

Secretary of education needs these 9 qualities

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We've had almost 8 years of turmoil in New Mexico education. Brushing aside all the manipulated statistics and grandstanding, New Mexico's education system still ranks at, or near, the bottom of all the states in educational achievement. The leadership of the Public Education Department and their agenda have failed us, not our schools or teachers.

We can do better – we must do better. Let's describe an ideal Secretary of Education.

The new NM Secretary of Education must:

- 1) Be a true leader, inspiring, validating, encouraging and collaborating with all our teachers, school staff, principals, administrators and district leadership with a vision of what we can be. This means telling the truth at all times instead of constantly issuing self-serving press releases. We need someone who is more interested in New Mexico's children than in padding a resume hoping to step up to a better job.
- 2) Defend public education. Approximately 90% of students in America attend public schools. Those students, parents and educators deserve strong support and advocacy.
- 3) Lead by example. Be a graduate of an accredited College of Education with a minimum of a Masters Degree and a 3.0 or better, GPA. Most teachers have a Masters Degree and many have PhDs. Anyone expecting to lead an education system must have those minimal credentials as a scholar and be a lifelong learner.
- 4) Have the training to accurately understand data collection and its limitations and uses. One or two college level courses in statistics and their application are essential. In today's data-driven world, this knowledge is required for fully understanding what works and doesn't work in any teacher evaluation and school grading system. These tasks cannot be understood or delegated to others without a basic knowledge of statistics and how to use them. Claiming to be data-driven isn't enough. One must understand what constitutes real data.
- 5) Foster respect for science. New Mexico is a leader in science. Students should be encouraged to take advantage of this world-class expertise. There isn't room for pseudoscience, watered-down science, or science tainted by anyone's personal belief system.
- 6) Have a minimum of five years of teaching experience in a public school classroom. This is the only way to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to capably fill any administrative position. On the most basic level, successfully managing a classroom and successfully managing adults both require the same communication and people skills. One of the most primary of those is treating everyone with respect.

7) Believe that an important part of “treating everyone with respect,” involves transparency and accessibility. Secrecy and “stonewalling” are out. Transparency and accessibility will be in.

8) Find out why we have a crisis in education and work to find remedies. Enrollment in colleges of education is down and our educators are leaving our state or leaving education entirely. This is according to a study by The New Mexico State University College of Education Southwest Outreach Academic Research Lab, as reported in the Albuquerque Journal, November 4, 2018.

9) Be recognized by students, parents, teachers and administrators, as a superior teacher and leader. This recognition goes far beyond student test scores and teacher evaluations. It asks, is this person a great teacher? Can this person lead others?

When our new governor takes office on January 1, 2019, we hope she will give New Mexico’s children, parents and educators a fresh start with a new Secretary of Education, a qualified candidate who will, beginning on day one, truly listen to parents, teachers, other professional licensed staff, principals and school administrators. Let’s begin a meaningful dialogue that will help all of us feel valued and respected.

These actions will go a long way toward improving morale in public schools that has been steadily deteriorating over the last several years. They will give our students the skills they need to thrive and succeed in today’s rapidly changing world.

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