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

Bill Number SB116 **Sponsor** Brandt/Gurrola

Tracking Number .229390.1 **Committee Referrals** SEC/SFC

Short Title Math Lab Pilot Project

Analyst Bedeaux **Original Date** 1/31/25
Last Updated

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 116 (SB116) creates a three-year math lab pilot project in the Public School Code. The math lab pilot project would be a school-based program designed to provide students with support and practice in mathematics with a focus on hands-on activities and project-based learning.

SB116 includes an appropriation of $3 million to the Public Education Department (PED) for FY26 through FY28, or $1 million per year for three years. The bill requires a participating public school to receive a minimum award of $100 thousand. PED would be tasked with administering the math lab pilot project, including establishing eligibility requirements and evaluating applications for participation.

School districts that receive funding to establish a math lab must accomplish the following:

- Establish a math lab staffed by one teacher who is knowledgeable about the academic content standards for elementary math;
- Focus on small group instruction, interactive learning, and collaborative learning activities aligned with grade-level math standards; and
- Provide professional development opportunities for teachers who staff math labs.

The bill specifies that math labs must be designed to improve outcomes in kindergarten through sixth grade mathematics, particularly by raising the participating school's mathematics scores on standards-based assessments. School districts and charter schools participating in the pilot would be required to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot within their district. SB116 requires that data collected during the pilot project be evaluated to help PED and school districts determine the efficacy of math labs and incorporate effective strategies into general math instruction.

FISCAL IMPACT

SB116 appropriates $3 million from the general fund to PED for expenditure in FY26 through FY28. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY28 shall revert to the general fund.

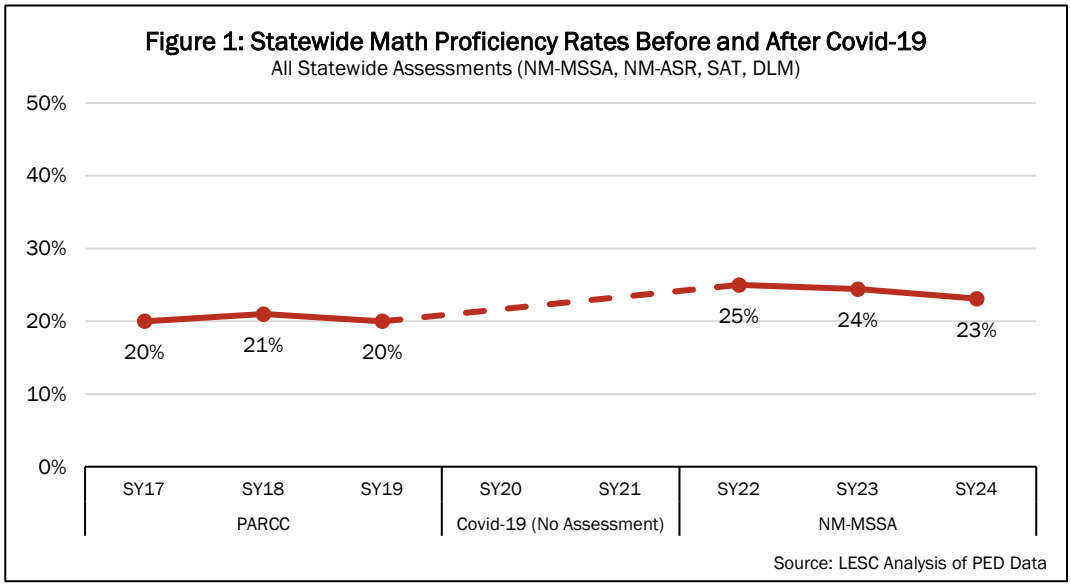
Assuming PED splits the $3 million appropriation to cover three years of the pilot project, the department would likely expend $1 million per year. Given that SB116 requires school districts and charter schools to receive a minimum award of $100 thousand, the funding in the bill is sufficient to fund math labs in a maximum of 10 school districts and charter schools for three years. Dependent on the outcomes of the pilot project, the Legislature may choose to allocate additional funds for the pilot project in the second and third years of the pilot.

