NOTICE TO ALL APPLICANTS:
EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to applicants for grant awards under this program.

ALL APPLICANTS FOR NEW GRANT AWARDS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IN THEIR APPLICATIONS TO ADDRESS THIS PROVISION IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING UNDER THIS PROGRAM.

Please respond to the following requests for information:

1. **Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.**

Mission: The New Mexico Public Education Department (PED), Special Education Division's (SED) mission is to ensure Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is provided for students with disabilities through equitable access to rigorous high-quality curriculum, high-quality instruction, and appropriate learning supports.

Policies: The SED requires that LEAs adopt special education policies, procedures and practices that meet the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part B (IDEA-B). SED's oversight of the provision of FAPE is aligned with the requirements of general supervision by the state educational agency. Additionally, New Mexico Administrative Code (NMAC) for special education further implements IDEA-B federal requirements. These state regulations are included in New Mexico's State Education Agency IDEA-B state application. The SED collects, reviews, and validates (for accuracy) special education data from all New Mexico local education agencies (LEAs). These data are used collaboratively (between the SED and LEAs) to ensure that students with disabilities can pursue a high school diploma and meet college and career readiness standards in preparation for adult life.

Summary: The New Mexico Public Education Department, Special Education Division's (SED) special education mission, policies, procedures, and practices make up the framework that guides the SED in pursuit of its commitment to ensuring students with disabilities are afforded equitable access to receiving a FAPE among their non-disabled peers.

2. **Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?**

In 2018, a landmark court ruling (Martinez/Yazzie v. the State of New Mexico Consolidated Lawsuit) found the State violated the rights of at-risk students by failing to provide a uniform statewide education system of programming and services to prepare students for post-secondary life. The ruling noted that students most significantly marginalized include those who are economically disadvantaged, identified as having a disability, English language learners, and Native Americans. These students account for over 70% of the population in New Mexico's public schools.

New Mexico places particular emphasis on eradicating inequities for students through the propagation of the special education policies, procedures and practices mentioned above. Further,

New Mexico implements a host of measurable activities as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part B (IDEA-B), e.g., State performance Plan (SPP) compliance and results driven monitoring of special education activity for each student with disabilities. The State's SPP/APR includes a State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) that is a comprehensive, ambitious, yet achievable multi-year plan for improving educational results for children with disabilities. New Mexico's SSIP focuses on increasing the number of students with disabilities in grades K-3 who are reading at or above grade level proficiency. The SSIP is aligned with the 2017 and 2022 State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG) funded by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)

New Mexico faces challenges regarding literacy in both adult and student populations. According to the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), New Mexico's overall literacy rates are among the lowest in the nation (2020). Adult literacy rates rank 49th, with 29% of the state at or below level one literacy rates (the lowest level). Our students' literacy rates also rank at the bottom nationally. The most alarming achievement gaps in reading proficiency existed for students with disabilities (SWD) and English language learners (ELL), only 24% and 31% of whom were assessed as proficient in 2021 (NMPED, 2021).

The State identified a root cause of literacy proficiency was a lack of evidence-based reading instructional practices. To address this issue, at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, New Mexico's PED launched a state-wide literacy initiative, Structured Literacy™ New Mexico. This initiative is focused on identifying struggling readers before they fail and supporting teachers through the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy™. The PED is providing Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling™ (LETRS™) training for pre-school and K-2 educators to support the implementation of Structured Literacy™.

Using continuous improvement methodologies, the SED identified barriers specific to students with disabilities. Findings suggested that special educators lack data literacy skills required to make instructional decisions and lack skills and knowledge of how to implement Structured Literacy practices in special education settings. These trends were particularly evident in rural districts that had limited access to professional development resources and schools with high populations of English language learners and students who are economically disadvantaged.

The goal of the SSIP is to increase teachers' use of formative reading data to make instructional decisions resulting in an increase of the number of K-3 SWD demonstrating progress towards reading proficiency. In 2020, the SED identified 77 schools in which K-3 students with disabilities have made limited to no progress towards reading proficiency. Since then the SED has provided instructional coaching and professional development supporting the implementation of Structured Literacy instruction.

Citations

Institute of Education Sciences (IES). (2020). *Comparison charts of state and county estimates - U.S. states* [PDF]. National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/piaac/skillsmap/src/PDF/STATE.pdf

New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED). (2021). *Proficiencies web files, state, district, school 2021, ESSA-aligned* [Data set]. NMPED.

Singleton, S. M. (2018, December 20). *Yazzie-Martinez court's findings of fact and conclusions of law* [PDF]. New Mexico public education department. https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Yazzie-Martinez-Court%E2%80%99s-Findings-of-Fact-and-Conclusions-of-Law-2018-12-20.pdf

3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

To address these barriers, the SED will:

Objective 1: Support effective implementation of structured literacy through an evidenced-based coaching framework.
Objective 2: Collaborate with partners and stakeholders to support the effective implementation of Structured Literacy™.
Objective 3: Provide leadership learning on effectively supporting the implementation of evidence-based coaching and data literacy practices
Objective 4. Provide parent/family members with an understanding of Structured Literacy™ practices to support students' literacy development outside the classroom setting.

The SED employs the following ongoing activities to reach these objectives:

- Professional development and coaching focused on data and root cause analysis to develop a individualized school plans based on that school's data;
- Instructional coaching for teacher partners to support implementation of evidence-based practices with students with disabilities;
- School wide/group professional development to target practices revealed in data analysis coaching for admins to support schoolwide instructional priorities; and
- Family literacy workshops to provide a bridge between instructional practices and home literacy activities

4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

New Mexico's State Identified Measurable Result (SiMR) in the SSIP is to increase the reading proficiency of students with disabilities in second grade in 40 of its lowest performing schools as measured by statewide-standardized reading assessments. Currently, New Mexico's statewide-standardized reading assessment is Istation's Indicators of Progress (ISIP) which is a formative computer adaptive assessment that reflects the reading ability level of each student and measures growth over time. Istation is administered three times per year: at the beginning of the year (BOY), middle of the year (MOY), and end of the year (EOY).
Baseline data for 2019 Istation scores (pre-COVID) for 2nd grade students with disabilities in participating schools was 12.9%.

FFY	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Target	16.5%	16.5%	17%	17.60%	18.6%	20.10%

Actual	16.5%	16.5%				

Notes:

1. Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity in order to submit an application.
2. Applicants may identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
3. Applicants may have already included some or all of this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) and page number(s) in their applications or State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.