The Office of Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham announced on Jan. 28 Public Education Department Secretary Kurt Steinhaus would be retiring after a lengthy and distinguished career in New Mexico public education.

"I am deeply grateful to Secretary Steinhaus for his lifelong and tireless service in pursuit of improving educational outcomes for every New Mexico student," Lujan Grisham said in a press release published on Jan. 28. "As a seasoned educator, his relationships with districts around the state have enormously benefited the work of the Department."

Lujan Grisham went on to list some of the things Steinhuas did for education in New Mexico.

"Under his leadership, New Mexico teachers are now the highest paid in the region and educators have more tools to do what they do best – teaching New Mexico students," she said. "The state of public education in New Mexico is in a better place than ever because of Kurt's dedication, and I wish him a very happy and well-deserved retirement."

Steinhaus thanked Lujan Grisham in a statement of his own.

“It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve in Gov. Lujan Grisham’s administration alongside the hardworking staff of the Public Education Department and the outstanding educators of New Mexico,” he said. “The governor’s vision for education is spot on, motivating, and visionary. I share her goal of working to improve the lives of children and families in each and every community, as I know educators and PED staff do as well.”

Steinhaus said he is taking the time to focus on his family and his health.

“I am deeply proud to have given my best to this job, but at this time I have a critical need to focus on my family and health. I am grateful to the governor for giving me the opportunity to finish my career working on behalf of the state of New Mexico, and I know that she will continue to work to deliver the best possible public education system for New Mexico students, educators, and families,” Steinhaus said.

Steinhaus also expressed deep appreciation to his wife, retired teacher Jo Beth, for a lifetime of support and partnership.

Among Steinhaus's accomplishments at PED were the focused learning initiatives "The Year of Literacy" and "Math is Me." As secretary, he oversaw the roll-out of a new assessment tool that offers better insight into how New Mexico students are performing and where targeted investments need to be made. He also worked to address unfinished learning that resulted from the pandemic using creative tutoring solutions, support for community schools, and innovation in Career and Technical Education around the state.

A staunch advocate for New Mexico educators, Steinhaus partnered with the governor to ensure they continue to be the highest paid and best supported in the Southwest.

Steinhaus began his career as a classroom educator, teaching at Alamogordo Public Schools from 1976 through 1988. After teaching at both Santa Fe Community College and the University of New Mexico he was hired at what was then known as the state Department of Education as an educational consultant, subsequently being promoted into various leadership roles, facilitating strategic planning about public education in New Mexico and managing budgets and staffing for program development, educational technology and interventions and incentive for school improvement.

He later worked as director of student and education programs at Los Alamos National Laboratory and as deputy secretary of PED. Prior to joining the Lujan Grisham administration, he served as superintendent of Los Alamos Public Schools for five years, where he led the high-performing district to some of the state's best graduation rates.

Steinhaus’s final day was Jan. 27. Children’s Cabinet Director Mariana Padilla will serve as interim department leadership until a permanent appointment is named.

