publicworks

making good ideas work for the better

Performance & Customer Service: Focus on Teacher Licensure, Charter Schools, Accountability & Assessment

Report to New Mexico Public Education Department

June 2005

Executive summary

Purpose and Approach

In September 2003, the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) was formed after voters passed an amendment to shift the leadership of public education in the state from a school board and superintendent model to a cabinet-level secretary and department. Under the leadership of Dr. Veronica Garcia, the PED has set for itself the ambitious goal of being as effective and efficient as possible, while increasing the likelihood that those who rely on the Department for critical information and support are highly satisfied with its performance. As a result, administrators and teachers will be better positioned to serve the learning needs of New Mexico's children. It is in this spirit that this study was commissioned.

Public Works was asked to employ an "organizational development and continuous improvement" lens in its analysis.

The PED engaged Public Works LLC, a public policy and management consulting firm, to assess program performance and customer satisfaction with three key PED areas of service and to develop recommendations to help the Department improve its ability to meet the needs of two of its primary customers – administrators and teachers. Public Works was asked to employ an "organizational development and continuous improvement" lens in its analysis. This report is focused on developing realistic solutions to improve performance and customer service in the areas of teacher licensure, accountability and assessment and charter schools. It also assesses how PED performs in its delivery of products and services to key customer groups.

The Department chose three areas for the study: teacher licensure, charter schools, and accountability and assessment, with the following objectives:

- To provide effective, user-friendly and timely processing of teacher licenses with an appropriate balance between technical processing and personal interaction with customers. Teacher licensure is a critical area of focus because of longstanding concerns regarding prolonged delays and complications in the certification process. Also, the newly enacted three-tiered licensure process has received national attention as an innovative means of improving teacher quality.

- To provide charter schools with effective and user-friendly technical assistance and support. Charter school development is significant because of the growing demand for such schools and the department's role in assuring the public that the educational quality of New Mexico charter schools is worthy of their children's enrollment.

- To provide school districts with effective and user-friendly technical assistance in meeting No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements, including those that pertain to Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Accountability and assessment are critical components of implementing federal No Child Left Behind mandates. As such, they require focused attention from the state level to help schools collect and effectively utilize data regarding student performance.

The Public Works methodology combined extensive interviews in New Mexico, review of NM reports and internal PED documentation, information about national policy and practice in each of the three areas of study and experience in other states capped by an electronic survey of nearly 1,600 PED customers consisting of superintendents, principals, teachers and other school personnel. From this data, findings and recommendations for action are presented for PED management in each of the three focus areas – teacher licensure, charter schools, and accountability and assessment.

Highlights of Findings and Recommendations

Teacher Licensure

Implementing the new three tiered licensure process poses a challenge for PED, districts and teachers alike. Coupled with longstanding issues regarding the timeliness and responsiveness of state licensing operations, it is important for PED to improve its performance in this area. Teachers report that while the licensure process has improved significantly, they still face long delays while PED staff reports a high rate of incomplete applications that slow down the process from the start. The study identifies a wide range of strategies to improve license application processing and responsiveness to telephone, email and in-person inquiries that ensure rapid turnaround.

Teachers report that while the licensure process has improved significantly, they still face long delays while PED staff reports a high rate of incomplete applications that slow down the process from the start.

Internal changes and improved communication with districts and schools are among the steps that can be taken to accelerate the process. There is significant opportunity for PED to provide more user-friendly, regular and targeted information to district human resource personnel to help teachers in completing the licensure process. Teachers report that applying for higher levels of licenses –

moving from level 1 to levels 2 and 3, and in particular completing the professional development dossier [required to move from level 1 provisional to level 2 professional teacher] is confusing and unnecessarily complex.

The study calls for PED to set a goal of reducing licensure time for complete applications to 3-4 weeks at a maximum, and for 24-hour acknowledgment of inquiries.

PED is taking steps to improve its utilization of technology in managing licensure. In so doing, it also needs to ensure that teachers and others can receive answers to questions and reach appropriate staff when needed. The study calls for PED to set a goal of reducing licensure time for complete applications to 3-4 weeks at a maximum, and for 24-hour acknowledgment of inquiries. Overall, interviews and survey findings indicate that PED has demonstrated a steady improvement in licensure processes amidst many challenges and changes. There is ample opportunity for redesign and streamlining the department's work, and better utilizing district and school level personnel. In addition to recommendations for improving internal business processes and communication, and developing better tools for communicating licensure requirements to teachers and districts, the report proposes strengthening partnerships with area colleges and universities to facilitate licensing of recent New Mexico graduates.

Charter Schools

The charter school movement is relatively new to New Mexico education, and hence the PED has worked hard to respond to this emerging sector serving public school students. While the number of charter schools in New Mexico is growing, they constitute a small segment (less than three percent) of total enrollment. PED is viewed as responsive and hard working in meeting individual charter school requests, but overall operates in a reactive mode. The bureau finds itself fielding questions from charter schools rather than strategically positioning itself to offer large-scale technical assistance in planning, capacity building, finances, and regulatory requirements. Coordination is a significant challenge not only with charter schools but with other bureaus within the department, as well. Improving collaboration between districts and charter schools in their jurisdictions, and among parts of PED is a recurrent theme throughout the recommendations.

As the number of charter schools grows in New Mexico, the PED will need to adjust its approach to better leverage external resources by providing technical assistance more broadly instead of one-on-one and to more proactively identify and address charter school issues.

As the number of charter schools grows in New Mexico, the PED will need to adjust its approach to better leverage external resources by providing technical assistance more broadly instead of one-on-one and to more proactively identify and address charter school issues. Because districts are the authorizer of charter schools in New Mexico, the state role can be unclear, and requires clarification and explanation if it is to be effective.

Accountability & Assessment

In the area of accountability and assessment, PED receives high marks for its innovations in streamlining and improving data collection. There remain, however, significant challenges to support schools and districts in the effective use of data regarding student achievement and to support improved teaching and learning that will subsequently narrow the achievement gap. PED's new single application process that combines applications for multiple federal and state authorities is widely heralded, yet superintendents and school principals request more lead time to complete these reports. They would also like to see better alignment and coordination among PED bureaus that request data and the new data warehouse being developed by PED. Other areas of improvement include technical assistance, where smaller districts in particular could benefit from increased assistance. District personnel and teachers report that templates, tool kits, training and guidance provided by the PED has been extremely helpful.

PED's new single application process that combines applications for multiple federal and state authorities is widely heralded, yet superintendents and school principals request more lead time to complete these reports.

Coordination can present a significant barrier to high quality customer service; site visits to schools by PED staff representing different bureaus and mandates would be better served if they were more coordinated, synchronized and streamlined. Superintendents and principals request improved information regarding state reporting requirements, and assistance with data collection for state and federal reports. In addition to improving timeliness, PED can increase and improve training on how to use assessment data down to the classroom level. Communication regarding Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) was an issue with districts and schools requesting technical assistance from PED to help them better communicate the impact of their No Child Left Behind (NCLB) rankings to their local communities. The research also presents numerous strategies, many of which are currently being implemented, to improve PED data systems, human resources and other operational aspects of the department.

Conclusion

This report identifies 65 specific findings and recommendations for PED's consideration. These findings and recommendations not only illuminate areas where PED can improve its operations and better serve the needs of New Mexico citizens, but they also provide specific action-oriented ideas to assist PED and its partners effectuate change. Across all three areas, the use of the internet was a pervasive finding.

Across all three areas, the use of the internet was a pervasive finding. It is suggested that PED significantly restructure its website, improve navigability and its capacity to act as an online portal to transact business.

It is suggested that PED significantly restructure its website, improve navigability and its capacity to act as an online portal to transact business. The site must also allow administrators, teachers and parents to find the information they need more easily. Themes of effectively using technology, improving collaboration, effectively disseminating and disaggregating data along with communication strategies apply well beyond the three areas studied. PED management is in the process of reviewing the report and developing action plans for implementing it. Some of the recommendations have already been addressed.

The NM Public Education Department is making considerable strides to recast the product delivery and image of the Department to better support New Mexico districts and schools in meeting the education needs of the state's children. Continuing to focus on customer service and implementing the recommendations in this report will help ensure that state government can meet the highest standards of responsiveness, timeliness and customer satisfaction among those who must deliver the most prized product of all – an education.

Continuing to focus on customer service will help ensure that state government can meet the highest standards of responsiveness, timeliness and customer satisfaction among those who must deliver the most prized product of all – an education.

publicworks
making good ideas work for the better

Table of Contents

public works
making good ideas work for the better

Chapter

1

Purpose

T he New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) engaged Public Works llc, a public policy and management consulting firm, to assess program performance and customer satisfaction with Department services and to develop recommendations to help the Department improve its ability to meet the needs of two of its primary customers – administrators and teachers. These professionals in turn, address the needs of students, parents and the citizens of New Mexico. This report employs an "organizational development and continuous improvement" lens in its analysis to develop realistic solutions for improving performance and customer service in three key areas. It also provides a sense of how PED is performing in the estimation of its key customer groups.

This report employs an "organizational development and continuous improvement" lens in its analysis to develop realistic solutions for improving customer service in three key areas.

Based on information about high impact PED processes, previous management reviews and potential to improve performance, the Public Works study is designed to support the following objectives:

- To provide effective, user-friendly and timely processing of teacher licenses with an appropriate balance between technical processing and personal interaction with customers.

- To provide charter schools with effective and user-friendly technical assistance and support.

- To provide school districts with effective and user-friendly technical assistance in meeting No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements, including those that pertain to Adequate Yearly Progress.

The remainder of this report is divided into several sections. Following a brief description of background, the methodology for collecting and analyzing data is discussed. Findings and recommendations for each of the three focus areas – teacher

public works
making good ideas work for the better

licensure, charter schools, and accountability and assessment – are presented. The next section includes immediate term action steps for PED consideration.   A list of findings and recommendations, a list of interviewees, and other supporting information are included in appendices.

Chapter

2

Background

I n September 2003, the New Mexico Public Education Department was formed after voters passed an amendment to shift the leadership of public education in the state from a school board and superintendent model to a cabinet secretary-level and department. The Governor appointed Dr. Veronica Garcia as the first Secretary of the New Mexico Public Education Department in November, 2003. The Governor charged the Secretary with addressing what voters saw as a mandate: to bring the newly formed Department's performance and capacity into the 21st century and to meet the educational needs of the state's citizens. PED has set for itself the ambitious goals of being as effective and efficient as possible, while increasing the likelihood that those who rely on the Department for critical information and support are highly satisfied with its performance. The hope is that these administrators and teachers in turn, will be better able to serve the learning needs of New Mexico's children. It is in this spirit that this study was commissioned.

Simultaneous to policy initiatives to raise standards of academic excellence and ensure high expectations for all New Mexico students regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic or educational disadvantages, the Secretary took steps to strengthen the performance of the programs under her purview. In this effort to build the capacity of the Department, she commissioned this management review to assess the state of customer service and satisfaction, and to find ways to improve the Department's support for its varied stakeholders and customers. Other aspects of her reform agenda (including both legislative and internal management initiatives) are not the subject of this study. However all these initiatives are designed to work in concert to collectively improve educational opportunity across the state.

The three areas chosen for this study are of significant import for the Department. They were chosen by PED senior management who considered prior studies, including the Decision Support Architecture Consortium (DSAC) Report. Teacher licensure is a critical area of focus because of longstanding concerns regarding prolonged delays and complications in the certification process. Also, the newly enacted three-tiered licensure process has received national attention as an innovative means of improving teacher quality.

publicworks
making good ideas work for the better

Charter school development is significant because of the importance of supporting choice and building the quality of the New Mexico charter schools. Third, accountability and assessment are critical components of implementing federal No Child Left Behind mandates. As such, they require focused attention from the state level to help schools collect data regarding student performance. That data must be used wisely to inform decision-making at the state, district and school level, and to make the necessary changes to improve the performance of schools that are not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals. In addition, newly enacted legislation in New Mexico necessitates PED ability to respond in these three areas.

That data must be used wisely to inform decision-making at the state, district and school level, and to make the necessary changes to improve the performance of schools that are not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals.

The intent of the study is to develop findings in each of these areas. Its goal is to identify potential improvements and to suggest recommendations designed to help build the Department's capacity to better address these ongoing issues. Taken together, analysis of teacher licensure, charter schools and accountability and assessment is intended to potentially raise issues and actions of Department-wide import, in addition to addressing the specific circumstances of each topic.

Chapter

3

Methodology

The Public Works methodology began with extensive data collection, analysis to develop key findings and identification of recommendations for PED consideration. Data collection combined internal PED sources, and other New Mexico and external sources. Public Works collected and reviewed internal PED and New Mexico state documents pertaining to the Department, and the issues under consideration, to ensure that prior work examining customer service and related issues was taken into account. The team participated in extensive interviews and meetings to ensure that the expertise, institutional knowledge and perspectives of PED personnel and external stakeholders were reflected. Within PED, personnel representing a cross section of the organization were consulted, including those directly responsible for the issues under review, but also those members of the organization with ancillary and related roles. Externally, the team met with stakeholders involved in the PED teacher licensure, charter school, and accountability and assessment processes, including teachers and administrators. Appendix B lists individuals who were consulted as part of this study.

Nearly 1,600 customers responded to a survey sent directly from Secretary Garcia. It was the first on-line survey deployed by the department.

In addition to collecting data within New Mexico, Public Works supplemented its review with information about national policy and practice in each of the three areas, as well as practices in other states. National education reform organizations with expertise in assessment and accountability, teacher licensure, and charter schools provided invaluable perspective and ideas.

The team based its interviews on a data collection protocol that identified key issues of concern to PED, modified to reflect the particular focus of each individual subject. The team refined its research and focus as deeper understanding of the issues facing PED emerged. In analysis, consistent themes were identified, as well as potential areas of dissonance. Outlier perspectives were so noted. In corroborating primary data collection and supplementing it with available documentation and prior analyses, the Public Works team sought to increase the relevance and immediate applicability of the study results for PED management's use.

public works
making good ideas work for the better

The remainder of this report discusses teacher licensure, charter schools and accountability and assessment. In each area, the report first provides an overview of current operations, inherited state of affairs and customer points of service. The report presents findings related to improving customer service, and recommendations for PED consideration and action. The report closes with suggested immediate next steps for PED senior leadership.

As the Public Works team conducted its research, members continuously raised issues of PED-wide impact. Similarities in findings across the three areas should be noted, and can serve as the basis for PED-wide action. For example, one recurring theme was the use of technology and the content and navigability of the PED website. It is evident from the recommendations in all three areas that attention to the website is an important undertaking. Similarly, issues of institutional communication and coordination present challenges in all organizations, and PED is no different. Findings and recommendations bear on numerous aspects of organizational behavior, strategy implementation, personnel practices and other systems and structures. By approaching these organization-wide dynamics through the specific lenses of improving customer experiences in teacher licensure, charter schools, and accountability and assessment, it will be possible to lead and sustain important changes in PED's ability to support New Mexico learners.

Survey Purpose and Methodology

To better understand the perceptions, evaluations and thoughts of customers receiving services from PED, an electronic survey was designed to tap two customer bases: teachers, as they relate to the licensure services of PED, and administrators (superintendents, principals, test coordinators and Title I coordinators) as they relate to accountability and assessment services of PED. Nearly 1,600 customers responded to a survey sent directly from Secretary Garcia. It was the first on-line survey deployed by the department. The methodology and results of the survey are presented in Part VII of this report, *Customer Survey Results.*

Chapter

4

Teacher licensure

Licensure Overview: Mission and State of Affairs

The mission of teacher licensure is to guarantee that all students in New Mexico learn from individuals who are highly qualified to teach. An effective licensing process is essential to quality education for New Mexico students. Pursuant to federal and state legislation and implementing regulations, the Department is responsible for ensuring that New Mexico teachers are appropriately certified and qualified to perform their classroom and administrative responsibilities.

Licensure in New Mexico is governed according to a newly legislated three-tiered process, which is in its early stages of implementation. "Level 1 teaching license" is a provisional teaching license issued for the first three years of teaching. It provides a beginning teacher the opportunity, through a formal mentorship program, to receive additional preparation to become a highly qualified teacher. In its 2005 spring session, the legislature extended the time-frame for a Level 1 license, not to exceed five years (from three years).

"Level 2 teaching license" is a professional teaching license given to a teacher who is a fully qualified professional, and who bears primary responsibility for ensuring that students meet and exceed state academic content and performance standards. A teacher may choose to remain at level two for the remainder of his/her career. Teachers move from Level 1 to Level 2 by successfully completing a professional dossier development and review.

"Level 3 teaching license" signifies a master teaching license. It is the highest level of teaching competence for those teachers who choose to advance as instructional leaders in the teaching profession. These teachers may undertake greater responsibilities such as curriculum development, peer intervention, and mentoring. The law specifies the requirements of each level, and what is required to move from one level to the next.

Of particular note is that the three tiers have different financial implications for teachers, and that salary increases are tied to advancement in tier. The salary increases currently apply only to teachers and not to other personnel in the school system. The licenses and endorsements which are currently offered are listed on the following page. Endorsements are attached to licenses and indicate the subject area in which a teacher is specialized, and is eligible to teach.

Licensure is overseen and managed by the Department's Professional Licensure Bureau, which is part of the newly formed Educator Quality Division. This new division was created partially in response to longstanding problems that the new Public Education Department identified. These relate primarily to two themes:

1. Length of time to process licensure applications and issue licenses, and
2. Lack of responsiveness to phone, email and in-person inquiries.

Figure 1
Teacher Licenses and Endorsements Offered in New Mexico

• Licenses Offered in New Mexico	• Endorsements Offered in New Mexico
• Administrative, K-12 • Athletic Coach, 7-12 • Certified Occupational Therapist, K-12 • Early Childhood, Birth -Grade 3 • Educational Assistant, K-12 • Educational Diagnostician, K-12 • Elementary Teaching, K-8 • Grades K-12 Teaching • Interpreter for the Deaf, K-12 • Middle Level Teaching, 5-9 • Mobility Trainer for the Blind, K-12 • Occupational Therapist, K-12 • Physical Therapist, K-12 • Physical Therapist Assistant, K-12 • Recreational Therapist, K-12 • School Business Official, K12 • School Counselor, K-12 • School Nurse, K-12 • School Psychologist, K-12 • School Social Worker, K-12 • Secondary Teaching, 7-12 • Secondary Vocational-Technical, 7-12 • Special Education, K-12 • Substitute Teaching	• Agriculture • Bilingual • Business Education • Family and Consumer Science • Fine Arts • Health Education • Language Arts • Library/Media • Music • Physical Education • Psychology • Reading • Science • Social Studies • Technology Coordinator • Technology Education (Ind. Arts) • Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages • Visual Arts

The Educator Quality Division also includes Professional Development and Ethics Bureaus, which attend to other aspects of ensuring that qualified teachers

are employed in New Mexico classrooms, and coordinate licensure processes with the Professional Licensure Bureau. Creation of the Educator Quality Division, new with the elevation of PED to cabinet status, was intended in part to increase attention to teacher quality, and to provide additional support for New Mexico's current and potential teachers to pursue professional development, attain highly qualified status, and move from provisional status to the professional and eventually master teacher tier.

With more than 22,000 Pre K-12 teachers across the state, the Professional Licensure Bureau is faced with processing new licenses and renewing licenses for thousands of current and prospective New Mexico teachers annually.

With more than 22,000 Pre K-12 teachers across the state, the Professional Licensure Bureau is faced with processing new licenses and renewing licenses for thousands of current and prospective New Mexico teachers annually. The relatively small number of staff (8 individuals) responsible for managing this process and simultaneously responding to a high volume of queries (via phone, email and in-person visits) has contributed to a significant lapse between the time current or prospective teachers submit applications, and the time they receive their licenses. In addition, large numbers of incomplete applications further complicate and delay the licensure process. During the months prior to this review, efforts by administration and staff to facilitate and accelerate the licensing process resulted in significant improvements and a decline in complaints, according to many of those interviewed as part of this study.

There is significant variance in the volume of inquiries the Bureau receives each day. It appears that volume varies seasonally as well. During February, weekly phone inquiries ranged from 107 to more than 600, and email inquiries from 59 to 209. Licenses issued, regardless of type, ranged from 100 to 700 during the same period. The Bureau is compiling additional data regarding type of inquiry, type of application and turnaround time by category. This will make a significant contribution to planning and distributing workload.

Customer Overview and Major Points of Service

Teacher licensure is a critical business process of the New Mexico Public Education Department. Its smooth functioning is essential to the overall delivery of high quality customer service, and the successful operation of the Department. Throughout interviews with PED personnel and others with interest in teacher licensure and certification, all parties emphasized the importance of a smoothly operating teacher licensure process. This component of PED's work is vital to its overall reputation, and to the ability of New Mexico districts and schools to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. The Secretary's emphasis on improving the operation of the licensure process is well placed. The need to ensure an effective, efficient and transparent process is further bolstered by the new three tiered

licensing requirements, and the need to implement this innovative and potentially complex legislative initiative.

> There is general agreement regarding who the primary and secondary customers of the licensure process are, and about what constitutes high quality customer service.

Those interviewed were remarkably consistent in their views regarding customers of the licensure process, and customer expectations regarding high quality service. Clearly the primary customer of licensing is the teacher, who needs a valid license to teach in a New Mexico school. Timeliness, accuracy and responsiveness on the part of the Bureau all are critical to teacher satisfaction. Secondary or intermediate customers of the licensing process include district personnel (superintendents, school principals, human resources personnel and other administrators), other PED staff and the numerous external constituencies who have an interest in ensuring that NM teachers are of the highest quality. Students are the ultimate beneficiaries of a well-run licensure process.

The Secretary's emphasis on improving the operation of the licensure process is well placed.

The PED personnel who are involved in licensure generally agree on what might constitute gaps in current performance, and what would make the service exemplary. These perceptions are shared by those outside the agency as well, and set the stage for improvement. Individuals establish their expectations regarding the level of service that they want government agencies to provide based on their experiences with other high performing organizations that they interact with on a daily basis. As a result, the Professional Licensure Bureau recognizes the need to be responsive to customers in e-mail, on the phone and through in-person interactions. Bureau personnel understand that a myriad of factors have contributed over time towards some customers not receiving the level of service that they expected, or that the Bureau staff seeks to provide.

While there is consensus about the needs of the customer in the teacher licensure process, there are less well-developed plans and procedures designed to ensure a consistently high level of service. Intermediary partners – including school districts, unions, and other PED components – as well as teachers themselves must also be equipped to support the goals of timely and effective licensure. PED staff believe they should provide timely responses to inquiries of all kinds, rapid feedback to correct incomplete applications, easy access to information about how to correctly apply for a license, and proactive support for districts. However, those goals are not an explicit part of operations. They are not codified in customer service standards against which performance can be benchmarked and measured.

publicworks
making good ideas work for the better

Major Findings: Teacher Licensure Processes and Procedures

1. The licensing process has been problematic for some time, and has received considerable attention from the current administration.

As stated above, a lengthy license application process has created frustration with teacher licensure across the public education system for some time. There are two primary concerns with the licensure process: (1) length of processing time, and (2) lack of responsiveness. Upon receipt of an application, several months typically can elapse before a valid license is issued. Delays in processing are endemic to the process and, according to those interviewed, have characterized licensing for many years. In addition, lack of responsiveness to phone and other inquiries (in terms of delay, non-response, and incomplete or inaccurate response) have historically contributed to a perception of licensure fraught with delays and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Complaints about licensure have frequently reached the Secretary, Governor and legislators. According to those interviewed, the number of complaints has decreased considerably during the past year, a finding verified by our e-survey results.

Teachers waiting for licenses to be issued can become understandably frustrated by the lengthy waiting times and difficulty in obtaining answers to questions. Licensure staff members are simultaneously frustrated by a large caseload and multiple demands on their time.

Teachers waiting for licenses to be issued can become understandably frustrated by the lengthy waiting times and difficulty in obtaining answers to questions. Licensure staff members are simultaneously frustrated by a large caseload and multiple demands on their time. The combination results in a "no-win" situation – where applicants feel increasingly unappreciated and under-served, and staff are under significant pressure to address concerns and issues, frequently outside their purview and expertise, without all the tools to do so.

The current administration has made improving licensure a priority, and according to this review, this emphasis has resulted in a reduction in complaints as well as improvements in processing times. It should be noted that the challenges facing New Mexico are similar to those in many other states. During the course of this study, it was noted that licensure processing issues plague many state operations. Some have devoted considerable effort to reducing backlogs and improving customer service. The findings and recommendations herein are consistent with the experience in other states. For example, discussions with national teacher quality associations noted similar processing issues as a national concern. A review of processes in several other states pointed to similar challenges of managing the processing of applications while simultaneously responding to customer inquiries.

2. While licensing turnaround time appears to be decreasing and customer satisfaction increasing, there is still substantial room for improvement.

Many of those interviewed noted improvement in licensure processing during the months subsequent to the new administration taking over, and the Quality Assurance Bureau conducting randomized telephone surveys to assess customer satisfaction. Backlog has been reduced, efforts made to improve communication with applicants, and other steps taken to reduce the length of time between receipt of application and issuance of license. It can still take six to nine weeks for an applicant to receive a license, however. In addition, customer inquiries, despite substantial load, appear to be receiving greater attention. The Bureau Chief has taken notable steps to improve consistency across the unit and place greater emphasis on customer service.

In process reengineering, it is important to distinguish between cycle time (the time elapsed between when an application is received and when a license is issued) and touch time (the time it actually takes to process an application).

In process reengineering, it is important to distinguish between cycle time (the time elapsed between when an application is received and when a license is issued) and touch time (the time it actually takes to process an application). While some complicated applications may require several hours to review, many applications can be processed in far shorter time. There is still significant room for improvement as cycle time far exceeds touch time, and the PED goal should be to eliminate as much of a holding period – the gap between cycle time and touch time – as possible. Many of the remaining findings focus on areas where the licensure process might be improved.

3. A small number of personnel are responsible for the bulk of licensure processing and are quite productive given the demands on their bureau.

The size of the Professional Licensure Bureau staff is small, numbering approximately 8 professionals. Because they juggle multiple responsibilities, they face difficulties in both processing applications and responding to the large volume of customer inquiries. Licensure staff members frequently feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of applications, e-mail, voice mail and drop-in visits. Responsibilities are dispersed across all staff members, with little differentiation or specialization. For example, staff members are expected to both answer phone and e-mail inquiries, and evaluate license applications.

The office culture appears to be one of sharing the workload, "hunkering down" and getting the job done. Unfortunately, the volume of applications, many of which are reportedly incomplete (see below), combined with phone, e-mail and walk-in inquiries, makes it extremely difficult for the staff both to respond to

inquiries and to process applications in a timely manner. As a result, both suffer, and lack of standard operating procedures for assigning and completing work prevent the Bureau from functioning at its highest potential. This situation is further complicated by lack of differentiation in staff roles.

It should be noted that personnel in the Professional Licensure Bureau, with the exception of the Director, are classified in clerical/administrative series. As a result, they have little, if any, promotion potential. The ability to recruit new employees to fill vacancies is severely constrained. The technical knowledge required to thoughtfully perform some aspects of the licensure process is significant. Staff ability appears to exceed the clerical series in which they are classified. It is also noteworthy that the expertise required to effectively evaluate licenses is dependent on the complexity of the application type: renewals are largely administrative, while other license applications, such as those involving reciprocity with another state and multiple endorsements, require greater expertise.

The performance of the unit is also hampered by longstanding vacancies, particularly of the receptionist. This individual is responsible for receiving and routing phone calls, opening, routing, indexing and scanning mail and responding to walk-in visits. The position, filled by an individual on temporary assignment at the beginning of this study, continues to remain vacant. This situation forces the responsibilities of this position to be shared among Bureau staff. Not only do these responsibilities exceed those reasonably performed by one individual alone, but also they are critical to the functioning of the office. The fact that this has been a temporary position for some time is detrimental to the stability and performance of the Licensure Bureau. This is also the one position that offers the "human touch" presence to customers that many respondents to the e-survey cited as greatly needed.

4. **Many applicants do not comply with Department guidelines, resulting in significant delays in processing their applications and adding unneeded complexity to the process.**

The impact of incomplete applications on licensure processing time is enormous, because each incomplete application requires additional communication and correspondence (usually by letter) with the applicant.

