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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
56th Legislature, 1st Session, 2023

Bill Number	<u>*HB256</u>	Sponsor	<u>Romero, GA</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.223834.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>HEC/HAFC</u>
Short Title	<u>Hybrid Dual Credit Pilot Project</u>		
Analyst	<u>Hathaway</u>	Original Date	<u>2/8/23</u>
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BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

*House Bill 256 (*HB256) creates a three-year pilot project to determine the efficacy of a new dual credit instruction model for public high schools.

The bill also contains an emergency clause, which means it would take immediate effect upon passage by the Legislature and signature by the governor.

FISCAL IMPACT

*HB256 appropriates \$1.8 million from the general fund to the Four Corners Regional Education Cooperative (REC), also known as REC-1, for expenditure in FY23 through FY26 to implement the cybersecurity hybrid dual credit pilot project. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY26 shall revert to the general fund.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Proposed Pilot Project. *HB256 proposes a pilot project to test a hybrid model of dual credit instruction in the cybersecurity field. The bill seeks to address the challenge of offering dual credit courses in technically complex fields—such as cybersecurity—in which students benefit from in-person instruction, but who may not have on-site high school teachers that have the expertise to provide instruction in such fields. The bill proposes a joint venture between the Four Corners REC, the Cybersecurity Center of Excellence at the New Mexico Institute of Mining & Technology (NM Tech), and 10 early college high schools in the state (to be selected via application process).

In the proposed pilot project, high school educators would receive training (and complete 18 credit hours of coursework) in cybersecurity to both become licensed as dual credit instructors and earn certification in cybersecurity. *HB256 specifies this would happen by the New Mexico Cybersecurity Center of Excellence at NM Tech providing a mixture of ongoing in-person and online education in cybersecurity to the high school teachers. Teachers in the pilot project would ultimately complete a two week-long, in-person summer institutes at the NM Tech campus in the

summers of 2023 and 2024. The teachers would also complete one credit-granting course through NM Tech each semester of the pilot project, ultimately earning certification in cybersecurity and a total of 18 credit hours to qualify as adjunct faculty who can teach dual credit courses. To be eligible to participate, the teachers must already have a master's degree.

While the teachers are engaging in the coursework, they would simultaneously be teaching cybersecurity courses and content to participating students, creating two parallel cohorts of teachers and students designed to allow: 1) ongoing teacher professional learning in cybersecurity; and 2) access to in-person instruction in cybersecurity for participating students. *HB256 notes participating students would also earn either an associate's degree or certification in cybersecurity at the end of the pilot program.

*HB256 would test a model of ongoing and continuous teacher development while also offering high school students access to courses in cybersecurity. The proposed pilot project would also require the participating student cohort to receive some online synchronous instruction (meaning learning in the same place, at the same time). This online synchronous instruction would be offered alongside other in-person and online courses, so while it would not be all of the instruction, it would allow the students to connect with fellow cybersecurity students statewide.

The Four Corners REC would be administratively responsible for the pilot project and would be charged with tasks including managing the finances of the pilot project, creating an application for high schools to apply to be a part of the project, and working with NM Tech to select an evaluator of the pilot project.

*HB256 specifies that 10 schools would be selected, each choosing eight students and one teacher with a master's degree to participate—this means the pilot project could ultimately affect 10 teachers and 80 students.

*HB256 requires an evaluation of the pilot project by a third-party evaluator. The evaluator would have to establish metrics for the pilot project outcomes, analyze data on implementation fidelity and outcome objectives, and prepare and report findings both during the course of the pilot project and at the culmination of the project.

*HB256 appears to be a novel solution to train educators in a high-demand, technical field (cybersecurity) and expand access to dual credit in this field to students. Determining the efficacy of such an instructional model could be beneficial to expanding access to education in technically complex fields.

Cybersecurity: Jobs and Field Growth. Cybersecurity is [defined](#) by the federal Department of Homeland Security as “the art of protecting networks, devices, and data from unauthorized access or criminal use and the practice of ensuring confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information.” Jobs in the cybersecurity field span many functions and specific job titles, but these jobs can include roles as cybersecurity engineers, information security analysts, security architects, computer forensics analysts, application security engineers, and information security officers, among other options. Each of these has specific functions, but in general cybersecurity jobs are among the fastest growing occupations in today's labor market. For example, information security analysts are among the most in-demand jobs in the country. Between 2021 and 2031, the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics reports the number of information security analysts is projected to grow by 35 percent, making it the eighth fastest growing occupation in the country, with a median base pay of \$102,600 in 2021.

