

House Memorial 58 Findings and Recommendations

Purpose

The House Memorial requests that the Public Education Department (PED) and the Higher Education Department (HED) study the number of adults served annually by public secondary schools and whether those adults would be better served in Adult Basic Education (ABE) or other equivalency programs. The departments will report their findings and recommendations to the Governor and Legislative Education Study Committee by December 1, 2019.

Process

The New Mexico Higher Education Department's Adult Education program (HED AE) convened a study group during the 2019 interim period to address the questions posed in HM58. The study group included leaders from HED, PED, legislators, adult education directors (directly and indirectly affected by the age cap), and other stakeholders.

Findings

In 2019 the legislature passed a bill (cite) setting an age limit of 22 years of age on students who could be served by the public school funding formula thus removing persons aged 22 and over from the purview of Section 22-1-4 NMSA 1978. In 2018 NM Public schools served approximately 800 adults, ages 22-70, working toward completing secondary school credentials and did so with funds from the public school funding formula. These 800 students were served by secondary schools that also served traditional age high school students.

The legislature also funds an adult education system that serves over 10,000 adults each year seeking secondary credentials. Adult education students are served by programs in community colleges, community-based organizations, and in corrections settings. In academic year 2018-19 (FY19) HED AE provided services to 1,418 students in prisons overseen by the New Mexico Corrections Department. HED AE also serves students in the four Workforce Regions: 2,373 in Northern, 3,528 in Central, 2,279 in Eastern, and 1,362 in the Southwestern Workforce Region. Some of these providers also serve students incarcerated locally, some work with Job Corps clients, TANF clients, Youth Challenge participants, drug court referrals, and other social and community service groups, depending on local need and collaborative relationships.

Recommendations

- Adult students would be better served by the Higher Education Department's Adult Education program for the following reasons:
 - Best practices: The Adult Education program can leverage other sources of funding, including federal sources in support of best practices, strategies and programs specifically designed to meet the needs of adult learners.
 - Cost effectiveness: The Higher Education Department's Adult Education programs graduate more students per year for fewer dollars-per-person.
- Hold harmless the programs currently funded by PED until the programs are eligible to apply for HED's adult education funding in 2021. If the programs currently funded by the Public Education Department are not held harmless, one program would close and the remaining programs would be harmed.

A more detailed set of findings, recommendations that include PED data are forthcoming.