



STATE OF NEW MEXICO

Public Education Department

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NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Public Education Department launches ‘Year of Literacy’ *Incoming secretary wants to celebrate reading in new school year*

SANTA FE -- The 2021-2022 school year will be the Year of Literacy across New Mexico, and everyone is invited to find unique ways to celebrate reading, the Public Education Department announced today.

Kurt Steinhaus, who will take over as Public Education secretary-designate on Aug. 20, proposed the Year of Literacy as a way to engage all New Mexicans in the single skill that is most essential to unlocking education.

“Reading is the key to learning. It’s an essential skill that really makes it possible to expand your horizons in any direction,” Steinhaus said. “This isn’t just for schools and students -- it’s for everyone. We want all of New Mexico to participate in celebrating a literacy that honors the rich cultures of our state.”

In 2019, only 34% of New Mexico public school students were rated “proficient and above” in reading.

“The Year of Literacy is an important reminder that until every New Mexico child can read at grade level or above, our education system is not serving our state as it should,” said Ryan Stewart, who is stepping down as Public Education secretary for family reasons. “We need to be a state of avid readers, and we’ll only get there when students see their role models reading for information and reading for pleasure.”

The Year of Literacy will include participatory events, beginning with a “Get Caught Reading” campaign. To participate:

- Families: Take a picture of your child reading independently or with other family members and send it, along with a caption, to family.engagement@state.nm.us.
- Teachers: Take a picture of how you are promoting reading in your classroom and send it, along with a caption, to teacher.liaison@state.nm.us.
- Businesses: Take a picture of how your business is promoting reading or access to quality books and materials and send it, along with a caption, to community.engagement@state.nm.us.

The Public Education Department will use the photos on social media with the #GetCaughtReading hashtag and for other Year of Literacy events.

The department is also looking for partners to conduct book drives, establish little free libraries, and provide mentoring and tutoring opportunities. Email community.engagement@state.nm.us to express interest or offer other ideas.

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The New Mexico Public Education Department partners with educators, communities and families to ensure that all students are healthy, secure in their identity and holistically prepared for college, career and life. Currently, the NMPED serves more than 317,000 students in 187 districts and charter schools. Find an abundance of resources for administrators, educators, families and students at [New Mexico Public Education Department \(state.nm.us\)](http://NewMexicoPublicEducationDepartment.state.nm.us) or follow the PED [at NMPublicEducationDepartment](#) on Facebook and @NMPED on Twitter.



Kurt Steinhause, the Public Education Department's secretary designate, gets caught reading in his office in the Apodaca Building. Steinhause has named this the Year of Literacy across Mexico. To kick off the celebration, the department has started a #GetCaughtReading social media campaign.