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**EDUCATION POSITION**

(Adopted 1987; revised 1995, 2009, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019, ***2021*)**

***The LWVNM Board approved the italicized sections on 1/16/21***

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico (LWVNM) believes that education is the cornerstone for perpetuating a strong and viable democracy. The public education system should impart to all students an understanding of the nature of democracy and the responsibilities of citizenship, the ability to think critically, and the skills necessary to continue to learn and function as adults in a complex society.

The League of Women Voters of New Mexicobelieves that every student should have access to a high quality, publicly funded education regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, family income, or geographical location. The League believes in accountability, transparency, and equity in the use of public funds for education.

The League supports public schools as the primary method of educating students. The League opposes the presence of private, for-profit companies in the governance, management, and provision of public education. *LWVNM believes that an education commission should be responsible for recommending the appointment of the head of the Public Education Department and advising on education policy, regulations, and finances*. The League believes in accountability, transparency, and equity in the use of public funds for education.

LWVNM supports the following strategies to ensure the greatest possible academic success for all students:

**Practices for Student Success:**

1. Use the Common Core State Standards to provide a framework for knowledge and the academic skills that students are expected to master, with flexibility for district and charter schools to determine how the standards are taught and measured.

2. Develop to each student's highest potential the knowledge and skills needed for success in adult life, along with a broad understanding and appreciation of history and prospects for the future.

3. Cultivate each student's capacity to solve problems and make decisions.

4. Provide opportunities for all students to develop their aesthetic awareness and creative abilities.

5. Foster an awareness of the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of participation in a democratic society.

6. Foster an understanding of basic economic principles and the need to manage resources for the benefit of both present and future generations.

7. Provide the tools to make wise college and career choices and to understand the importance of each individual's work in the local, national, and world economies.

8. Promote practices that lead to physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

9. Enhance the sense of community within the school, as a microcosm of the larger society, through standards of conduct that reflect a concern for the opinions, values, aspirations, and well-being of all.

10. Develop the critical thinking and problem-solving skills of students through experiential learning and through the use of technology.

11. Maintain and use health and social service teams in the schools to identify and work with at-risk students and their parents or caregivers, with referrals to appropriate community agencies when necessary.

**Community Involvement:**

1. Collaborate with all sectors of the community to improve public education at all levels.
2. Seek business initiatives offering work schedules that support student attendance at school.
3. Create incentives to encourage students to develop career skills and graduate from high school.
4. Implement programs that increase involvement of parents of all socioeconomic groups in the education of their children at all grade levels.

**Early Childhood Education:**

*1. Fund sufficiently a broad base of social service agencies, providers, and schools to foster the development of children from birth to age five and prepare them for success in school and life.*

*2. Provide quality early childhood care providers and educators with culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate programming and access to resources through cross-agency partnerships.*

*3. Emphasize holistic development of preschoolers through programming that supports social, emotional, cognitive, and physical learning.*

*4. Provide programs that encourage increased family involvement in the education of their children.*

**Evaluation of Teachers, Students, and School Performance:**

1. Focus student evaluation on student academic progress rather than rigid standards of proficiency.
2. Use student testing to assist teachers in providing effective and timely strategies for student academic achievement.
3. Implement measures to improve the preparation, recruitment, professional development, and retention of quality educators with in-depth knowledge in core academic subjects and instructional strategies.
4. Follow due process procedures when terminating teachers and principals who do not meet minimum standards.
5. Base assessment of school and teacher performance on overall quality of the education provided to the students and improvements in student academic growth as measured by multiple methods, including professional observations.

***Postsecondary Education:***

*The League believes that all qualified students should have the opportunity to acquire a postsecondary education and that successful participation should be aided by a variety of resources. Postsecondary education includes public career-technical, community college, undergraduate, and graduate institutions. Preschool, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education should be viewed as a continuum leading to lifelong learning.*

 *Effective programs*

*1. Prepare students for increasingly difficult academic work and explain graduation standards and expectations.*

*2. Provide information for middle school and high school students and families regarding academic and financial issues related to attending postsecondary institutions, including the variety of options and dual credit.*

*3. Provide state-funded, need-based financial aid to enable all qualified students to attain a postsecondary education.*

*4. Provide state-funded, merit-based scholarships to attract and retain high-quality students.*

*5. Facilitate positive engagement in learning, using a variety of community resources to support students socially and emotionally and improve academic performance.*

**Charter School Regulation** (Adopted 2016)

Charter schools are discretionary programs intended to fill unmet needs and/or to test innovative instructional strategies to produce quality educational outcomes. Policy makers must ensure that adequate funds are available for traditional public schools and define how charter schools fill unmet needs. Appropriate instructional and support services must be provided in all public schools to meet the diverse needs of individual students.

Regarding the mission of charter schools, the LWVNM believes the following:

1. A charter school should not be authorized unless:
	1. its mission would serve a need the traditional schools cannot;
	2. funds are available;
	3. there is a demonstrated need based on student population projections.
2. New Mexico should provide flexibility and supplemental funding for magnet programs and career academies within traditional public schools.
3. Charter school innovations demonstrated to be effective should be disseminated to improve the traditional public education system.
4. The state should establish a closure policy revoking the contract of a charter school that fails to meet minimum academic, financial, and organizational standards for two consecutive years or for two of the three most recent years.

For the sake of assuring accountability and transparency and minimizing the fiscal impact, LWVNM recommends the following:

1. A charter school’s finances should be available for public scrutiny, and budget processes should be similar to those for school districts, which require the public to be provided with an opportunity for input into decision-making.
2. Charter school governing council members should adhere to standards and best practices as delineated by the NM School Boards Association.
3. Funding to state-chartered schools should minimize the amount allocated to for-profit management and business operations with oversight provided by state-approved auditors.
4. Funding should be equitable so as not to advantage charter schools over traditional public schools.
5. NM should develop an effective performance-based accountability system for charter schools focused on increased proficiency, academic growth, and college/career readiness standards to ensure that charter schools demonstrate positive student outcomes.Charter schools that do not meet the established benchmarks should be put on time-limited improvement plans and not allowed to increase enrollment until they have met the benchmarks.

LWVNM believes that public funding for virtual schools should be less per student since the schools do not require brick and mortar facilities.

**Funding for Public Education** (Adopted 1973; revised 1983, 1993, 2002, 2007, 2015)

The League of Women Voters of New Mexico supports use of a distribution formula that reflects differences in student needs, teacher experience and qualifications, the number of schools and students in a district, level of education, capital outlay, and transportation requirements.

Programs that foster children’s development from birth to age 5 for success in kindergarten and beyond should be adequately funded.

The New Mexico State Equalization Guarantee funding formula should be used to achieve equity and to provide fair funding for every child based on need, regardless of location. There should be periodic review and modifications to assure that the formula is faithful to its original intention.

Funding should provide for high quality education for all students and be consistently and fairly applied across the state.

Local school districts should control the funds distributed to them by the state.

All state and federal mandates should be accompanied by funding so as not to place an undue burden on the public schools.

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League of Women Voters of New Mexico

 [www.lwvnm.org](http://www.lwvnm.org) educ@lwvnm.org

Drs. Meredith Machen and Eileen VanWie, Education Co-Chairs