One of the most significant problems cited by staff is the substantial proportion of applications that are incomplete when received by the Licensure Bureau. The Bureau Chief recently observed that she was spending a large percentage of her time processing returns. While an exact measure of incomplete applications was unavailable as it is not objectively quantified or tracked, it is estimated that well over half of applications are received with some part missing. As a result, they cannot be processed; a license cannot be issued based on an incomplete application. Applications frequently lack appropriate signatures,

college transcripts, or correct fees. Some are not fully filled out. The impact of incomplete applications on licensure processing time is enormous, because each incomplete application requires additional communication and correspondence (usually by letter) with the applicant. This is followed by additional submission of missing parts, tracking and routing of new material and a new review. Surprisingly, only ten percent of the e-survey teacher respondents noted incomplete applications as an impediment to licensure processing, or said that they had been notified that they had submitted an incomplete application. Upon further analysis most of those reporting incomplete licensure experiences were applying for Level 1 licenses. PED is advised to find creative ways to better educate first-time applicants on how to submit completed applications, thereby contributing to an efficient and timely application turnaround.

While it is difficult to predict the precise impact on turnaround times of increasing the percentage of complete applications, benefits are certain to be significant. A process where incomplete applications are the exception rather than the rule, and where significant responsibility is placed on the applicant to complete materials correctly and completely, would lighten the burden on the licensing staff. It would also create more time for staff to respond to inquiries from teachers, district personnel and others. Among the notable practices from other states are efforts to reduce the number of errors and incomplete applications at the front-end, so that the error rate is low enough that it does not impede the process.

5. Stakeholders generally attribute delays and difficulties in licensure to PED staff, with little regard for where in the process problems may have occurred.

As noted above, it is important to disaggregate components of the licensure process to determine where bottlenecks exist, and where there might be opportunities for improvement. In addition, to ensure that accountability is correctly assigned, it is important to determine where the process breaks down. While the Professional Licensure Bureau maintains overall responsibility for the licensure process and for some of its inefficiencies, other parts of the system bear responsibility as well. In particular, it may be that the Department is incorrectly held responsible for delays in a process that should be more accurately attributed to applicants, and could be mitigated at the school and district level.

In addition, it is possible that high profile and visible cases of delay, error, inefficiency and license denial come to characterize the larger process in many people's minds. Such issues may not be representative of general practice, and represent a small number of cases. While such errors are to be avoided and their number reduced, the licensure process does result in denial of licenses for some, and perception of undue compliance burden for others.

6. The licensure process is quite complex, and clear and consistent information about it is not readily available to either PED staff or external customers.

The perceived complexity of the licensure process, with three tiers of different requirements and significant nuance and detail distinguishing different types of licensing and endorsements, requires careful attention on the part of the applicant to ensure timely, correct and complete filing of applications. Simply put, easy-to-understand information about what is required and when, along with tools to facilitate the process for teachers, are not readily available. The issue here may not be the complexity of New Mexico's licensure requirements (which do not appear significantly different from other states). Rather, it may be the degree to which those requirements are understood by those who must comply with them, and the degree to which they are consistently communicated by both staff reviewing applications and intermediaries at the district level. In the words of one analyst, "every case becomes a special case".

The process is quite complex for teachers moving from Level 1 to Levels 2 and 3. It is also complex for the staff who must implement it.

The process is quite complex for teachers moving from Level 1 to Levels 2 and 3. It is also complex for the staff who must implement it. A lack of consistency plagues the process, since different staff may respond differently to similar inquiries, and there is little if any triage of workload to cluster similar cases together and develop specialized expertise. There are few procedures in place to ensure that consistent guidance is provided in response to teachers' and others' inquiries.

7. Communication of requirements, schedules and issues to districts, unions, teachers and other parts of PED is intermittent at best.

It is advisable for staff to devise a proactive approach so that teachers, district personnel and other stakeholders in the licensing process fully understand the requirements throughout teachers' careers. Because of the staff's focus on reacting to application receipts and questions, little staff time is available to build such an approach. While there is information available on the PED website about licensure, it is poorly organized, hard to navigate and difficult to filter. Many of those interviewed simply did not know where to look for appropriate guidance and information, and those who did seek additional information were often stymied in their attempts. It is also not possible to find answers to frequently asked questions, common problems, or guidance and tools to help teachers comply with state requirements with ease.

Applicants are generally unaware of the impact of incomplete applications in slowing down the process. They do not appear to recognize that they may have submitted incomplete or incorrect applications themselves. While PED staff report incomplete applications well over 50 percent, a small percentage of those surveyed (10 percent of 1,351 respondents) stated that their applications have been incomplete. This incongruence points to lack of consistent information across the system about the impediments to timely licensure. Without aggressive, proactive communications about the requirements of the licensure process, it is not surprising that there are large numbers of incomplete and erroneous applications.

District and school human resource personnel can play critical roles in facilitating the licensure process.

District and school human resource personnel can play critical roles in facilitating the licensure process. However, not all districts or schools offer this capability. This may be unfortunate, as e-survey results show that applicants who had access to a HR point of contact to assist with their application reported faster turnaround times and far less incomplete applications. In some cases, largely determined by individual staff and district preference, licensure staff members review discrepancy reports with districts. Annual briefings are provided regionally by the Division Director, and licensure staff members are now providing additional presentations around the state – a notable and commendable effort to increase visibility and understanding of the steps needed to obtain a license. However, these efforts have been sporadic to date, and insufficient in number to create a stronger sense of responsibility among teachers and districts of their obligations as partners in the licensure process.

8. While the licensure staff work to be responsive to the myriad of requests, there is not a strong, systematic process for ensuring that voice mail, e-mail and in-person visits are answered quickly and consistently, without disrupting the overall flow of work.

The volume of new license applications, renewals, and information submitted to supplement incomplete files, coupled with customer inquiries, has been noted elsewhere in this report. While the volume clearly poses challenges, the internal processes for responding to inquiries and managing staff time effectively could be enhanced. This would result in improved processing. For example, there are few written standard operating procedures that guide staff responses to written and oral questions. In addition, there appears to be no systematic process for responding to e-mail. Rather, the individual to whom the email message is addressed is expected to respond to it, with little attention to relative volume among staff members, nor to ensuring consistency of responses.

All Bureau staff names and email addresses are posted on the PED website, so it is impossible for the user to know to whom to direct specific inquiries on particular

topics or requests, or how to best get a response. Similarly, phone calls are generally routed to whoever is available, as are walk-in customers, who can enter the office suite and potentially receive the attention of everyone there. At the time of the Public Works team's initial visit, the configuration of furniture in the office suite was not conducive to managing walk-in traffic or handling in-person inquiries well. Since then, a rearrangement of the office entry has mitigated interruptions.

The issues posed by slow, partial or missing responses to phone, e-mail and in-person inquiries have serious implications for customer satisfaction. As recent data shows, the number of inquiries is significant. Phone calls sometimes do not get answered. Other than anecdotally, it is impossible to ascertain the questions that arise with great frequency, those that can be answered easily, and those which require more complex analysis. It is difficult, absent a coherent system for assigning and triaging work, to respond in kind with a functioning process and metrics that diagnose ability to provide adequate and timely responses, or for managing staff and customer expectations.

The disruptions to the processing of applications also pose significant challenges to accuracy and efficiency. When work is interrupted, it is more prone to errors, restarts and delays. Clearly the Bureau must respond to all inquiries in a timely manner and establish (and meet) clear expectations for how those responses will occur. This needs to be done in a more planned and systematic way so that application processing, and fielding questions, can be managed more effectively. Methods to better manage staff time and prioritize work, to provide consistent answers to frequently asked questions, and to develop more standard operating procedures for key aspects of the Professional Licensure Bureau operations are strongly advised.

9. **The process for receiving, logging and routing incoming mail is unnecessarily complex.**

Initial review of the process for logging in, routing and indexing mail reveals a very complicated, multiple-step process where documents change hands several times, creating numerous opportunities for errors and delays. Indexing, for example,

The mail process – critical because it is the starting point of the licensing queue and the basis for record keeping and document processing – has received little systematic attention to streamlining and simplification.

occurs after applications are routed to the Ethics Bureau and returned for additional processing; the Ethics staff handles fees and background checks and retains those documents it needs for its background evaluation. There is also little differentiation between types of mail, new applications and loose attachments to applications in queue. For example, an application that would be complete if not for a missing Superintendent signature page is not handled in a manner that allows for the missing document to be quickly obtained, and the licensing process to be completed.

The mail process – critical because it is the starting point of the licensing queue and the basis for record keeping and document processing – has received little systematic attention to streamlining and simplification. It appears to be a process governed by habit and long-standing practice, and one which could benefit from reengineering. The fact that the receptionist for the Bureau is a temporary employee (or that no one holds the position) exacerbates the mail processing challenge. Despite the steadfast dedication of a temporary employee, there is little incentive to make systemic changes to improve the process.

While all documents pertaining to license applications are scanned and available on-line, staff members do not consistently make use of the electronic record. In many cases, original hard copies are used, duplicating what is available on the scanned record. It appears that the Bureau is not utilizing the full functionality of the indexing and scanning system, which staff is reluctant to explore further because of PED's delinquency in paying maintenance fees to the software vendor.

10. **The current strategy for processing transactions is strictly First-In, First-Out (FIFO), with no regard for potential queue changes.**

The process whereby the Professional Licensure Bureau reviews applications and issues licenses is on the surface extremely simple. Applications are processed in the order in which they are received. This principle of first-in, first-out processing is a sound one. However, when applied without exception, it can result in significant delays and backlogs.

When received, an application is logged in and placed at the end of the queue. At a later date, it is reviewed for completeness. If complete, it is processed and a license issued. If incomplete, the applicant is notified in writing, and the process begins again. There is no determination immediately upon receipt of an application regarding the completeness of the applicant's package; rather, that determination is made as staff reviews the applications in order of receipt. Additions to an incomplete application result in it being placed at the end of the queue, where the process begins again. The second reviewer of the application may not be the same individual who reviewed the application the first time, raising the possibility of inconsistent interpretations and a second request for information. This may explain the e-survey finding where teacher respondents reported frustration in receiving conflicting interpretations or a midstream change of rules regarding the processing of their particular license applications. Similarly, in the case of complete applications that may have other flaws (such as insufficient qualifications or missing coursework, for example) and where a license cannot be issued, the applicant is contacted in writing to submit the necessary information, and the process begins again.

Theoretically, complete applications should experience a much shorter processing time than those with missing parts. However, because all applications are treated the same way, the complete application is not necessarily processed more quickly, so there is little incentive to get it right the first time. Once an incomplete application is finished, there is no acceleration either; the newly complete application goes to the end of the line.

A quick review of the mail and logging procedure indicates that it might be possible to make an initial determination of application completeness, and to reduce waiting time. It would also be possible on a daily basis to review incoming applications for complexity and make decisions regarding whom to assign them. The first-in-first-out methodology, because it is applied without regard to the complexity of the applications, or to the workload and expertise of staff, is a significant contributor to the unacceptably long waiting times in licensing teachers. It should be possible, without violating the principles of fairness, to develop a process for triage that could significantly reduce turnaround for complete applications, identify deficiencies more quickly and identify straightforward versus complex and unusual cases.

11. The Professional Licensure Bureau has begun to track paper flow and collect data about different stages of the process, but a clear method for measuring performance and setting goals is lacking.

Data about demands on the licensure system are extremely useful in diagnosing issues and identifying potential solutions. The Professional Licensure Bureau is initiating the systematic collection of data regarding applications and applicant inquiries. It is utilizing information about the demographics of the New Mexico teacher population, and examining license needs on a calendar basis. It also collects data about number of applications received and processed, as well as the volume of e-mails, phone calls and in-person visits. Collection of this data, and expansion of data collection efforts to also characterize types of applications, issues encountered, nature of customer inquiries, and customer satisfaction, will support the Bureau's efforts to improve processing time and communicate better across the Department and with schools, districts and teachers.

While it is useful to know the number of emails and phone calls per week, without additional information about the content *of those inquiries, it is difficult to determine the best strategy for responding to them.*

This effort to better collect and utilize data to inform decision-making is clearly in midstream, and should be commended. However it is currently too aggregated and generic to be of great use for management, and needs greater granularity. For example, while it is useful to know the number of emails and phone calls per week, without additional information about the content of those inquiries, it is difficult to determine the best strategy for responding to them. As efforts continue to

better understand the process and collect data over time, the data should become more useful in identifying specific gaps in performance and information needs.

12. The new automated voice answering system has the potential to substantially reduce frustrations with the process, as can other enhancements in technology, but it cannot replace personal interaction.

The PED has invested in an automated voice response system to handle a large percentage of licensure queries by phone. Once operational, this system will allow the applicant to inquire as to application status. The intent of the automated voice system is to significantly reduce the number of phone, e-mail and walk-in inquiries to the Professional Licensure Bureau, and to ensure that phone calls are fielded quickly. For example, teachers will be able to find out if their license is valid, and – if they are applicants – where their license is in queue. It will also provide applicants with information about their particular licensure requirements, organized in a manner that allows callers to select options that pertain to their individual situations. The automated system call routing protocol was reviewed as part of this study. In response to concerns raised at that time, Licensure Bureau staff modified the automated system protocol to ensure that customers have the ability to contact a live person at several junctures during the automated menu offerings. This ability to make changes to improve responsiveness and to work on the continuous improvement of existing systems speaks well to Bureau staff and management's attention to customer service issues.

13. Recent steps to provide professional development to licensure staff are part of an effort to increase professionalism, improve morale, and refine the range of skills needed to support the Bureau's mission.

Historically there have been few professional development opportunities available to Professional Licensure Bureau staff. Training in the licensure process is on-the-job, and it is unclear the degree to which staff have been trained in the intent and requirements of the new three-tiered licensure process. In addition to having substantive understanding of New Mexico teacher licensing requirements, staff needs the ability to maneuver the technical complexities associated with processing all stages of licenses, at all levels. Staff also frequently interact with the public, and heretofore have had limited opportunity for customer service-related training. Recent professional development efforts, focused on team building, conflict resolution and other organizational development and customer issues, are a notable enhancement. Additional professional development is needed. It should be part of the effort to improve coordination among the Educator Quality Division's bureaus, and could help

Recent professional development efforts, focused on team building, conflict resolution and other organizational development and customer issues, are a notable enhancement.

provide staff with greater knowledge of the range of issues associated with licensure. Development of capacity in (or exposure to) business process reengineering and related disciplines could also improve operations. Day-to-day changes to operations that provide for opportunities to share information about licensing issues and inquiries will improve consistency and increase response rates.

14. The new three-tiered licensure approach in New Mexico is a significant innovation that will require time to implement, and could be better understood and facilitated by Licensure Bureau staff.

The newly enacted three-tiered licensure process in New Mexico obviously has near-term implications for the Professional Licensure Bureau, as well as for the Professional Development Bureau and other parts of PED. While Licensure staff members do not have primary responsibility for implementing the three-tiered system and helping teachers and districts understand its requirements, they are frequently met with inquiries about the new process. Primary responsibility for interpretation of the three-tiered requirements, and overall support for teacher professional development, is the responsibility of the Professional Development Bureau. Background and ethics issues are under the purview of the Ethics Bureau.

The new process will take several years to implement, and learning during initial ramp-up will be time-consuming. Some of the concern about licensure may, in fact, be a function of anxiety and uncertainty about the requirements and specifications of the new legislation, rather than about licensure itself. It is critical that the Licensure Bureau understand the new legislation. For many PED customers, the Licensure Bureau is the point of service or first stop for licensure and teacher quality-related questions. Customers will find it frustrating if they have to navigate a complicated internal PED organizational structure to get their questions answered. In fact, internal organizational structure should be irrelevant to customers, whose concern should be receiving high quality service, not maneuvering the PED organizational chart. Regardless of the newly enacted statutory requirements, the licensure process itself must achieve a high level of confidence, and staff must be able to field, route and respond to inquiries that relate to teacher quality broadly defined.

15. Coordination and communication among parts of the new Educator Quality Division, and with other parts of PED, are not always functioning well, despite clear mission overlap.

The newly formed Educator Quality Division includes three components with overlapping and synergistic missions. Because of its relatively recent creation, there has been little opportunity for collaboration and coordination among Division managers and staff. As a result, the interface between the bureaus, and

flow of information about different aspects of teacher licensure and certification, may not be as complete and efficient as possible. Expertise in each of the three bureaus has important applications across divisions.

The Professional Development Bureau leads the implementation of the New Mexico three-tiered licensing process. It sets policy and direction that is often subsequently interpreted by the Licensure Bureau. There appears to be little systematic coordination between the Professional Development Bureau and the Professional Licensure Bureau regarding the requirements and implications of the new law, despite the fact that for many, the Licensure Bureau is the first point of service for teacher quality and licensure related questions. The Ethics Bureau works more closely with Licensure on a day-to-day basis, but the interface is stymied by overcrowding and distance. The Ethics Division has taken essential steps to secure their sensitive files. However, because three individuals share a one-person office and a single phone line, their ability to effectively perform their functions is compromised. Regardless of space, there appear to be artificial divides between the two groups, particularly during the initial stages of application processing, at a point where numerous steps might be streamlined and simplified. For example, as applications are received, logged in and routed, they are handled several times and go through steps that could be eliminated or merged.

16. The Professional Development Bureau's provision of technical assistance and information on the internet during the first year of three-tiered process implementation has provided a degree of support to districts and teachers beyond what has been available in Licensure in the past.

Implementation of the three-tiered process during its first year was led by the Professional Development Bureau. They provided technical assistance, disseminated print and web-based information (www.teachnm.org), and generally supported teachers and districts in interpreting new requirements. With particular focus on dossier preparation required of teachers who are in their third year of a provisional license, and who are applying for professional teacher (Level 2) licenses, the PED investment in assisting teachers to meet the requirements of the law was both necessary and well received.

During the first year of the three-tiered process, the Professional Licensure Bureau has lacked the resources to provide the kind of assistance to teachers and districts akin to that provided by the Professional Development Bureau in support of dossier development. The use of contractual support from the University of Mexico added substantive depth and expertise to the PED's leadership in this arena, and may be a model for Professional Licensure as it attempts to strengthen its outreach and support for teachers seeking licenses.

Recommendations: Teacher Licensure Processes and Procedures

The recommendations for teacher licensure address the findings cited above and those found as a result of the e-survey results of 1,351 teachers. Their overarching goal is to improve customer satisfaction with the licensure process. In brief, the PED, through the Professional Licensure Bureau, must process licensure applications and respond to inquiries it receives more quickly, and ensure accuracy. Improving the licensure process entails steps that alter the operations of the Professional Licensure Bureau to better manage and triage the application processing workload and improve responsiveness. Efforts must also be made to improve information available to applicants, as well as communications with applicants and other stakeholders in the licensure process.

These recommendations reflect careful consideration of resource constraints, and an eye to steps that can be implemented with minimal new financial, human or technological resources. The study team frequently encountered the perspective that licensure issues would be simply solved with more money and staff. We sought, however, to find solutions that could be implemented with a minimal amount of new investment.

1. Set stretch goals.

Currently, the Professional Licensure Bureau states that it expects that processing a license application will take six to eight weeks. Based on prior experience, this is probably a realistic estimate of how the process has worked. It does not, however, provide incentives to accelerate the process, nor does it establish expectations among staff or customers that the process should and can move more quickly. Even if this six to eight week benchmark is reached, it will continue to lead to customer dissatisfaction in that the majority of New Mexico's teachers represented

The Professional Licensure Bureau would benefit from setting "stretch goals" for licensure processing that clearly communicate and commit to more aggressive and customer-oriented measures of performance.

in the e-survey believe that a three to four week turnaround of an application to licensure is "reasonable." The Professional Licensure Bureau would benefit from setting "stretch goals" for licensure processing that clearly communicate and commit to more aggressive and customer-oriented measures of performance. For example, the goal might be to, by [January 2006], process [90 percent of] complete applications in no more than 14 calendar days. This goal falls well in line with turnaround times of 15 states surveyed for this project, with some

states reporting turnaround times of less than one week, a goal worthy of consideration for New Mexico[1].

In addition to setting clear, numeric goals of performance and measuring improvement against them, the Bureau would do well to establish and promulgate customer service standards. Simple and direct, these benchmarks would specify the level of service that licensure customers should expect to receive. Such standards include measures of timeliness (all inquiries will be acknowledged within 24 hours, for example), accuracy, respectfulness, user-friendly processes, and easy access to information. In turn, these benchmarks guide operations and infrastructure.

Involving Professional Licensure Bureau staff in the development of stretch goals and performance standards yields understanding, facilitates buy-in, and fosters a culture of innovation and customer excellence. With such goals, it is then possible to modify processes to meet them. Absent aggressive goals, business as usual, including occasional flare-ups, will prevail.

2. **Develop a set of metrics to regularly track process and issues.**

PED and the Professional Licensure Bureau deserve recognition for acknowledging issues surrounding licensure turnaround time and customer service, and for their efforts to improve performance and collect data to better understand the delay points in license application review. Data can be a very powerful tool in helping to improve the process further. The process for collecting data that tracks application volume, inquiries and other workload statistics can be routinized and expanded, capturing regular and comparative measurement of response time. The Bureau can gain insights as to what critical points in its delivery system deserve change and/or fine-tuning by expanding the data it already collects to include not only input, but output results as well. In addition, it may be advisable to break down incoming applications and requests into major categories, so one can determine what parts of the process – for example, types and parts of applications, and kinds of questions – pose the greatest demands. Table 10 of the e-survey section of this report (Part VII) captures some of the factors that can be considered in the tracking metrics.

A performance scorecard or dashboard concept would be extremely useful to PED management to identify issues and manage the licensure process. Such a

---

[1] Appendix 3 includes data regarding licensure processing times and application fees from several other states. At this time, it would not bode well for New Mexico to raise its fees until its turnaround time improves. Increase in fees, if considered, should be directly related to a technology or human resource investment that will clearly improve the turnaround time between application and production of a license to the customer. Currently, the New Mexico fee is neither high nor low compared to other states.

tool, refined over time, would permit identification of trends, areas of improvement and need, and shifts in demand. Website traffic offers another tool to gain further knowledge of customer needs by monitoring the content of inquiries and patterns of accessing data points and web pages, topics and sections by visitors.

3. Modify the First-In, First-Out (FIFO) process: revamp mail routing, indexing and scanning and the interface with the Ethics Bureau, and consider developing staff capacity to specialize in particular aspects of the licensure process.

There are numerous opportunities to modify the processing of license applications. For the purpose of re-designing the system, it is important to develop a process map that delineates every step, where it tends to bog down, where there is potential for error, and what steps can be eliminated, streamlined or merged. In addition, time to complete each step (both in practice and theory) should be identified, and potential for inconsistencies in processing should also be identified.

Such an analysis will likely validate some aspects of the processing procedure, and bring into question others. Changes that could be considered include:

- Review newly received applications on a daily basis, triage and then assign them to appropriate staff
- E-mail response to applicants that their applications have been received and are under review
- Rapid determination of application completeness, and communication with applicants regarding missing components. The e-mail response mentioned above could signal that initial review indicates that an application includes all required parts and it has been forwarded for review
- Expedited process for review of complete applications and issuance of licenses
- Modification of the application queue so that once complete, an application receives consideration instead of beginning the process again
- Development of methods that allow for consistent segmentation and assignment of work, so that license applications of similar types are treated consistently. Currently, staff members appear to use different approaches in processing the applications assigned to them.

Reviewing mail sorting, routing, scanning and indexing processes enables the Bureau to identify and remove unnecessary processing steps. Since this review, and the changes that result from it, will alter the historic relationship between the

Ethics Bureau and Professional Licensing Bureau, a joint effort is required. The best results will be yielded from a "one touch" objective that minimizes the risk of error and loss, ensures that documents are coded and scanned immediately upon receipt, and seeks to streamline operations (regardless of how they have been performed in the past). Setting aside staffing issues, the delineation of responsibilities between the two bureaus related to the routing of applications and their contents could be simplified and clarified.

> *The best results will be yielded from a "one touch" objective that minimizes the risk of error and loss, ensures that documents are coded and scanned immediately upon receipt, and seeks to streamline operations.*

In assessing the process for reviewing applications and issuing licenses, bureau management would be wise to consider relative workload requirements of different types of applications, and the potential benefits of staff specializing in specialized types of issues and problems. For example, individual staff members could develop expertise with particular types of licenses, with particular parts of the process, or particular types of issues (such as tracking down transcripts and/or interpreting them – both of which were issues repeatedly raised in the customer service e-survey).

4. **Develop standard operating procedures and a consistent process for responding to e-mail, phone and walk-in inquiries.**

The Professional Licensure Bureau will enhance its operation and subsequent customer service by developing standard operating procedures for all aspects of the licensure process to increase consistency, raise quality, address frequent questions and in general translate staff's institutional knowledge into documentation of the process. Of note are the Bureau Director and staff efforts to revise the employee handbook. This undertaking should be accelerated, with component parts issued in draft as they are developed.

The Bureau also needs a consistent, documented process for responding to customer inquiries, whether they are received by phone, e-mail, or in-person. Customers in the e-survey repeatedly cited lack of consistency in responses. Currently, the method for responding to such inquiries, and the content of responses, is relatively random and highly dependent upon the subjective interpretation of the person handling the application. A number of means are available to clarify expectations regarding the transaction of responses:

> Phone Calls. The Bureau should develop a procedure for routing and responding to phone calls that place a premium on getting calls answered without overly disrupting work. A process whereby staff members rotate through an "on call" schedule and are responsible for fielding calls received during set times is one means of reducing uncertainty. Calls should also be tracked according to metrics such as subject and geography

to help the Bureau target responses. The Bureau could also advertise specific open phone hours, and make several staff members available during those periods. Staff should request e-mail addresses from callers so that responses can be confirmed in writing. In short, the Bureau needs to take active steps to organize its phone response process so that expectations are clear, calls get fielded, and staff members are appropriately involved.

E-mail Exchange. Similar changes should be made in responses to e-mail. Currently, it is difficult, if not impossible, to measure the volume of e-mail inquiries, the timeliness or consistency of responses, or how large a burden this is on staff time. Over time, applicants can be encouraged to use e-mail, and tools should be made available to teachers and districts that address common issues and questions. The process would be greatly aided by the creation of a single mailbox (something like licensure@ped.nm.state.us) for e-mail inquiries and a process for distributing and responding to these questions. In fact, teachers who responded to the e-survey cited the ability to correspond by way of e-mail (generating a response in 24 hours), and the ability go online to determine the status of their applications, as the top two most helpful initiatives the Bureau of Licensure could implement (Table 6).

In-person Visits. The Bureau can develop a method for reducing the disruption resulting from in-person visits. The courtesy and helpfulness of Bureau staff was observed during the course of the study, but it was also clear that walk-in visits are handled by whoever happens to be available. Creating specific "open office" hours for consultation, and encouraging (but not requiring) walk-in visits during those times would cut down on the disruption factor. The office has been reconfigured to prevent visitors from accessing the entire Bureau staff without clear purpose. It can be modified even further (by moving furniture) to create a reception area and small workspace that offers access to a computer and printer for visitors. Such a space reconfiguration, implemented in part during the course of this study, is not only improving the level of customer service but also reduces the daily disruptions from people looking for licensure information.

5. Adopt a "help us help you" communications campaign.

Clearly one of the largest impediments to a well functioning licensure operation is the lack of awareness among applicants of their own obligations to facilitate the issuance of their licenses. The Professional Licensure Bureau, working with other pertinent parts of PED, would do well to launch an information campaign to help teachers and administrators at the school and district level better understand the

requirements of the three-tiered licensure process. Such a campaign could be organized around a "help us help you" theme, making clear that the PED goal is to make the licensure process run as smoothly as possible. Applicants must understand that their cooperation and compliance is essential to a quicker and easier licensing process. This campaign could incorporate the message that incomplete applications slow down review and approval of licenses. Materials could direct applicants to information about licensure requirements and more general materials about teacher quality.

> *Such a campaign could be organized around a "help us help you" theme, making clear that the PED goal is to make the licensure process run as smoothly as possible.*

We recommend that the information campaign focus on educating those teachers moving to higher level licenses, and those who are in the pipeline for Highly Qualified Status. The results of the e-survey validate why these two customer segments will benefit from a pre-emptive information campaign. One in three believe that the process for achieving Level 2 or Proving Highly Qualified Status is "too complicated unnecessarily." Half of all 1,574 respondents reveal that they only understand the process for moving up to the next level of their licensure "somewhat" or "not at all."

