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**Center for Community Analysis**

Center for Community Analysis

New Mexico State University



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# Kinder to Career Goals for Doña Ana County

Results from the Success Partnership's K-Career Strategic Planning

Take a moment to think about your elementary school days. You learned how to solve mathematical problems, read passages and think critically about the story, and even consider future careers. Did you know what you wanted to be? Several studies have suggested that a child's identity starts to form early, including aspirations for their adult career. (1) Because of this, it has been said that children should have the knowledge, skills, and resources for career readiness as early as kindergarten. (2)

Since Fall 2022, the [Success Partnership's Doña Ana County Coalition](#) has been working on strategic planning for their two action networks; Students Succeed Academically in Healthy Schools & Equitable Access and Success in Higher Education and Careers. Community organizations and community members used [data](#) to establish [a list of outcomes and objectives](#) that will support Doña Ana County students' education and career readiness and are currently brainstorming strategies to reach those outcomes. The following outlines the Coalition's goals and intended outcomes.

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## Goal 1: Students Succeed Academically in Healthy Schools

For children to succeed academically, they must have their basic needs met and feel physically and emotionally secure in school. (3) Schools can implement policies and

practices that support the health and well-being of *students* so they can grow to be healthy and successful *adults*. (4)

## **Students' basic needs are met, so they are ready to learn**

It has become widely recognized that increasing integrated student supports in schools leads to better outcomes for students. (5) The Coalition plans to help schools increase the number of wrap-around services available, such as food banks, clothing banks, job training programs, and more. The Coalition also recognizes the need to help traditionally underserved students and families navigate the school system and acquire the supports that students need to thrive.



## **Improve mental and behavioral health among students, staff, and families**

According to the 100% Community Survey for Doña Ana County, 67% of families who need school-based health services for their child said there weren't enough mental health care professionals at their child's school, and nearly half (48%) said the school did not offer the types of services their child needed. (6) In addition, the number of high school students feeling sad or hopeless in Doña Ana County increased from 30.1% in 2009 to 41.1% in 2019. (7)

To address these concerns, the Coalition plans to support social-emotional learning programs containing trauma-informed instructional and restorative practices in schools across the county. In addition, the Coalition plans to help increase access to behavioral health services in schools and increase awareness of mental/behavioral health issues from a culturally and linguistically responsive lens.

## **Schools embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)**

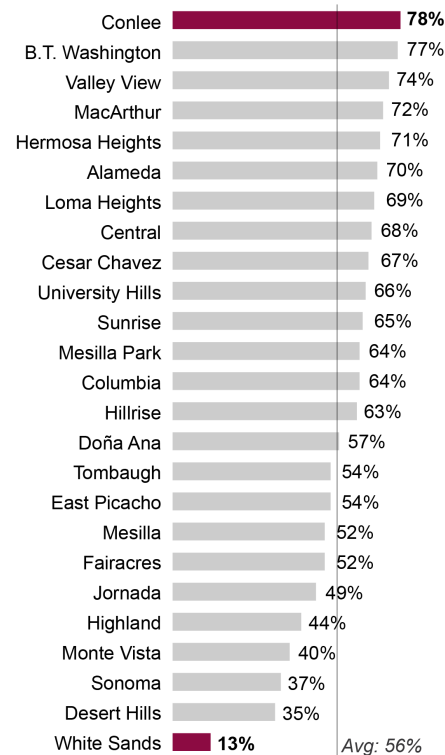
With over 38,000 K-12 students in Doña Ana County, schools are comprised of students from diverse demographic backgrounds: socioeconomic statuses, nationalities, and many different learning abilities. Embracing diversity can positively impact students' academics and socio-emotional development. (8) To understand the DEI needs of their schools, the

Coalition plans to support a fully comprehensive DEI assessment for school districts.

## Students have equitable access to resources and student supports

Prior research from the Center of Community Analysis (CCA) shows that public and charter schools in Las Cruces are segregated by race, income, language, and disability status, which drives a local achievement gap. (9) There is a notable difference in the percentage of economically disadvantaged (ED) students between elementary schools in Las Cruces Public Schools. Research shows that schools with a high percentage of ED students often lack the same resources for students as schools with lower poverty rates. (10) The Coalition will work to bridge this gap by increasing student access to individualized supports and high-quality programming.