During the 2024 legislative session, the Legislature appropriated $400 thousand to PED to distribute to Rio Rancho Public Schools (RRPS) to support the district's math lab program. Information provided by RRPS shows that the district budgeted distributions of $100 thousand per teacher for two teachers over two years. RRPS used operational funding to allow the teachers to participate in professional development programs at a cost of approximately $4,400 per teacher.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

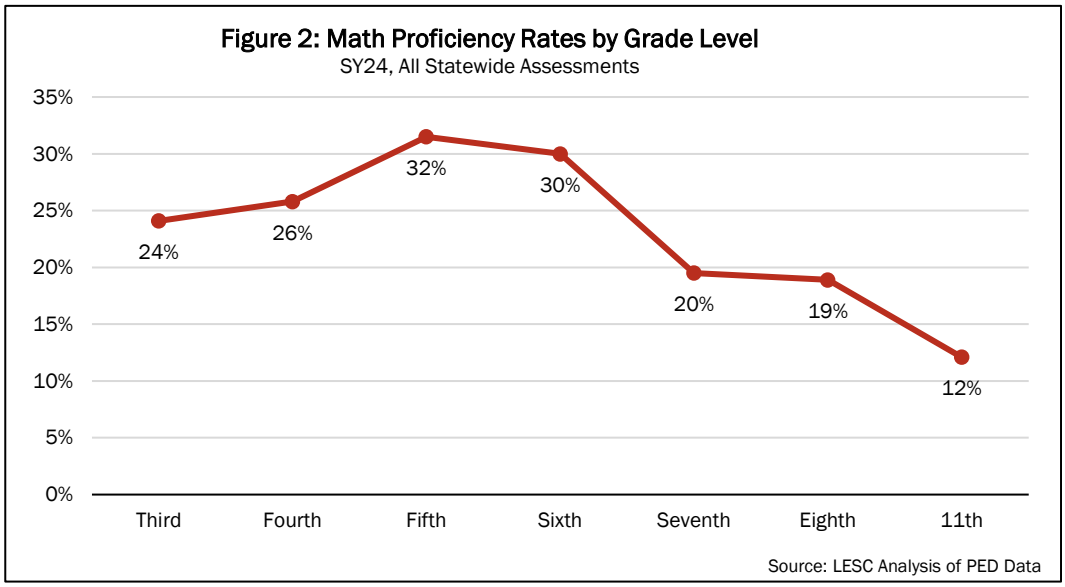
Fostering Mathematics Success in Early Grades. SB116 proposes hands-on and project-based approaches to mathematics in early grades, helping students connect with math concepts in a format that may be more engaging than traditional classroom instruction. Recent LESC analysis has highlighted the importance of early mathematics skills in laying the foundation for students' success in higher-level mathematics courses. Critically, students' perceptions of their math abilities have a strong impact on their math achievement; students who are able to cultivate a "positive math identity" show increased achievement over time.

Math Achievement in New Mexico. Math achievement remains an area of concern in New Mexico. Statewide, approximately one in four students are proficient in grade level math. As shown in **Figure 1: Statewide Math Proficiency Rates Before and After Covid-19**, math proficiency rates have slightly declined since the end of the Covid-19 pandemic; in the 2023-2024 school year (SY24), 23 percent of students statewide were proficient in math.

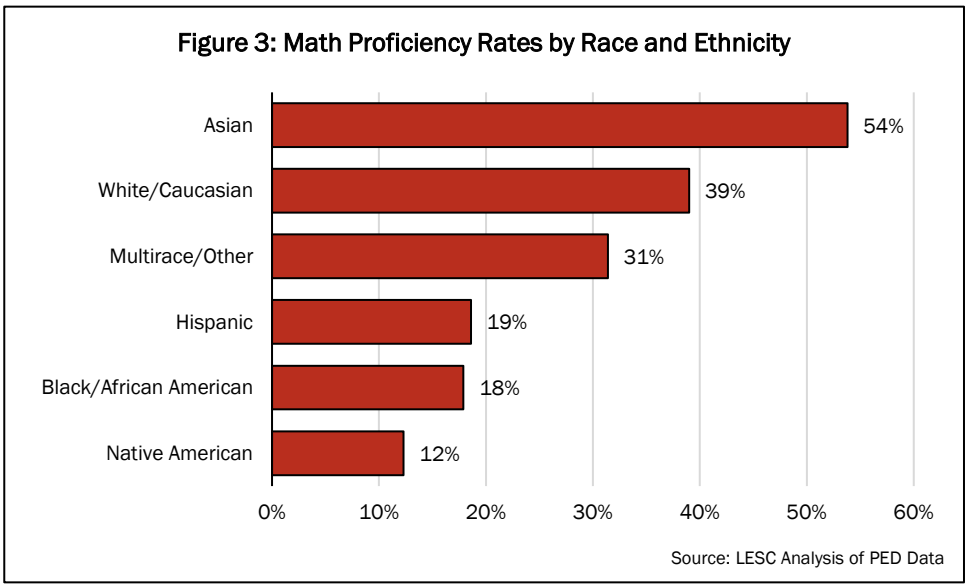


New Mexico's math achievement varies by grade level, with younger students showing greater levels of proficiency. As shown in **Figure 2: Math Proficiency Rates by Grade Level**, proficiency rates begin to decline in sixth grade, as students are introduced to higher-level math concepts. By 11th grade, only 12 percent of students reach proficiency in math, raising concerns that students may be ill-prepared for college-level math courses when they exit high school. LESC