6. Develop easy to use tools for teachers, including an improved website interface.

Easy to use tools and checklists would go a long way toward helping teachers complete their applications quickly and fully on the first go-round. Materials currently available on the PED website and from the Department regarding licensure are quite limited. There are few, if any, examples of FAQs (frequently asked questions), guidance for applicants in different categories, checklists of frequent errors and problems to avoid, or easy to find information about where to go for additional information. Development and promulgation of these tools should be a top priority and would be well received by customers.

> *We recommend modifying the application package itself, by adding a visible checklist that requires applicant signature at the beginning to easily spell out what the applicant must do to successfully complete the licensure process.*

Respondents to the e-survey gave their highest rating to a "Check List of everything you must have in your application" as a helpful tool (*See Table 13*). We recommend modifying the application package itself, by adding a visible checklist that requires applicant signature at the beginning to easily spell out what the applicant must do to successfully complete the licensure process. The language in the current application regarding application requirements is not prominent enough to have the desired impact. The Bureau and

Department possess the staff expertise and institutional knowledge to prepare and revise a set of simple products like these. The effort would require little additional expenditure.

The website can be used to galvanize the development of simpler tools to support teachers in seeking licenses, and to help PED process licenses more effectively. The website should be quickly and substantially redesigned to be more navigable and direct. Redesigning the Professional Licensure Bureau's front entry page to provide a clearer roadmap about what is on the site removes the guesswork from the customer on how to use the site and where to find answers. An informed customer means a greater likelihood of completed applications for PED, which, in turn, generates faster turnaround of licenses. New website materials would serve multiple uses. Materials could be provided to districts to help guide teachers through the process. They could be used to assist staff in fielding questions.

Eventually, it will be possible to drive licensure inquiries to the website for answers and guidance. However, this will not occur until the information on the web is improved and the interface is simplified. It is also recommended that revisions to the website occur on an incremental basis, rather than delaying progress until a wholesale redesign can be unveiled sometime in the future.

The Professional Development Bureau's work to implement the three-tiered process (and the dossier requirement in particular) may provide a useful model for the Professional Licensure Bureau. This bureau's use of contractual labor through the University of New Mexico (UNM) to support the website content, provide technical assistance, and field questions is an option and opportunity for the larger licensure process. It might be feasible to modify the scope of the current UNM contract to include licensure content and to expedite these recommended changes.

7. **Strengthen relationships with District and school human resource personnel as intermediaries in facilitating the licensure process.**

District and school human resources personnel (HR) play an important role in helping teachers work through the licensure process, and they have a strong vested interest in timely and accurate licensure. The burden on the PED licensing operation can be eased through efforts to help personnel of Human Resource Offices better understand common pitfalls to successful licensure applications. A helpful step would be to provide materials that they can easily adapt and distribute to district and school personnel. Another step toward increasing district understanding and ownership of the teacher licensing process could result from expanding and regularly completing review of district discrepancy reports. This would require that all districts be contacted by Licensure Bureau staff, and their status reviewed, at several junctures during the year. In a cross–tabulation of "turnaround time" with "who people turn to" for licensure questions, we found

that those who went to a Human Resources person at their school or district were much more likely to receive their license within three to four weeks than any other source of contact. One out of three teachers taking the survey indicates that Human Resources is where they first seek advice. Thus, empowering HR as both facilitator and messenger on behalf of the Bureau is a wise return on investment.

8. **Ensure that there is the opportunity for questions to be fielded by a live voice in addition to the automated service.**

There must be someone on the other end of phone. E-mail must get answered. In-person visitors must leave the licensure office feeling that their government has served them well. The need for improved processes for addressing inquiries is addressed in other recommendations above. The suggestion that the Professional Licensure Bureau curtail its contact with the public to reduce workload and allow staff members to focus on processing applications should not be entertained. On the contrary, the Bureau should redouble efforts to ensure that interactions with teachers and other stakeholders meet the highest levels of timeliness, courtesy and responsiveness. Filling the receptionist position would greatly aid in providing a helpful human contact, and meet a need expressed by many customers of the e-survey who could not find answers elsewhere.

Over time, the volume of inquiries will be reduced as PED becomes more proactive in providing information and outreach to teachers and districts and implementing the other suggestions discussed in this section. Until then, however, it will be important to find ways to ensure a high level of service for those seeking guidance. This requires, as discussed elsewhere, a reengineered process of managing workload that responds to e-mail, phone and in-person inquiries in an accurate and timely manner.

9. **Clarify staff roles, and responsibilities and expectations regarding performance, and reclassify some clerical positions.**

The leadership of the Educator Quality Division and Professional Licensure Bureau are advised to empower staff to perform at full capacity, streamline operations and improve communications. To do this, leaders must clarify staff roles and responsibilities, track and make explicit performance expectations, and provide adequate time and resources to develop staff capacity and build a knowledge base. Because the Bureau brings together long-time PED personnel and newly hired staff, a mentoring or team-based approach is required to ensure that new licensure staff has the ability to learn the ropes, thereby assuring consistency in responses. Investment of time and attention to the management and development of licensure staff is a prerequisite to a smoothly functioning operation. Regular brainstorming sessions among licensure staff that are, carefully

facilitated (one state used a daily meeting first thing in the morning) will help identify ways to improve service.

It should be possible to establish performance expectations of Bureau personnel regarding complexity and volume of casework performed. Establishment of such goals will help manage the flow of work across the office, and identify exemplary (as well as potentially problematic) performance.

It is noted that personnel in the Professional Licensure Bureau, titled "consultants", are classified in clerical or administrative job series. PED should strongly consider reclassification of those positions into professional series with promotion potential. This would more accurately recognize the duties performed in the office. Such reclassification would also improve the Bureau's ability to recruit and retain new staff.

10. Increase coordination and communication across Educator Quality Division bureaus.

The Educator Quality Division is a newly formed entity with the potential to significantly improve the PED's ability to influence teacher quality across the state. Creation of the Division, with its three bureaus, also allows for the creation of licensure staff that focus on managing the licensure process while being removed from daily operations and/or other aspects of licensure policy. The creation of the three bureaus, however, requires careful attention to coordination so as to avoid fragmentation and inadequate communication. Because the work of the three groups is more inter-related than is current practice, steps should be taken to improve communication, learning and joint-problem solving across the three groups. Especially with the Professional Development Bureau and Division Director moving to a new building, efforts to ensure Division operations (as opposed to three independent entities) will need to be redoubled. The staff consistently pointed out to the study team examples of the need to improve communication, and their desire to achieve this.

The vacant space created by the Professional Development Bureau move presents an opportunity to redress the sub-optimal working conditions of the Ethics Bureau. It also presents an opportunity to move the staff closer to the partner Licensure operation, which is across the hall.

11. Utilize innovative approaches to human resources management to augment the current licensure workforce.

Because PED faces constraints in terms of hiring new personnel for the licensure process, several alternatives are suggested to provide additional support to the

operation. Without some additional staff support, at least in the short term, it will be difficult for the licensure process to achieve the performance improvements envisioned by the Secretary. Not all functions need be performed by full-time PED or Professional Licensure Bureau employees, however. For example, at relatively small expense, PED might consider contracting for administrative support on a part-time daily basis to perform scanning and indexing functions. In addition, PED could consider the possibility of transferring employees from other parts of PED on temporary assignment to the Professional Licensure Bureau, on a special project basis. Similarly, by leveraging capacity of other parts of the organization, PED could facilitate much needed support for licensure. The development of improved materials for the website and related products could be supported by staff from public affairs, program or information technology functions. More frequent use of intra-Division and cross-Department teams could also build capacity significantly. In addition to securing administrative support, the Department might consider modifying the scope of existing contracts to provide support to licensure functions, rather than adding permanent staff. Such an investment could – as it has for the Professional Development Bureau through their UNM endeavor – provide licensure with the quick response and strong content capacity that teachers and districts need and expect.

12. Investigate the functionality of scanning software to ensure it is being fully utilized, including the possibility of using it for indexing.

Problems with the Department's contract for the maintenance of the licensure scanning software have impeded the effective functioning of the licensure process. The Department has been in arrears on the contract, and it was not in place for most of 2004. Whether this was the result of bureaucratic oversight, lack of funds, or some other reason, the absence of a maintenance contract in good standing does not send a signal of institutional support for licensure. It also frustrates efforts to improve the automation of the process and cultivates among staff understandable reluctance to fully embrace technology. In the short term, the maintenance contract should be paid on time. Once the contract is in good stead, the full functionality of the software should be explored.

The Office of the Chief Information Officer, as part of its equipment inventory and hardware refresh plan, should ensure that the equipment that supports licensure operations is maintained, backed up, and replaced as needed.

There are also problems with the hardware (particularly scanners) that support the operations of the Bureau. Specifically the hardware may be at risk of failure. The Office of the Chief Information Officer, as part of its equipment inventory and hardware refresh plan, should ensure that the equipment that supports licensure operations is maintained, backed up, and replaced as needed.

It is our understanding that the DSAC report and project will address the overall requirements of developing the Information Technology infrastructure at PED. Improved information technology would enable PED to offer customers the ability to file and transact applications online and provide the Bureau with the capacity for the back-end processing of applications. In the meantime, however, the office of the Chief Information Officer should continue to work with Professional Licensure Bureau staff to develop a better understanding of the requirements of the licensure process and explore alternatives to current systems. Such a requirements analysis must entail a review of the existing system, and address the question of whether the existing system would improve with new investment, or whether alternatives should be pursued.

In light of the DSAC IT project, this study did not examine the options for automating the licensure process to include web-based interfaces for completing and submitting applications. At this juncture, the considerable expense and feasibility of such an endeavor render it a longer-term consideration for licensure planning, rather than a reasonable near or mid-term approach to existing issues and concerns.

13. **Develop a liaison relationship with New Mexico colleges and universities that prepare teachers to assist graduates with their first licensure application.**

PED has an opportunity to strengthen its relationships with New Mexico institutions of higher education in several ways. For example, it would be extremely helpful if colleges of education would consider it part of their mentoring role to assist their graduating students with their first application for licensure. According to e-survey results, those applying for a Level 1 license have the highest incidence of incomplete applications. If colleges could be persuaded to pursue more of a partnership role with PED in assisting students with licensure applications, all parties would benefit.

In addition, PED could forge partnerships with colleges and universities to simplify the transcript requirement components of the licensure process, eventually eliminating the need for hard copy submittal of transcripts altogether. As evidenced by key informant interviews and e-survey results, acquiring copies of transcripts to attach to licensure applications is a significant obstacle in achieving reasonable turnaround time from application to licensure. Some states have eradicated this obstacle by allowing colleges of education within the state to send verification that all of the requirements exhibited by a transcript have been met.

Such a cross-agency partnership could be pursued in other areas as well, as PED explores additional means of streamlining licensure application process. Investigation of using technology more heavily and expanding partnership with

law enforcement to automate background checks could eventually allow PED to reduce its dependence on physical fingerprint cards.

14. Create an intra-departmental study group that includes a cross section of customers, PED staff and stakeholders to assess the nature of and response to the reported complexity of completing Professional Development Dossiers.

Even though the Professional Development Bureau has invested heavily in training seminars and materials on completing PDDs and offers a user-friendly website (through www.teachnm.org) for teachers to complete and submit their applications online – no other element of the e-survey evoked such an emotional and negative response. Among the 100 people who stated that they had completed a PDD, and responded to the question, "What was the experience like for you?" most claimed that the process is unreasonable, stressful, difficult, and not a true indicator of educator quality. Some reported that the online submission, in itself, is problematic.

One way to shed further light on this issue would be to convene a few focus groups with those who have successfully completed a dossier, and survey in depth all teachers who have completed one.

We believe that this finding should at least trigger further study by PED to determine whether or not its tenor is valid. One way to shed further light on this issue would be to convene a few focus groups with those who have successfully completed a dossier, and survey in depth all teachers who have completed one. However, it is also vital to hear from those who have not started or completed the process. An analysis of web traffic to Teach New Mexico would also be helpful for determining where, along the PDD continuum, customers become frustrated. An analyst could gain insight by looking at what happens when a log-in account is established, and where in the process such accounts are aborted.

Resource Implications

Significant changes in licensure results can be achieved with minimal expense. The bulk of the recommendations above entail changes in work processes, reprioritization of workload and changes to long-standing operational practices. To accomplish these changes, however, there must be a focus on project management and support for improvements. PED could reorient existing contractual resources toward this purpose, or dedicate internal resources to support it. It would also be helpful to consider external facilitation and support for the change process.

Other resource implications include, at minimum, addressing the receptionist vacancy. In filling that position, it is advised that the division and bureau management be given the option of reconfiguring staff responsibilities and

redefining the vacancy (considering contractor options as well as state employees). On-time support and payment of the Bureau's software maintenance contract must be rectified. Provision of contractual resources for administrative support (such as scanning) and for modification of the UNM contract (or another vehicle) to provide licensure technical assistance akin to the Professional Development contract are worthy of careful consideration. This could include development of improved website content, technical assistance, and/or developing telephone and e-mail inquiry response capability. This would free up bureau staff to focus on license application evaluation. Other in-kind support to improving the licensure process can be provided by other PED Divisions, as appropriate.

Chapter

5

Charter Schools: Findings and Recommendations

PED Role in Charter Schools and State of Affairs

I n 1999, the New Mexico legislature passed the Charter Schools Act allowing for the creation of charter schools in New Mexico. According to the Act, a charter school means "a conversion school or start-up school within a school district authorized by the local school board to operate as a charter school." The purpose of the Act is to create a vehicle – charter schools – for teaching, assessment, and curriculum innovations...[2]. In New Mexico (and several other states), school districts alone have the power to authorize a charter school. If an application for a charter is rejected by the district, the school may appeal to PED to have the district's decision overturned, which in fact has happened multiple times in the past several years.

Charter schools in New Mexico appear to be growing, but it is too early to gauge their long term impact or success in terms of either individual school enrollment or creation of new charters. As of 2005, New Mexico has 58 approved charter schools, 43 of which were open as of 2004-05. Nine of these have been continuously operated since 2000; the others are less than five years old. The chart below shows the growth in the number of operating and approved charter schools

---

[2] "[I]s to enable individual schools to restructure their educational curriculum to encourage the use of different and innovative teaching methods that are based on reliable research and effective practices or have been replicated successfully in schools with diverse characteristics; to allow the development of different and innovative forms of measuring student learning and achievement; to address the needs of all students, including those determined to be at risk; to create new professional opportunities for teachers, including the opportunity to be responsible for the learning program at the school site; to improve student achievement; to provide parents and students with an educational alternative to create new, innovative and more flexible ways of educating children within the public school system; to encourage parental and community involvement in the public school system; to develop and use site-based budgeting; and to hold charter schools accountable for meeting state board minimum educational standards and fiscal requirements." (Sect. 22-8B-3.).
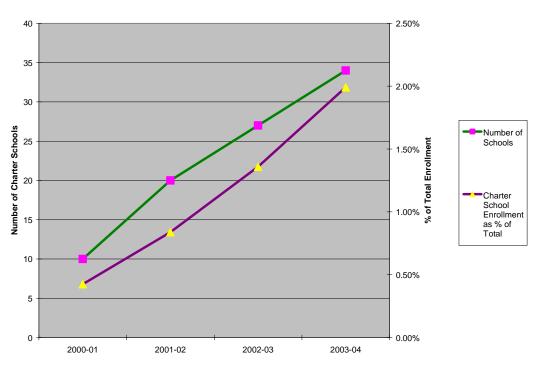
since the law's enactment in 1999. If the current trend continues, charter schools will continue to increase in number. As of 2003-04, enrollment in charter schools totaled 6,429. The size of charter schools ranged from fewer than two-dozen students to more than 700, with the average charter school enrolling 189 students. The largest enrollment is in grades 9 and 10, with the smallest enrollment in grades 2, 3, and 12.[3]

Since it is anticipated that the number of New Mexico charter schools will continue to increase, it is important to have a sense of where they might be established in the future. Today, New Mexico charter schools are concentrated in the Albuquerque area. The capacity required to develop a charter school, in addition to enrollment and resources, is much more difficult to obtain in rural areas. Based on an analysis of a variety of variables, it appears that districts with the highest potential for having new charter schools are likely to be ones with preexisting private schools, a high percentage of schools not meeting adequate yearly progress (AYP), and a low percentage of school age children in poverty. This analysis is detailed in *Appendix 4*.

Figure 2

Growth in Charter Schools

Source: New Mexico Public Education Department.

---

[3] New Mexico Public Education Department, *2003-2004 Evaluation of New Mexico Charter Schools* (September 2004), pp. 7-9.

Customer Overview and Major Points of Service

There are several phases to creating, opening, and operating a charter school. These are reflected in the draft New Mexico charter school handbook.

1. Exploration and building consensus: During this phase, charter leaders create a vision, assemble a team and conduct research of applicable state, federal, and local laws. PED encourages individuals to contact the Department as early as possible in the process to allow PED to provide guidance. A detailed plan is developed for all aspects of school operations and finance.

2. Charter drafting, negotiation, redrafting, and approval: This phase entails seeking approval of the school's charter, including petitioning certain bodies or populations if required. PED must approve the charter school's budget. Understanding and responding to all the required elements of the Charter is a major undertaking. PED provides technical assistance as needed during this phase of development. PED also reviews and submits edits to all charters prior to their submission to school boards, even though this is not mandated in statute or rule.

3. Pre-operations, planning and development: Once authorization is received, the proposed charter school can take all the necessary steps to begin operations.

4. Operations, troubleshooting, and improvement: After the school opens, during the life of the school, PED conducts a variety of reviews, usually through the district. PED is responsible for accrediting the charter school at the end of the first two years of operation. In addition, charter schools are required to submit a variety of plans to PED for approval, including the EPSS, as well as reports on student achievement. Charter schools are required to comply with the same reporting requirements as any other school district in the state; there are more than 60 different reports that must be filed throughout the course of the year.

According to the draft New Mexico Charter School Handbook, PED's roles and responsibilities are as follows (see page IV-6, August 2004 version):

1. Provide technical assistance to charter schools, charter school applicants, local education agencies and local school boards
2. Approve charter school budgets
3. Collect and monitor state and federal expenditure reports
4. Accredit charter schools
5. Rate charter schools in the statewide accountability system

6. Approve charter schools' Education Plan for Student Success (EPSS)
7. Approve all required plans (Note: No specific list of plans was provided.)
8. Participate in the appeal process
9. Monitor State Stimulus and Federal Charter School funds
10. Approve State applications for state grant programs
11. Respond to other issues and questions as appropriate
12. Develop a set of questions and answers on other identified issues.

Major Findings: Charter School Processes

1. The Charter Bureau is working very hard to respond to the needs of those planning and operating charter schools.

PED's Charter School Bureau, part of the Instructional Support Division, offers both technical assistance and monitoring and compliance. The Bureau tends to work with schools one-on-one, rather than providing general guidance or technical assistance on a more systemic basis. As a result, the services described below may be provided to some charters, and not to others, depending on staff availability. During the development of a charter school, the Bureau reviews and comments on the proposed charter. After a school has opened, the Bureau continues to conduct compliance oversight by reviewing reports and documents submitted by the charter school. The Charter Bureau attempts to work closely with new charter schools during their first two years of operation. The Bureau will also assist charter schools with applications for grants and will monitor the grant funding and reporting.

Bureau staff conducts multi-day site visits to identify potential compliance issues and assist the school with coming into compliance. The Bureau does this by providing schools with advice, materials, and workshops. Materials include forms, templates, guides and examples of documents the school will need to produce. Technical assistance may cover governance, finance, employee policies, curriculum standards, assessment and accountability, and facilities. The assistance and workshops may be provided by PED staff or through consultants hired by PED. PED staff also work to provide charter schools with contacts and networking opportunities with other charter schools. Workshop topics typically include items such as analysis of assessment data and how to use it, governance council policies and operations, standards-based curriculum and instruction and student assistance. In general, charter schools appear satisfied with this assistance, but have noted that the fact that there is a single person in charge of rendering judgments and opinions on nearly every aspect of charter school operations can be intimidating and limiting at times.

If staff members do not know the answer, they do not refer the customer to another division at PED; instead, they find the answer themselves and get the information to the customer.

Staff members of the Charter Bureau appear to be very committed to responding to information requests that arrive over the phone, via e-mail or via fax. They tend to be reactive in responding to requests, rather than proactive in implementing a statewide strategy for supporting charter development and operation. If staff members do not know the answer, they do not refer the customer to another division at PED; instead, they find the answer themselves and get the information to the customer. This commitment to individual customer service has earned the Bureau a reputation for being responsive and is to be commended. There are, however, significant opportunities for improved coordination with other parts of PED, better use of district and other expertise, and opportunities to increase the span of PED assistance. For a start, the Bureau could develop alternatives to one-on-one, individual interaction.

2. **Monitoring and assisting charter school creation and operation is a largely new function; growth adds to these challenges.**

The Charter Bureau's current situation needs to be placed in historical context, along with the Department overall. Providing support to charter schools is a relatively new function, with a relatively small staff. That means there is room for development in PED's ability to fully support charter schools statewide. This could include standardizing procedures and creating materials for customers, including a user-friendly, highly functional website and other mechanisms for providing technical assistance. For example, written manuals, procedures, and templates for a variety of charter school programs and functions are lacking. The same staff monitors compliance, provides technical assistance and serves as charter school advocates within PED. The number of staff in the Charter Bureau has not increased despite the annual increase in the number of approved and operating charter schools across the state. In addition, other divisions' participation in charter school site visits has been limited (perhaps due to lack of funds) and their role unclear. Schools situated a substantial distance from Santa Fe do not receive the same level of hands-on attention as schools closer to PED offices. Bureau staff members have had to track the finances of grants they monitor due to the lack of adequate data systems that are accessible across the Department.

There is not a general awareness of the relevance to charter schools of programs across the Department. As a result, there is limited expert support available to charter schools in budget, accounting and technology. There is also limited support around educational programs that include, for example, bilingual education, Indian education, special education, and the administration of grants programs such as Title I and other federal programs. The Bureau does not have a

track record of coordinating response to charter school inquiries with other parts of PED.

A strong website could be an effective means to drive development and dissemination of tools and resources to those involved in charter schools at all levels: established schools, the community, and participants at all stages in the conception and implementation of new schools. However, because this has not been a staff priority, the staff focuses instead on responding to individual questions. These questions might otherwise be answered through more proactive, anticipatory materials and tools, including resources available on the web. Similarly, because those interested in or providing home schooling cannot get information or register online, Charter Bureau staff must spend time answering questions and registering home schools, according to the staff interviewed.

3. PED, which works primarily with districts, faces an organizational challenge in determining how best to support charters.

A fundamental, systemic tension exists at PED because PED has traditionally operated with the District – not individual schools – as its primary customer. Charters are not only individual schools, but they are schools that are different from the other schools in a district. When charter schools were first approved in New Mexico, they were few in number and were made the responsibility of the Charter Bureau. This organizational "pigeon-holing" of charter schools resulted in their isolation from the rest of PED, and may have inadvertently resulted in mixed messages to districts and charters about their relative priority in statewide policy and practice. Several issues related to charter school support have been unresolved. Scheduling has also presented conflicts, as different parts of PED schedule events involving school and district staff without coordinating with Charter Bureau staff, creating conflicting demands.

A particular issue for charter schools pertains to special education requirements, an area where charters require additional support from districts and the PED.

Multiple demands on limited PED staff have caused confusion as to how best to provide technical assistance to charter schools, both within the Division and PED at large. For example, the Bureau has responsibility for home school registration and non-public school liaison in addition to supporting charter schools. It is also unclear the degree to which the PED effort to support charters should focus on planning and authorization, operations and technical assistance, and/or oversight and monitoring.

A particular issue for charter schools pertains to special education requirements, an area where charters require additional support from districts and the PED. The PED Special Education Bureau supports Regional Educational Centers and districts without adequate special education staff, not individual charter schools.

As a result, charters need to be able to look to district and Regional Education Centers for special education support.

Charter schools also have identified a need for budget development and financial management support. PED, however, is not organized to provide significant assistance at the individual school level. Budget analysts at PED focus primarily on the district and state rather than the individual school level. Teacher licensure also poses challenges for charter schools, as charter teachers are required to meet state licensing requirements and charter schools lack the expertise and information needed to effectively maneuver the licensure process.

As noted elsewhere in this report, because the number of charter schools and complexity of their task is expanding, the current strategy of providing one-on-one technical assistance may not serve the breadth of charter school needs. Having bureau staff serve as individualized charter school experts to a small number of schools was a manageable strategy initially. It is now essential to rethink how best to meet charter school needs to ensure more broadly available support and assistance. The goal for PED is to capture expertise from across the Department, to take full advantage of District resources, and to serve as an effective broker among the many stakeholders in the charter movement.

4. Resources beyond PED to support the development and implementation of charter schools are growing.

Since the passage of the law permitting school districts to authorize the creation of charter schools in New Mexico, new resources and sources of expertise to support charter schools have emerged. Albuquerque Public Schools employs a Charter Schools Coordinator to help guide and oversee the charter process in the district. The New Mexico Coalition for Charter Schools, which recently received a Walton Family Foundation grant and is under contract with PED to provide incubator services to potential charter school founders, also provides much needed capacity.

Nationally, there are several advocacy and resource groups for the school choice movement, including the Center for Education Reform, National Charter School Alliance (formerly the Charter Friends National Network), the National Charter School Clearinghouse, the US Charter Schools organization, Charter School Leadership Council, the National Association for Charter School Authorizers, and others. These entities are among those that may be important resources for the New Mexico charter movement. The U.S. Department of Education also provides funding opportunities, research, and practical information about charter schools.

5. A general lack of experience with charters (at PED, district and school levels) contributes to an ad hoc approach and inconsistency.

As mentioned above, the emergence of charter schools is a relatively new phenomenon, and states are all in the process of learning how best to lead, manage and provide adequate oversight for them. New charter schools have "how to" questions as they gain experience with all aspects of the authorization and regulatory and financial management processes, in addition to the mechanics of operating an educational institution. Simultaneously, districts are learning how to provide appropriate guidance and oversight to the charters under their purview. Charter schools are also encountering difficulties related to requirements of IDEA and appropriately supporting children with special needs. Another challenge is ensuring that teachers are appropriately licensed under New Mexico law, and NCLB teacher quality requirements.

6. Confusion in how best to provide support to charters stems from ambiguity regarding the relative roles and responsibilities at the state, district and school levels.

PED and district staff may receive mixed messages about their responsibilities with respect to charter schools, because charter schools are independent in some regards, but subject to federal, state and district requirements like all public schools in other matters. Some of those interviewed noted that in their view, charter school regulation is vague, especially with regards to governance. It leaves too much to the discretion of local practice and the particular relationship between district and charter. The relationships between charter schools, districts and the state are not well defined, leading to confusion about who is responsible for leading and supporting different parts of the process.

District and charter school staff members are not clear who in PED is responsible for what. For example, who has the legal responsibility for interpreting and enforcing charter school guidelines? Some of those interviewed commented that PED has overstepped its bounds as PED staff interpretation of the law can vary from district to district. A lack of written documentation of bureau interpretations creates the risk of subjective and potentially inconsistent applications of state mandated policies and procedures. Others observed that sometimes PED behaves as if it were an authorizer, directing charters to do something different from what the district (the actual authorizer) directs the school to do. Some charters and districts point to close working relationships, while for others, the links may be more tenuous. This leaves PED staff without assurance that information is flowing from the state to district to school level. Applicability of NCLB requirements to charter schools is another area where confusion abounds.

7. A lack of support for charter school creation and operation among some parties may put charters on the back burner.

Charter school advocates and Charter bureau staff both assert that they do not encounter consistent support for charter school development and operation at the State and local level. While charter operators apparently perceive the Charter Bureau staff as "pro Charter," they may avoid calling on other experts in the Department. The perception among some is that staff members who are not "pro charter" tend to minimize information, delay responding to requests, or transfer the request to other staff at PED who do not know the answer.

