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NEWS RELEASE

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New Mexico High School Graduation Rate Improves, But Much Work Remains

Santa Fe, NM – New Mexico has established policies in an effort to improve high school graduation rates, which improved somewhat from the year before, a new report from *Education Week* shows.

New Mexico's graduation rate, as tracked by *Education Week's* Diplomas Count 2009 report, improved slightly compared to the year before. New Mexico's graduation rate was 56 percent for the class of 2006, an improvement from 54.1 percent the year before. New Mexico's ranking was 48th out of 51 states and the District of Columbia, also an improvement from the year before. New Mexico ranked 50th out of 51 states and the District of Columbia in the 2008 report.

The national graduation rate for the class of 2006 was 69.2 percent, according to the report.

"While progress is good, the fact remains that far too many of our children take too long or fail to graduate from high school," Secretary of Education Veronica C. García said. "This has an enormous impact on our economy and negatively impacts their future quality of life."

New Mexico is among the 20 states in the country that have formally defined college readiness, or the skills and knowledge needed to be prepared for college, the report shows. New Mexico has also defined work readiness, established high school exit exams and offers students opportunities to earn industry-recognized certificates or licenses in the public school system, the report shows.

"New Mexico's work to define college readiness can help us create a more integrated public education system that better serves New Mexico families, from preschool through college," Deputy Secretary Catherine Cross Maple said. "It's a roadmap for students that aspire to higher education."

"New Mexico has often been noted for strong standards and high expectations." Secretary García said. "Now is the time to put them to work. It's clear that we must be more aggressive in preventing dropouts."

The New Mexico Public Education Department is scheduled to release the state's first cohort graduation rate report later this summer.

The complete Diplomas Count 2009 report can be viewed at www.edweek.org/go/dc09.

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