

State of New Mexico
Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

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**GOVERNOR RICHARDSON SAYS EDUCATION REPORT CARD REFLECTS
NEED FOR HIGHER SALARIES**

SANTA FE – Gov. Bill Richardson today reiterated the need to immediately boost teacher salaries by 6 percent in light of a new national education report card that gave New Mexico a C- for its efforts to improve teacher quality.

The governor emphasized that the key to reforming education is to make sure the state has the best teachers. That's why he wants to give 6 percent pay raises to the people who are on the front lines of improving schools.

"This first step will raise New Mexico teacher salaries from 44th to 39th in the nation," Richardson said. "In return, we will hold teachers to the high professional standards which we have the right to expect from those who have nothing less than our state's future in their trust."

That report card, released Tuesday by Education Week, concluded that New Mexico continues to fall behind other states in the quality of its teachers because of low salaries, poor teaching conditions and competition from bordering states. Those roadblocks make it difficult for New Mexico school districts to recruit and retain the best teachers.

New Mexico received nearly identical rankings this year as it did a year ago.

- Standards and accountability: B
- Improving teacher quality: C-
- School climate: C
- Adequacy of resources: C
- Equity of resources: B

Education Week is a trade publication for educators.

The report warned that New Mexico could continue to slip behind other states in teacher quality if its leaders don't find innovative ways to recruit and retain educators.

“New Mexico continues to provide fine teachers, but because of our low salaries they continue to leave here to other states,” Richardson said. “Improving salaries is the most immediate fix we can use to actually pick up some ground on other states.”

Aside from the governor’s proposal to raise salaries this year, he pledged during his campaign last year to pursue other ideas to attract the best teachers, including:

- **Zero percent loans and scholarships.** Gov. Richardson would encourage universities to participate in “Teachers for Tomorrow,” a program that offers zero-percent loans through the New Mexico Educational Assistance Foundation.
- **National Board Certification.** He wants to increase the number of National Board Certified teachers by at least 400 in New Mexico by 2006. He wants to give teachers who achieve certification a \$2,500 bonus and give teachers days of professional development to prepare for the rigorous process.
- **Help teachers buy homes.** The governor will work with the New Mexico Mortgage Finance Authority and local school boards to offer teachers a \$5,000 grant, scaleable to communities with high-cost housing, to help with the down payment and closing costs of a new home. Teachers will have to have two years of teaching in New Mexico under their belt. The state would forgive 10 percent of the grant each year as long as the teacher stays in the state.
- **Alternative licensing.** Allow New Mexicans with college degrees to take a teacher’s exam and complete 60 hours of teaching instruction, rather than obtaining a second degree. Such teachers currently receive assistance from a mentor and are closely supervised for two years. The governor would support community colleges that participate in the program.
- **Cash incentives.** Provide teachers with performance-based bonuses. Districts that choose to participate would create its own committee, with per-review to determine who gets bonuses.