The need for PED to respond in a balanced and consistent manner to charter school related issues is perhaps more important than perceptions about individuals' support for charter schools. In this regard, PED processes for seeking district, charter school and community input in cases of conflict is of central importance. According to some of those interviewed, the process for responding to district and parent issues has not always included seeking the charter school perspective. Similarly, the process for consulting with districts during the charter evaluation process does not appear to be consistent. Consistent guidelines for addressing conflict among the jurisdictions with interest in charter school operation could be provided and monitored by PED.

8. A lack of collaboration among charters, PED and districts can result in duplication, miscommunication and missed opportunities.

One of the most important findings of the charter school portion of this study relates to information flow, and the difficulty of ensuring that information is disseminated in a useful, timely and comprehensive manner. Many of those interviewed identified the need to better communicate across PED, as well as among PED, districts and schools. For example, understanding legislative requirements, particularly as they relate to NCLB, and implementing regulations and procedures are frequently noted as areas needing improvement.

The information gap is not only between the Charter Bureau and other programs within PED and districts, but between charter schools and districts as well.

Other examples of lack of coordination can be found in monitoring, where charter schools are monitored by Charter Bureau staff alone rather than in partnership with other Bureaus and Divisions. Opportunities to include charter schools in professional development and events for other public schools (and vice versa) are often overlooked. Finance and facility issues are also an area of considerable complexity where information and coordination are lacking. This includes the flow of funds from state to district to school, grants and financial management issues including allowable costs and other internal controls, and facility funding.

The information gap is not only between the Charter Bureau and other programs within PED and districts, but between charter schools and districts as well. Keeping in touch with both the appropriate district staff and charter school staff is challenging for PED, because of the ever-changing contact information for charter schools and districts. Among some charter schools, there is a perceived lack of reliable, consistent information coming out of PED. In some cases, the capacity of districts to support their charter schools is limited. This creates a technical support vacuum that PED must fill. In still other cases, the problem rests at the charter school level, where school leaders prefer to operate as independently as possible, and at a great distance from district and state constraints.

Recommendations: Charter Schools Processes

PED faces a significant challenge. It must ensure the success of charter schools through monitoring and technical support, even as charter schools and their enrollments increase, without a concurrent expansion in resources at PED. One solution is for the Charter Bureau to figure out what not to do. In other words, the Bureau should look for opportunities to stop doing whatever is not in the core requirements of the statutes and rules, while continuing to ensure the success of charter schools.

Recommendations designed to address the above findings are presented below.

1. Create a more strategic, proactive approach to supporting charter school creation and operations.

PED needs to take a more strategic approach to its role with charter schools, shifting from a largely reactive role to a more proactive one designed to support systemic change. While it may sound like a cliché, this is a situation where there is room to work smarter, especially since there is little or no capacity to work harder. Support for charter schools appears to unfold absent a plan or clear priorities regarding what, from PED's perspective, are the primary aspects of PED support, objectives, proposed activities and milestones.

The Instructional Support Division, working closely with Charter Bureau staff, should therefore develop key strategic priorities for PED work supporting charter schools. It should specify the actions required to accomplish those priorities. Such a plan will be instrumental in focusing Bureau work, addressing many of the issues identified above, and clarifying the relative roles and responsibilities among PED, district and school participants in the charter process. As discussed in greater detail below, direct customer service and technical assistance is a critical component of that work. It should, however, be conceived of as part of a larger

strategy to institutionalize support for charter schools and to build standard processes and tools for helping PED customers.

Assessing risk, and structuring compliance monitoring and technical assistance accordingly, is critical to a more strategic approach to fulfilling PED's responsibilities regarding charter schools. However, the table of contents for New Mexico's draft Charter School Handbook (August 2004) makes no mention of risk assessment or of risk management. Essential to planning for charter school support will be developing a more explicit understanding of the risks inherent in the various stages of charter school development and implementation.

Planning should also have a human resources dimension, and consider staffing options for best utilizing Bureau and Division staff. Lack of administrative support is, for example, an area where the Bureau requires assistance. In addition to hiring additional staff, the Bureau should explore options to ensure administrative support needs can be met. It may be feasible to take advantage of resources elsewhere in the Division to immediately ease this burden.

2. Use the EPSS concept to manage charter school relationships.

The EPSS process, wherein a PED staff person is assigned responsibility for coordinating support and serving as principal point of contact for each district, should be applied to charter schools as well. Each charter school should have a point of contact at PED, potentially within the Instructional Support Division. That individual should be responsible for ensuring that appropriate expertise from across the Department is accessed to support the charter school. In general, the Charter Bureau should see its role as broker and coordinator of PED services and information to the charter schools and their districts.

The basic goals of this approach to coordination, in theory, are:

- To improve continuity and consistency
- To provide access to services and expertise across PED
- To overcome administrative barriers
- To enhance accountability by designating a primary point of contact
- To increase efficiency

3. Increase the consistency of guidance for charter schools by clarifying policy and guidelines in writing.

One method of optimizing limited resources is to answer a question once, in writing, and to post the answer on a website so that all customers have access to

the question and the answer. The same goes for interpreting rules and statutes. As a result, information provided in response to individual queries can be generalized and accessed by others, whether at PED, the district or school level. PED could go a long way toward increasing its reach and effectiveness by better documenting PED guidance through memos, frequently asked questions, e-mail, conference calls and the like. In cases of legal interpretation, PED staff should seek General Counsel approval before issuing legally binding guidance.

4. Revamp the current approach to providing technical assistance to charter schools.

Concomitant with the recommendations above regarding addressing high risk areas and developing improved guidance and communications to PED, districts and charters, the Instructional Support Division and Charter Bureau in particular would benefit by making changes in its procedures. It should alter its approach to technical assistance to supplement individual site visits and support with approaches that reach a wider audience. This approach would not eliminate single school support, but rather ensure that it is part of an overall strategy that includes methods to provide information and assistance across the system. A more "wholesale" technical assistance strategy would take advantage of the full range of communications tools to address

A more "wholesale" technical assistance strategy would take advantage of the full range of communications tools to address charter issues.

charter issues. These include a combination of written guidelines and tools, use of the Internet, regional meetings, conference calls, and targeted assistance. This is a way to leverage other resources to support charters.

An effective way to optimize resources is to solve problems up front. Other preventive activities include publishing guides, improving communication with Districts, networking with experts, improving internet and intranet content, standardizing processes, and reducing the isolation of programs.

In particular, the PED might:

- Take greater advantage of non-PED resources

    PED can increase the number of channels that charters use to find the resources and information they need. For example, the Bureau could supply the Albuquerque resource room with a copy of each of the publications AEB takes on site visits and shares with the charter schools. The Bureau could also serve as a conduit for publications to other channels, such as the New Mexico Coalition of Charter Schools, which provides direct support to charter schools.

- Contract with technical assistance provider(s)

Rather than provide most of the technical assistance itself, PED could contract for other entities to provide technical assistance to charter schools and districts across the state. Using contractors/consultants to implement PED guidance and NM law could be an effective means of leveraging PED resources. Similarly, PED could investigate the possibility of funding public education and research through the NM charter organization.

- Develop handbook and tool- kit materials for potential charter schools to navigate the process and build capacity

The Bureau has been working on a charter school handbook that will be available in soft and hard copy. By publishing the handbook as a series of modules, the PED could make components of the handbook available as they are developed, and easily publish updates and addenda.

As the charter school movement has matured across the United States, there now exists a solid collection of guides, websites, "how-to" manuals, advocacy groups and networks of experts to support charter schools. PED could take advantage of these through a variety of means. It could modify them to New Mexico's particular needs, provide links to these resources and organizations, and scan for the most applicable guides and resources.

- Create a resource center to be a central source of information about charter schools

The Coalition and APS have both mentioned creating a Charter Resource Center where information about, and for, charter schools can be gathered. In addition to the handbook and tools suggested above, other documentation will greatly assist charter school, district and PED personnel. These include, for example, a list of documents required for charter school authorization and operation, and a guide to charter school planning. The Resource Center could be marketed so that experts and interested individuals know where to go and where to send information. Rather than PED having to take on this responsibility, it could become a cornerstone of the Coalition for Charter Schools. The Coalition has already started to develop guides in collaboration with school administrators.

- Develop a mentor or partner school model for sharing effective practice

This capacity building model could also be used to pair leaders of stronger charter schools with staff who work with a struggling charter school. It could help districts pair struggling public schools with successful, innovative charter schools. The model could be used to identify best practices across the charter schools and network schools.

5. Minimize systemic barriers by reinforcing, at the highest levels, PED support for school choice.

In his 2004 State of the State speech, Governor Richardson praised charter schools and promised to support them with additional funding for facilities. Dr. Garcia demonstrated her support by personally registering students at the Monte Del Sol charter school. Despite this high level of support, charter schools are sometimes perceived as problematic. They may have been created out of conflict with District policies or staff; they may have slightly different operating statutes and rules than most of PED's customers; and they are not always started by individuals who are knowledgeable about federal, state and local legislative requirements and regulations. They are, in effect, still somewhat of a mystery.

The New Mexico Legislature created charter schools with the intent of providing an important opportunity to test out a wide variety of educational elements to identify the best ways to address the educational needs of a wide variety of students. These elements include curriculum, organization, teacher participation and even school operating hours.[4]

A "charter school children are our children" philosophy would provide a counterbalance to some of the institutional challenges of supporting charter school development and implementation.

Simply put, if charter schools were embraced as everyone's business at PED, then it would reduce the number of missed technical assistance opportunities that PED otherwise provides to non-charter schools. A "charter school children are our children" philosophy would provide a counterbalance to some of the institutional challenges of supporting charter school development and implementation. This would make clear that the ultimate goal of raising standards for all children is the PED mission for every school, including charters.

PED is already implementing this model of shared responsibility for education of Native Americans. Instead of being the sole responsibility of the Indian

---

[4] New Mexico Charter Schools Act, Sect. 22-8B-3.

Education Division, Dr. Garcia created a shift whereby support for Indian education was a PED-wide responsibility, not a separate program. The Indian Education Division plays an advocacy and broker role, helping guide customers through the Department, accessing expertise across PED, and serving as a liaison between Native American interests and PED. If this model was applied to the charter schools office, it would not be viewed as a separate program (like Bilingual or Special Education), but as a liaison office. The entire PED would have responsibility for the success of charter schools. If channels of communication to other divisions are created, it will encourage customers to be empowered to directly contact experts across PED.

6. PED should adopt a broker/facilitator role between districts and charter schools for shared services and technical assistance.

The customer service needs for charter schools are not substantially different from their non-charter counterparts. However, in some cases, districts are not willing to provide charter schools with the same level of technical support (or even basic information sharing) as non-charter schools in their districts. Provision of professional development is a prime example of an area where improved coordination among PED, district and charter schools could have substantial benefits.

A number of mechanisms are available to PED to perform this brokering role, consistent with the recommendations regarding improved technical assistance above. For example, PED could facilitate issues identification and resolution workshops with district and charter teams in attendance; PED could spearhead the development of a statewide professional development calendar; PED could also help districts set up information sessions at charter schools to review different aspects of school improvement. Albuquerque Public Schools has done this successfully, with district staff responsible for food services, transportation, facilities, data collection, warehouse purchasing, and curriculum.

7. Improve communication and collaboration, by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of PED divisions as they apply to charter schools.

At the crux of PED's leadership in supporting charter schools is finding means to improve communications and collaboration, and to clarify roles and responsibilities. PED is faced with a significant opportunity to support districts and charter schools by seeking means to provide timely, easy to access information about different aspects of charter school development and operation. The Instructional Support Division and Charter Bureau can also play a significant leadership role by helping clarify and make explicit the relative roles and responsibilities of different institutions in the charter process. They could

delineate, for example, the district role and the state role, as well as the process for conflict resolution.

Some examples of specific activities for PED consideration are:

- Keep current with changes affecting charter schools

The Charter Bureau could lead a process for ensuring currency of information across the Department regarding charter schools. For example, as information about rule changes, practice changes or clarifications to federal funds unique to charter schools becomes available, AEB could ensure that all parts of PED are well informed, and disseminate this information to districts and schools.

- Standardize processes and forms

As mentioned above, PED could improve collaboration among Department, charter, and district staff by standardizing certain processes and procedures. For example, PED staff could use the same forms for the same functions/tasks across the agency and across the districts and schools (e.g., cash request forms). The Bureau could conduct an informal survey of charter schools to identify those forms that are duplicative or inconsistent, and then forward their findings to the Executive Committee to prioritize and appoint a project director responsible for following through on standardizing or eliminating duplicative or redundant requirements.

- Highlight benefits and costs of charters to districts

Through continuous education and highlighting how charter schools affect districts, PED and some charter schools are persuading districts to be more accepting of charter schools. For example, data showed there was a correlation between an increase in the number of charter schools in the Albuquerque Public Schools and a decrease in the number of dropouts. Charter schools include a higher percentage of special education students than in NM public schools at large. It is critical to ensure adequate support for students with special needs who attend charter schools.

- Provide internal professional development to improve understanding across PED of charter school needs

PED could provide more cross-training to other divisions regarding unique needs of charter schools. This can be accomplished through staff trainings or orientations by Charter Bureau staff, or through other existing

channels such as the monthly staff meetings. Such an approach would not only create common understanding of the role of choice and charters in New Mexico school reform, but would also increase ability of staff across the organization to contribute to and support the Charter Bureau's work.

8. Coordinate the scheduling of PED district visits and other technical assistance with Charter Bureau.

Scheduling issues, and the multiple demands districts and charters place on PED staff, are significant sources of concern. By taking advantage of its role as coordinator and broker, the Instructional Support Division and Charter Bureau can significantly improve the efficacy of visits, both increasing utility and reducing potential burden.

For example:

- Combine district and charter site visits.

  By including a cross section of program staff on site visits to charter schools, the burden on the Charter Bureau would eventually decrease. The charter schools would be provided with a network of contacts at PED and empowered to use those contacts. Site visits by PED staff to the districts should include visits to member charter schools in that district. For example, if Bilingual/Multi-Cultural staff are visiting a district, they should add to their itinerary a visit or contact with any charter schools in that district.

- Place high priority on financial technical assistance.

  Financing charter schools is one of the greatest challenges for charter schools, districts, and PED. Of all the technical assistance needs, this ranks among the highest, yet receives some of the most limited support. PED needs to find means of improving the financial guidance and support provided to districts regarding charter schools, and to charter schools directly. Many of the methods identified above will be useful to assist in this regard.

  To improve financial management and reporting practices and take steps to mitigate risk, PED could contract for financial management support and technical assistance to charter school developers.

9. Provide improved web based resources: guides, FAQs, online requests, home school registration, Intranet.

PED does not currently take full advantage of its website as a powerful tool for supporting charter schools. Among the changes that could be considered are:

- Improve the Charter School resources on the PED website to include not only procedural information but also guidance regarding governance, instructional practices, and the many other components of operating successful schools
- Create a regular (monthly?) electronic newsletter with updates and information for charter schools and districts
- Pursue opportunities to develop a PED intranet and also take advantage of web video and voice-over-internet opportunities
- Automate contact updates to ensure contact information for charter school personnel is current.
- PED might build a database (or augment ADS) about charter schools that describes them in sufficient detail so that program and fiscal staff (or anyone else at PED dealing with charters, and perhaps the schools directly) could access information and match school needs with updates and technical assistance opportunities. It could also remind schools of deadlines and other requirements, and track what assistance a school had requested and received.

Other states and charter school associations provide ready examples of use of the Internet to provide more information and increase capacity across the system to support charter schools.

Resource Implications

As with customer service in the licensure arena, significant changes in PED's leadership of charter school planning, technical assistance and oversight can be achieved with minimal expense. The bulk of the recommendations above entail changes in work processes, reprioritization of workload and changes to long-standing operational practices.   It will be difficult to accomplish these changes, however, without some focused project management and process improvement support. PED might reorient existing contractual resources toward this purpose, or dedicate internal resources to support it. External facilitation and support for the change process is advised.

At minimum, the Department could develop a human resources strategy that clearly identifies current capacity and gaps between the current state and future

goals. This should be expressed not in terms of number of FTE, but rather the functions that need to be performed and expertise required to do the job. The question of how to address those needs would follow from that analysis. In the technology arena, additional support for improved website content, and development of on-line and in person technical assistance options should be considered. Other PED Divisions, as appropriate, can provide in-kind support to charter schools through more visible and intentional coordination and sharing of expertise.

Chapter

6

Accountability and Assessment

PED Role in Accountability and Assessment and State of Affairs

T he third area of focus of this inquiry is accountability and assessment. In its mission to advance student achievement, the New Mexico Public Education Department provides services to ensure accountability and effectively use assessment data to inform strategic planning, decision-making and instructional practice. Accountability for results has been at the center of many education initiatives over the past decade. Similarly, thoughtful use of assessment to gauge progress and direct resources for improvement has been at the heart of many education reform movements. Compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act and HB 212 is a major policy and programmatic focus of the PED and New Mexico districts and schools.

The mission of assessment and accountability is to provide technical services and tools to help schools throughout New Mexico improve instruction and student achievement and meet national and state standards of educational performance. To achieve these goals, the Public Education Department must have the capacity to:

1. Collect and report necessary performance data,
2. Interpret data to determine how well schools and districts are progressing toward meeting benchmarks mandated by the U.S. Department of Education and by New Mexico lawmakers,
3. Diagnose management and teaching practices that may be impeding student learning, and
4. Ensure that schools' measures of student success improve steadily over time.

public works
making good ideas work for the better

PED also provides tools to assist administrators, teachers, parents and other stakeholders in the education enterprise to best support high standards for all children. PED must manage assessment and accountability reporting and compliance for approximately 90 school districts across the state. Many of these districts are in remote, poor areas of New Mexico that serve small, predominantly minority and low-income populations.

When the new leaders of the Public Education Department assumed responsibility for public education in New Mexico, they immediately reorganized management functions and business operations so that they would be prepared to meet the requirements of No Child Left Behind and respond more effectively to their customers. However, while the Department has succeeded in establishing an effective and professional management team, managers may not be doing all they can to change the PED's historical "top down" approach. District and school professionals must be included in the process to transform public instruction in New Mexico.

Accountability and Assessment Customer Overview and Major Points of Service

PED faces a multifaceted challenge in addressing accountability and assessment needs. It must focus on data collection and ensure that data is collected in as timely, reliable and valid a manner as possible. It also has a data analysis responsibility. PED helps interpret the data statewide. It supports districts in their efforts to use data for decision-making purposes, to identify performance problems, target resources and inform school and community leaders. The PED also has a substantial communication responsibility. It strategically explains how to (and how not to) use accountability and assessment data to constructive ends, to support improvement in instruction rather than solely as a punitive measure. Finally, PED can exert significant leadership in providing technical assistance to poorly performing schools, using analysis of required data to guide school improvement efforts.

The Assessment and Evaluation Bureau in the Assessment and Accountability Division oversees the development and delivery of standards-based tests that measure student proficiency in reading/language arts and mathematics at various grade levels. These assessments serve as the basis of the New Mexico educational accountability system, which requires the PED to demonstrate not only that schools and districts are performing well in the aggregate, but that each public school student in the state is meeting national and state competency standards. The Office of the Chief Information Officer manages and maintains the tools that are used to collect and report individual performance data.

The Priority Schools Bureau in the Quality Assurance and Systems Integration Division monitors schools and districts to determine that they are making adequate annual progress toward ensuring that students are academically proficient. It also develops improvement plans for schools that are failing to progress. The bureau has the critical role of intervening in school operations so that New Mexico's students and teachers succeed.

The Academic Growth and Analysis Bureau in the Assessment and Accountability Division interprets a variety of performance data collected by the office of the Chief Information Officer to determine whether schools, districts and the state are in compliance with the accountability requirements of NCLB and New Mexico statutes. The bureau supplies the evidence that guides the development of educational policy and classroom practices and on which public education institutions are evaluated.

PED manages assessment and accountability reporting and compliance for public schools, including charter schools, across the state. PED primarily supports district-level personnel who in turn provide guidance and services to individual schools. At the district level, the personnel responsible for coordination of testing, collection of data and management of accountability requirements are the primary contacts for PED accountability and assessment staff. At all levels, how PED frames accountability requirements, particularly as they relate to NCLB implementation and the concern about failing schools, is important to educators and to the surrounding communities, as a means of galvanizing appropriate action.

Major Findings: Accountability and Assessment

1. Significant efforts have been made at the state level in data collection, capacity building, training and data sharing.

While there remains a great deal to be done, the PED has made significant strides in accountability and assessment.

PED has taken substantial steps to organize its accountability and assessment operations to support district and school needs and federal compliance. Through concerted efforts to not only improve data collection but also provide ongoing training and technical assistance to district staff, there has been significant improvement in timeliness and quality of data. There has also been substantial improvement in system-wide understanding of data requirements. While there remains a great deal to be done, the PED has made significant strides in accountability and assessment.

In particular, the Department has:

1. Created an Assessment and Accountability Advisory Council with a wide range of stakeholders who review the A/A process and make suggestions for improvements. An Executive Group meets monthly, while the larger Council meets quarterly.
2. Created an internal working group with the Quality Assurance Bureau, Priority Schools and Content Curriculum Specialist to better align the curricula to standards that are driven by informed data.
3. Created a single application process among Titles I through V.
4. Created a monitoring guide as a self-assessment tool.
5. Created the EPSS (Educational Plan for Student Success) which requires schools to submit a strategic plan on how to address students' needs.
6. Created a "Federal Coordinating Committee" to conduct an agency-wide search for redundancy in reporting requirements from districts and an inventory of all federal reporting to determine how reports can be consolidated and/or streamlined.
7. Provided on-site and regional training workshops to assist Test Coordinators and Title I Coordinators in report processing.
8. Created District report cards (even as PED is in the process of creating school report cards).

All of these action steps have been extremely useful in helping PED accomplish its goal of supporting districts, so that they may continuously improve the education of New Mexico's children and youth.

2. **The complexity of federal and state requirements and many other demands on school systems contribute towards an environment of wide-ranging confusion.**

Ensuring accountability across the K-12 education system and appropriate and effective use of assessment is an incredibly complex and multifaceted undertaking. In addition, significant turnover of personnel at the school and district level (of Title I coordinators, for example) makes building capacity difficult. It can be difficult to provide a common understanding because all stakeholders in the education process, at all levels, are involved. Teachers seek to understand how new federal and state requirements affect their classroom instruction; principals and administrators seek to understand how best to collect data, analyze it and use it to improve educational practice; and districts seek to use accountability and assessment information to most accurately identify areas of need and to target assistance.

What is required, when, by whom, and for what purpose is not clear in the eyes of many participants in the public education system. The multiple stakeholders in the

quest for accountability have different focuses and interests. Possible inconsistencies among federal, state and local policies and practices further complicate matters.

Without common language and tools with which to channel these concerns, confusion and anxiety about how to interpret data and how to support children proliferate.

PED therefore enters what is already a controversial and perplexing field. To determine how to implement the principles of standards based reform and support higher achievement for all New Mexico students is the challenge facing PED.   Individual schools and districts have varying capacity to interpret federal and state mandates, and to translate those legislative and regulatory requirements to action on-the-ground. PED efforts over the past several months to improve communications with districts about data collection requirements related to No Child Left Behind compliance and Adequate Yearly Progress have been well received at the district level, and have begun to standardize expectations.

National focus on education reform, coupled with local concerns about the adequacy of preparation of New Mexico youth, fuels concerns across the state on the part of parents, students, teachers, administrators and other community members. Without common language and tools with which to channel these concerns, confusion and anxiety about how to interpret data and how to support children proliferate.

3. The primary PED goal to assist schools in meeting NCLB requirements and AYP is part of PED's true focus on improving student achievement and raising standards.

Creating a culture of high expectations and raising standards for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other sub-group characteristics is a major challenge for New Mexico's education system, as it is in other states. NCLB provides a framework for PED and state, district and school leaders to drive change to narrow the achievement gap between all students and minorities. Because the stigma associated with not making adequate yearly progress (AYP) and being designated as a school in need of improvement for several consecutive years receives the bulk of attention, the potential of leveraging NCLB as a tool for improving instruction, and identifying and addressing weaknesses in schools can be overlooked. New Mexico educators have an unprecedented opportunity to focus attention on raising the achievement of all students and increasing the rigor and relevance of public education across the state to ensure that students graduate from high school prepared for postsecondary education and careers.

4. Virtually all parts of PED are involved in some aspect of accountability and assessment, making communication of a common message difficult.

Many parts of PED are involved in different aspects of accountability and assessment. This requires an unprecedented degree of cooperation among PED operations with heretofore relatively independent functions. The internal management challenge of working across the agency to provide unified and coordinated support for districts struggling with accountability and assessment requirements is a notable one. This is not solely a question of data collection and analysis; it involves the strategic leadership and communications platform of the Secretary as well. It is not solely a function of identifying poorly performing schools; it involves efforts to align technical assistance and professional development across the state as well. Accountability and assessment involve determining the assistance that can be provided to schools not reaching AYP, as well as efforts to analyze data to inform decision-making at the school level.

The PED organizational structure, as described in the Department's Comprehensive Framework for Supporting Schools in Need of Improvement, clearly delineates functions of the Assessment and Evaluation Bureau, the Priority Schools Bureau and School Assistance Bureau. Coordination among these three components, with other Department functions, and with the EPSS strategic planning process, has the potential to substantially alter the traditional state relationship with districts and schools. This coordination is already happening, and is resulting in higher quality, more timely support. In addition, efforts such as the recent Closing the Achievement Gap Conference convened by Secretary Garcia are an important means of focusing attention on accountability and assessment. These efforts leverage not only State capacity, but also take advantage of external expertise and information sharing across districts and schools as well.

PED's federal coordinating committee is one example of notable efforts to better inventory and coordinate PED communications with districts, and district requests, as is the EPSS initiative.

Fragmented, redundant and/or sporadic communications to schools, districts and the general public contribute to a lack of consistency in interpretation of accountability purpose and requirements. Interviewees noted several instances of receiving different direction from different PED offices regarding assessment policy. The same applied to guidance to districts regarding technical issues. Others report that guidance is not provided amidst the full context of overall requirements or its source. Historically, a strong culture of independence among PED units has impeded coordinated guidance to districts and schools. PED's federal coordinating committee is one example of notable efforts to better inventory and coordinate PED communications with districts, and district requests, as is the EPSS initiative.

5. A lack of capacity to use data for decision making at the district and school level is an ongoing challenge.

New Mexico is not alone in noting a lack of capacity at the school and district level for staff to effectively use data to drive decision making. Drowning in a sea of data points with little understanding of what they mean and what to do about them is a common theme from our interviews and survey. PED efforts are also underway to help districts and schools more effectively use available data for management and instructional purposes.

PED has an opportunity to help districts refine their use of data to ultimately create better learning environments and improve teaching and learning. Effective use of data can be not a threat, but rather a boon to teachers. It can help them to better understand their students and to refine and change instructional practice.

Districts and schools do not always have sufficient access to data that help inform changes at the school and classroom level. PED staff in the Accountability and Assessment Division, and in the Academic Growth and Analysis Bureau in particular, are working to address this concern in the following ways:

1. By providing consistent, accurate and timely information to the field,
2. By ensuring that the field has the knowledge and resources needed to respond to the requirements of NCLB,
3. By revamping analytical tools, developing new procedures for verification of data, and providing technical training and assistance.

Over time, these efforts will erode the long held perception of PED as somewhat inflexible and overly bureaucratic.

According to some of those interviewed, administrators and teachers may not be sufficiently adept at interpreting data to use it effectively to raise student achievement. Strong efforts by PED staff to build awareness about assessment have been well received. However, there is a need for additional professional development and training, and greater coordination with the Professional Development Bureau.

6. PED data systems are improving under new leadership, yet challenges remain.

Despite being extremely short staffed, PED has made remarkable strides in improving data collection – in terms of timeliness, reliability and validity, ease of use, and understanding. While there is still a long way to go, progress in this regard is notable and the current direction should be continued. Clearly there are data related issues that need to be addressed. For example, the partnership with

the Office of the Chief Information Officer needs to be restructured to more clearly identify roles and responsibilities between program offices and systems developers, and ensure that "ownership" of data is at the program level.

The ADS system, while functional, presents coordination and communication issues both within the Department and with districts. Several of those interviewed noted instances of difficulty maneuvering the ADS system, inconsistency with program requirements, and lack of responsiveness to, and coordination with, program needs. It was also noted that the process for adding, modifying and deleting data elements appeared to be unclear, or inconsistent. A number of data related issues were identified related to timeliness, validity and reliability, connectivity and interoperability. These are being addressed by the Office of the Chief Information Officer.

