

## Letter to the Editor: A letter to the heartbeat of New Mexico: Our incredible teachers

Written by Gallupsun Staff  
Friday, 29 December 2023 00:00

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Dear New Mexico Educators,

As the sun sets over the enchanting landscapes of our beloved state, concluding my tenure as the 2023 New Mexico Teacher of the Year, I am compelled to express my deepest admiration and gratitude to you, the incredible, hardworking, and truly inspirational teachers of New Mexico.

Throughout my journeys this year, my learning expanded far beyond the confines of my four walls, transcending physical boundaries as I traversed this state and encountered inspiring educators who served as my marigolds. I witnessed the tapestry of our communities, where you stand as beacons of light, shaping the minds of the next generation with unwavering dedication and boundless love.

These experiences were transformative, broadening my perspective and deepening my understanding of the challenges and triumphs. There are educators like the 2024 New Mexico Teacher of the Year, Roy Basa, a science teacher at Twin Buttes Cyber Academy in Zuni, New Mexico. He embodies innovation by collaborating with his community, organizing workshops for students where they received training from medical professionals, fostering career and technical education pathways within the realm of education in New Mexico. The collaborative exchange of ideas with fellow educators has fueled my commitment to advocating for policies that prioritize the well-being of educators, recognizing the profound impact it has on the success and flourishing of our children. The connections forged during these interactions have become the bedrock of my advocacy.

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In a society that sometimes underestimates the profound impact of teachers, New Mexico is privileged to have a cadre of educators who go above and beyond. Your classrooms are sanctuaries of learning, places where dreams are nurtured and potential is unlocked. Your resilience in the face of challenges, your ability to adapt and innovate, and your tireless pursuit of excellence do not go unnoticed.

Amidst annual scores and national rankings that sometimes overshadow our accomplishments, I want to underscore the dedication and passion you bring to our classrooms because they are far more profound than mere statistics suggest. Your classrooms are filled with narratives of compassion, support, and dedication, far beyond what any standardized test can reveal. Beyond rankings lie numerous stories of resilience, determination, and unwavering commitment, stories that exemplify the transformative power of education in ensuring postsecondary success and shaping tomorrow's leaders.

There is the teacher who ensures that every child in their class has warm clothes for the winter, embodying a commitment to providing not only education but also comfort and security. In another classroom, there's the teacher with a cabinet full of snacks, understanding that for some students, the breakfast and lunch they receive at school might be their only meal. Down the hall, there's the teacher who spends weekends organizing extracurricular activities, because they believe in the transformative power of community and a well-rounded education that goes beyond academics.

There are educators like the 2024 New Mexico Teacher of the Year, Dr. Roy Basa, a science teacher at Twin Buttes Cyber Academy in Zuni, New Mexico. He embodies innovation by collaborating with his community, organizing workshops for students where they received training from medical professionals, fostering career and technical education pathways.

These are our stories, born out of a genuine desire to make a positive difference, that need to shine brightly, showcasing the depth of our impact.

Thank you for your tireless efforts, your unyielding spirit, and the love you pour into the lives of the students of New Mexico. You are not just teachers; you are the heartbeat of our communities, the catalysts of change, and the guardians of dreams. In every corner of our state, your influence is felt with legacies being written in the achievements and aspirations of the

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students whose lives you touch. New Mexico is brighter, stronger, and more hopeful because of you—a community where exceptional teachers light the way toward a brighter future.

***With gratitude and love,***

***Tara Hughes***

***2023 New Mexico Teacher of the Year***