

LESC bill analyses are available on the New Mexico Legislature website ([www.nmlegis.gov](http://www.nmlegis.gov)). Bill analyses are prepared by LESC staff for standing education committees of the New Mexico Legislature. LESC does not assume any responsibility for the accuracy of these reports if they are used for other purposes.

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

<b>Bill Number</b>	<u>SB235</u>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<u>Soules</u>
<b>Tracking Number</b>	<u>.229424.4SA</u>	<b>Committee Referrals</b>	<u>SEC/SHPAC</u>
<b>Short Title</b>	<u>School Math Changes</u>		
<b>Analyst</b>	<u>Andrews</u>	<b>Original Date</b>	<u>2/5/2024</u>
		<b>Last Updated</b>	<u></u>

---

---

**BILL SUMMARY**

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 235 (SB235) would amend the Mathematics and Science Education Act to establish statewide requirements for kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) mathematics instruction and practice.

SB235 would require school districts and charter schools to develop and implement professional learning plans in accordance with standards established by the Public Education Department (PED). Beginning in the 2026-2027 school year (SY27), SB235 would require public schools to begin using a PED-approved early numeracy screener to assess student's math performance prior to completion of the second grade. If a student in kindergarten through fifth grade is identified as having characteristics of dyscalculia or a math difficulty, SB235 would require schools to provide that student with appropriate interventions and provide written notice to the parents within 15 days of the administration of the early numeracy screener (see **Substantive Issues**).

SB235 would require PED to establish a mathematics instructional leadership framework providing standards for mathematical content, instruction, ongoing professional learning, mathematics coaching, and program evaluation. PED would also be required to determine minimum course requirements for licensure for prekindergarten through third grade, kindergarten through eighth grade, fifth through ninth grade, special education, and alternative licensure. In addition, SB235 would require mathematics coaches to hold a mathematics specialist endorsement from a PED-approved program.

SB235 would also require the Math and Science Bureau (MSB) at PED to monitor the implementation of instructional materials to ensure they are aligned with state academic content and performance standards.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

SB235 does not include an appropriation.

SB235 could have fiscal impacts for PED primarily driven by a need for staff to develop and carry out the proposed mathematics approach.

SB235 may also impact school district and charter school operational budgets to develop and implement professional development plans in accordance with SB235.

School districts and charter schools could use operational funds to support the initiatives proposed in SB235, though there are not specific funds appropriated to implement the bill. The LESC public school support recommendation for FY26 includes \$6 million for science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) initiatives and \$15.6 million for FY26, FY27, and FY28 (\$5.2 million per year) for math achievement from the public education reform fund (PERF), as part of a LESC proposed framework to support multi-year investments. The Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) public school support recommendation for FY26 includes \$38.4 million for FY26, FY27, and FY28, (\$12.8 million per year), for math achievement from the PERF.

## SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

**Dyscalculia.** SB245 defines dyscalculia as a specific learning disability or a pattern of symptoms characterized by a person’s difficulty or inability to process numerical information, learn arithmetic facts, perform accurate or fluent numerical calculation, engage in mathematical reasoning, and articulate the person’s understanding of mathematical information or how the person engaged in mathematical reasoning. According to the Learning Disabilities Association of America, a nonprofit for individuals with learning disabilities, [4 to 7 percent of students have dyscalculia](#). The LFC’s [2023 Progress Report: Special Education](#) notes that specific learning disabilities like dyscalculia—along with other learning disorders like dyslexia (reading) and dysgraphia (writing)—grew by more than 37 percent over the past decade.

**Parental Notification.** SB235 would require schools, beginning in SY27, to provide written notification to parents if their kindergarten through fifth grade (K-5) student is identified as having characteristics of dyscalculia or a math difficulty within 15 days from the date the PED-approved early numeracy screener was administered, or from the date an interim assessment was administered for a student in third through fifth grade. SB235 would require written notice to include an explanation that the student was identified as having characteristics of dyscalculia or a math difficulty, and that a mathematics improvement plan for the student will be developed. The written notice would also have to include a description of services currently provided to the student and a description of the proposed research-based math interventions and supplemental instructional services and supports for the student. Finally, SB235 would also require that parents receive monthly written notification regarding the student’s progress and a description of the student’s specific skill deficits and strategies for the parents to use at home to address these skill deficits.