7. The issues facing schools with large Native American populations are particularly acute. They are being addressed by the new Bureau of Indian Affairs and a culture throughout the agency that Indian Affairs affects all organizational units of the Department.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs was created in 2003. Of the State's 89 school districts, 22 of them serve Native American students. In terms of land size alone, New Mexico is distinguished by having the most Native American residents in the United States. There are two charter schools serving Native American children. The director of the bureau was interviewed as part of the overall review of customer service needs in the area of Accountability and Assessment. Native American students and their teachers present unique needs and opportunities for PED.

All too often, school administrators believe that a segmented class addressing language skills suffices as meeting the learning needs of Native Americans.

One of the most important functions of the bureau is to provide technical assistance to teachers in knowing how to better instruct Native American students. The Director believes that all new New Mexico teachers (or at least those teaching in the 22 districts) would do well to attend a special training program on how to teach in context with the Native American culture throughout ALL classes. For example, teachers could be shown how to use the community around them as a learning laboratory to teach science and math such as exploring the geometric designs of Indian pottery. All too often, school administrators believe that a segmented class addressing language skills suffices as meeting the learning needs of Native Americans. At the same time, a significant number of schools do not apply for bi-lingual funding.

There are two ongoing problems that the Bureau and PED will need to continuously address. One is the cultural barrier that districts face with Native

American elders who fear that their youth will become too assimilated into American culture and lose their heritage (all the more reason to teach in context with the culture). The second is the high turnover rate of teachers, especially in rural, isolated communities reaching Native American children.

Recommendations: Accountability and Assessment

Based on the findings above and PED's desire to improve customer service in all aspects of accountability and assessment, a number of actions are recommended. These are summarized below.

1. **Develop and implement a coordinated PED outreach and communication strategy for accountability policy and NCLB compliance.**

The Department may not be doing all it can to effectively communicate its plans for transforming public education in New Mexico not only to school personnel, but to parents, higher education, employers, and community members. PED should develop a proactive, strategic communications plan to help customers better understand issues related to the state's effort to help all students in the state succeed. Such a plan should be developed in careful consideration of customer needs. It should use a range of vehicles to convey the PED message.

When report cards are made public in August, they should be accompanied by a suite of tools that districts and schools can use to communicate how they should be interpreted.

PED's efforts to support districts in meeting accountability requirements are not always understood at the local level. Ongoing training and initiatives such as the EPSS plan will, over time, help address this. PED should consider bolstering its communications and outreach efforts to ensure consistent messages across the Department, and to pave the way for new information systems and training opportunities.

Included in this communications strategy recommendation is the need for a strategic approach to report card dissemination and communication. When report cards are made public in August, they should be accompanied by a suite of tools that districts and schools can use to communicate how they should be interpreted. PED should lead a campaign concurrent with their release to frame their applicability, use and impact.

2. Fully support the direction of the Accountability and Assessment Division, ensuring that funded staff positions be filled as a top priority.

The most significant barrier to effective operations pertains to inadequate staffing. Despite approval and budget for additional positions, the recruiting process at PED has not resulted in timely hiring. The personnel process for recruiting and hiring personnel should be examined to significantly reduce time to hire new personnel, reduce unnecessary restrictions on hiring, and ensure that qualifications match position requirements. In some instances, for example, the qualifications required by personnel for particular positions do not match the requirements of the job. For example, some positions requiring advanced statistical, evaluation and data management expertise and training also require a teacher license, which may or may not in fact be necessary to perform the job well.

The State Personnel Office (SPO) has indicated that it is willing to work with PED to reclassify positions and seek ways of improving and accelerating recruitment. Education Administrator positions require teacher licenses, and therefore may not be appropriate classification series for all Accountability and Assessment Division positions. Similarly, the statistician classification does not reflect market value or expertise of the work required. The SPO recognizes the issues with the state hiring process, and has the ability to assist the PED in seeking appropriate flexibility to recruit and retain highly qualified personnel in accordance with state civil service requirements. PED should seek such assistance as quickly and aggressively as possible.

Hiring managers should be given greater discretion in identifying the qualifications for positions under their purview. Also, human resources personnel should be expected to be facilitators of and advocates for building a high quality workforce, seeking innovative ways to recruit and retain personnel. While not the subject of this report, it is apparent from multiple interviews that human resource systems within the PED require significant attention and redress.
In cases where PED does not have the option of hiring full time, state civil servants, PED should seek alternative means of building human resource capacity. It might use of contractors with specific expertise to support and leverage PED staff, perhaps through partnerships with area universities.

The Secretary should direct a review of human resources functions, including recruiting, retention and performance management practices. The review should examine ways to handle exemplary performers and poor performers and ways to provide professional development opportunities. In addition, PED should undertake a strategic human resources planning exercise to examine the capacity of PED personnel relative to expected future needs of the organization. This analysis would identify PED strengths and challenges, forecast human capital needs, and inform a succession plan for PED personnel development. Such a

dual look at human resources operations and a strategic view of human capital needs would serve PED and the state well in positioning for the future.

3. Complete the requirements analysis proposed by the CIO and develop IT architecture and "data warehouse" as a result.

The effort of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) to develop a "data warehouse", or PED-wide system for collecting and tracking data, should be placed on an accelerated schedule and supported to fruition. Based on a systematic requirements analysis, this effort requires a clear management process, strong project management discipline and a PED-wide team to support the CIO. In the absence of more rationalized data collection procedures and systems, errors and delays, frustration and confusion are likely to continue. Without accurate and compelling data, the state's compliance efforts and technical assistance to districts will be in jeopardy.

A coordinated, on-line data collection approach will mitigate the need for entering the same data on multiple occasions.

As part of its data collection planning, PED should consider the development of web-based data collection and analysis tools to facilitate data collection and to improve analysis capability. A coordinated, on-line data collection approach will mitigate the need for entering the same data on multiple occasions. (This was a major concern voiced by those at the district level.) The Decision Support Architecture Consortium (DSAC) report and recommendations provide strong guidance regarding data collection and reporting. Furthermore, development of modular procedures and guidelines to assist districts in data collection should be developed on an on-going basis.

OCIO efforts to address issues related to data systems related should be supported, and articulated in an information technology improvement plan that is shared across PED. The data issues related to timeliness, validity and reliability, connectivity and interoperability should be explicitly acknowledged and prioritized. PED should develop a plan/timeline to address them.

4. Address the "redundancy issue" of information and data requests that various bureaus within PED require from schools and districts.

- Coordinate, integrate and synchronize ADS data with all other reports being collected by every entity within the Department. Consider the ADS data warehouse as the first-stop for data requests before asking schools or districts to respond to surveys and reports that involve data already known and housed at PED

- Continue the work of the Federal Coordinating Committee to conduct an inventory of all reports that are requested and processed by PED. This process will better identify and assess their necessity, use and redundancy by other units within PED. Some reports to consider are: Reading First with full-day kindergarten reports, and community parent reporting with the EPSS plan and Title I reports

- Integrate the Bi-lingual application with ADS data already housed at PED

- Assess the timing of due dates for reports that considers: the time of year (e.g. the month of May is extremely difficult) and the amount of time given respondents to adequately prepare accurate, complete reports

- Import data that PED already retains (e.g. ADS data) onto reports so that respondent do not have to continuously import the same data for different reports

5. Enhance the ADS (Accountability Data Assessment) system by considering the following requests identified in the electronic customer survey of superintendents, principals, Title I and Test Coordinators:

- Include free and reduced lunch data

- Provide ability to access data so that schools can compare their performance with other like-schools and districts

- Create user-friendly formats to disseminate the ADS reports to the community and teachers.

- Provide access to longitudinal profiles of students (e.g. performance, test scores, and attendance) to assist teachers in tracking and addressing individual student needs.

- Provide data via locked Excel Data Files, Word documents and/or as an online, interactive database. Currently, data is sent to respondents solely as PDF files, which is the last ranked method of how respondents want to receive ADS data. This does not mean, however, they do not want a PDF copy; it's just that they want a file that can be interactive to make the data more relevant to their local needs.

- Adopt a "fixed-date" to submit data rather than the 40th day of a school calendar year that is disparate throughout the state (over 80 percent of survey respondents report this as urgent).

6. Continue to create tools to help districts interpret accountability and assessment results and to organize and present them in an accessible way that meets audience needs.

The PED website is a powerful tool that can be used much more effectively to disseminate high quality information to the public about educational accountability, and "how to" resources for school and district personnel. The PED should take steps to improve the usefulness, currency and navigability of the AYP information page. Tools should also be developed with substantive understanding of the needs of target audiences: for example, the How to Make AYP Quick Reference Guide appears to be a good summary for the lay person, but not sufficient for district or school staff. The training materials for District Test Coordinators, currently available on-line, are not reachable from the PED home page. An effort should be made to organize, by audience and content, all accountability and assessment materials in one place.

PED should create a matrix for all reports required by PED that identifies, for respondents, the timeline of when they should begin working on data collection; due dates; sources in laws and regulations that require the report, and appropriate PED staff to contact regarding report requirements. This matrix should be posted online with links to contacts and additional resources to help respondents complete the required reports.

In addition to the suggestions above, redesign of the website should be based on a survey of customer needs regarding web use and potential, coupled with information about how bureaus currently conceive of and take advantage of the web as a primary communications vehicle. These tools work in concert with professional development and technical assistance delivery (to be discussed below).

7. Develop and implement a plan for district and school level technical assistance and professional development in support of accountability and assessment objectives.

Developing capacity at the district and school level to better support all aspects of accountability and assessment – including data collection, analysis, communication and school-level technical assistance – is an important part of PED's role. A professional development plan, targeted to personnel in different functions at different parts of the system, would be a useful endeavor. Such a plan and its

implementation is outside the purview of the Accountability and Assessment Division, and should be led by the Professional Development Bureau in partnership with other parts of PED. This should be done in close consultation with district and school personnel to ensure consonance with local needs.

In terms of on-site assistance, the visits of PED staff involved in federal reporting and related technical assistance should be coordinated to minimize the number of independent visits to schools and districts, and to reduce the potential for duplication.

The professional development and capacity building approach should have a major web-based, self-paced component.

The professional development and capacity building approach should have a major web-based, self-paced component. On-line professional development and access to tools supporting instruction, should be part of this undertaking, and can serve as a portal to other sources of effective practices. Technical assistance and professional development for accountability and assessment, concomitant with documenting procedures and processes, is particularly important in light of significant turnover in district and school level staff.

PASS (the Partnership to Advance School Success) is one example of a public/private partnership that PED might investigate as it develops its professional development plans. It pairs volunteer CEO mentors and education coaches with principals of under-performing schools. There are many sources of technical assistance for professional development in support of improving poorly performing schools. In addition, PED does not currently provide on-line professional development. It also does not provide easy access to tools for teachers and other school personnel to integrate curricular materials with diagnostic assessments. These would help them align curriculum with content standards to help schools meet AYP.

8. Enhance the Educational Plans for Student Success strategic planning process.

The EPSS was broadly recognized as a productive initiative that is making significant improvements in the relationship between PED and the districts and schools it serves. To improve that process further, PED should consider steps to:

- Provide more technical assistance to help schools integrate all components of the plans with systemic strategies for overall school performance, direct impact with mission, goals and objectives, alignment with budgetary decisions allocating resources and alignment with curricula. (Some schools report utilizing the Baldrige Framework for Improvement method to achieve strategic integration with EPSS)

- Streamline the process for smaller districts; the one size fits all approach is reported by some smaller districts to be overwhelming or irrelevant in some cases

- Provide assessment data and AYP results before conducting the EPSS process

- Continue the Department's efforts in providing a template for easier utilization, streamlining the process and providing regional workshops on completing and utilizing the EPSS, while simultaneously striving to maintain one consistent format.

9. **Provide more listening opportunities to gain better understanding of how parents, community leaders and school and district personnel are meeting accountability and assessment challenges.**

The complexity of the challenges related to accountability and assessment call for a great deal of listening and sensitivity to perspectives and capacity across the state. To ensure that PED leadership is consistent with and responsive to the needs of the various customer groups it serves, ongoing, structured listening opportunities should be developed to ensure that PED staff develops a deep understanding of on-the-ground needs, and links them to federal and state requirements. For example, the "Capitol for a Day" idea, where state officials hold town meetings across the state and meet with constituents of different agencies and programs, is one way of seeking more public and open input.

These recommendations are entirely consistent with Secretary Garcia's Council on Excellence and Equity plan that was announced subsequent to the April 21-22 conference on closing the achievement gap. The study team wholly endorses those recommendations, which included, in part:

- Hold regional conversations engaging community stakeholders and school personnel to address the achievement gap, and consider creation of regional excellence and equity councils,

- Ensure alignment of professional development efforts, working closely with teacher preparation programs, to include best practices in teaching of math, science and reading, and support for limited English proficient students,

- Amend legislation to adopt more holistic approaches to serving youth, improve coordination among service providers, and improve teacher recruitment, and

- Launch/expand public relations campaign to keep this issue in public conversation.

10. Continue efforts to focus on the needs of Native American children.

Though our review did not focus on the Bureau of Indian Affairs specifically, the following suggestions address some of the unique challenges faced in teaching Native American children, especially as that task relates to improving student achievement and complying with accountability and assessment requirements:

- Develop an intensive mentorship program for new teachers by matching them with Level 3 Native American teachers who have excelled at teaching in context to Native American children in all subject matters

- Adapt where feasible some of the programs and resources offered at the Center of Research on Education Diversity & Excellence at Santa Cruz (UC), cited by the BIA director as a best practice example

- Consider creating an "Endorsement" for Native American teaching to reinforce and elevate the skills required to teach in context with the Native American culture

- Create a consortium with the business and the Native American community to offer scholarships to attract Native Americans to pursue teaching careers. The scholarships would mentor them and provide resources throughout their college careers.

11. Improve the content and navigation of the PED websites.

The importance of technology for driving change is a theme that is repeated throughout the recommendations in this report. PED's efforts to redesign its website comes at a very auspicious time given the challenges the Department faces. Appendix 6, Getting the Message Out: How States are Engaging Constituents in the Process to Improve Schools and Help All Children Succeed profiles three state efforts in this regard. In order to assist in the development of a high-quality website, it is important to consider the elements that characterize notable websites. Noting the criteria used to select award-winning government websites, *www.ped.state.nm.us* should be reoriented with the following in mind:

The impression of the home page should be inviting and it should not overwhelm the visitor with information that all looks alike.

- The impression of the home page should be inviting and it should not overwhelm the visitor with information that all looks alike. The home page can provide many links, but it should do so by variations in format and color and by providing enough white space to let the visitor's eyes "rest." There should also be some visual indicators to remind visitors that they are in different sections of the website, and use of "breadcrumbs" to facilitate navigation. Care should be taken to not to make the website too busy, to avoid flashing and streaming content that provides unnecessary visual "noise" and distracts the visitor from the primary purpose of visiting the PED site. Too much motion on a home page can give the impression that more effort is being given to visual appeal than to actual content, and can substantially impede site performance in areas without high speed connection.

- The agency's message should be easily accessible, and information organized according to customer needs, not internal organizational structure. The mission statement sets the tone and context for the agency. The agency's website is an excellent channel for reinforcing the agency's mission and vision. Information should be organized to serve customer needs, and should not require knowledge of internal organizational structure.

- The website should be easy to navigate. A few basic tools should be available to the visitor. These include search and advanced search capability. The site should also have a site index so that any visitor can quickly understand how the site is organized without having to click through all the tabs and links. All subsequent pages should also have a link back to the home page. An A-Z index should be included for another quick search option.

- Easy navigation also refers to the speed with which documents or information can be loaded. While videos and web casts can be content-rich, they are very slow to load, even with broadband access. A better alternative is to give the visitor the option of downloading a text-based transcript of the video or web cast.

- The home page should provide easy access to commonly-used agency information. The contacts link should include, at a minimum, a physical address, an e-mail address and a phone number. It would be preferable to include a departmental directory with contact staff and their contact information so that the visitor does not have to first go to the division page and then

hunt down contact information. An education agency's website should also have an easy link to user-friendly accountability information and basic statistical information about the state as a whole, school districts and individual schools. There should be a link or tab for FAQs on the home page to provide yet another quick option for users to find answers to their questions.

- PED should create opportunities to seek input from different customer groups about their website needs, and leverage existing interactions for that purpose.

The Center for Digital Government includes four elements in its criteria for Best Government Websites. The first element, which accounts for fifty percent of the score, is functionality. Another 15 percent of the score is based on efficiency or time saved:

- Functionality (ease of use) and improved access: What steps have you taken to ensure customer satisfaction, easy navigation, and clean appearance? How intuitive is the interaction between government and citizens, businesses or other governments, or between the educational institution and its students, teachers and parents?

- Efficiency or time saved: How is what you are doing shaping government or education efficiencies? What has this Web site/application done to streamline services or business? Give specifics on how you have measured the efficiencies and time saved. How are the results replicable?

The Center's award winning education websites for 2004 include:

- California Department of Education, (*www.cde.ca.gov*). This offers an excellent example and map as to how the entire PED web site could be organized.

- Indiana Department of Education's accountability system. This offers an excellent example of how the Accountability and Assessment section could be organized on the PED web site. (*www.doe.state.in.us/asap/*)

- Center for Distributed Learning at the Butte County (CA) Office of Education (*www.ctaponline.org*) . This offers an excellent example of online professional development programs for teachers.

Additional state education sites which include the critical elements should also be noted: Florida (*www.fldoe.org*); Arkansas (*arkedu.state.ar.us/*); Georgia (*www.doe.k12.ga.us/*); Idaho (*www.sde.state.id.us/Dept/*); Montana (*www.opi.state.mt.us*)

The Public Works team reviewed the literature and best practice examples, conducted interviews with PED staff and collected electronic-survey responses to questions about how to enhance the PED web site. Based on our findings, we offer the following specific suggestions:

- Complete the process initiated by the new web director at PED to ask all bureaus and divisions within PED to identify what should be purged on the current site.

    o This should be seen as a top priority and a date certain should be set for a complete purge of outdated and irrelevant data and information posted on the site.

- Create a "Press Room" section on the site that not only offers press releases and archives of such but that also offers Fact Sheets and briefing papers written for journalists on key topics such as NCLB, AYP, Report Cards, Demographics and profile data of New Mexico students and schools.

    These fact sheets should provide context and interpretation for the press of key issues facing education stakeholders. It should also include hyperlinks to additional resources to assist the press in their research of various topics.

- Add a search feature and index of all information available on the PED site (e-survey respondents repeatedly requested this feature).

- Consider creating a navigation point and section for parents that would be a user-friendly, one-stop entry point to navigate the site that also includes postings relevant to them (e.g. Report Cards and how to interpret them, fact sheets on such topics as "NCLB and What it Means to You and Your Child" and "What AYP Reports Tell You").

    This would also include a resource section that provides information, tips, fact sheets, and access to assistance for parents and guardians to help their children become successful students. All language on this section of the website must be in simplified, jargon-free, lay terms with acronyms clearly spelled out and explained. This section of the site should also be available in Spanish.

Resource Implications

We've noted that significant changes for charter schools and licensure can be achieved with minimal expense by focusing on changes in work processes, reprioritizing workload and changing long-standing operational practices. In the accountability and assessment area, however, this is not the case. Until the positions that are currently identified and budgeted for are filled, it will be very difficult for accountability and assessment management and staff to act on many of the changes outlined above. PED's ability to excel in this area is being held hostage by a slow and cumbersome recruiting process. The efforts of an extremely dedicated and committed core group have had a substantial impact on the state's ability to comply with NCLB requirements in terms of collecting data and measuring performance. As in the other two areas, technology investment is critical as well, not only in revamping the PED website (both in terms of improving content and overhauling navigability and structure), but also in supporting improved data management processes under the stewardship of the Chief Information Officer. Finally, improving the communications strategy supporting accountability and assessment is not a particularly resource-intensive undertaking.

Customer Service E-Survey Results

Background

The Secretary of Education requested a customer service survey that would assess the department's progress in providing user-friendly and responsive customer service in three areas: accountability and assessment, teacher licensure and charter schools. To reach the maximum number of customers that interact with PED in these fields, Public Works designed the Department's first electronic survey reaching out to superintendents, principals, test coordinators, Title 1 coordinators and teachers. Nearly 1,600 people responded to the survey.

Public Works designed the Department's first electronic survey reaching out to superintendents, principals, test coordinators, Title 1 coordinators and teachers. Nearly 1,600 people responded to the survey.

Methodology

To construct the e-survey questionnaire, Public Works interviewed those deputies and bureau chiefs responsible for teacher licensure, accountability and assessment, charter schools, the Chief Information Officer and the Secretary to identify points of service for each customer base served by the department. We then constructed two e-surveys: one geared to teachers assessing their experience and needs regarding licensure and one to administrators (superintendents, principals, test coordinators and Title 1 coordinators) to assess their experience and needs regarding accountability and assessment requirements (federal and state) administered by PED.

The Accountability and Assessment Survey, which also included a charter school section, presented 30 questions that evaluated responses to an additional 67 separate pieces of information. Eleven questions solicited open-ended text responses while the others offered a mix of: one rank order question, yes or no responses, demographic data, and forced choice responses to a Likert-type continuum that rates the degree of usefulness or helpfulness to a wide range of customer service products. Four questions allowed respondents to enter text

responses to a "Please specify" prompt. Both surveys took an estimated 10 to 12 minutes to complete.

The Teacher Licensure Survey presented 22 questions that evaluated responses to an additional 24 separate pieces of information. One question was open-ended and five offered opportunities to further specify responses by way of text entry. The survey offered one rank order question, yes or no responses, demographic data, and forced choice responses to a Likert-type continuum that rates the degree of usefulness or helpfulness to a wide range of customer service products and needs of teachers.

Once both e-surveys were constructed, the content was reviewed by the key informant interviewees cited above to identify any necessary corrections. Based upon the results of this review, minor refinements were made and the e-survey was launched. (See the appendix for both survey questionnaires).

The e-survey was sent as a hyperlink embedded in a message from Dr. Garcia asking each individual to participate in the survey. The Teacher Licensure Survey was sent directly to 795 school principals who were asked to forward it to their teachers since PED does not have a master e-mail list of all teachers in New Mexico. This process rendered 1,351 completed surveys by teachers.

The Accountability and Assessment survey was also sent as a hyperlink embedded in a message from Dr. Garcia asking each individual to participate in the survey. It was sent to an email list of:

- Superintendents (89)
- School Principals (795)
- Test Coordinators (140)
- Title I Director/Coordinators (88)

This process rendered 223 completed surveys by school administrators responsible for accountability and assessment, which computes to a 20 percent response rate. Thus, a grand total of 1,574 customers completed the surveys that were launched on May 18, 2005 and remained open for two weeks.

The survey was completely anonymous; however, we did ask respondents to identify what school district they represent and their position. Teachers also indicated the level and type of license they hold. This allowed us to cross-tabulate responses and gain further insight as to the unique perspectives of particular customer groups who interact with PED.

The assurance of confidentiality and anonymity to survey respondents was very important to PED, thus, we designed the e-survey system so that it would not be

capable of tracking responses to e-mail addresses. We achieved this by sending the survey to respondents from an entirely different portal -- the state government e-mail system. When employees received the email letter from Dr. Garcia, they were then asked to click onto a URL address that sent them to a secure, separate website hosting the survey. At that point, the traceable link was broken so there would be no way to track responses back to e-mail addresses. Public Works utilizes the services of Market Tools, Inc., to host, manage and calculate aggregate frequency scores with percentages for each question.

The assurance of confidentiality and anonymity to survey respondents was very important to PED, thus, we designed the e-survey system so that it would not be capable of tracking responses to e-mail addresses.

As noted earlier, one open-ended and five "please specify" text entry questions populated the Teacher Licensure Survey, which yielded 796 text entries. The Accountability and Assessment Survey offered eleven open-ended text entries and four "please specify" prompts, which yielded 998 text entry responses. The three principals of Public Works who worked on this project separately reviewed all of these entries, identifying frequently cited "themes" for each question. A theme was identified as noteworthy when it was expressed by at least 15 percent of respondents. Those themes that reached at least 95 percent consensus among the raters are reported.

Limitations

This survey offered PED an opportunity quickly and economically to assess how a large group of customers – administrators and teachers – rate their interaction with PED points of service relevant to them in several key areas. Rather than rely on a representative sample of the universe of potential respondents from which you can confidently extrapolate how the general population would respond to these questions if they were asked, this approach solicits opinions from the universe itself. This means however, that the results are based upon those who decide to respond, which may or may not represent all segments of the universe to be questioned. The Teacher Licensure Survey was dependent upon each school principal forwarding the email letter from Dr. Garcia to the teachers under his or her jurisdiction. Thus, we are not able to report an overall response rate as we do not know if all school principals forwarded the e-mail. In fact, we suspect that of the 89 school districts in New Mexico, teachers in 19 districts or 21 percent of all districts did not receive the e-mail from Dr. Garcia as there were zero entries to the question asking respondents to cite their school district. Only 4 percent of respondents did not identify what school district they represent.

As to the Accountability and Assessment Survey, of the 223 completed surveys, thirty percent did not identify what school district they represented. As a result, 29

districts were not cited. We believe, in this instance, more districts were represented than actually reported.

Hearing directly from nearly 1,600 people representing 80 percent of districts who interact with various points of service provides PED a solid first step in assessing how customers rate their service experience with the Department.

Time of year also suppressed the response rate in that the survey was launched near the end of the school year (May), which represents a very busy time of year for both teachers and administrators.

Even so, hearing directly from nearly 1,600 people representing 80 percent of districts who interact with various points of service provides PED a solid first step in assessing how customers rate their service experience with the Department. We suggest re-launching the survey in the Fall of 2005. PED might provide periodic, continuous customer service surveys throughout the year.

For clarity, survey results are presented separately.

Accountability and Assessment Survey Results

Who Responded

Of the 223 people who responded to the survey:

- More than half (53 percent) were school principals or assistant principals
- Twelve percent were Title I Director/Coordinators
- Ten percent were superintendents
- Eight percent were Test Coordinators
- One-fourth indicated "Other" as their position with the school district or school, most of which were teachers.

One-third of superintendents who received the e-survey responded while 30 percent of Title I Directors/Coordinators did. Fourteen percent of principals and test coordinators who received the survey responded. Overall, the survey yielded a twenty percent response rate, which is above the norm for surveys of the general public and within the norm for employee surveys.

The Districts most represented by the respondents were Albuquerque (16 percent of all respondents), Aztec (8 percent), Las Cruces (9 percent), Los Lunas (4 percent), Roswell (4 percent) and 55 other districts. Those districts that received no identifier among respondents: Alamogordo, Belen, Bernalillo, Capitan, Carrizozo, Cloudcroft, Corona, Des Moines, Dora, Dulce, Elida, Espanola, Floyed, Fort Sumner, Grady, Grants, House, Jal, Jemez Mountain, Lake Arthur,

Lordsburg, Magdalena, Maxwell, Reserve, San Jon, Santa Rosa, Socorro, Tatum, Tucumcari and Tularosa. Please note that almost one-third of the respondents did NOT indicate which district they were from, thus, we do believe that more districts were likely represented among this sample than reported.

Review of General Findings

Single Application Process for Titles I through V. This new process initiated by PED received very high marks for being user-friendly: Of the 98 people who indicate that they had experience with the process, 97 percent report that it was either "somewhat or very easy" and 85 percent report that it took them no more than two-to-four weeks to complete.

"Having it on Excel was a great improvement this year. The RFA itself was the best I've seen in the six years I've been completing the Consolidated Application for our district."
-- Survey respondent

Nearly 100 respondents gave text responses to Question 4, which asked if they had any suggestions to improve the single application process at the state level. Most took the opportunity to compliment PED for the new process. The most prominent themes suggested by respondents to improve the process are:

- Give us a little more lead time to complete the application and learn of workshops.
- Align the application process to integrate with EPSS Plans.
- Allow for more line space to enter data.

Self-Assessment Monitoring Guide. Respondents who had experience with this guide – which comprised of less than half of all respondents – report that one in five found it to be "Very Helpful" while 68 percent found it to be "Somewhat Helpful." One in ten did not find it very helpful.

