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# Report: State should raise cash for schools

**By Robert Nott**  
The New Mexican

The state Legislature should raise revenue — including increasing income tax rates for high-income residents — to offset a decrease in educational funding, a new report suggests.

The New Mexico Voices for Children report — “Funding Public Schools in New Mexico in the Great Recession” — utilizes data from the Public Education Department, the Legislative Finance Committee and the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions to stress that public schools were hit with a 5 percent funding cut for the current year.

The report, which focuses on the last year of education funding, notes that the decline in funding comes from a combination of state cuts and the end of federal stimulus money.

Gerry Bradley, research director for the nonprofit, non-partisan New Mexico Voices and author of the report, said by phone Tuesday that he realizes the report contains few surprises.

“I drew attention to something that is getting no attention,” he said. “Our Legislature and the (governor’s) administration did not keep the K-12 budget intact ... and we’re losing employment in the K-12 system.”

Utilizing documents from

the Department of Workforce Solutions, Bradley notes that the state lost about 2,300 education-sector jobs, though he said he does not know how many of those are teacher positions.

“Putting less money into the school system is not going to help. That’s a really bad idea,” he said. “People say that the school system is failing us, but they’re not looking at the fact that we’re not investing more in the school system. We’re investing less.”

The report also suggests that the state should rely more heavily on property taxes to support operational costs (as well as capital expenditures) for education.

Bradley, a former state economist with the Department of Taxation and Revenue, said the state’s \$2.4 billion K-12 education budget accounts for about 43 percent of the total state budget.

Based on 2009 data, the U.S. Census Bureau reports that New Mexico spends a little more than \$9,000 per pupil. Over the past few years, the state has ranked somewhere between 30th and 35th when it comes to per-student outlay in that report.

## ON THE WEB

◆ Visit [www.nmvoices.org](http://www.nmvoices.org) to access the eight-page “Funding Public Schools” report.