

Yazzie/Martinez Education Equity Action Plan

Know Before You Go toolkit

TIMELINE

2018 Court Rules in Favor of Students

- In Yazzie/Martinez, the court ruled that New Mexico is violating students' rights to a quality education—especially Native students, English learners, students with disabilities, and students from economically disadvantaged households.

2019–2020 Community Advocacy Grows

- Families, educators, and advocates demand that the state honor its commitments to education equity under the Indian Education Act, Bilingual Multicultural Education Act, Hispanic Education Act, and Black Education Act.
- The state promises reforms—but with no clear plan to deliver results.

2020 – 2021 – Families Demand Digital Access

- Plaintiffs file a motion after students in rural, tribal, and low income households were denied internet, devices, and tech support during remote learning.
- The court sides with families again, ordering immediate access to technology.

2022–2023 Over \$1 Billion Spent, Still No Plan & No Results

- Over \$1 billion spent in education, still no statewide implementation plan to fix root issues.
- Revolving door at Public Education Department (PED)
- Little to no Tribal consultation. Communities are still shut out of decisions.

2024 – Plaintiffs Return to Court Over State's Noncompliance

- The state has failed to meet its obligations set by the court.
- Community leaders, parents, and advocates call for the court to enforce its ruling and provide a real, enforceable plan to support students' rights to an equitable education.

April 29, 2024 – Another Major Court Victory for Students & Families

- The judge ruled in favor of the plaintiffs again—ordering the state to create a real, community-driven education plan.
- This landmark win affirms what families, educators, and Tribal leaders have long been calling for: solutions shaped by those closest to the students and schools.

August 2025 – State Launches Community Input Sessions

- The court ordered the state to develop a new Remedial Action Plan, with input from families, educators, and Tribal leaders.
- **After years of community-led advocacy and calls for collaboration, the state is now required to listen to and include community leadership and expertise and holding public input meetings to shape the plan.**



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WHY WE NEED YOUR INPUT

What is the Yazzie/Martinez case?

- The *Yazzie/Martinez* case is a landmark education lawsuit that challenged New Mexico's Public Education Department for failing to provide a sufficient and equitable public education—**especially for Native students, English learners, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families.** In 2018, the court ruled that the state was violating students' constitutional rights.

What did the court say?

- The court agreed that **New Mexico was not meeting its constitutional duty to provide a uniform and sufficient education system** and found that the state was failing to provide students with basic necessities—qualified teachers, culturally relevant curricula and materials, professionals to support their health and well-being, and much more. These systemic failures especially harmed Native students, English learners, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families. **In 2019, the state was ordered to fix the broken education system.**

What is happening now?

- As of April 2025, **the state is finally required by law to develop a real, enforceable 5-year plan to address these systemic failures.** The state held consultant-led regional meetings, and for the first time the state asked communities directly for input. **Whether or not you joined those, this is your chance to connect with youth, legal advocates, and community leaders who are working to hold the state accountable throughout the plan development.**

What's at stake? What could real change look like?

- This is a once-in-a-generation chance to *transform public education*—grounded in equity, culture, and community wisdom! Real change could mean **more language and cultural programs, better-funded schools, safe and inviting schools, relevant and project/community based curricula, and social services and mental health support** for every student to succeed.

Want to learn more?

- For more on the court order, the plaintiffs' 9 components, and a short video explainer, visit: nmpoertylaw.org/nmclp_resources/ym-education-action-plan-order



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THE STUDENTS AT THE CENTER OF THE CASE

Four student groups were named in the Yazzie/Martinez case because the state was not meeting their needs:

Native students

Students from Tribal communities deserve education that honors their languages, cultures, histories, and sovereignty. This includes meaningful Tribal consultation by school districts, fully funded Native language programs, curriculum created by and for Native peoples, teachers trained to teach that curriculum, and more Native educators in the classrooms.

