



Newsletter | December 2020 | Edition 4

2020 Education Context Report

Baseline Data for Prenatal-to-Career Success Initiatives in Doña Ana County

With one of the most pivotal years in recent history coming to a close, now is a crucial time for reflection. The new year presents an opportunity to reevaluate education in Doña Ana County so that our children can achieve prenatal-to-career success. Together with Ngage NM and the SUCCESS Partnership, we are pleased to present the 2020 Doña Ana County Education Context Report, where you will find the latest data on local, statewide, and national education outcomes. The information in this report serves as your baseline for informed decision-making in 2021.

The 2020 Doña Ana County Education Context Report is structured around the three overarching community goals of the SUCCESS Partnership: [Children's Success](#), [Community Support](#), and [Community Values](#). Keep reading to see key findings, or click below to access the full report.

See the full Education Context Report [here](#).

Goal 1: Children's Success



Photo by Isaac Quesada

Early Childhood Education

- Access to Early Childhood Education in Doña Ana County has increased, with funding available for an additional 809 children compared to FY 2017.
- With a median annual income of \$19k, childcare workers in our county currently earn less than fast-food cooks.
- Mid-to-low-income families are more likely to struggle with accessing childcare compared to very-low-income families.

K-12 Success

- Enrollment is up in K-5 Plus Programs, which aim to narrow opportunity gaps by providing increased instructional time in high-poverty public elementary schools.
- Since 2015, high school graduation rates in all three Doña Ana County school districts have risen, with Gadsden and Las Cruces now mirroring the national average.
- Enrollment trends at Arrowhead Early College High School + Medical Academy in Las Cruces suggest a growing opportunity gap for Hispanic students and economically disadvantaged students.

Post-Secondary Access & Success

- Nearly half of college-aged residents of Doña Ana County were enrolled in post-secondary education in 2019.
- First-year retention rates at NMSU and DACC have risen slightly but mostly remained steady in recent years. Graduation rates at NMSU have increased.
- Financial aid award amounts have increased at both NMSU and DACC, but fewer students are receiving aid.

Career Opportunities for Graduates

- The median annual household income in Doña Ana County is about \$9k below the median income for New Mexico and about \$21k below that for the United States.
- Registered Nursing and Medical Practice have an excess of job openings, representing opportunity but also a great challenge for our county where less than half of the adult population holds a bachelor's degree or higher.

Goal 2: Community Support



Photo by Alex Robinson

Equitable & Sufficient Education Resources

- The Yazzie/Martinez case continues to fight for education equity in New Mexico, most recently asking for the State of New Mexico to provide computers and high-speed internet to students who are currently unable to access remote learning.
- In Doña Ana County, Hispanic or Latino persons are twice as likely as white non-Hispanics to lack access to the internet or a computer.

Parent, Student, & Community Voice

- Ofiate High School made the news this summer as the Las Cruces Public School Board unanimously voted to change the school's name to Organ Mountain High School, effective in July 2021.
- Doña Ana County parents report difficulty with school-based health care and school-based mental/behavioral services.

Support for Educators

- Starting salaries for K-12 teachers in Doña Ana County are lower than those in El Paso County, which may draw potential teachers away from our schools.
- New Mexico is one of the bottom 5 states in the nation for average teacher salary.

Goal 3: Community Values



Photo by Jose G. Ortega Castro

Whole Childhood Well-Being

- After a spike in 2015, infant mortality rates in Doña Ana County have now dropped below the statewide and national levels.
- Mental health is an increasing concern, particularly for female students. Female students in Doña Ana County high schools are almost twice as likely as male students to engage in non-suicidal self-injury or to feel sad or hopeless.

Cultural & Bilingual Competency

- 135 students across Doña Ana County received a Seal of Biliteracy in 2018.
- Nearly 3,000 students in Gadsden Independent School District participated in bilingual programs.
- Raices Del Saber Xinachtli Community School opened in Las Cruces in 2019; a public charter school focused on a biliterate, culturally-responsive curriculum.

Creative, Student-Centered Education

- Las Cruces Public Schools established 4 new community schools in 2020, for a total of 5 community schools within LCPS.

See the full Education Context Report here.

Final Thoughts

Since publishing our first Education Context Report in 2016, we have tracked many meaningful changes throughout Doña Ana County. The latest data suggests that while many outcomes have greatly improved for county residents, there is still room for growth. And although it is unknown how COVID-19 restrictions will affect education outcomes in the next few years, we know that our community is strong and resilient. The [SUCCESS Partnership](#) is committed to improved education outcomes and embraces the idea that education is a "shared responsibility." We thank all the parents, educators, and community members who work relentlessly to support our community's most valuable asset, the children. We wish you a safe and happy holiday season.

To view in-depth data about prenatal-to-career success in Doña Ana County, visit the full [2020 Education Context Report](#).

To view prior newsletters, reports, snapshots, and dashboards from the **Center for Community Analysis**, including the previous [2016 Education Context Report](#), visit our [website](#).