Educational Plans for Student Success (EPSS) also received solid marks for being either "Very Helpful" (36 percent) or "Somewhat Helpful" (48 percent) for those who reported having had experience with the process. Sixteen percent, however, did not find the process very helpful. The most prominent themes suggested by respondents to improve the EPSS process are:

- Provide more technical assistance in helping schools integrate all components of the plans (e.g., strategies for overall school performance, direct impact on mission, goals and objectives, alignment with budgets, allocating resources and alignment with curricula).
- Streamline the process for smaller districts; the one size fits all approach is overwhelming or irrelevant.

- Provide assessment data and AYP results before conducting the EPSS process.
- Continue providing templates for easier utilization and streamlining the process.
- Provide more regional workshops on completing and utilizing the EPSS.
- Strive to maintain one consistent format.

Federal Coordinating Committee. PED recently established this committee to better coordinate all of the federal and state reporting requirements affecting the districts. Respondents were asked, "What would you like to see them address?" Over one-third of the respondents offered suggestions, many of which were also cited in response to questions on: how to improve the ADS system and how to address the "redundancy issue." Here is what respondents suggest the committee address:

- Identify all reports that must be submitted with a timelines for due dates, list of requirements, contact and additional resource information for further assistance.
- Coordinate site visits of PED federal reporting technical assistance staff so that all relevant staff visit the district and or school on the same day.
- When assessing the timing of due dates for reports, consider: the time of year (e.g. the month of May is extremely difficult) and the amount of time given respondents to adequately turn around an accurate, complete report.
- Import data that PED already retains (e.g. ADS data) onto state and federal required reports so that respondent do not have to continuously enter the same data for different reports.
- Keep streamlining reports and the processes to complete them.
- Wherever possible, reduce paperwork.

Redundancy Issue. During key informant interviews with PED, a good number of administrators believed that one of the chief customer complaints is redundancy in which various bureaus within PED ask schools and districts for the same data or information. To further explore this phenomenon, respondents were asked to share if they had any example of redundancy that they would like PED to address.

The following redundancy themes emerged from the text responses:

- Need to coordinate, integrate and synchronize ADS data with all other reports being collected by every entity within the department.

- PED should use its own ADS data warehouse as the first-stop for data requests by bureaus before asking schools or districts to respond to surveys.
- Populate report requests with data already known and housed at PED (saving school and district staff from repeatedly entering the same data).
- Integrate Reading First with full-day kindergarten reports; Community parent reporting with the EPSS plan and Title I reports.
- Integrate the Bi-lingual application with ADS data already housed at PED.

Technical Assistance. PED has initiated a number of strategies to enhance technical assistance and is exploring other methods to assist district and school administrators in meeting accountability and assessment requirements. Respondents were presented with fifteen methods of imparting technical assistance and were asked to rate them as either "Most Effective, Effective, Somewhat Effective or Not Very Effective.

The following table presents the ranking of the top seven strategies, to which at least 50 percent of the respondents gave a "Most Effective or Effective" rating. They are rank ordered with the most favored being cited first.

Table 1

Most Favored Methods of Receiving Technical Assistance by 50%-plus of Respondents
1. One-on-one mentoring sessions
2. One-day sessions not involving an overnight stay
3. Regional Workshops
4. Inventories of Best Practices on various subjects with contact information
5. E-mail updates with
6. "Train the Trainer" programs
7. Tool Kits

Technical Assistance preferences by 40 percent of respondents are: Interactive online training sessions, and interactive self-paced CDs and video-conferencing that allows for live interaction with presenters. The technical assistance methods least favored by respondents are: passive video conferencing that involves simply listening to experts (50 percent rated them as "Not Very Effective") and phone conference calls (30 percent rated them as "Not Very Effective").

The Accountability Data Assessment (ADS) system is at the core of the accountability and assessment program of PED. Respondents were asked, "In what format would you like to receive your ADS data?" Currently, they receive the

results via PDF files. Here is how those respondents who rendered an opinion would like the data and reports formatted:

Table 2

Preferred Method to receive ADS Reports	Percent
1. Excel Spread Sheets	35%
2. Word Document	28%
3. Online, interactive database	21%
4. PDF File	15%

The following themes surfaced when respondents were asked, "Are there specific ADS data that you would like to have access to and if so, what kind of analyses would you run?"

- Provide ability to access data so that schools can compare their performances with other like-schools and districts from one year to the next.
- Offer user-friendly formats to disseminate the ADS reports to the community and teachers.
- Provide access to longitudinal profiles of students (e.g. performance, test scores, and attendance) to assist teachers in tracking and addressing individual student needs.
- Adopt a "fixed-date" to submit data rather than the 40th day of a school calendar year. This suggestion was also picked up in Question 19 as a strategy that more than 80 percent of survey respondents report as urgent.
- Include free and reduced lunch data.

Nearly half of the respondents felt that teachers know how to interpret assessment data , however, one in four believe they do not know how and one in five feel that even though they know how to interpret it, they really do not think it is relevant to them and how they teach.

When asked, "What kind of data would help teachers better align their curricula to meet the standards," the following thematic responses are profiled:

- "Timely" reports would make the greatest impact on re-aligning the curricula to improve student success in reaching standards and benchmarks.
- If teachers receive assessment data in late May, for example, they would be in a much better position to make curricula changes prior to the new school year.

- Teachers are also hopeful that the "short term assessments" will further aid in this direction.
- Providing more training to teachers that show them how to disaggregate assessment data as it relates to their students, and what and how they are teaching.
- Present user-friendly formats of assessment data – some suggest that an "Item Map" or blueprint be provided with NMSBA and NMHSSA results.
- Provide assessment data in a more meaningful context so that teachers can correlate and reference connections of assessment results to standards (e.g. item analysis of NMSBA and CRT to specific standards.)

Information Technology (IT). Many of PED's new strategies to improve customer service in accountability and assessment will rely upon creating a state of the art IT infrastructure, matched by customers' ability to access the Internet. Thus, it is good news that only seven percent of respondents report that they must contend with dial-up capacity. The others report high speed throughout the school and more than half report it within classrooms, as well. According to the LITES division, New Mexico public schools do have 100 percent connectivity and nearly all have broadband access. However, some schools experience high "down rates," meaning that because of network demands that outpace resource and capacity, there are periods of time in which no one has access to broadband.

Accountability and Assessment Initiatives. Six new strategies implemented by PED to create a more user-friendly process with accountability and assessment were presented to respondents to rate as to how helpful each has been to them.

Of those who indicated they had experience with these strategies, the following table rank orders how helpful respondents rated these strategies:

Table 3

New PED User-friendly Strategies	Percent Extremely or Very Helpful
1. Pre-coded Labels	80%
2. Front-end Checking	68%
3. Procedure Manual for NM Standards Based Assessment Program	63%
4. Procedure Manual for Analysis	63%
5. Biography Data Analysis	60%
6. District Report Cards	59%

Average Yearly Progress (AYP) reports have been a major undertaking for the New Mexico PED as with all state education agencies throughout the country, as mandated by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Respondents were asked how helpful four different initiatives would be in assisting them in presenting "AYP results to their community." It is very clear that the single most important action PED can take in this direction is to give administrators of schools and districts "enough lead time to prepare a response." The following table presents how helpful respondents found each of these strategies to assist with AYP:

Table 4

Strategies to present AYP to communities	Percent Extremely or Very Helpful
1. Enough lead time to prepare a response	88%
2. Hold briefing sessions with us prior to release on how to interpret	79%
3. Prepare public information Fact Sheets (print and web based) that explain the results	78%
4. Prepare "Talking Points" with parents and press to help us explain this in lay terms."	75%

Besides reviewing the above four strategies, respondents were asked if they had suggestions as to how PED can assist the respondents with AYP. The following themes emerged:

- The NCLB Special Education requirement that set proficiency standards for special education students for testing at their grade level should be changed. Students can not meet this unrealistic requirement.
- Analyze both Special Education and English Language Learner accountability measures of NCLB as to whether or not they serve the best interest of New Mexican children.
- PED should be an advocate on behalf of schools and districts to change parts of the law (NCLB) that are harmful to public education.
- Give us AYP results early enough for school districts to analyze, clarify and develop a response (August is too late).
- Provide AYP results for parents in Spanish, maybe even the Navajo language.
- Allow districts to review a "first pass" of the AYP report before publication, so that Districts and PED can validate, clarify, interpret and correct data before it is presented to the public.

Setting Priorities. PED has been faced with a great many challenges within a short period of time – among them, organizing a new department in state government and implementing major national (NCLB) and state (HB 212) legislative mandates. All this has been attempted with modest, and in some instances, inadequate Information Technology and human resource capacity. To assist PED in setting priorities of what should to be addressed first, respondents were asked to rate from one to six (one being the most urgent and six being the least urgent) nine initiatives. The following table rank orders how each initiative fared as being the first and second most urgent:

Table 5

PED Initiatives: What is the most urgent?	Percent of top two urgency levels
1. Post "Best Practice" examples on a wide range of topics that include contact information.	76%
2. Create Tool Kits to help teachers interpret assessment results & align their curricula to meet NCLB standards.	75%
3. TA on how to analyze data patterns or relationships that indicate curricula or teaching practices should be refined to meet standards.	73%

4.	Create a PED website that is easy to navigate for school administrators, teachers and parents.	73%
5.	TA on how to interpret assessment results for school administrators.	67%
6.	Provide online, interactive information systems so you can conduct your own data analysis.	62%
7.	Rather than use a 40th day cut off, set a date specific so all school data is universal.	61%
8.	Develop on-line professional development programs for teachers.	48%
9.	Post school report cards on the PED web site.	48%

Factors Influencing Accountability and Assessment. When asked to rank order how much six factors influence accountability and assessment requirements, district and school administrators responded with the following rankings:

Rank order of influence on accountability and assessment

1. No Child Left Behind Law
2. New Mexico State Laws
3. PED Regulations and Policies
4. Public Opinion
5. The Press
6. Union Requirements

Teacher Licensure Process. Respondents were presented ten strategies to make the teacher licensure process more user-friendly. (This same list was also shared with the teacher sample.) The table below shows how the district and school administrators rate those strategies as either "Extremely Helpful or Very Helpful:"

Table 6

PED Teacher Licensure Process: Degree of helpfulness of each strategy rank ordered by district and school administrators	Percent of extremely or very helpful	Teacher Sample Ranking
1. Ability to go online and find the status of application	95%	2/90%
2. Ability to email PED and receive response in 24 hours	95%	3/89%
3. Forms that can be completed on computer and printed out	94%	4/87%
4. Check-list of everything you must have in application	94%	1/93%
5. Clearly written Guide Book on what is required for each type license	93%	NA
6. Online application process for license renewals	92%	9/83%
7. FAQ for each type of licensure on PED website	89%	8/83%
8. Ability to call PED for status report on application	88%	5/85%
9. Easy to understand "Tool Kit" for applications	87%	6/85%
10. List of "Top Ten Mistakes" to avoid in completing an application	87%	7/84%

Both groups reached consensus on what they consider the top four initiatives that would make the teacher licensure process more user-friendly. Both groups welcome the opportunity to electronically communicate with PED regarding the status of their application and would find the ability to download forms that could be filled-out on their computer or online as extremely helpful. One of the simplest initiatives to implement – a Check-list of everything you must have in an application – is ranked first by teachers and makes the "top four" among administrators.

Districts and teacher licensure. When asked what districts are doing to make the licensure process easier, respondents report that:

- Just more than half assign one person to be the point of contact for licensure
- Six out of ten assign a coach to help teachers through the process
- Nearly one out of three assign someone to conduct a final check before an application is mailed in

![public works logo - making good ideas work for the better]

- One out of five holds quarterly briefings on licensure requirements with teachers.

These findings are similar to what teachers report as well. When asked if they could share a "What Works" example from their district, a wide range of ideas was presented by 47 respondents. Mentoring strategies were the most frequently reported strategies. Check-lists or flow charts that respondents had developed, and coaching for the new dossier requirements, followed.

Charter Schools Survey Results

Three questions centered upon charter schools: PED's role in providing technical assistance to districts and schools, its performance of roles related to charter schools and an open ended text question asking for any suggestions as to how the PED Charter School Bureau could better serve schools' needs. Three-fourths of the respondents indicate that they had no experience with charter schools and thus rated their responses as "non-Applicable."

One quarter of respondents (n = 37) found applicable the question, "How helpful is PED at providing technical assistance to you in affecting your ability to work with your local charter schools?" They ranked PED as "Extremely or Very Helpful" in the following areas:

1. Student performance standards (56 percent)
2. Financial and budget requirements (52 percent)
3. Curriculum requirements (50 percent)
4. State regulations that apply directly to charter schools (48 percent)

The three areas where respondents believe PED is "Not so Helpful" are:

1. Student progress reports filed by charter schools (45 percent)
2. Interpreting financial reports of charter schools (42 percent)
3. PED onsite technical assistance intensives at charter schools (38 percent).

When asked. "How helpful is PED at performing the following roles related to charter schools," respondents rank the following as the top three "Extremely or Very Helpful:"

1. Interpreter of regulations and policies (50 percent)
2. Technical assistance provider to districts (50 percent)
3. Provider of coherent, coordinated policies on charter schools (46 percent)

Nearly half (47 percent) of the respondents indicate that the PED role most frequently rated as "Not so Helpful" was facilitator between districts and charter schools. On the other hand, 43 percent found PED to be helpful as a facilitator. One out of three did not find PED's role as "Impartial judge of charter school disputes or closures" as helpful.

The open-ended question, "How can the PED Charter School Bureau better serve your needs in working with your local charter schools," drew responses as follows:

- More "bridging" with charter schools: strengthen the district liaison connection, and know more about what charters are doing and where they are located.
- Hold charter schools to the same accountability levels: Keep charter school standards up to par to ease transitions between charters and public schools. Ensure that charters follow NCLB policies.
- Be an advocate: Have District, PED, and NCA personnel conduct joint site visits to see first hand activities that occur at the local level. Create an agency wide positive attitude towards charters so they don't have to be on the defensive.
- Better communication across PED about Charter Schools.

The sample for this response is extremely small, however, much of what is exemplified with these findings comports to what we learned through key informant interviews. It may be very helpful for PED to create a specific survey on and for charter schools to better gain more insight as to their needs. This survey was sent to all charter school principals and or directors, but only three respondents indicated that they were a charter school principal or director.

Teacher Licensure E-Survey Results

Who Responded

Over 2,500 visits were made to the URL hosting the survey, of which 1,351 teachers submitted a completed survey. Of this number, the majority (64 percent) had interacted with PED regarding their teacher license more than six months ago. Fifteen percent interacted between four and six months ago, thirteen percent within the last two to three months and eight percent within the last month.

The majority of the respondents (37 percent) were Level 3 Master Teachers while one in four were Level 2 Professional Highly Qualified. One in five identified themselves as Level 2 Professional teachers while one in ten were Level 1

Provisional. Seven percent were Level I Provisional Highly Qualified and only 2 percent held a Temporary One-Year License.

The chart below cross-tabulates the number of years teaching in New Mexico with the level of licensure. As would be expected, those with greater years of service hold the greatest percentage of Level 2 Professional Highly Qualified and Level 3 Master Teacher licenses.

Table 7

What level of license did you most recently seek or hold with the NM PED?	How long have you been teaching in New Mexico?				
	1 to 2 years	**3 to 5 years**	**5 to 10 years**	**10 to 15 years**	**16 years plus**
Temporary One Year License	10%	3%	1%	0%	0%
Level 1 Provisional	39%	12%	3%	1%	1%
Level 1 Provisional Highly Qualified	26%	14%	3%	1%	1%
Level 2 Professional	9%	33%	27%	18%	14%
Level 2 Professional Highly Qualified	8%	30%	32%	32%	14%
Level 3 Master Teacher	8%	8%	34%	48%	70%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The typical respondent of this survey interacted with PED regarding licensure over six months ago; is a Level 3 Master Teacher; has been teaching in New Mexico for eleven-plus years and is an Elementary Teacher K-8.The table below identifies the number of years survey respondents have been teaching in New Mexico.

Table 8

Number of Years Teaching in NM	Percent
1 to 2 years	13%
3 to 5 years	19%
5 to 10 years	23 %
11 to 15 years	21%
16 years plus	24%

The most common type of license among the respondents was "Elementary Teacher K-8" at 44 percent, while "Secondary Teacher 7-12" accounted for 20 percent of the survey respondents. Twelve percent were "Grades K-12 Teachers,"

and just one percent were "Secondary Vo-Tech Teachers." One in five classified their type of license as "Other," the vast majority being Special Education teachers.

The Districts most represented by the respondents are Albuquerque (11 percent of all respondents), Las Cruces (9 percent), Los Lunas (8 percent), Farmington (8 percent), Central (7 percent), Alamogordo (6 percent), Hobbs (5 percent) and 63 other districts. Those districts that received no identifier among respondents: Corona, Fort Sumner, Hagerman, Jal, Jemez Valley, Maxwell, Melrose, Mesa Vista, Moriarity, Pojoaque, Quemador, Reserve, Santa Rosa, Silver, Socorro, Tucumcari, Tularosa, Vaugn and Zuni.

Review of General Findings

License Turn Around and Customer Satisfaction. The majority of respondents (61 percent) believe that three to four weeks for PED to process a license is a reasonable amount of time. Twenty percent have higher expectations, thinking that PED should turn around a license within two weeks. The remaining nineteen percent would allow five to eight weeks for licensure processing. Based upon these results, if PED were to consistently process applications within a three week window, customer service satisfaction would be extremely high in terms of this benchmark alone.

Actual experience, as reported by the respondents, indicates that:

- Most (37 percent) received a license in 7 to 12 weeks.
- Twenty-seven percent received a license in 5 to 6 weeks.
- Twenty-one percent received a license within 3 to 4 weeks.
- Fifteen percent received a license between 13 to 16-plus weeks.

One in five customers received their license during what the majority of respondents believe is a reasonable period of time to turn around a license. The majority, however, encounter turn-around rates that involve twice as much time as what they expect or consider acceptable.

Despite the incongruence between expectations and delivery, the PED Licensure Bureau appears to be on solid footing in achieving customer satisfaction, as almost seventy percent of respondents rate their most recent experience in receiving their license from PED as either "Excellent" (24 percent) or "Good" (44 percent). One in three, however, is not satisfied: twenty percent rate their experience as only "Fair" and thirteen percent say it is "Inadequate."

When asked whether or not they have "found the licensing process at PED improving over the past year," one in three said "Not Really," while fifteen percent said very much so and fifty percent said "Somewhat." Thus, it is

consistently evident that one out of every three licensure customers of PED is not satisfied with his or her experience.

To further explore who was dissatisfied with the licensure experience, we cross-tabulated the level of licensure with how respondents rate their most recent experience. We found that the groups most likely to rate their experience as less than satisfactory (Fair or Inadequate) are those at the beginning stages of teacher licensure: Level 1 Provisional, Temporary One-Year and Level 1 Provisional Highly Qualified (Listed in rank order of dissatisfaction). We also found that the Level 1 groups were more likely to report an incomplete application experience than other groups.

Incomplete Applications. In interviews with licensure staff, it was posited that one of the reasons that applications are delayed are the number of incomplete applications that are submitted and must be returned. However, among this group of 1,350 teachers, only 10 percent report being told by PED that they filed an incomplete application. Of this group, it is learned that:

- The majority (37 percent) was never told by PED that their application was incomplete; they had to call to find out.
- Nearly one-third (32 percent) were told between three and six weeks after they sent an application that it was incomplete.
- Nearly one-fourth (24 percent) were told between seven and ten weeks or more after they sent an application that it was incomplete.
- Less than one-tenth (7 percent) were told within one to two weeks after they sent an application that it was incomplete.

Those respondents who state that their license application was incomplete were given ten common reasons that PED suggests might contribute towards an incomplete status. Of these ten reasons, the most common cited by respondents is transcript-related. Either the applicant forgot to send it or the transcript did not have all the information required by PED (17 percent). Others sent in a personal check, which is unacceptable by the department (6 percent). Other reasons cited (less than five percent each) are: forgot to include type of license being requested, part of the application was not filled out, the superintendent's signature was missing, fingerprints were missing or applicants forgot to include money order or cashier's check.

The majority of respondents (66 percent), however, chose "Other, Please Specify," on the list of possible reasons for incomplete applications. The over-riding themes from 100 text responses are presented in Table 9:

Table 9
Text Responses as to Why Licensure Applications are Incomplete

Themes	Observations/Notes
Locus of cause of incomplete application:	
A. PED	The greatest number of respondents cited PED as being responsible for the incomplete application. Many respondents had the experience of PED losing their applications, transcripts, background checks, and even money orders.
B. Applicant	In some cases, the applicant failed to complete the paperwork correctly or was not yet qualified to apply. In some cases, the applicant was confused by the instructions/requirements or received conflicting information resulting in an application being rejected by PED.
Element or item that was incomplete:	
A. Transcript	The most problematic element in the application packet is transcripts: Because they arrive at PED separately, in many cases PED cites the transcript as either being lost or not received. Also, transcripts were misinterpreted by failing to give the applicant the appropriate college credits. In some cases, the transcript sent by the college or university was incomplete for PED's purposes.
B. Fingerprints	This is the second most common element causing incomplete applications mainly because faxed fingerprints are illegible.
Failure to meet qualifications:	
A. Payment	In a few cases, the payment amount was incorrect or PED lost the payment or misfiled it.
B. Assessment of coursework	In some cases, PED incorrectly assessed the transcript.
C. Information or license from another state	Many respondents transferring licenses from other states report that PED does not understand the information from the other state and therefore, rejects the application rather than call the applicant or other state for clarification.

Degree of difficulty by licensure level and other components of the licensing process. To better understand and disaggregate how respondents assess the level of difficulty in applying for licensure, we presented nine licensure components and asked respondents to rate them on a scale of one to four. The chart below presents the breakdown of responses by those who claimed to have experience with the particular process.

Table 10

17. How would you rate the following licensure processes?				
Process	**1** **Fairly** **Simple**	**2** **Reasonable**	**3** **Too** **complicated** **but it's** **necessary**	**4** **Too complicated** **Unnecessarily**
1. Level 1 License	**31%**	**43%**	11%	15%
2. Level 2 License	**20%**	**44%**	14%	22%
3. Level 3 License	17%	35%	15%	**33%**
4. Proving Highly Qualified Status	12%	36%	19%	**33%**
5. Renewing a license maintaining current status	**23%**	**53%**	10%	14%
6. Applying for an Endorsement	**18%**	**52%**	16%	14%
7. Submitting a Professional Development Dossier	3%	11%	21%	**65%**
8. Acquiring reciprocity from another state	12%	30%	25%	**33%**
9. Competency Testing	15%	42%	20%	23%

Several points stand out from these findings:

- Licensure renewal, applying for endorsements, Level 1 and Level 2 licensure are seen as the easiest and most reasonable of all the licensure processes.

- Three areas that portend customer dissatisfaction are those that are seen as "too complicated unnecessarily" and three areas yield a 33 percent response rate. In other words, one out of every three teachers who experienced: acquiring reciprocity from another state, applying for Level 3 licensure or proving highly qualified status found the process to be unnecessarily complicated.

- The most problematic area by far is submitting a Professional Development Dossier generating a 65 percent response rate from teachers believing that the process is too complicated and unnecessarily so. Insights as to why teachers believe this are explored in the next section.

It appears that as the level of licensure rises, the teacher's perception of difficulty increases. Half of all respondents report that they only understand the process for moving up to the next level of their licensure "somewhat" or "not at all." This suggests that PED will need to focus on those teachers in the pipeline for advancement so that they better understand the process now and prevent future problems with customer dissatisfaction.

Applying for a Professional Development Dossier. This component of the licensure process operated by the Professional Development Bureau evoked the most negative "emotional" reaction among respondents. Just over one hundred people (8 percent) indicate that they had submitted a Professional Development Dossier. They were provided the opportunity to enter a text response to the question, "what was the process like for you? We received 137 responses, indicating that 35 people had started completing a dossier and had not completed it, but still chose to comment. The following chart identifies the major themes that emerged. These themes are also validated from other text responses that suggest additional improvements to the licensure process in general.

Table 11
If you submitted a Professional Development Dossier, what was the process like for you?

Themes	Observations/Notes
The PDD is unreasonable.	The most common response was that the PDD ranged from "tedious" and "awful" to "unreasonable". It is viewed as an endurance test more than a useful exercise. In a few cases, teachers cited they were leaving NM teaching because of it. 65% of the text responses were highly negative.
The dossier is very time consuming.	The time requirement along with the perception that the exercise is unreasonable led many respondents to raise the concern that their time would have been better spent focusing on their students.
The requirements kept changing.	Changing requirements, requirements being added, and conflicting or vague requirements or instructions created frustration. The deadlines for the Level 2 application and the dossier were different. Also, the resulting waiver/extension for the Level 2 application meant that some teachers went through the exercise for no reason. Online submission was problematic.
A worthwhile experience for some.	A modest segment of respondents believed that preparing the dossier was a good experience or they at least understood why a dossier was required. More respondents fell into this category than the number who stated it was purely a "worthless exercise." They also cited having had access to a support team and/or resources to help prepare it. This appears to make a critical difference.
The dossier is not a good indicator of teacher quality.	A modest segment of respondents felt that the dossier was a paper exercise that was not a good indicator of teacher quality.
The process is extremely stressful.	Teachers believed that their livelihood depended on the quality of their dossier, yet the time involved combined with changing requirements made the process very stressful.
Needed a rubric to follow.	A clear example of a successful dossier would have been useful.

Where people turn to for help on licensure applications. To better understand where teachers seek advice on how to complete their applications, (and hence, to determine where best to focus training materials) we asked respondents, "Whenever you have questions about applying for your license, who do you turn

to?" The following is the rank order of where teachers most frequently seek advice to submit an application:

1. Human Resource Personnel at their school (33 percent).
2. School Principal (25 percent)
3. A fellow teacher (22 percent)
4. Call PED directly (17 percent)
5. Go to PED web site (13 percent)
6. Designated contact at school – not Human Resources (9 percent)
7. Teach New Mexico web site (8 percent)
8. Superintendent (3 percent)

Eight percent of the respondents (111 entries) entered a text response, for "Other, Please Specify." Most used this opportunity to further explain who they contacted. The most common response was speaking with someone at the school or district level related to Human Resources. Others cited actually driving to Santa Fe to meet with the Licensure Bureau in person, going to their union representative or a fellow teacher. Cross-tabulating "turn-around time" with "who people turn to" for questions reveals that those who went to a Human Resources person at their school were much more likely to receive their license within 3 to 4 weeks than any other source of contact.

What can be done at the District level? Teachers were given a list of four steps that can be taken at the district level to ease the licensure process. Respondents could make multiple choices as to what they believe are helpful.

Below is the rank listing of those most frequently chosen:

1. Assign one person to be the contact for licensure.
2. Assign a coach to help new teachers through the process.
3. Assign someone to conduct a final check before it is mailed to PED.
4. Hold quarterly briefings on licensure requirements with teachers.

User-friendly initiatives by PED. The department has been implementing a number of initiatives to streamline the licensing process and make it more user-friendly. And the results show: The majority of respondents (seven out of ten) find the process is improving and are well satisfied with their customer service with PED and the licensure process.

To better assess what current and potential strategies would be considered most helpful by teachers, we presented nine action steps and/or initiatives that the Licensure Bureau could or does offer and asked respondents to rate how helpful they believe each would be to enhance the licensure process. The table below depicts their responses.

Table 12

PED is working to make the licensure process more user-friendly. How useful would you find the following:				
Initiatives	1 Extremely helpful	2 Very Helpful	3 Somewhat helpful	4 Not so helpful
1. Online application process for license renewals	57%	26%	13%	4%
2. Forms I can fill out directly on my computer and then print out	58%	29%	10%	3%
3. Ability to go online and find out the status of my application	**69%**	21%	7%	3%
4. Frequently Asked Questions on each type of licensure on the PED web site	55%	28%	14%	3%
5. List of the "Top Ten Mistakes" to avoid in completing your application	52%	31%	13%	3%
6. Ability to email PED and receive a response in 24 hours	**68%**	21%	6%	4%
7. Ability to call PED to determine the status of my application	58%	27%	10%	5%
8. A well designed, easy to understand "Tool Kit" for applications	54%	31%	11%	4%
9. A Check List of everything you must have in your application	**69%**	24%	5%	2%

The top three initiatives that teachers believe would make the process more user-friendly are: the ability to go online and review the status of their applications, ability to e-mail PED with a 24-hour response and a simple Check List of everything you must have in your application. These findings are consistent to what administrators also believe would make the process more efficient. These efforts are all relatively easy to implement and indicate that teachers are more than

publicworks
making good ideas work for the better

willing to use online resources to get answers which, once established, can create less human resource demands on the Bureau.

