Written by By Deswood Tome Sun Correspondent Friday, 10 November 2017 08:50





Some months have passed since Del Norte elementary in north Gallup earned an A grade from the New Mexico Public Education Department.

It is one of three schools in the Gallup McKinley County Schools district that received the stellar grade, based on a set of criteria from PED that schools must meet to earn the top grade.

Lincoln Elementary and Tse Yi Gai High School are the other two schools on the honor roll.

"Good morning boys and girls," PED Secretarty Christopher Ruszkowski said, before the hundres of students in the new Del Norte Elementary gymnasium. "Both of your schools last year—you are all here together—are going like this," Ruszkowski said, as he used his hand in an upward rising motion.

Del Norte is the district's newest school that opened in March. It's Juan de Onate and Washington elementary schools combined.

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"We do three things," Ruszkowski said. "We celebrate and give a gift. We ask that community members come. Three, we learn to make the school great."

There are 121 schools in New Mexico, out of 850, that received an A grade this year, nearly 15 percent.

"I am traveling around the state celebrating all of the 'A' schools," Ruszkowski said. "Number one, very hard, to have an A school without an awesome principal."

The public education secretary gave praise to the teachers as well as parents for the celebrated achievement.

"I get to go to a bunch of different schools on behalf of the governor," Ruszkowski said.

He replaced Hanna Skandera who served as Gov. Susana Martinez's first cabinet secretary for education. The change occurred in June.

Public education in New Mexico has been criticized for cuts in funding. Between the years 2008 through 2016, education has suffered budget cuts by as much as 30 percent.

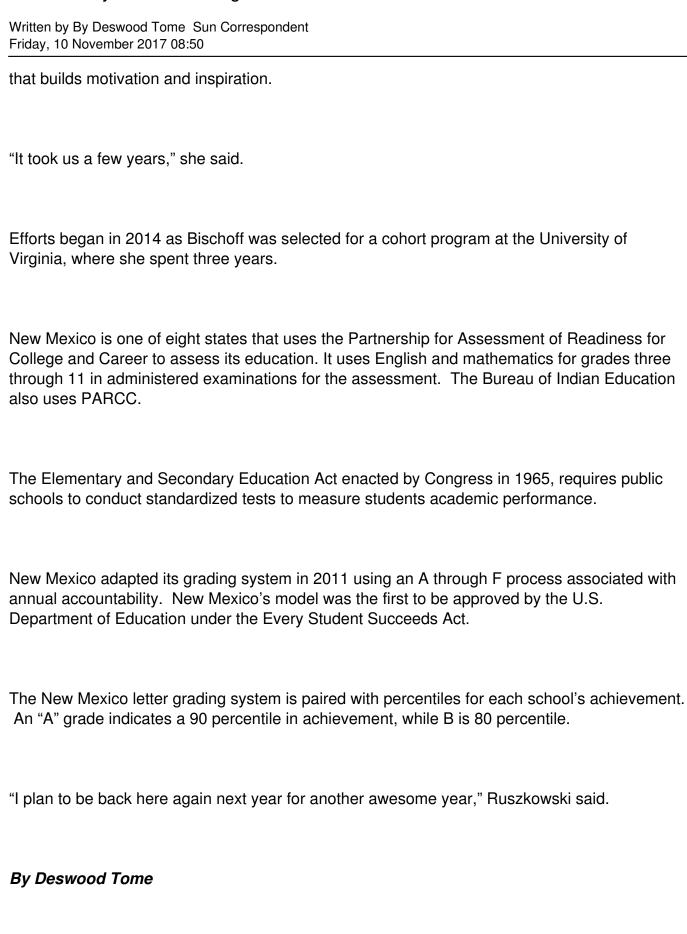
More than 100 students at Del Norte Elementary are enrolled in special education.

For New Mexico, students in special education suffer from disabilities or they include those who are designated as gifted and talented with high assessment scores.

Kristin Bischoff, Del Norte Elementary principal, attributes the achievement to a well trained staff

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