English language learners

Multilingual students need strong bilingual education, English language support, and access to rigorous, grade-level instruction—not watered-down content. Schools also need more bilingual, TESOL-certified, and Native language teachers to meet these students' needs.

Students with disabilities

Students receiving special education services must have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and funding to support their specific needs such as assistive technology, inclusive classrooms, and staff who are trained and supported to meet their needs.

Students from low-income families

Students from economically disadvantaged households need safe schools, transportation, access to healthy meals, supplies, and qualified educators, social workers, counselors, and mental and behavioral health services—no matter their zip code.

Black students

While not one of the four groups named in the original case, the plaintiffs have since asked the court to explicitly include protections for Black students under New Mexico's **Black Education Act**, passed in 2021. That law guarantees culturally responsive education, anti-racism training for educators, and a focus on the unique needs and experiences of Black students. Real equity in education must include Black students too.



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THE PLAINTIFFS' 9 COMPONENTS FOR A REAL PLAN

To comply with the court and serve all students, any state plan must include these 9 essential building blocks. Here they are summarized:

1. **Qualified, Supported Educators:** Our students need teachers and school staff who are certified, trained in culturally and linguistically responsive education, and reflect our communities—especially Native, bilingual, and special education teachers.
2. **Culturally & Linguistically Relevant Curriculum:** What students learn should affirm their identities, languages, and histories. Curriculum must follow state laws like the Indian Education Act (IEA), Hispanic Education Act (HEA), Bilingual Multicultural Education Act (BMEA), and Black Education Act (BEA), and be created with input from the communities they serve.
3. **Academic, mental, and behavioral health supports:** Schools need more than just teachers—every student should have access to counselors, social workers, and support staff who help with learning, wellness, and belonging.
4. **True Tribal & Community Collaboration:** Tribes and local communities must have decision-making power. That means meaningful Tribal consultation, local leadership, and respect for community-driven solutions.
5. **Real Accountability & Transparent Data:** The state must track how funds are used and whether schools are improving—using community-centered measures that reflect student experiences, not just test scores.
6. **Student & Family Support Services:** Wraparound services like language access, special ed, tutoring, and family supports must be in place to meet the full needs of each student.
7. **Tech & Internet Access:** Every student needs working devices and reliable internet at school and at home—with tech support and teacher training.
8. **Stronger State Oversight:** The Public Education Department must have the staff, tools, and authority to enforce the plan and improve results.
9. **Long-Term, Targeted Funding:** Education reforms need sustainable investments—not one-time grants—and full funding of the IEA, HEA, BMEA, and BEA to reach students who've been left behind.

Which components does your school need most urgently?



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PROMPTS TO REFLECT ON BEFORE THE MEETING

Use these to prepare your thoughts—they won't all be asked at the meeting, but they can help you speak from your experience:

- What are the biggest barriers students face in your school or community?
- What would culturally relevant education look like for your child?
- What supports do students in your community still need?
- What would a thriving public school feel like to you?
- What are your hopes and dreams for your child in school and after they graduate?

Consider these:

- Which of these student groups are part of your family, school, or community?
- What does it look like when these students are truly supported?
- Have you seen your community's languages, cultures, and stories reflected in classrooms?
- Which student groups are often left out of local conversations?
- What does it mean to educate students with dignity and respect?

Go deeper:

- What do Native students still need where you live?
- What barriers do multilingual students face in your schools?
- How can schools better include students with disabilities?
- What supports are most urgent for families facing poverty or housing insecurity?
- How should schools fulfill the promises of the Black Education Act?

Finish these sentences:

- "If the state's new education plan truly centered students like mine, it would include..."
- "My message to the Public Education Department about what our kids need is..."
- "Here's how I know when a school is working for our children:"
- "A school that respects our culture and language looks like..."
- "Students learn best when..."
- "The support my child needs to succeed is..."
- "To make schools safe and welcoming, they should..."



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