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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
57th Legislature, 1st Session, 2025

Bill Number	<u>HB532</u>	Sponsor	<u>Sanchez</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.230821.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>HCPAC/HEC</u>
Short Title	<u>Student Water Safety Guidance</u>		
Analyst	<u>Hicks</u>	Original Date	<u>2/24/2025</u>
		Last Updated	<u></u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 532 (HB532) would require each local school board and charter school governing body to develop or adopt water safety guidance that informs students and parents about local water safety options and swimming lessons, as well as general guidance about safety around bodies of water and water infrastructure. Beginning with the 2025-2026 school year, this guidance would need to be provided to parents upon a student's enrollment, or no later than the 10th day of the school year. Schools would be allowed to incorporate this guidance into their school or district handbook if written acknowledgement of receipt is provided by parents.

FISCAL IMPACT

HB532 does not contain an appropriation.

HB532 may have fiscal implications for public schools to develop or purchase curricula and materials, or to contract with external entities to provide water safety education.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

New Mexico Statute and Administrative Code. Under current state law, there is no requirement for schools to provide water safety guidance to students and parents. [Administrative code](#) requires foster care providers to provide water safety instruction to children in their care if the home is adjacent to a body of water or swimming pool but does not pertain to public schools. This section of administrative code notes water safety instruction does not necessarily mean swimming lessons and should cover broader key knowledge and skills about water safety.

Drowning Deaths. SB532 would require schools to provide water safety guidance to students and parents alike. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), more than 4,000 unintentional drowning deaths occur each year. Drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury death for children between the ages of 5 and 14 years old. From 2018 to 2021, the annual age-adjusted drowning death rate in New Mexico was 1.62 deaths per 100 thousand,

higher than the nationwide rate of 1.31 deaths per 100 thousand people. New Mexico’s drowning death rate ranks as the 11th highest death rate in the United States.

[Drowning deaths](#) in the United States are on the rise, with 500 more people per year dying from drowning between 2020 and 2022 compared with 2019. The CDC reports drowning rates are highest among Native American, Alaska Native, and Black persons.

Swimming Lessons. [Data](#) from the CDC in 2024 indicate only 45 percent of American adults have ever taken a swimming lesson. Among Black and Hispanic adults, this percentage declines to 37 percent and 28 percent, respectively. In a 2021 [study](#) by the Children’s Hospital of Chicago, the primary barriers for parents registering their children for swimming lessons were cost, time, and access. SB532 would direct schools to provide students and their families with information about local swimming lessons and other water safety information, potentially helping address the issue of access.

U.S. National Water Safety Action Plan. SB532 would direct schools to develop or adopt water safety guidance. The 2023-2032 [U.S. National Water Safety Action Plan](#) was created with input from the American Red Cross, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the CDC, and the National Park Service, among other partners. This plan includes 99 recommendations to improve water safety knowledge and promote drowning prevention. Among these recommendations is the development of minimum educational standards for water safety education. This action plan could be a useful tool for schools to develop guidance compliant with the provisions of HB532 should the legislation become law.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

HB532 does not include language about rulemaking, nor does the does the bill outline any form of state oversight for its requirements. HB532 may require the Public Education Department to adopt rules and publish resources necessary to implement the bill.

HB532 would require public schools to develop or adopt safety guidance and communicate this guidance to families. Schools would likely also need to coordinate with community partners to identify swimming lesson providers and other local water safety initiatives.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

National Context. According to the [ZAC Foundation](#), an organization dedicated to promoting water safety, as well as a contributor to the U.S. National Water Safety Action Plan, only [Louisiana](#) legally requires water safety education in schools. States like [New York](#), [Florida](#), [Arkansas](#), and [Georgia](#) have either introduced swimming initiatives or adopted laws to support swimming lessons, but do not require water safety education.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- New Mexico Regional Education Cooperatives Association (NMRECA)

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