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Governor Bill Richardson and Education Secretary Veronica García Announce Statewide Healthy School Report Card

SANTA FE- Governor Bill Richardson and New Mexico Education Secretary Veronica García today announced plans for a statewide report card that will measure how New Mexico's public schools are responding to increasingly alarming child health issues.

"We've eliminated junk food from our schools, increased physical education and doubled the number of school based health centers," Governor Bill Richardson said. "This report card will help us track our progress in ensuring that New Mexico's students are healthy and ready to learn."

This school year, 67 schools across the state, including all Santa Fe public schools, will use the Healthy School Report Card developed by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. It will measure each school's efforts to promote physical activity, provide nutritious foods and encourage family involvement in the health and education of their children.

All New Mexico public schools will begin using the report card within the next three years. Each school's data will contribute to the statewide report card.

Research shows direct links between student health and academic progress. About a quarter of New Mexico students are considered overweight or obese and increasing percentages are suffering from preventable diseases, such as type two diabetes, caused by poor nutrition and sedentary lifestyles. The problem is worse among the state's Hispanic and Native American students.

"In New Mexico we know that healthy students make better learners, which is why Governor Richardson has placed a focus on the whole child in New Mexico's school reform efforts," said Secretary Veronica García. "The Healthy School Report Card will provide our schools with a cost-effective planning tool in order to affect positive change, determine policies, and establish programs at the local level."

In addition, the report card will help districts and schools meet the state's wellness policy mandate, which requires school health advisory councils to provide twice-yearly data-based recommendations for improving student health.

“We need a community approach to address rising rates of obesity among our students,” said Health Secretary Dr. Alfredo Vigil. “Getting schools more involved in promoting healthy lifestyles is an essential key to helping youth develop patterns now that will carry with them through adulthood.”

Des Moines Municipal School in Des Moines, New Mexico is one of 11 school and district sites from across the United States and Canada that have been using the HSRC to involve their communities in improving student health and academic performance as part of a pilot study. The school opened a school-based health center last August that provides physical, dental, and mental health care for students, staff, and the surrounding communities.

“The work at Des Moines Municipal School epitomizes community collaboration to ensure all children are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged,” said Gene Carter, Executive Director of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. “I admire and applaud Governor Richardson and Secretary Garcia’s commitment to providing resources so that all New Mexico schools can work with their communities to address a critical – but often overlooked – element of academic achievement.”

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