Dual Credit Defined and Research Base. Dual enrollment (or dual credit, as it is called in New Mexico) is a term used to describe programs that allow high school students to take a college course and earn both high school and college credit. Research from the Institute of Education Sciences, the statistics, research, and evaluation arm of the U.S. Department of Education, shows dual credit programs generally have [positive effects](#) on students. In particular, participation in dual credit programs has a strong positive effect on students' college degree attainment, college access and enrollment, credit accumulation, completing high school, and general academic achievement in high school. In New Mexico, dual credit students graduate from high school at higher rates, on average, than students who do not take dual credit courses. The statewide four-year cohort of 2020 graduation rate for dual credit students was 89.3 percent compared with 76.9 percent across the entire four-year cohort of the same year.

Dual Credit Participation in New Mexico. HED and PED reported in the 2020–2021 school year, 16,587 total students enrolled in dual credit courses, taking a combined 44,402 dual credit courses. This is a 23.8 percent decrease from the 2019–2020 school year, during which 21,757 total students took a combined 54,265 dual credit courses.

There are 27 institutions of higher education (IHEs) that offer dual credit programs, but four institutions serve the majority of students: Central New Mexico Community College (CNM), San Juan College, Santa Fe Community College, and New Mexico State University–Doña Ana. Of these, CNM serves the largest share, with 4,479 dual credit students in the 2020–2021 school year.

The five most common subject areas students take dual credit courses in are English language and literature/letters (5,012 course enrollments), mathematics and statistics (4,744 course enrollments), visual and performing arts (2,980 course enrollments), biological and biomedical sciences (2,921 course enrollments), and foreign languages, literatures, and linguistics (2,674 course enrollments).

Funding of Dual Credit. The primary costs of dual credit include tuition, fees, instructional materials (including textbooks), and transportation costs to and from the student's high school and the IHE. Each participating entity (student/family, secondary school, and postsecondary school) bear responsibility for various parts of these costs. IHEs waive tuition for dual credit students—while state law does *encourage* the waiving of tuition, it is administrative code that *requires* tuition to be waived by IHEs. State law does require IHEs to waive general fees for dual credit students, but course-specific fees may be charged to students. State law also requires the high school that a student primarily attends to pay the cost of required textbooks and other course supplies. Students and families must arrange transportation to and from the postsecondary institution although some school districts are able to help students with this. Students and families must also pay for course-specific fees.

Students taking dual credit courses, since they are still full-time students at their respective high schools, still generate funding through the state equalization guarantee, the state's public education funding formula. Dual credit students, however, do not generate funding for through the postsecondary funding formula for IHEs.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

About Regional Education Cooperatives. RECs have existed in New Mexico since 1984, when they were established under (at that time) the New Mexico State Board of Education. In 1993, the New Mexico Legislature created the Regional Cooperative Education Act (see Sections 22-2B-1 NMSA 1978 through 22-2B-5 NMSA 1978) to statutorily establish RECs as “individual state

agencies administratively attached to the Public Education Department.” New Mexico has 10 RECs, geographically distributed across the state. Each REC has specific member school districts and 68 of New Mexico’s 89 school districts are members of a REC. While RECs often serve New Mexico’s rural school districts, RECs also provide services to all school districts, charter schools, and state-supported schools in New Mexico.

The membership of the Four Corners REC, or REC-1, includes Aztec Municipal School District, Bloomfield School District, Central Consolidated School District, Farmington Municipal School District, Gallup-McKinley County Schools, and Zuni Public School District.

While *HB256 does specify that the pilot project would be administered by the Four Corners REC (REC-1), it does not appear to limit the selection of participating schools to the member school districts of REC-1. The schools could be selected from any of the state’s public early college high schools.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The Four Corners REC (REC-1) would be administratively responsible for the pilot project and would be responsible for managing the finances of the project, creating an application for schools, selecting an evaluator (in collaboration with NM Tech), and ensuring the pilot project functions as specified in *HB256.

NM Tech would be responsible for selecting the participating schools, providing instruction in cybersecurity to both participating teachers and students, and also selecting an evaluator of the project.

Participating schools would be responsible for applying to be part of the pilot project and if selected, choosing eight students and one teacher who has a master’s degree to participate in the pilot.

RELATED BILLS

Relates to House Bill 125, School Dual Credit Task Force, which creates a task force to study the administration, cost, and function of dual credit in New Mexico.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files

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