

The Yazzie/Martinez STUDENT Forum January 28, 2026

Kirtland Bond Wilson Technical Center

Community Input. These themes and recommendations reflect what students from Shiprock, Newcomb, Kirtland, Naschitti, and Ojo Amarillo have identified as essential to transform education as required by the Yazzie/Martinez decision & order -- rooted in lived experience, cultural relevance, and a call for systemic change.

Systemic Gaps & Challenges (Why this matters)

Inconsistent Cultural and Linguistic Implementation of Yazzie/Martinez Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students' experiences vary by school and classroom. Some students feel culturally supported. Others report lack of support, invisibility, or embarrassment.. Ceremony absences not always respected. Language instruction not early enough. 	Explanation: Student feedback indicates inconsistent delivery across schools and classrooms. This results in uneven fulfillment of the mandate.
Representation Gaps in Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited to no presence of Native teachers, counselors, and administrators. Students lack consistent access to role models who share cultural background. Students want elders involved. 	Explanation: Current staffing patterns limit students' access to culturally grounded leadership and support.
Unequal Access to Academic Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differences in access to advanced coursework and enrichment. Limited tutoring or structured academic support in some settings. Technology and infrastructure disparities in certain schools. 	Explanation: Opportunity is not distributed evenly, which contributes to achievement gaps.
Limited Formal Structures for Student Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student input is gathered but not consistently embedded into governance. Few permanent advisory mechanisms with defined authority. 	Explanation: Students are willing to speak, but there are limited formal pathways for their feedback to shape decisions.

Theme

Students Want Cultural Relevance Embedded in Daily Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students expressed the importance of Native language, history, and identity being integrated into regular instruction. Cultural content is not seen as an elective, but as part of what makes learning meaningful. When culture is present, students report stronger engagement and a connection to school. 	Explanation: Students are linking academic engagement to cultural recognition. They are not asking for occasional events — they are asking for integration into core instruction.
Students Are Connecting Belonging to Academic Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students described feeling overlooked or misunderstood in school settings. Some reported low expectations or lack of cultural awareness among staff. Students emphasized that respect and safety impact their ability to focus and perform academically. 	Explanation: Students are identifying school climate as a factor in achievement. Academic outcomes are influenced by whether students feel seen and valued.
Students Want Clear Academic and Career Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requests for clearer graduation requirements and planning support. Interest in college preparation, trade programs, and career technical education. Need for stronger academic advising and mentorship. 	Explanation: Students are motivated and future-focused, but they need consistent navigation support to access opportunities.
Mental Health and Wellness Are Ongoing Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students asked for more accessible counseling services. Desire for culturally responsive mental health support. Recognition that stress, family responsibilities, and community issues impact learning. 	Explanation: Students view mental health as directly connected to academic performance, not separate from it.

Community Recommendations & Priorities

Establish Formal Student Advisory Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create standing Native student advisory councils at school and district levels. Provide mentorship and facilitation support to ensure effective participation. 	Explanation: Students demonstrated willingness to engage and share feedback. Advisory structures would create continuity, representation, and shared accountability across schools.
Ensure Follow-Through and Transparency on Student Input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly communicate how student feedback will inform decisions. Provide periodic updates on actions taken in response to forums and surveys. Include schools and student populations not represented in prior engagement efforts. 	Explanation: Students expressed uncertainty about whether their input would result in change. Clear communication and follow-through are necessary to maintain trust.
Strengthen Indigenous Educator Recruitment and Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop “grow-your-own” pathways for Native students entering education careers. Expand recruitment efforts for Native counselors, administrators, and support staff. Offer retention incentives and leadership development opportunities. 	Explanation: Representation influences mentorship, trust, instructional relevance, and culturally responsive practice. Building Indigenous leadership within schools is a long-term equity strategy.
Expand Academic Navigation and Career Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand dual credit, AP, and career technical education access equitably across schools. Provide structured SAT/ACT preparation and college readiness programming. Facilitate mentorship connections with Native professionals and alumni. Increase exposure to college visits, career exploration trips, and enrichment opportunities. 	Explanation: Students articulated a desire for stronger preparation for life after graduation. As one student stated, <i>“I deserve a better education.”</i> Expanding navigation systems ensures aspiration is matched with access.
Invest in Culturally Responsive Mental Health Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase counselor and social worker availability across schools. Provide training in culturally grounded and trauma-informed practices. Integrate elders and culturally relevant wellness practices where appropriate. 	Explanation: Students reported limited counselor availability, concerns about confidentiality, and a need for culturally grounded support.

Students' Voice:
On a scale of 1-5, how much do you feel your perspective was heard today?

4.44 out of 5

“I felt more seen and heard and I like that.”

What This Means:

- The overall experience was very positive.
- The average falls between “heard” and “strongly heard.”
- Nearly 9 out of 10 students rated the experience a 4 or 5.