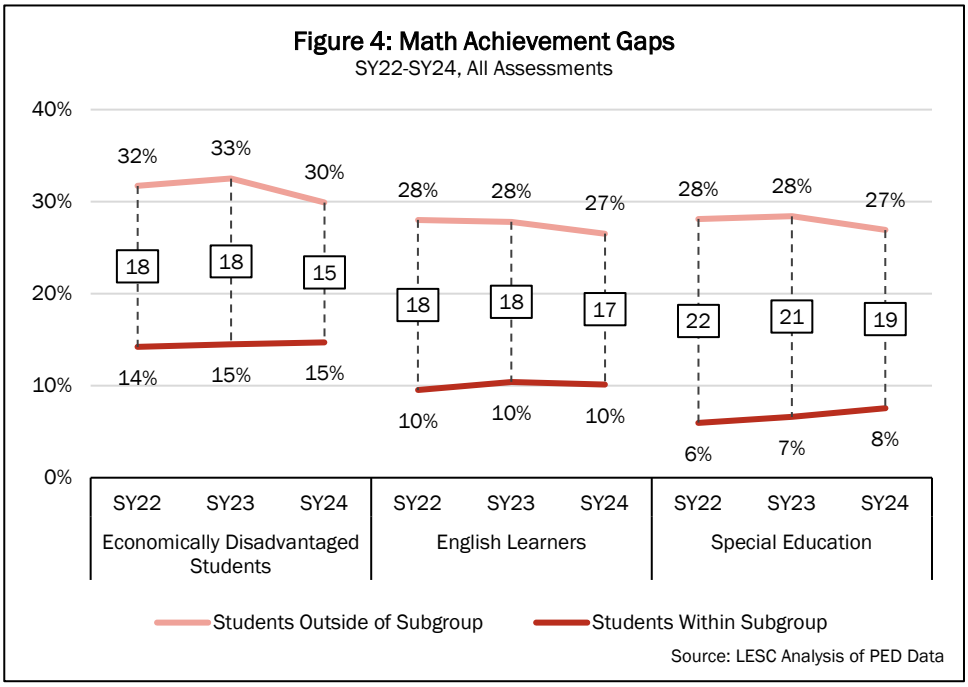
analysis has highlighted how intensive interventions in early grades and in middle may help change students' math trajectories.



There are wide differences in math achievement in regard to student race and ethnicity. As shown in **Figure 3: Math Proficiency Rates by Race and Ethnicity**, Native American students, Black or African American students, and Hispanic students are less likely to reach proficiency than White or Asian students.



In the 1st Judicial District Court's ruling in the *Martinez-Yazzie* consolidated lawsuit, the court pointed to wide achievement gaps as evidence that the state has failed to provide a constitutionally required sufficient education for economically disadvantaged students, Native American students, English learners, and special education students. While achievement gaps have begun to narrow slightly in recent years, **Figure 4: Math Achievement Gaps** displays that gaps remain wide since the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. Recent narrowing of achievement gaps is partially due to declining proficiency rates for historically higher-performing students; ideally, New Mexico should strive to increase proficiency rates for all students while still providing interventions for economically disadvantaged students, English learners, and special education students.



ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

PED would be required to administer the pilot project, including establishing criteria for applications and the selection of awardees. PED would be required to provide annual notices to school districts and charter schools of the requirements and procedures for participating in the pilot project, as well as the amount of funds granted to awardees. The department would also be required to provide technical assistance to participating schools through the department's Math and Science Bureau and the Math and Science Advisory Council.

SB116 would require participating schools to test students before, during, and after the pilot project, as well as to follow students through the rest of their time in public school. School districts and charter schools participating in the project would be responsible for reporting data and evaluating whether participating students gained proficiency, including the names of participating schools, the number of participating students, the amount of funds distributed to each participating public school, changes in math proficiency rates, and narrative feedback on the impact of the program from teachers, students, and parents. PED would be required to make these reports available to the governor and to the Legislature through LESC annually. In addition, PED would be required to prepare a final report on the efficacy of the pilot project by November 1, 2028.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The data reporting and evaluation provisions of SB116 are strong practices that could help the Legislature identify evidence-based programs to improve math achievement. PED's implementation of SB116 could help produce randomized controlled trials (RCTs) or strong quasi-experimental studies to evaluate the pilot project's effectiveness.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- New Mexico Regional Cooperatives (NMRECA)

TB/de/mca/jkh