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GOVERNOR SUSANA MARTINEZ ANNOUNCES $5.5 MILLION PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT NEW MEXICO SCHOOLS THROUGH NEW A-F GRADING SYSTEM

Funding would provide individual instructional coaches to the lowest performing schools, incentivize effective school leaders and teachers to move to struggling schools

SANTA FE – Today, Governor Susana Martinez announced a $5.5 million proposal to significantly support students and teachers at New Mexico's struggling schools, as well as reward those schools with the highest student improvement and success. The funding would be allocated based on New Mexico's new school grading system, which passed the legislature last year with broad bipartisan support.

As part of the new A-F school grading system, New Mexico's schools will receive their first preliminary grades next week. This will provide parents and school leaders with a clear picture of where their school stands, as well as provide each school an opportunity to improve their grade in time for the first official release of school grades this summer.

For those schools that receive a grade of D or F when preliminary grades are released next summer, the Governor's proposal would allocate $4.3 million to help improve student achievement. This includes:

· $3,400,000 to support individual instructional coaches in the 40 lowest-performing schools. Each of the lowest performing schools will be given funds to hire an instructional coach who will support the teaching staff and school leaders at each school.
· $400,000 to support and incentivize highly effective school leaders who choose to serve in low performing schools.
· $500,000 to attract highly effective teachers to the lowest-performing schools.

In addition, the 25 highest-performing schools will receive a reward of $50,000 each to be used for important programs or improvements.

"Every student and every school can succeed in New Mexico," said Governor Martinez. "This proposal calls for a focused investment in schools where students are struggling and should help us close the achievement gap. With an easier-to-understand grading system that gives us a clear idea of how schools are performing, we are better able to target those that need help and identify and reward those with the highest achievement levels."

Under the current mandates of No Child Left Behind, New Mexico schools are deemed simply to be "passing" or "failing," with 87% of schools having been labeled as failing last year. New Mexico's new school grading system goes beyond one-time student test scores to prioritize individual student growth as a central component of a school's grade. The system also works to control for differences between schools based on income levels and other factors.

"This strategic investment in our struggling schools will pay big dividends for our students," said Public Education Department Secretary-designate Hanna Skandera. "There is no doubt that one of the most important factors in raising student achievement is a highly effective teacher. Today's proposal provides great incentives to attract successful teachers and school leaders to struggling schools in order to turn them around."

Struggling schools that receive support funds will be required to improve student achievement in less than 2 years or risk losing additional funds. This proposal will be part of the Governor's budget presented to the Legislature in the upcoming regular session.

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