The proportion of Las Cruces elementary students who are economically disadvantaged varies greatly by school:



## Goal 2: Equitable Access and Success in Higher Education and Careers

In Doña Ana County, nearly half of White Non-Hispanic adults have a Bachelor's degree or higher compared to only 18% of Hispanic or Latino adults. (11) Disparities in educational attainment lead to income disparity. The Coalition hopes to close this gap by supporting strategies that increase access to higher education and career opportunities resulting in the following outcomes.

### Increase equity in higher education enrollment

The inequity in college access is a significant problem in the country. Historically underserved students – such as low-income, Black, and Hispanic students – are underrepresented in higher education, particularly at four-year institutions. (12) Access to college credit

### Students participate in career and work-based learning opportunities

Research shows that only 4% of high school students in the state participated in work-based learning in 2019-2020. (16) Work-Based Learning experiences allow students to immerse themselves in a particular field and help young people

learning in high school provides the opportunity - especially for underserved students - to get an early start on beginning college, save on tuition, and explore different programs to study. (13) However, significant disparities in access to Dual Credit exist in Doña Ana County. (14) The Coalition plans to support strategies to increase early access to college pathways for all students.

### **Increase the number of highly skilled workers and people in sustainable careers**

A highly skilled workforce can help businesses and workplaces become more profitable and pave the way for growth and development. (15) The Coalition aims to increase the number of students enrolled in Work-Based Learning, experiential learning, and internship programs by developing partnerships in the community between businesses, nonprofits, and college departments.

decide on their long-term career goals. (17) However, access to internships and other work-based learning opportunities can be challenging for students juggling family responsibilities and, often, jobs. The Coalition plans to implement needed wrap-around supports for students, such as transportation, childcare services, and more.

### **Expose all students to career knowledge at an early age**

Early exposure to career knowledge can introduce students to employment paths they may not have previously considered and teach them the skills needed. Career and experiential learning engage students in hands-on experiences and reflection. Through this learning, students can better connect knowledge learned in the classroom to real-world situations. (18) The Coalition plans to support middle and high schools to integrate career and experiential learning opportunities into the core curriculum.



### **Applying the Strategies**

The goals and objectives set in place by the K-Career Coalition can successfully increase student success and equitable access to higher education and careers. How can you contribute to the success of Doña Ana County's students? Help the Coalition develop strategies to achieve these outcomes. Contact the K-Career Coalition at [successdac.org](http://successdac.org) to get involved. To see data related to the K-Career strategic planning, visit:

## Kindergarten through Career Strategic Planning Data

### About the ECE Coalition

The ECE Coalition is comprised of dozens of local ECE organizations and community members. Four backbone organizations that support the ECE Coalition are [La Clinica de Familia Family Services \(LCDFFS\)](#), [Ngage NM](#), the [Community Action Agency of Southern NM \(CAA\)](#), and the [NMSU Center for Community Analysis \(CCA\)](#).

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#### Sources:

- (1) [At What Age Should Children Start to Consider their Career?](#)
- (2) [New study reveals what age parents think kids should start thinking about career](#)
- (3) [Meeting the Needs of the Whole Student](#)
- (4) [CDC Healthy Schools](#)
- (5) [Small investments for big gains: Transforming wraparound services into an engine of opportunity](#)
- (6) [The 100% Community Survey Report Doña Ana County 2020- CCA, Anna, Age Eight Institute and the Resilience Leaders of Doña Ana County](#)
- (7) [New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey \(YRRS\)](#)
- (8) [How SEL Can Help Make Schools Feel More Inclusive](#)
- (9) [How school boundaries and segregation impact student success](#)
- (10) [Does the SES of the School Matter? An Examination of Socioeconomic Status and Student Achievement Using PISA 2003](#)
- (11) [Center for Community Analysis](#)
- (12) [Policies to Ensure Equitable Access to Well-Resourced Colleges and Universities](#)
- (13) [Kindergarten through Career in Doña Ana County](#)
- (14) [Kindergarten through Career Strategic Planning Data](#)
- (15) [The Importance of Having Skilled Manpower](#)
- (16) [New Mexico Comprehensive College and Career Pathways Assessment Report](#)
- (17) [Benefits of Work-Based Learning](#)
- (18) [What Is Experiential Learning And Why Is It Important?](#)



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