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# NEWS RELEASE

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## New Mexico Class of 2011 Graduation Rate is 63%

*Rate Reflects New, More Accurate Calculation, Signals Significant Need for Reform*

**SANTA FE** – On Friday, the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) announced the statewide four-year graduation rate for the Class of 2011 dropped to **63%**, a decrease of **4.3%** over the year before. Due to federal regulations, the method to calculate the graduation rate changed this year. The new measurement criteria counts student populations left out of prior calculations. This new calculation presents a clearer picture of how many students are graduating in New Mexico. The rate continues to highlight the need for reform as over three out of 10 students are still not graduating within four years.

"Given the brilliant potential of our teachers and students, we have the ability, opportunity, and responsibility to ensure that more New Mexico kids are graduating from high school and being prepared well for higher education or successful careers," said PED Secretary-Designate Hanna Skandera. "Important reforms like focusing on reading, identifying and helping struggling students, and recognizing our great teachers will help ensure we have more graduates in the years ahead."

In April, PED began the "New Mexico Reads to Lead" initiative to focus on student literacy between Kindergarten and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. A recent study shows a student's ability to read in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade is the leading indicator of high school graduation.

In addition, the FY13 budget provides funding for assessment tools that teachers can use between 4th and 10th grades to better identify – during the school year – those students who are falling behind and need additional help. And, for the first time ever, every New Mexico 10<sup>th</sup> grader will be able to take the Pre-SAT for free in order to ensure that high school students are thinking earlier about attending college and determining subject areas where they may need assistance before taking the ACT or SAT.

A complete breakdown of graduation rates by district and student groups can be found at the PED website: <http://ped.state.nm.us/Graduation/index.html>. Nearly half (44) of the state's 89 school districts showed improvement in graduation rates, with some districts showing significant progress.

Friday's announcement comes before commencement ceremonies across much of the state and is the earliest PED has ever released the graduation rate.