Respondents were also provided the opportunity to suggest any additional improvements they think PED could make with the licensing process. Nearly 300 people responded with suggestions.

The most consistent and frequent themes for additional improvements are:

- Ability to talk to a live person. If online contact doesn't resolve the issue, teachers want to talk to an individual who is knowledgeable, courteous and able to handle the issue. The number should be toll free and the wait should be less than five minutes.

- Modify the licensure requirements. This is the second most frequent suggestion. Many felt that requirements need to be more reasonable and more reflective of actual experience and education.

- Consistent information. Information received from various channels, and in some cases within PED itself, is conflicting, confusing or out-of-date.

- Strengthen the online option for submitting applications. The e-mail contact on the website should result in an e-mail response. When applications are submitted online, there should be an automatic e-mail confirmation. Provide an online help option and online meetings to walk teachers through the licensure process. Allow for digital signatures so entire application can be submitted online.

Perception of what influences teacher licensing requirements in New Mexico. In order to better understand how customers believe requirements evolve from PED regarding licensure, teachers were asked to rank order six factors; one being the most influential and six the least. Below is how respondents ranked them:

Rank order of influence on teacher licensing requirements

1. No Child Left Behind Law
2. New Mexico State Laws
3. PED Regulations and Policies
4. Union Requirements
5. Public Opinion
6. The Press

Summary

The New Mexico PED is clearly on the right track to improving customer service as evidenced by the responses from its customer base of teachers and administrators. Most are pleased with the direction that the department is taking to create user-friendly interface with services provided by the PED. Constructive recommendations to enhance service delivery focus on timely and accessible assessment data, lead time to respond to AYP reports, integrated data and reporting throughout the PED, synergized due dates for reports, and on-going technical assistance (especially in interpreting and disaggregating data for better teacher interpretation). Online capacity for assessment data and public education materials regarding AYP and NCLB would be very welcome. These efforts must embrace and engage the charter schools in a more proactive manner.

> *Teachers are looking for a more user-friendly online interface with PED for licensure processing; human intervention when needed; a turn-around time of three to four weeks for processing licensure applications.*

Teachers are looking for a more user-friendly online interface with PED for licensure processing; human intervention when needed; a turn-around time of three to four weeks for processing licensure applications, and more efficiencies in handling items included in an applications, especially transcripts. Reciprocity with other states and less complicated Level 3 and Highly Qualified Status applications are desired, especially, less onerous submission requirements for a Professional Development Dossier.

There are many infrastructure and policy initiatives in the planning stages at PED, cited in this report, that will greatly aid in creating a platform for continuous improvement in customer service and product delivery.

Chapter

8

Action Plan for NM PED Leadership

The recommendations cited in this report are grouped in three areas: teacher licensure, charter schools, and accountability and assessment. While similar themes appear throughout – such as the need for improved coordination and communication, along with issues pertaining to the website and technology – the recommendations in each area are intended to provide a roadmap for PED managers as they strive to improve customer service across the Department. The Secretary and her team can take immediate steps to provide guidance regarding how to ensure that action and results ensue from the findings and recommendations included in this report.

> *"I have been very pleased with the new PED. They are much more responsive, reflective and customer oriented. I have a point of contact that I can reach at any time. I feel that for the first time in almost 25 years, NM is on the right track.*
> -- School superintendent, E-survey respondent.

A core team of leaders from across the Department should be charged with reviewing the report and recommendations, developing action plans and establishing a follow up process and timeline for each area. A high level customer service team would then be responsible for oversight of customer service improvement efforts across the Department. Such a process might include chartering several sub-teams – one in each area, and also communications and technology working groups to address these crosscutting issues. Each action plan should include specific implementation steps and milestones. The management team should track progress on a monthly basis. Action in each area should not be wholly delegated to the bureau level. The Secretary should designate a "champion" of the implementation effort to serve as overall guide, coordinator and advocate for change. Recognizing that some of the recommendations are pitted against long established bureaucratic habit, such external advocacy will be critical. In addition, provision of some project management and facilitation support to the implementation work is advisable.

public works
making good ideas work for the better

**Benchmarks of
Great Customer Service[5]**

One and Done
Institutional Memory
Collaboration
Touch Point Alignment
Customer Experience Management
Real-Time Information Management
Customer Scorecard
Closed-Loop Processes
Listening and Learning Posts
Customer Segmentation

Leaders of high performing organizations that place primary focus on exemplary customer service generally follow a set of customer service standards that govern their behavior. Such standards, like those listed in Appendix 6, can be used to design, manage and assess program performance in government as well. For example, the principle of one touch customer service, where customer needs are solved during the first contact, is directly applicable to the licensure process. Customer service standards pertaining to institutional memory, where interactions are cumulative, and build on each other, rather than repetitive and beginning anew with each question, is reminiscent of the EPSS process and attempts to better coordinate state and local interface. Other principles of high level customer service pertain to non-defensive listening to customer needs, and adjusting processes to meet those needs. They also pertain to accountability measures that place a premium on responsiveness. Organizing around principles of exemplary customer service, translated to individual PED programs and processes, will serve the state well in ensuring that the schools and districts get the support they need to consistently raise standards and narrow the achievement gap.

The NM Public Education Department, under Secretary Garcia's leadership, has made considerable strides to recast the image of the Department and better support New Mexico districts and schools in serving all children. In the words of one Superintendent, "I have been very pleased with the new PED. They are much more responsive, reflective and customer oriented. I have a point of contact that I can reach at any time. I feel that for the first time in almost 25 years, NM is on the right track with Dr. Garcia and her staff. The focus on systems thinking, Baldrige and continuous improvement is excellent. The Secretary and her staff model what they value and value the differences between districts, yet provide clear direction for consistency across the state."

Continuing to focus on customer service will ultimately ensure that state government can meet the highest standards of responsiveness, timeliness and customer satisfaction. Students will be better for it.

---

[5] Source: Cap Gemini Ernst & Young, 2002

Appendix

1

List of Findings and Recommendations

Major Findings: Teacher Licensure Processes and Procedures

1. The licensing process has been problematic for some time, and has received considerable attention from the current administration.

2. While licensing turnaround time appears to be decreasing and customer satisfaction increasing, there is still substantial room for improvement.

3. A small number of personnel are responsible for the bulk of licensure processing and are quite productive given the demands on their bureau.

4. Many applicants do not comply with Department guidelines, resulting in significant delays in processing their applications and adding unneeded complexity to the process.

5. Stakeholders generally attribute delays and difficulties in licensure to PED staff, with little regard for where in the process problems may have occurred.

6. The licensure process is quite complex, and clear and consistent information about it is not readily available to either PED staff or external customers.

7. Communication of requirements, schedule and issues to districts, unions, teachers and other parts of PED is intermittent at best.

8. While the licensure staff work to be responsive to the myriad of requests, there is not a strong, systematic process for ensuring that voice mail, email and in-person visits are answered quickly and consistently, without disrupting the overall flow of work.

9. The process for receiving, logging and routing incoming mail is unnecessarily complex.

10. The current strategy for processing transactions is strictly First-In, First-Out (FIFO), with no regard for potential queue changes.

11. The Professional Licensure Bureau has begun to track paper flow and collect data about different stages of the process, but a clear method for measuring performance and setting goals is lacking.

12. The new automated voice answering system has the potential to substantially reduce frustrations with the process, as can other enhancements in technology, but it cannot replace personal interaction.

13. Recent steps to provide professional development to licensure staff are part of an effort to increase professionalism, improve morale, and refine the range of skills needed to support the Bureau's mission.

14. The new three-tiered licensure approach in New Mexico is a significant innovation that will require time to implement, and could be better understood and facilitated by Licensure Bureau staff.

15. Coordination and communication among parts of the new Educator Quality Division, and with other parts of PED, are not always functioning well, despite clear mission overlap.

16. The Professional Development Bureau's provision of technical assistance and information on the internet during the first year of three-tiered process implementation has provided a degree of support to districts and teachers beyond what has been available in Licensure in the past.

Recommendations: Teacher Licensure Processes and Procedures

1. Set stretch goals

2. Develop a set of metrics to regularly track process and issues

3. Modify the First-In, First-Out (FIFO) process: revamp mail routing, indexing and scanning, and the interface with the Ethics Bureau, and consider developing staff capacity to specialize in particular aspects of the licensure process

4. Develop standard operating procedures and a consistent process for responding to email, phone and walk-in inquiries

5. Adopt a "help us help you" communications campaign

6. Develop easy to use tools for teachers, including improving web-site interface

7. Strengthen relationships with District and school human resource personnel as intermediaries in facilitating the licensure process

8. Ensure that there is the opportunity for questions to be fielded by a live voice in addition to the automated service

9. Clarify staff roles, and responsibilities and expectations regarding performance, and reclassify some clerical positions

10. Increase coordination and communication across Educator Quality Divisions

11. Utilize innovative approaches to human resources management to augment the current licensure workforce

12. Investigate the functionality of scanning software to ensure it is being fully utilized, including the possibility of using it for indexing

13. Develop a liaison relationship with New Mexico colleges and universities that prepare teachers to assist graduates with their first licensure application

14. Create an intra-departmental study group that includes a cross section of customers, PED staff and stakeholders to assess the nature of and response to the reported complexity of completing Professional Development Dossiers

Major Findings: Charter School Processes

1. The Charter Bureau is working very hard to respond to the needs of those planning and operating charter schools

2. Monitoring and assisting charter school creation and operation is a largely new function; growth adds to these challenges

3. PED, which works primarily with districts, faces an organizational challenge in determining how best to support charters

4. Resources beyond PED to support the development and implementation of charter schools are growing

5. A general lack of experience with charters (at PED, district and school levels) contributes to an ad hoc approach and inconsistency

6. Confusion in how best to provide support to charters stems from ambiguity regarding the relative roles and responsibilities at the state, district and school levels

7. A lack of support for charter school creation and operation among some may put charters on the back burner

8. A lack of collaboration among charters, PED and districts can result in duplication, miscommunication and missed opportunities

Recommendations: Charter Schools Processes

1. Create a more strategic, proactive approach to supporting charter school creation and operations

2. Use the EPSS concept to manage charter school relationships too

3. Increase the consistency of guidance for charter schools by clarifying policy and guidelines in writing

4. Revamp the current approach to providing technical assistance to charter schools

5. Minimize systemic barriers by reinforcing, at the highest levels, PED support for school choice

6. Adopt a broker/facilitator role between districts and charter schools for shared services and technical assistance

7. Improve communication and collaboration, by clarifying the roles and responsibilities of PED divisions as they apply to charter schools

8. Coordinate the scheduling of PED district visits and other technical assistance with the Charter Bureau

9. Provide improved web based resources: guides, FAQs, online requests, home school registration, Intranet

Major Findings: Accountability and Assessment

1. Significant efforts have been made at the state level in data collection, capacity building, training and data sharing

2. The complexity of federal and state requirements and myriad of demands on school systems contribute towards an environment of wide-ranging confusion

3. The primary PED goal to assist schools in meeting NCLB requirements and AYP is part of PED's true focus on improving student achievement and raising standards

4. Virtually all parts of PED are involved in some aspect of accountability and assessment, making communication of a common message difficult

5. A lack of capacity to use data for decision making at the district and school level is an ongoing challenge

6. PED data systems are improving under new leadership, yet challenges remain

7. The issues facing schools with large Native American populations are particularly acute. They are being addressed by the new Bureau of Indian Affairs and a culture throughout the agency that Indian Affairs affects all organizational units of the Department

Recommendations: Accountability and Assessment

1. Develop and implement a coordinated PED outreach and communication strategy for accountability policy and NCLB compliance

2. Fully support the direction of the Accountability and Assessment Division, ensuring that funded staff positions be filled as a top priority

3. Complete the requirements analysis proposed by the CIO and develop IT architecture and "data warehouse" as a result

4. Address the "redundancy issue" of information and data requests by various bureaus within PED from schools and districts

5. Enhance the ADS (Accountability Data Assessment) system by considering the following requests identified in the electronic customer survey of superintendents, principals, Title I and Test Coordinators

6. Continue to create tools to help districts interpret accountability and assessment results and to organize and present them in an accessible way that meets audience needs

7. Develop and implement a plan for district and school level technical assistance and professional development in support of accountability and assessment objectives

8. Enhance the Educational Plans for Student Success strategic planning process

9. Provide more listening opportunities to gain better understanding of how parents, community leaders and school and district personnel are meeting accountability and assessment challenges

10. Continue efforts to focus on the needs of Native American children

11. Improve the content and navigation of the PED websites

Interviews

Beverly Aguillar, Executive Budget Analyst Principal
Barbara Alvarez, Indian Education Division
James Ball, Assistant Secretary, Educator Quality Division
Bernadette Bach, Director, Professional Licensure Bureau
Ellen Bernstein, President, Albuquerque Teachers Federation
Barbara Bianchi, Rural Education Division
Penny Bird, Assistant Secretary, Indian Education
Linda Bluestein, Albuquerque Public Schools
LeeAnn Buras, Santa Fe Public Schools
Veronica Cordova, Professional Licensure Bureau
Angela Dawson, Santa Fe Public Schools
Crystal Garcia, Professional Licensure Bureau
Geri Romero-Roybal, Assistant Secretary, Quality Assurance & Systems Integration
Edward Gilliland, Accountability and Assessment Division
Margaret Gonzales, Professional Licensure Bureau
Linda Grover, Executive Director, NM Coalition for Charter Schools
Carolyn Henderson, Education Administrator, Title I Office
Michael Kaplan, Director, Bureau of Alternative Education
Rita Kumari, Educator Ethics Bureau
Linda Lefton, Charter Schools Coordinator, Albuquerque Public Schools
May Lou Lovato, Professional Licensure Bureau
Elaine Martinez, Professional Licensure Bureau
Larry Martinez, Director, Professional Development Bureau
Wilma Martinez, Indian Education Division
Janet Montoya Schoeppner, Albuquerque Public Schools
Don Moya, Deputy Secretary, NM Public Education Department
Larry Mirabel, Director, Flow Through Unit,
Steve Oldroyd, Acting Program Manager of Special Education
Linda Olivas, Professional Licensure Bureau
Sam Ornelas, Program Manager School Assistance Bureau
Susan Ortega, consultant for Bilingual Education, Bilingual and Multicultural Bureau

Antonio Ortiz, Program Manager, Capital Outlay Bureau
Dr. Patricia Parkinson, Assistant Secretary, Instructional Support Division
Robert Piro, Chief Information Officer
Jason Rodriguez, Office of Information Technology, internet support
Arlene Romero, consultant for Bilingual Education, Bilingual and Multicultural Bureau
Heather Rooney, Accountability and Assessment Division
Lee Rosen, State Personnel Office
Ferdi Serim, Program Manager, Literacy, Technology & Standards
Katherine Shurlock, consultant for Bilingual Education, Bilingual and Multicultural Bureau
Libby Sternberg, Santa Fe Public Schools
Tashi Tashi, Educator Ethics Bureau
Don Watson, Assistant Secretary, Accountability and Assessment
Jerry Williams, Educator Ethics Bureau
Wilson Wilson, Albuquerque Federation of Teachers
Patrick Werito, Indian Education Division

A wide range of external sources were consulted, including other state departments of education, the US Department of Education, national non-profit organizations focused on research and improving practice in education, as well as university and private sources of expertise.

License Application Times and Fees, a multi-state comparison

Average Turnaround Time for Issuance of Teacher Licenses, 2004

State	Number of Teachers	Time Required, In-State (calendar days)	Time Required, Out-of-State (calendar days)
New Mexico	**21,172**	**56**	
Alaska	8,080	42	**42**
Arkansas	30,330	14-21	**14-21**
California	307,672	75	**75**
Colorado	45,401	42	**42**
Florida	138,226	51	**51**
Georgia		<3	**<3**
Idaho	13,896	30	**30**
Indiana	59,968	21-28	**28-42**
Iowa	34,573	10-14	**21**
Kansas	32,643	14-21	**14-21**
Kentucky	40,662	2	**2**
Maryland	55,382	90	**NA**
Michigan	89,595	14-28	**28-56**
Mississippi	31,588	2	**2**
Missouri	66,717	14-28	**14-35**
Nevada	20,037	14-21	**42**
North Carolina	87,677	14	**14**
Rhode Island	11,196	105	**105**
South Dakota	9,257	14-21	**14-21**
Tennessee	58,652	2	**60**
Texas	288,655	17	**17**
Utah	22,415	3-21	**56**
West Virginia	20,119	56-70	**56-70**
Wisconsin	60,385	42-56	**42-56**

Data collected by MGT of America, Inc., 2004
Teacher numbers from National Center for Education Statistics, NAEP State Profiles, 2004.

publicworks
making good ideas work for the better

Teacher License Fees

State	Initial License Fee	Renewal Fee
Alaska	$125	**$125**
Connecticut	$100	**NA**
Florida	$56	**$56**
Georgia	$20	**$20**
Idaho	$75	**$75**
Iowa	$60	**$60**
Kansas	$24	**$24**
Maine	$50	**none**
Massachusetts	$100	**$100**
Michigan	$125	**$125**
Mississippi	None	**none**
Nevada	$110	**$80**
New Mexico	$50	**$25**
Rhode Island	$25	**$100**
South Carolina	$75	**$75**
Utah	$45	**$45**
Wisconsin	$100	**$100**

Data collected by MGT of America, Inc., 2004

Appendix

4

Charter School Econometric Analysis Methodology

Public Works identified several variables that correlate to the presence of charter schools. Based on an analysis of several variables, it appears that districts with the highest potential for having new charter schools would be ones with preexisting private schools, a high percentage of schools not meeting annual yearly progress (AYP), and a low percentage of school age children in poverty. However, if Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) is removed from the data set for analysis – APS's sheer size and the number of charter schools in APS skews all the data to look like APS – then the relationships between the variables change slightly. The correlation between the existence of private schools and charter schools declines slightly (from "high" to "marked"), while the inverse correlation between charter schools and poverty increases from "low" to "moderate." In other words, the smaller the percentage of school aged children in poverty, the higher the chances that a charter school will exist in that district. Also, the correlation between charter schools and "% AYP not met" disappears altogether, dropping from "low" to "none." After weighting and then ranking these variables for each district, a list emerges of 20 school districts with the highest potential for authorizing new charter schools. The complete methodology is detailed below.

Table A-5. List of Districts meeting Probability Criteria for Charters.

District Name	Total Population	% school age in poverty to total school age	No. of Schools	AYP Not Met	% AYP Not Met	# of Private Schools	Weighted Score	Rank for Potential for Charter School
RIO RANCHO PUBLIC SCHOOLS	57,828	4.20%	13	6	46.20%	3	2.20	1
GRANTS-CIBOLA COUNTY SCHOOLS	26,348	26.70%	11	6	54.50%	9	3.86	2
LOS ALAMOS PUBLIC SCHOOLS	18,802	1.90%	7	1	14.30%	3	3.96	3
HOBBS MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS	36,432	22.40%	17	5	29.40%	2	4.14	4
CENTRAL CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS	33,872	32.80%	17	7	41.20%	8	4.48	5
BELEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS	28,543	20.30%	11	4	36.40%	2	4.50	6
MORIARTY MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS	22,546	13.80%	8	3	37.50%	2	4.66	7
POJOAQUE VALLEY PUBLIC SCHOOLS	9,361	12.60%	4	4	100.00%	3	5.48	8
BLOOMFIELD MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS	16,518	19.70%	7	4	57.10%	1	5.80	9
GADSDEN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS	50,157	41.20%	18	13	72.20%	2	5.86	10
PORTALES MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS	16,265	29.40%	8	8	100.00%	1	7.28	11
RATON PUBLIC SCHOOLS	8,274	23.40%	5	0	0.00%	1	7.52	12
TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES SCHOOLS	13,125	33.60%	6	2	33.30%	1	8.16	13
CUBA INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS	5,494	44.60%	3	3	100.00%	4	8.94	14
DULCE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS	2,973	28.70%	3	3	100.00%	1	9.04	15
LORDSBURG MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS	4,004	34.70%	5	0	0.00%	1	9.76	16
ZUNI PUBLIC SCHOOLS	7,517	50.20%	6	5	83.30%	2	9.82	17
JEMEZ MOUNTAIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS	1,737	31.90%	6	1	16.70%	1	10.28	18
MOUNTAINAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS	1,869	39.40%	2	1	50.00%	1	10.80	19
MAGDALENA MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS	2,953	45.60%	3	1	33.30%	1	11.12	20

Appendix

5

Getting the Message Out

How States are Engaging Constituents in the Process to Improve Schools and Help All Children Succeed: Three Case Study Examples

The trend toward greater accountability in education has been accelerating for some time. Twenty years after the publication of the nation's education report card, A Nation at Risk, children in the United States continue to perform poorly on academic proficiency tests compared to those in scores of other nations. There is growing recognition and concern throughout the country that the weaknesses in the U.S. educational system pose a serious and potentially lasting threat to the nation's security and way of life.

The No Child Left Behind Act, enacted in 2002 and designed to ensure that each student in the country is learning academic fundamentals, provided states with an opportunity as well as a challenge. Many states had rigorous accountability measures in place a decade before the new performance mandates of NCLB were introduced, and those states in particular have used the demands of the new law to strengthen their systems and schools. But as a result of the NCLB legislation, each state in the country has had to develop 1) new information technologies that help them quantify educational outputs and demonstrate educational achievement, and 2) new ways to analyze and interpret data that go beyond federal mandates to inform state decision making and set goals for improved performance.

Economic demands are driving the accountability movement and the requirements of No Child Left Behind. To be competitive in the new global economy, children must complete school and graduate with the skills and knowledge to succeed in higher education and in the modern workplace. Many states have recognized that a partnership between educators, parents, community members, business leaders and lawmakers will be necessary to ensure that all children attain an education that will prepare them for future prosperity and success, and are adopting new communications strategies to galvanize those constituents.

publicworks
making good ideas work for the better

The following case examples provide a snapshot of the methods that states are employing to communicate with their constituents and engage them in the educational process. The case studies emphasize strategies to 1) make parents active participants in the dialogue with educators and champions of educational excellence; 2) communicate about the importance and implications of accountability and the state's plans to meet national standards of excellence, 3) provide easy-to-use tools and resources that support educator development, and that allow stakeholders to be informed, valuable contributors in the educational process; 4) utilize the latest technology to collect and compile comprehensive performance data that yields meaningful results and that stakeholders are able to manipulate, manage and interpret themselves to inform their decision making.

Iowa

The state of Iowa website is a high-functioning web portal. Iowa's constituents will find topics displayed in a simple categorical format. The Department of Education home page is accessible through the "education" category. If users are seeking specific information about, for example "adult basic education," they can forego the steps necessary to navigate the Department of Education site by using the main portal's search feature to connect directly to that office. The portal routinely provides information in HTML, so that it can be viewed on-line without having to be downloaded to a computer.

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXEMPLARS

The Iowa Department of Education has created a "priority shortcuts" list at the top of its home page that signals the primary areas the department wants to emphasize with constituents. Following is a summary of the priority services that Iowa is offering to its education stakeholders.

- Calendar: The department-wide calendar provides a comprehensive list of educational and special programs available for academic and non-academic staff of the department and to the community. Calendar readers can send email to the program coordinator through this interactive site.

- No Child Left Behind: This service gives general information about the federal act and Iowa's response to it. The Iowa NCLB report card evaluates Iowa schools on five measures:

  o Student proficiency
  o Attendance rates
  o Graduation rates
  o Quality of teachers
  o School safety

- o Less than 5% (4.4%) of schools (66 schools total) failed to make annual yearly progress in the above areas and were designated "in need of assistance." 2.4% of districts were identified as in need of assistance.

- "School Profiles" (report card): These reports analyze student achievement data for each of the state's schools and districts according to measures required in NCBL. The department developed this sophisticated analytical tool to allow parents, policymakers and educators to evaluate school performance for themselves and to assess the state's progress over time and across geographic regions.

  - o The School Profiles website creates charts that reflect up to 5 schools' performance against the state average and against other regions; graphs that provide trend analyses; and disaggregates information by gender and race/ethnicity.

  - o The site provides clear instructions and explanations of data sources and links to district websites.

- Teacher Quality: This service references professional development opportunities offered by the department, including courses designed to help teachers improve classroom practices and use and understand data to increase student achievement.

- Licensure: This product delivers complete, step-by-step instructions about license requirements and application procedures and offers on-line services to renew or order a duplicate license.

CONCLUSION

The design of the Iowa Department of Education website correlates with its intent. By providing high-quality, comprehensive information available in an ultra easy-to-use format, the department is encouraging its customers in school districts, in families, and in the community to be informed and to contribute in a common effort to help Iowa's children. By highlighting these 5 services, community learning, educational standards, school performance, teacher quality and teacher qualifications, the department is demonstrating that it is focused on standards and accountability.

Texas

The Texas web portal is extraordinary in the amount and breadth of the information and services it provides. Despite the multifarious layers of this

superhighway, the process for navigating them is smooth and consistent, not fraught with potholes, roadblocks, or dead-ends. For example, the portal routinely provides information in HTML, so that information can be viewed on-line without having to be downloaded to a computer. Pages and documents always provide links to related, additional information that can be found elsewhere. The K-12 resources available under education and training do not lead users directly to the Texas Education Department. Rather, they showcase the on-line products and services that state K-12 educators have deemed important to academic achievement. Educational accountability is emphasized, as it is in Iowa, but the primary message that the Texas state portal conveys to the public and to its constituents about K-12 education is that there are services available to help families succeed. Following are descriptions of those products:

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXEMPLARS

- Division of Performance Reporting: This division of the Texas education agency manages the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS), the equivalent of the annual school and district "report cards" required by NCLB, and the "accountability ratings" list, which is the equivalent of other states' schools in need of assistance or priority schools list. In addition to reporting the accountability elements required for evaluating and determining annual yearly progress under NCLB, such as academic proficiencies in math and reading, the Texas AEIS calculates other academic indicators, such as the percent of students requiring accelerated instruction. It evaluates each school as part of a campus comparison [peer] group, and publishes substantial non-academic data including teacher salaries, teachers by program, staff size, average teacher years of experience, instructional/expenditure ratio, and campus operating budget. As with the Iowa School Profiles, customers can search for information by school name, district, county or region. The division also publishes "Snapshot," an annual overview of public education, as well as Texas School Statistics Pocket Edition.

- Greatschools.net: This national non-profit service provides parents with the information to choose schools, help their children in school, and contribute to school improvement. Greatschools.net documents performance in public, private and charter schools in each of the 50 states and provides detailed profiles for schools in Texas, California, Colorado, Arizona, Florida, New York and Washington.

- Some features of the Texas site include:

  o Free school profiles on each of the state's schools and districts, searchable by school, district or city name.

  o A way for parents to receive free newsletters, provide feedback about a school, compare schools, and review articles in English and Spanish.

  o For an annual fee of $16.95 parents may subscribe to the service to receive additional information about school choice and how it works, school 1 to 5 star ratings, and to read school reviews by other parents.

  o Using data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), greatschools.net details the following basic information about every public elementary, middle and high school in the United States:

    § Phone number, fax number, address, district name, location map
    § Grade levels served, school type
    § Number of students and teachers, student-teacher ratio
    § Percentage of students participating in the federal free or reduced-price lunch program
    § Test scores from state mandated standardized tests
    § Clear explanations and "Issues to Consider" for all data presented

- Detailed school profiles for states like Texas also include:

  o Complete academic data, including state mandated standardized test and college admission test scores

  o Teacher experience, professional status, credentials and demographics

  o Detailed enrollment information

  o School funding, facilities and technology information

  o Student demographics

- School funding and grants: This product offers extensive public information about state funding of public schools and funding for special programs and grants, on-line payment services, and e-grants. The site features an on-line service for customer comments and questions.

- Schools on the web: This central site links to the state's 20 educational regions and each of the state's district's websites.