It is important to note that while SB235 requires interventions and parental notification to K-5 students who are identified as having characteristics of dyscalculia or a math difficulty, SB235 does not define math difficulty. Given that 75 percent of students in New Mexico are not proficient in math, depending on how math difficulty is defined, these provisions of SB235 could impact most students and their families.

**Professional Learning Plans.** SB235 would require school districts and charter schools to develop and implement an elementary and secondary mathematics professional learning plan, in

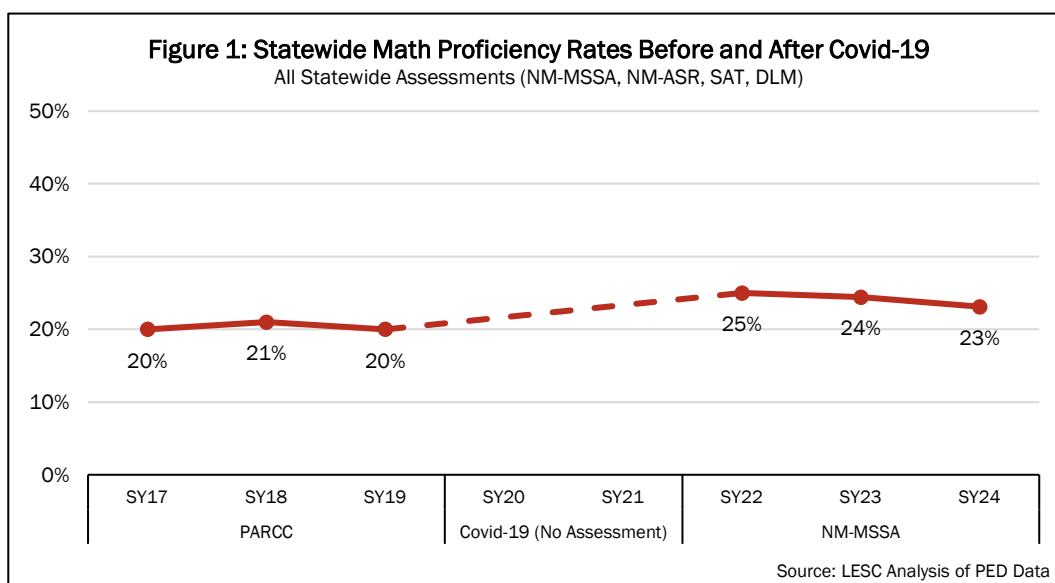
accordance with standards developed by PED. SB235 would require these professional learning plans to be updated every two years in cooperation with teachers and school administrators.

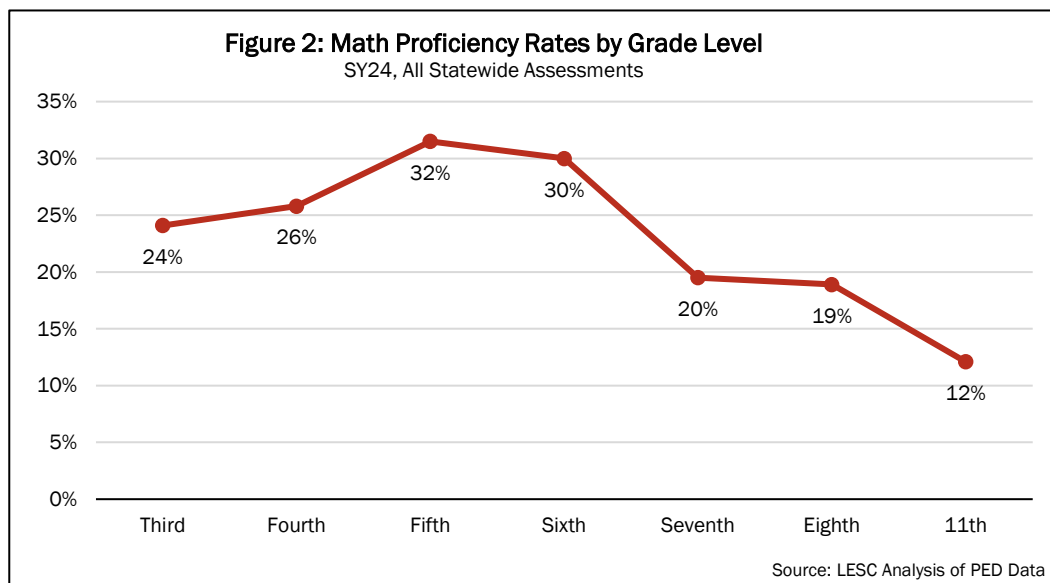
**Math Coaches.** SB2325 requires that public schools that have a mathematics coach require that mathematics coaches hold a mathematics specialist endorsement from a PED-approved program. It is unclear how many mathematics coaches are employed in public schools that hold—or do not hold—a mathematics specialist endorsement. In addition, SB235 does not specify a timeline for currently employed mathematics coaches without a mathematics specialist endorsement to obtain an endorsement from a PED-approved program.

