

MY VIEW

Making New Mexico's children the priority

- By Peter Spokus
- Aug 19, 2017

The New Mexico Public Education Department recently released to districts and the media the results of last year's PARCC tests ("Slight improvement in PARCC exam results," July 25).

As reported, the 2017 results show 28.6 percent proficiency in English language arts and 19.7 percent in math. In 2015, the first year PARCC was administered in New Mexico, the numbers were 26.4 percent and 17.4 percent, respectively. Albuquerque Public Schools and Rio Rancho Public Schools actually saw English scores decline slightly over the past three years, while math was nearly flat. However, the reporting failed to highlight the tremendous successes by other schools in the state. Farmington, Hobbs and Alamogordo, in particular, enjoyed strong results.

In Albuquerque, charter school Albuquerque Institute for Mathematics and Science, also known as [AIMS@UNM](#), and others, achieved tremendous results. In fact, Albuquerque Institute for Mathematics and Science's results were nationally recognized. *The Washington Post* named Albuquerque Institute for Mathematics and Science 42nd nationally in most challenging high schools and *U.S. News and World Report* ranked Albuquerque Institute for Mathematics and Science No. 1 in New Mexico, No. 83 out of 2,350 national charter schools and No. 314 in national high school rankings.

The Albuquerque Institute for Mathematics and Science tests results are not a result of a "stacked" sample. Contrary to reports, the [AIMS@UNM](#) student body makeup is very diverse: 52 percent male and 48 percent female, and the total minority enrollment is 51 percent and achieves a 94 percent graduation rate.

Rather than shifting the focus to the unproven issue of testing fairness, maybe the public should question why some schools and districts perform well and others do not? Why don't the state education power brokers learn from the successful schools and consider their proven strategies? Obviously, our New Mexico kids can and do score well on these "biased" tests!

Albuquerque Institute for Mathematics and Science is trying to expand its footprint to other New Mexico communities, in particular Rio Rancho. Unfortunately, the current political climate has placed obstacles in that path in the form of lawsuits, recognized legal judgments made followed by baseless appeals. At the heart of the issue is the improvement of our New Mexico kids' education. It's time to get politics out of education and make New Mexico's children the priority.

Peter Spokus lives in Albuquerque. In addition to being a taxpaying New Mexican, he is the communications liaison for Albuquerque Institute for Mathematics and Science.