



For immediate release
Aug. 5, 2009

Contact: Gilbert Gallegos
(505) 476-2217

Governor Bill Richardson Announces Graduate New Mexico Initiative

Plan To Bring Back 10,000 Dropouts

Santa Fe – Governor Richardson today announced the next generation of Making Schools Work education reform initiatives: *Graduate New Mexico! It's Everybody's Business*. His announcement today – the first of several initiatives to be unveiled during the next several weeks – is designed to bring back 10,000 dropouts, address the achievement gap, and improve graduation rates in New Mexico.

“To sustain New Mexico’s growing economy and workforce, all New Mexican’s must at the very least graduate from high school. We must accept that in the 21st century, to secure a job that will support a family and provide a decent quality of life, a high school diploma is a must,” said Governor Richardson.

“Incremental gains are good, but not good enough. We must take bold steps in our reform effort,” said Education Secretary Veronica C. García.

The total investment in new education reform is \$8.9 million dollars from federal stimulus money. Governor Richardson announced the first six components of *Graduate New Mexico! It's Everybody's Business*:

1. **An expansion of IDEAL-NM (Innovative Digital Education And Learning). The Public Education Department will make online courses available to up to 10,000 students that need to make up credits to graduate.** The credit recovery program will provide on line courses that students can take any where there is internet access. Students must go to their high schools to register.
2. **The appointment of a task force for the Schools Most In Need of Improvement.** The taskforce will examine the schools that have consistently failed to improve over the last five years and will make recommendations about intensive interventions New Mexico should consider to improve its persistently low performing schools. The task force will be headed by Education Secretary, Dr. Veronica C. García.

3. **The establishment the Office of Hispanic Education** at the Public Education Department. The office will liaison with the Hispanic Community to engage in meaningful ways to address the achievement gap.
4. **Three Governor Summits on the Achievement Gap** each with a separate focus on Hispanic, Native American, and African American student achievement to be held in October, November, and December of 2009. The purpose of the summits is three fold: 1) to call attention to educational challenges, 2) to collaboratively arrive at solutions, and 3) to engage parents and community in the process.
5. **The availability of online cultural competence training** for teachers. The course will be offered in collaboration with NM Highlands University Center for the Study and Education of Diverse populations to train teachers in culturally relevant teaching techniques and materials.
6. **The creation of an annual report card** clearly reporting achievement, graduation rates, drop out rates, college attendance, college remediation rates, and post secondary attainment levels for each ethnic group. The first baseline report will be released no later than December 31, 2009.

“It is going to take a statewide community effort if we are to ensure that every New Mexico high school student graduates from high school ready to contribute to New Mexico’s economy. Graduate New Mexico. It’s everybody’s business,” said Richardson.