- Texas Education Network: Sponsored by the University of Texas at Austin, the network offers professional development products and services for teachers, parents, students and administrators

CONCLUSION

The portal name, Texas On-line, is illustrative of Texas's intention to provide its customers with full-scale on-line business services. The state has succeeded in this goal, but what are the direct benefits for Texas, its citizens, its businesses, and customers of public education in the state? The intent of the annual yearly progress requirement in the federal public education legislation is to ensure that schools are meeting their obligation to provide a high-quality education to children and families. The standards for academic accountability embedded in the AYP requirement are a means to determine whether schools are meeting that benchmark. The NCLB legislation further requires that states publish data that parents and other education stakeholders can use to evaluate whether schools are performing well and to help them improve. The Texas K-12 on-line educational services are providing resources that help families understand and access the educational benefits that are available to them, encourage parents to evaluate public schools and make informed choices about public schools, and create learning resources that enable children to excel.

New Mexico

The state of New Mexico official website identifies itself as a web portal, but it does not function as one. As a result, it is neither a robust state website nor a portal that offers on-line products and services. If, for example, the user asks for Public Education Department on the site's search engine, he or she is referred to the state library to a listing of reports that mention public education, not to the department's website. The state homepage's "popular sites" are not prominently displayed to attract the user's attention, they are hidden inside a pull down menu. There are no references to education, higher education, or education and training in the popular sites section of the home page. The category "education in New Mexico K-12 information" contains three links: 1) to the PED assessment and accountability division website (see below); 2) to the New Mexico schools locator service, which is non-functional as neither the featured map nor the schools list

link to any further district information; and 3) to learning services, which displays out-of-date programmatic information. From the public education department home page, the user cannot return to the state "portal."

CUSTOMER SERVICES STATUS

Unlike in the web portals described above, information on the PED website has not been organized to anticipate the customer's needs or to be seamlessly available at multiple points throughout the system; the latest technologies have not been used to make it easy to access and use. The following section uses a few representative examples to look at the services provided by the New Mexico public education department in the customer service areas that were used to evaluate its peers.

Engage parents in educational excellence and accountability

- Program areas highlighted on the department home page include: community partners, higher education, legislature, licensure, public outreach, parents and students

- "Quick links" provided for parents and students include:

  - School locator (see above)
  - The No Child Left Behind product, which connects to the department's federal grant programs, not to information about the AYP process, to school and district report cards, or to information about the implications for families of the No Child Left Behind Act, as is typical on all of the websites evaluated for this study (see list below).
  - The product "school ratings" yields "file not found".
  - A "Parent Community Involvement Training" workshop for educators was offered in November of 2004, but information about the workshop was buried on the department's Federal Grant Programs website.
  - There is not a dedicated "website for parents" or virtual library section available on the department homepage or on the state homepage.

Promote accountability and standards

- Program areas highlighted on the department homepage include: community partners, higher education, legislature, licensure, public outreach, parents/students

- In Minnesota, for example, the department homepage promotes:

    o Educator Licensing and Teacher Quality
    o Academic Standards
    o No Child Left Behind
    o Assessment and Testing

- The department's special education page has been professionally designed to have the standard "look" that dominates state education web portals. This is both positive and negative. It is not in the best interest of the department to have a program website that is not consistent with the department website. On the other hand, the site is more user-friendly than the department's other websites and can therefore serve as a model for improvement.

- There is a "standards based assessment" feature on the department home page, but it does not link to anything.

- The Adequate Yearly Progress feature on department home page links to the adequate yearly progress website, which is not fully functional.

Make information easy for stakeholders to access and use

- The "Questions about the New Mexico PED" service prominently displayed on the PED home page does not work—there is no link available.

- The department websites are highly inconsistent. The LITES (literacy, technology and standards) website seems to be more comprehensive and well designed than the Assessment and Accountability website, for example, but this seems to be the result of an ad hoc process for publishing public information.

- There is information published on LITES that would better serve the customer if featured elsewhere.

    o The LITES website contains a link to New Mexico Reading First, a comprehensive approach to teaching reading, which should be offered as professional development for teachers, information for parents, or even resources for school improvement. Users seeking this information may not discover it because it is on the LITES program page. As a second matter, the promised link to "on-line technical assistance modules" for New Mexico Reading First does

not work.

- o The LITES homepage also includes information directed at parents and families, such as "Best Practices for Out-of-School-Time Programs," which may not be well utilized unless it is made available through a page explicitly designed to serve parents.

- o Another features of the LITES website is "my standards." This is an on-line tool to help teachers plan and map instructional strategies based on New Mexico standards. It may be a very valuable teacher resource, but should perhaps be promoted on an educator development website.

- The new special education report card is designed to look like an on-line report card, but it is not interactive. For example, links do not open doors to on-line information, as is the case throughout the Texas portal, but to static PDF documents. This type of service is much less convenient for the user.

- Users cannot return to the state home page from the Assessment and Accountability Division website.

- There is no link to the PED homepage from the Assessment and Accountability Division website

- The Assessment and Accountability Division home page and the Assessment and Evaluation Bureau home page are non-functional and contain inaccurate information.

Provide comprehensive performance data

- The opening line in the report cards section of the new special education website reads: "The information in this report card cannot tell you everything about your district…" This may not be the message that the department wants to send to its customers, especially as other states are providing volumes of data designed to answer the questions their customers want to know.

- The "School Designation Report" published by the Assessment and Accountability Division is well done. But information should be available for users to view on-line, not in PDF format. The report is buried on the Assessment and Accountability Division home page, but should perhaps be a prominent feature of the PED home page.

- The School Designation Reports are static and do not include analytical properties that allow users to compare schools/districts and conduct longitudinal tracking.

- New Mexico may not be taking best advantage of the services provided through the national greatschools.net website. New Mexico schools and districts are listed on the service, but attempts to link to school and district profiles failed. The department also does not provide customers with a link to greatschools.net.

CONCLUSION

The New Mexico Public Education Department website is not consistent or entirely credible as many products and services simply do not work as promised or as the user would expect. As a result customers are discouraged from using the website and may not have confidence in the department as a useful source for information and a provider of valuable products and services. Teachers also may be frustrated to the point that they do not utilize the site. There do not seem to be any professional development offerings available for either teachers or parents, despite the fact that the internet would be an inexpensive and effective mechanism to deliver educator development resources and information and to engage parents. Through its website, the department is sending a message to its constituents that it may not intend. In providing ineffective services and limited information for the public, in failing to utilize cutting-edge technology, promote academic accountability and excellence, or provide for educator development, the department is signaling to its customers that it does not have the tools to ensure that schools, teachers and principals improve, and that children and families succeed.

Top Ten Customer Service Benchmarks

Benchmark	Brief Description
One and Done	Customers' needs are solved during the first contact
Institutional Memory	When a customer interacts with your organization, everyone in the enterprise is aware of the prior interactions, outstanding issues, and pending opportunities.
Collaboration	Customers are involved in the specification, design and/or delivery of a desired result
Touch Point Alignment	Customers are able to do business with you through multiple channels, which are aligned with customers' needs and their value to your business.
Customer Experience Management	You've mapped all "touch points" between you and your customers and are able to deliver a consistent, high quality experience that provides added value to the customer.
Real-Time Information Management	Your employees have real-time access to the right information to make customer-based decisions and resolve issues immediately.
Customer Scorecard	Employee performance requirements and measures are designed to drive specific customer behaviors that are measured exactly.
Closed-Loop Processes	Integrated front and back office systems ensure that information and workflow carry through the entire enterprise to their logical conclusion, closing the customer the customer loop, and enabling continuous knowledge capture.
Listening and Learning Posts	Forums facilitate information sharing and learning among your customers that helps them interact with you, learn from each other, and provide valuable customer input to your business processes and operations
Customer Segmentation	Segmentation is based on customer needs, preferences, behaviors and economic potential, which provides the basis for resource allocation decisions in marketing, sales and service

Source: Cap Gemini Ernst & Young, 2002.

Key Elements of Turnaround of Licensure Applications

Selected Phone Interview Research Notes

As part of its research, Public Works interviewed individuals at national associations related to teacher licensure, US Department of Education and other experts. Included in that data collection were discussions with licensure staff in several states with roughly the same numbers of teachers as New Mexico. The notes from those conversations are included below.

States with Similar Teacher Size to New Mexico

Key Elements	Iowa	Kansas	Mississippi	Nevada	Utah
Of all that they do, what is the most important thing they attribute to producing quick turnaround?	It is the steps taken from time it's processed into the work basket and how the staff handle it on a daily basis. In-state higher education has access to licensure database for entry of new applicants, so higher ed processes it and turns it in. In state turnaround is 3-4 weeks; out of state takes longer because of way things arranged with higher ed. They send the information in stages (fingerprint card first, then application when complete and graduate).	Regulations on course requirements are based on program approval. Helps because staff don't do transcript analysis. Instead, require verification from college or university, so don't have to go course by course on transcripts. Saves time and reduces staffing requirements. KS Only accepts complete application packets and uses a prescreening process, where office assistants follow pre-screening sequence. They start with big pieces – fee, signatures, professional practices questions, transcript, etc. If missing an item, then issue a "send back" and send entire packet back, so don't accept transcript separate from application. As the consultant works the packet and discovers they need to send	Standard schedule for coverage – walk-ins, phone, e-mails -- is the key. High priority is given to mail-ins and walk ins. Try to process everything same day and complete within a weeks time.	Excellent database. Packets come in, get entered on computer, computer receipts it, makes labels and then it is given directly to the analyst. School district sends a list of SS#, and the system issues report of where files are in process, which is downloaded to Excel and sent to the district. Reduces calls from district and district questions of applicant. School districts have web access to database, which has reduced phone calls. Allows district to answer questions up front because the first contact is usually with district (by applicant). Initial completion check: If packet is incomplete – "All but…" letter with checked boxes of missing items is issued.	An excellent computer system. Different people handle different aspects of licensing process. University education dept. sends formal recommendation, including application card, transcripts, fees, and letter of recommendation for institution.

Key Elements	Iowa	Kansas	Mississippi	Nevada	Utah
		notification, then it is a simple matter of matching the submitted item to active or existing file. Database is very user friendly, self-contained and can pull up anybody to see exactly where file is located (status codes), if been sent a letter, if started working file and can track where in office file is at all times. .		One stop shop for each file rather than put into cue. Each analyst handles a part of the alphabet. Can type in any conversation and pull it back up if any questions raised. Send out 6 month reminder letters automatically, updates log file automatically when the letter was sent.	

More

What are the key elements of their platform? § Software § Hardware § Online capacity § Staffing: specialists? # of staff	Software: IBM system – scanning system -- and new system just developed. Working to get both systems more closely aligned. They maintain a database where every document is scanned into the file; they keep no hard copies. Hardware: 2 scanners; 1.4 people doing scanning on a daily basis. Online: Can look up license, enter SS # DOB and folder number, and bring up own license and change some of the demographic information. Working towards using e-mail address to notify when license is due. New system as of April (e-mail addresses). There is higher ed access to web file only in entering new applicants from their programs. No one has access outside the building; it's a closed system except for teacher prep institutions. Once they submit, they can't get back in without permission.	Software Database system developed in-house since 1996. Hardware Servers; desktops – server based Online capacity Just getting into true webbased online application processes. Presently, can print application forms. First step will be doing forms. Staffing: 8 total 4 administrative staff: § 2 - Open mail, prescreening, key in check and vital data to activate files § 2 – fingerprint process Specialists: 3 licensure consultants § Renewals § Rest of the files Asst. Dir. – makes sure everything running right and sets policies	Software Extra Mainframe (issues licenses) Laser fiche Hardware Gateway desktops Online capacity: Download applications. Checklist for each type of license for each area (not each endorsement); i.e., traditional, alternate, duplicate, renewal, reinstatement. Staffing: 4 analysts (analyze documents and issue licenses) 4 support staff (includes scanners) 2 others who work in the office – work for director; also assist in answering phones 1 director – who can do everything.	Software Visual FoxPro – developed in Visual FoxPro Hardware Desk tops; sequel server so can communicate with all of them Online capacity Can download all the forms, name change, address change, teacher verification form. Can refer to the website; check the transcript against regulations. Staffing: specialists? 3 staff in Carson city – receptionist, analyst, and supervisor Vegas – 3 analyst, 2 admin II, 2 receptionist, 1 director, 1 consultant in teacher ed; .5 secretary	Software Power point, but programmers have built CACTUS – computer aided credential of Utah teachers in schools - system using Power Point. Moved to this in 1999; major update in 2000; continually updated with rules and law changes. Originally set up as a tracking system for all licensed educators. Becoming major computer system for the agency. Significant data warehouse (patti program – tracking system for applied/ CTE programs). Finance program is attached; linking with UPAS that tracks students in schools and will link with teaching assignment in CACTUS to be sure properly licensed teacher is in classroom. Tracks when do fingerprint check; check initial licensure (instate), where got degree; demographic data

public works
making good ideas work for the better

	Staff: 12 state employees; 2 that are federal – total of 14 Specialists: Federal staff take care of all special ed; rest have specialty. Will cross over if get too backed up; bt they have priority issues.				(name, gender, citizenship, Social Security, etc) track license, areas of concentration, endorsements, and each renewal or upgrade, any additional degrees. Entire teaching career can be posted. Has experience history back to 1984. Hardware Desktop computers Online capacity Can track status of license. Can pull application off website, fill out, and mail it in. Staffing: specialists? # of staff 17 people in dept. 6 of whom work on licensing 1.5 work solely on Univ. recommendations for college grads in-state. Technician works with state specialists in adding new endorsements to existing licenses One tech whose primary job is NCLB and praxis tests, part of duties is

| | | | | assisting in renewals of active educators
Tech who deals with out of state applications and assists with active educators
Tech (just retired) dealing with inactive educators in renewing their Utah license.
Coord's Sec. works with individuals moving from level I to level II license (upgrading)
Supervisor does univ. recs for support positions, special ed. Increased staff by 3 people just last two years. |

More

How do they handle? § Email § Phone Calls § Walk-ins	Email Each consultant is listed on the website including their specialization. Can send e-mail directly to them from website. E.g., Coaching specialist. Turnaround as quick as can; occasionally will get several hundred if someone is on vacation. May be 3-4 weeks behind. But e-mails and phone calls are deatl with within 2-3 days. Phone Calls Everyone has a voice mailbox. If call general number they will direct caller; if go to website, direct line for each consultant is listed. Can get most of the information from website. Receive 40-60 calls per day. Don't put on hold; if line is busy, rolls into voicemail. Can pull up the data immediately while on the phone. System with older data takes 5-10 minute time to do the search. Generally speaking, can bring up the file and look at it and tell exactly what's happening.	Email Each has own e-mail address; readily available on website. Lots of e-mail traffic. Most get answered 24-48 hours unless consultant has been gone. If gone, do automatic absence notification. Sometimes give proxy to secretary or another consultant. Some common question responses, generalized statements that one consultant uses. Phone Calls Main Certification phone number. The 4 office assistants get the calls on that system and answer generic questions. If can't answer, then refer to consultant. Each consultant has a published phone number and are assigned files to work based on last four digits of identifier (SS#). Voice mail. If all operators logged off	Email 3 people who receive e-mails and answer in same day. Keep database of responses. Respond no later than the same week. Phone Calls Most customer complaints used to be about the hold time on the phone. During peak season, bring in contract workers to assist with answering phones to reduce complaints. Average hold time is down to 3-5 minutes. In March, could be 15-30 minutes, now less than that. Everybody answers the phone and is supposed to be knowledgeable about the process – encourage them to know the entire system. Support staff answer phones all day. Use scheduling and process. Walk-ins 4 analysts on staff. During peak season, break walk-in times into	Email Has a person who does e-mail. Same person who opens u.s. mail; also checks the voice mail Generic e-mail address. Person who opens e-mail answers the questions (at a higher grade). 3 levels – reception area, admin. II – required to answer all questions except analyze transcripts, and analysts. Turnaround time is 2 weeks. Phone Calls Pretty heavy. Not on phones between 8-1. Districts can get through, but not the public. Everyone picks up. Front desk picks up on 3rd ring, then whoever is available picks it up. In Carson City, 1-2 minutes hold time; Las Vegas put on hold forever (staffing problem). Not a voice-routing system (between 8-1, series of buttons). After 1:00, rings through.	Email Telephone and e-mail refer to website that gives info for licensing for out-of-state applicants; renewals; alternative routes to licensing. Individual's e-mail address and specialty is listed; everyone is responsible for their own e-mail. Not a lot of e-mail traffic; more phone traffic than e-mail. Phone Calls Automated system (if will listen to the message) where give instructions on what button to push regarding specific questions. There is an option to get to a live person. Most people push first button because don't want to wait. System doesn't allow them to be put on hold. If line is busy, can leave a message and will call them back. Try to get back within 3-5 days max.

	Walk-ins A few a day; not a lot because there are so many features on line. Also, if not in Des Moines, probably wont' come in. Usually, walk ins have big problems; or are in a crunch for a deadline because it is easier to send in by mail. No special process for walk-ins because rarely have 2 at a time; no line. Have a receptionist with multiple duties (scanning; general phone; other work as needed). She will find out what customer needs and get the appropriate consultant, who takes them back to the desk if needed. Large waiting area.	system, can still leave a message on main number's mail box. Sometimes a backlog. Try to answer the same day; usually within 2-3 days. Have capacity to code the phones so they forward to operator system or to another consultant to avoid a large backlog in voice mail box (use if gone more than a day or so.) **Walk-ins** Lots of walk-in traffic. When first walk in, there's a reception area with 2 office assistants who try to help them. If not, walk them in to an appropriate person. Physical office is small; person can wander. Typical summer day, about 5 or 6 walk-ins per day, but sometimes none in the winter.	4 parts so don't have files pile up. If not peak time, only one analyst on walk-ins the entire day; rotates among analysts each day. Don't pull mail on desk of absent employees. Hours are 8-4:30 every day. For those getting initial license, receptionist assigns a number and keys in demographic information; then assigns it to analyst who processes them within 30 minutes.	**Walk-ins** NV has a fair amount of walk in traffic. People at front desk (lower paid position), required to check it in, and check for completeness of packet. " While teacher is there, receptionist enters it into database (2 minutes). Person feels like they are getting taken care of and it's on the system and goes straight to the analyst.	Almost impossible to do paperwork and answer phone calls. Averaging 36-45 calls per day. That's biggest struggle – haven't figured out how to resolve it yet. CA says won't accept phone calls before 1:00 p.m. Utah not yet chosen that route. In most cases able to resolve the issue while on the phone – within 10-15 minutes, because of the CACTUS system. When get call, first thing does is pull CACTUS file up – have all that info in front of her. **Walk-ins** Lots of walk-in traffic. 3 licensing technicians with a counter at the front. If unable to respond to inquiries, then can refer to other staff members. The 3 staff are doing other things, but their responsibility is to help at the counter. That's part of the permanent assignments. Walk ins are accepted 8-5.

How do they process: § Transcripts § Fingerprints	Transcripts Iowa scans them into the system and then destroys them. Arrive either with the application or separately. If get it on different days, scan it into the file so that every document is in the file. Fingerprints Initial license only. Not required for renewal. Send in whole packet – get grads to send in early (FBI takes 6 weeks to process and state dept. of criminal investigation only takes a day or two to process). Big problem is readability; feds have to get another card. Sometimes something happens in process, and applicant has to start over with fingerprint card.	Transcripts Out of state – official transcripts have to accompany packet or packet is rejected. In database, record when packet is sent back and why. Automatically generates send-back and referral letters. In-state – don't require transcripts. Requires trust in teacher ed institutions. Piloting electronic submissions for December grads. Fingerprints All are processed through KS Bureau of Investigation – require 1 completed fingerprint card and a fee. Record when forwarded, then KBI responsible for forwarding to FBI, then receive paper report from KBI and FBI. Turnaround time is about 2 weeks. KBI transmits prints electronically to FBI. The division runs this as a separate process.	Transcripts Transcripts sent to applicant, who walks it in with packet. Most call before they come to know what's needed to meet requirements. Fingerprints District handles the fingerprint process/ background check. No requirement for finger prints for licensure, but it is a requirement for employment. MS is connected to NASDTEC – if revoked, comes up in the system and is sent downstairs for investigation.	§ Transcripts If missing transcript, will still issue license. Request they come in with the packet. NV uses collegesource.org – subscription –to figure out block credits. Can type in school name, catalogue option comes up, can search for course description, rather than writing to the applicant asking for clarification or course description. If the wrong office gets transcript, can check database and see transcript belongs somewhere else (i.e., in Vegas not Carson City) – because the database is maintained on real time. § Fingerprints If missing fingerprint card, send whole packet back because can't issue. Put provisions on license – don't want to hold up issuance to wait for FBI to get back. NV uses NASDTEC clearinghouse, which	Transcripts University sends in directly. Eff. July 1, 2005, with in-state universities, no longer will be sending transcripts. Changing appl form for new grads. Univ will fill in new degrees, designated officer will sign form saying program has been completed. No more transcripts being required. Out of state, will still need the transcripts. In-state institutions have already been accredited, reviewed and approved, so basing new process on honesty of institution – signature verifying requirements have been met. Transcripts have to be in packet for it to be complete, but that is problem because colleges. want to send separately. It causes too many problems and is at risk of being mislaid. Once received, transcripts are reviewed.

		Can start processing it separately, rest has to come in as a complete packet. 2 separate fees – application and fingerprints.

Provide applicants with a large envelope for returning the card. Law enforcement will frequently forward it themselves in the envelope.
Kansas grads – Univ. brings in a law enforcement person for a day for the students to get theirs done. | | lists anyone who has ever had a suspended or revoked license. Once a month, go to it, download it and sort it. If get a match, then prints out a report of revoked licenses. System keeps old numbers in NASDTEC database. Can flash NASDEC as soon as issue SS#, stops them upfront . Same with US Mail – look when open, send packet back immediately.

Takes 1-6 months. Sheriff's departments scan prints in, so not a problem with smudged cards. | Utah is putting institutional recs online and will be required to be included in the packet. Once evaluated, then can determine if meet Utah requirements, then send final packet. Have staff specialist (hired in Jan.) to do evaluation and put together more streamlined out of state application approach. Questions on classes, contents, then forward to state subject matter expert (5-10 day turnaround) for review. If license is denied, then return entire packet to individual with a letter stating denial. Working on procedures to let applicanat know what they need to do to meet requirements.

Fingerprints
Receive actual fingerprint cards taken by local law enforcement. Going to online scanner program in November to speed up process – recent funding from legislature |

| | | | | | to reduce turnaround to 7-10 days. Sent to FBI and Utah Bur. of Identification – severely backlogged since 9/11.

Scanning: Individual sends in or brings in fees for background check. Office fills out form authorizing fingerprint check. Individual takes form to one of 17 designated areas. Fingerprints scanned. Individual designates where results of background check to be sent. In-state- sent to university and state office of education (student teachers must have this). |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

More

| Other Notes: | If there is an incomplete application, all the items in the packet are still put into system; letter generated saying what's not complete and sent to individual. If not completed, stays as a blank file and eventually moved out of the system. Person given folder number but not an active file.

Find the best technology you can – look for program first and then look for hardware to support it. Scanning is the way to go; don't keep hard documents. Anything that can jump screen to screen and allow for notes is the type of system you want. May pay extra for it but in the long run it will make the staff happier. | Can track licenses on the web. School districts can access it if they have the social security number and last name. Database system is easy to use. Updated website; still have people under old system and new system, so hoping this will allow them to access information they need to avoid a lot of the phone calls; have downloadable applications so don't have to send packets and create labels. | No fee for processing so no financial transaction. | Issue license based on completion of approved program rather than course analysis of transcript. Used to have to look at every single course to verify – now, make assumption its there with certain majors. If transcripts arrive separately, it goes into an in alphabetical file; when packet arrives, staff check the alpha file.

Biggest issue was knowing who had the file. Now, the person who logs the packet on the system knows who will get the file because of the alpha split and adds the analyst's initials to database. If put back in file, delete initials, so know that no one has it and it's in the file.

Database is completely table driven, so can easily modify whenever the laws/rules change.

Database saves lots of time; once on system, hit print and get file label | Link with Utah Eds Network to CACTUS so licensed educators can access own files and can see what Dept has on them. For out of state applicants, can track license application.

All 40 districts have access to information on educators in districts.

Try to get a computerized system that assists in tracking teachers. 20 years ago, had a dos-based system where tracked teacher records. So much easier to pull file up, what they need to do to renew or where they are. If didn't have CACTUS would be pulling hard files.

Most complaints are about telephone response time. Tried a receptionist but didn't work because still had to refer calls; didn't know answers to all of the questions, so still ending up on everyone's desk. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

				and address label.	Considering it again. Resisted voice messaging system because objective is customer service, but calls got so bad, had to go to voice messaging system. Website has helped some because lots of info posted there on the process, fees, out of state application, alternative routes, acceptable activities, entry year enhancement program to move from level I to II.

About Public Works LLC

Public Works offers public policy research and analysis to government agencies and officials, non-profits and think tanks across the country. Public Works has provided policy development, long-term planning and management consulting to several governors' offices, state constitutional officers, and numerous state cabinet agencies, as well as several federal, county and municipal officials. Public Works has also worked with school officials, regional K-12 education entities, chief state schools officers, and universities across the country on cutting-edge educational initiatives. The firm's senior level personnel have all served extensive tours of duty in government policy-making positions including former state cabinet officials, gubernatorial chiefs-of-staff, and state and agency policy directors.

About our team on this project

Linda M. Rhodes, Ed.D., is a former Cabinet Secretary, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (1987-1994), holds a Doctorate in Education from Teachers College, Columbia University and has consulted on a wide-range of education projects including: consultant to the Chancellor of the California State University on developing strategies to prepare CSU students for 21st century work; facilitated statewide *21st Century Work Round Table* with the Chancellor and statewide business leaders to explore CSU partnerships with the business community; designed and conducted an electronic survey among innovative faculty to identify barriers in offering active learning courses (service learning, fieldwork, case studies and internships). Created an Entrepreneurship Curriculum for rural high school students in collaboration with the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship and taught high school students in Pennsylvania's largest rural school district on how to start a small business later featured in *The Wall Street Journal.* Created an electronic career portfolio for high school students providing an interactive, on-line career research program for students in 24 school districts including lesson plans for teachers and a hard-copy portfolio for students along with a web site that acts as a virtual bridge between 70 high schools and hundreds of local businesses. Founder of a Community Technology Center (CTC) in an academically distressed school district and HUD Enterprise community bridging the digital divide for inner city youth funded by the by the U.S. Department of Education. Conducted a study for Mercyhurst College on how to better design their nursing education programs and curricula (CNA, LPN, RN) to meet the changing needs of the healthcare workplace (hospitals, community health and nursing homes). Rhodes has also written two books on caregiving and aging. Her newest book, *Should Mom be left alone? Should Dad be driving?* (Penguin 2005) is a 2005 National Mature Media Award winner.

public works
making good ideas work for the better

Robert D. Muller, Ed.D., is a former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education at the U.S. Department of Education, where he also served as senior adviser to the Deputy Secretary. He currently provides education and management consulting to organizations seeking to drive change and improve performance. Recent projects include: development of high school reform strategies at the state and local level, identification of effective grants management practices and core competencies for a federal agency, and creation of organizational strategy and membership development for a national education advocacy group. He has 20 years of experience leading organizations and projects in government, business and not-for-profit organizations. In addition to his education focus, he has broad expertise in the strategic management, leadership and operation of government programs. Muller holds a Doctorate in Education in higher education management from the University of Pennsylvania, a Masters Degree in Public Policy from Harvard University, and B.A. from Amherst College. His recent doctoral dissertation focused on the new knowledge economy's impact on the leadership of colleges and universities.

Sidney Bailey Hacker, MPA graduated from the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas at Austin and has devoted the nearly 20 years of her professional life to state government, starting with the Texas Legislature where she worked for five years for the House Appropriations Chair focusing on Texas' education finance and policy issues for both higher and public education. She then ran the Austin office of Texas' Office of State-Federal Relations for Governor Ann Richards. Sidney joined the Texas Performance Review, working to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the state's criminal justice agency, workforce development system, and utility regulation agency, while developing ways to enhance Texas' economy over a six year period. She served as Deputy Budget Director for the City of Austin before joining Public Works.

More information:

Public Works LLC
1690 East Strasburg Rd.
West Chester, PA 19380

Voice: (610) 296-9443
Fax: (610) 296-9434
Web: www.public-works.org