It is also unclear if mathematics coaches with mathematics specialist endorsements will be strictly coaching mathematics teachers, or if mathematics coaches will take on some of the intervention work—such as targeted or intensive interventions through a multilayered system of support—that are required for students identified as having characteristics of dyscalculia or a math difficulty in this bill.

**State of Math Education.** Math achievement is a serious concern in New Mexico. One in four students are proficient in math in New Mexico, with even lower proficiency rates for students with disabilities, as well as students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and English learners. In the consolidated *Martinez-Yazzie* lawsuit, the court pointed to low proficiency rates in math overall, as well as the persistent achievement gap between student subgroups, as part of evidence the state violated students’ fundamental rights. 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.





The state of math achievement is also a concern nationally. Results from the [2022 Program for International Assessment \(PISA\)](#), an international exam that measures reading, mathematics, and science literacy of 15-year-olds, showed reading and science results in the U.S. held steady between 2018 and 2022, while mathematics achievement decreased during the same time. In math, the U.S. scored 26th among the 81 countries that participated in PISA in 2022. For comparison, the U.S. ranked sixth in reading skills and 10th in science skills in 2022.

As students in the U.S. have consistently fallen behind on international assessments, there has been deliberate conversation about what can be done at all levels of policy (federal, state, and local) to improve mathematics outcomes. The state policy conversation has largely centered around options to support math instruction that mirror the type of approaches implemented regarding literacy. This has been complicated, however, by a lack of universal consensus from mathematics experts on a “science of math” that is analogous to established science of reading approaches.

There is, however, a substantial body of research supporting effective mathematics teaching and learning (for example, the [National Council of Teachers of Mathematics’ \(NCTM\) Principles to Actions](#)). Effective mathematics instruction requires a complex interaction of core numeracy skills, mastery of concepts in a linear and sequential way, and interventions to address deficits that recognize the inherent complexity in teaching math. According to NCTM’s Principles to Actions, consistent implementation of effective teaching and learning of mathematics are only possible when school mathematics programs have in place:

- A commitment to access and equity;
- A powerful curriculum;
- Appropriate tools and technology;
- Meaningful and aligned assessment; and
- A culture of professionalism.

It is important to note SB235 requires PED to develop and implement a mathematics instructional leadership framework for K-12 mathematics instruction and practice, but it will be up to PED to incorporate these five essential elements of school mathematics programs as outlined by NCTM. Because of the broad language contained in this bill, it is unclear how SB235 will direct PED to create a system that contains all the essential elements of excellent mathematics programs.

It is also important to note PED already has the authority to implement many of the provisions of SB235, including but not limited to: changing licensure requirements, evaluating professional development plans, and providing standards for mathematics instruction and content.

**LESC Study of Mathematics.** During the 2024 interim, LESC staff recommended the Legislature focus on the unique role it plays in allocating resources and setting a vision for math success, with a focus on teacher training and corresponding funding. In a July 2024 policy brief, [Solving the Math Puzzle: State Policy for Student Success](#), LESC staff noted the Legislature could consider requiring professional learning for all teachers, addressing both content and pedagogical skills given not all pre-service teachers in New Mexico have access to the math content or methods courses they need. LESC staff also noted the Legislature could consider targeted interventions for students in an effort to increase student achievement and address learning gaps. SB235 would require professional development plans and implementation for elementary and secondary mathematics, require PED to determine course requirements for licensure, and support targeted interventions for students identified as having characteristics of dyscalculia or a math difficulty.

## ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

SB235 would require PED's MSB to monitor the implementation of instructional materials and ensure programs are aligned with state academic content and performance standards. PED's Instructional Materials Bureau vets instructional materials through a rigorous review process to determine alignment with New Mexico Content Standards and Benchmarks and inform school districts and charter schools to the efficacy of the process and provide them access to high-quality instructional material (HQIM). According to the Instructional Materials Bureau, [63 percent of districts have purchased HQIM for K-12 for math](#). MSB and the Instructional Materials Bureau could collaborate to carry out the provisions of SB235 and ensure efforts are not duplicative.

School districts would need to develop and implement professional development plans in accordance with SB235, and update these plans every two years, which may require additional FTE and funding. It is important to note that school districts are also required to develop and regularly update several other plans that take considerable staff time, for example literacy professional development plans and school safety plans.

Educator preparation programs (EPPs) would likely need to respond to updated course requirements for math education programs as SB235 directs PED to determine minimum course requirements for prekindergarten through third grade, kindergarten through eighth grade, fifth grade through ninth grade, special education, and alternative licenses.

The Higher Education Department (HED) notes SB235's requirements would likely result in future higher education students with stronger math abilities and knowledge, reducing the need to provide remedial math courses and increasing the number of students engaging with college- and university-level math.

## OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

**State Approaches to Support Math.** State legislative policy can support mathematics success by allocating funding and resources, ensuring well-developed methods to approve instructional materials, directing professional learning and development expected of educators, and providing mechanisms to drive interventions and supports. Primary levers of state policy tend to focus on improving the quality of instruction (for example, reviewing teacher preparation standards or

requiring professional learning of current educators), aligning state systems for a cohesive approach (for example, ensuring funding is used for high quality instructional materials), or providing for assessment and intervention tactics to support students (for example, creating/funding tutoring programs or creating methods to identify students in need).

A policy outline focused on early math achievement published by the Education Commission of the States, a national nonprofit that tracks and researches educational policy, found state actions have largely centered on three topics:

1. Assessment and intervention;
2. Curriculum; and
3. Workforce supports.

A 2024 state policy scan from the Education Commission of the States indicates eight states—Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia—have enacted legislation related to math instruction and supports between 2022 and 2024. State policy has taken many forms, with some states directing additional study, some establishing required supports for early numeracy, some directing screening and interventions, and others requiring reporting to legislative bodies, among other state options.

- **Arkansas** passed Senate Bill 294 in 2023 which requires monitoring and intervention plans for third through eighth grade students who fall below grade level in math, as well as requiring its state education secretary to engage with stakeholders with expertise in early numeracy.
- **Florida** passed House Bill 7039 during its 2023 legislative session, requiring supports for students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade who show “deficiency in mathematics or dyscalculia,” including parent notification and school district monitoring. Florida also requires its department of education to provide lists of approved math interventions, programs, curricula, and supplemental materials and requires its department of education to provide legislative recommendations regarding teacher preparation and math professional development.
- **Virginia** passed House Bill 938 in 2022 requiring its board of education to convene a group of stakeholders to advise its General Assembly on ways to promote excellence in math instruction.

***Martinez-Yazzie.*** In 2019, the 1st Judicial Court issued a final judgement and order on the consolidated *Martinez-Yazzie* education sufficiency lawsuit, finding New Mexico’s public education system failed to provide a constitutionally sufficient and adequate education for at-risk students, defined as English learners, Native American students, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families. The court pointed to high school graduation rates, student test scores, and college remediation rates as indicators of how the state is not meeting its constitutional obligation to ensure all students are college, career, and civics ready. The court’s findings suggested overall public school funding levels, financing methods, and PED oversight were deficient. As such, the court enjoined the state to provide sufficient resources, including instructional materials, properly trained staff, and curricular offerings, necessary for providing the opportunity for a sufficient education for all at-risk students. However, the court stopped short of prescribing specific remedies and deferred decisions on how to achieve education sufficiency to the legislative and executive branch instead.

It appears SB235 could begin to address findings in the consolidated *Martinez-Yazzie* education sufficiency lawsuit regarding low math proficiency rates.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

- LESC Files
- Higher Education Department (HED)

**MCA/tb/jkh**