

# Helping New Teachers Pays Off With Results

By [Albuquerque Journal Editorial Board](#) on Fri, Oct 7, 2011



The “big goal” is paying off for some New Mexico teachers and students.

Teach for America, a national program, works with teachers in low-income, high-need schools. Its premise is that success is more likely if you set “big goals” and draw a road map for reaching them.

Each teacher sets his or her own “big goal” for the class, usually based on standardized test results. One New Mexico teacher’s goal was that 85 percent of her students will be proficient on the assessment she uses for reading, math and writing. Ambitious for sure.

The “big goal” of the program itself is to place the most promising young teachers in places where they are needed most. Right now, Teach for America is working with more than 100 teachers in schools in the Gallup area. The teachers are required to attend a five-week summer institute and take classes at the University of New Mexico, working toward their degree while teaching full time.

Teach for America is funded through a mix of public and private money. In New Mexico, school districts pay the teachers the salary and benefits of any novice teacher. The state kicks in \$400,000 for the program. Private sources and AmeriCorps, which recruits workers into high-need jobs in education, public health and other sectors, provide the rest. AmeriCorps is a part of the Corporation for National and Community Service, an independent federal agency.

One of the program’s more interesting strategies involves real-time coaching. A mentor via radio in the back of the classroom gives prompts to help the teacher stay on track. Managing student behavior and setting the right tone are essential so teachers can focus on the subject instead of struggling with a class that’s out of control.

Beginning teachers say they often feel they work in isolation with little feedback. Teach for America tackles that with debriefing sessions where the mentor and teacher talk about what worked, what didn’t and what to do about it.

This straightforward approach is refreshing — set a big goal, make a plan and try to make it work. And measure the progress. Status quo public education should borrow this lesson plan.

*This editorial first appeared in the Albuquerque Journal. It was written by members of the editorial board and is unsigned as it represents the opinion of the newspaper rather than the writers.*

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