FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Soules **LAST UPDATED**
ORIGINAL DATE 2/6/25
SHORT TITLE School Math Changes **BILL NUMBER** Senate Bill 235
ANALYST Liu

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT*
(dollars in thousands)

Agency/Program	FY25	FY26	FY27	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Numeracy Screener		$0.0	$552.0-$1,626.9	$552.0-$1,626.9	Recurring	General Fund
Diagnostic Screener		$0.0	$220.8 - $650.8	$220.8 - $650.8	Recurring	Federal Funds
Total		$0.0	$772.8 - $2,277.7	$772.8 - $2,277.7		

Parentheses ( ) indicate expenditure decreases.
*Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

Relates to Senate Bill 242 and House Bill 157
Relates to an appropriation in the General Appropriation Act

Sources of Information

LFC Files
Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) Files

Agency Analysis Received From
Higher Education Department (HED)

Agency Analysis was Solicited but Not Received From
Public Education Department (PED)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Senate Bill 235

Senate Bill 235 (SB235) amends the Mathematics and Science Education Act to:

- Define dyscalculia,
- Require PED's mathematics and science bureau to monitor instructional materials,
- Require districts and charters to develop professional learning plans for elementary and secondary math,
- Require PED to create a math instructional leadership framework,
- Require PED to set minimum course requirements for multiple licenses,
- Require math coaches to hold a specialist endorsement from a PED-approved program,

- Require schools to assess students with an early numeracy screener before they complete second grade,
- Require schools to provide interventions to kindergarten to fifth grade students with dyscalculia or math difficulties, and
- Require schools to notify parents if their kindergarten to fifth grade student has dyscalculia or math difficulties and services that will be provided.

This bill does not contain an effective date and, as a result, would go into effect 90 days after the Legislature adjourns if enacted, or June 20, 2025.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

This bill will create recurring costs for PED and schools in developing plans, assessing students with an early numeracy screener, and providing interventions and services to students with dyscalculia and math difficulties. The executive, the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC), and LFC budget recommendations for FY26 all include nonrecurring appropriations for a three-year math initiative through PED, with respective proposals of $15 million, $15.6 million, and $38.4 million. The LESC recommendation further includes a recurring appropriation of $6 million to PED for a science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) initiative.

The costs of a dyscalculia screener can vary significantly, from very basic screening tools costing as low as $25 per test to upwards of $1,000 when professionally administered. The FY25 kindergarten cohort has over 22 thousand students, so the costs of a nondiagnostic screening tool to meet the requirements of this bill could range from $552 thousand for this cohort (assuming they become second graders in FY27) to $1.6 million for students between kindergarten and second grade if the screener is applied to more grade levels. Costs of the early numeracy screener will likely be lower if PED procures the screener for use by all schools statewide and will decline annually assuming kindergarten cohorts continue to shrink. This analysis further assumes only 1 percent of the cohort will be referred to receive a professionally administered screener (although not required by the bill and likely paid by federal special education funds), bringing the estimated costs to about $2.3 million annually.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Provisions of this bill are comparable to state practices related to early reading intervention, including the use of an early screening tool, alignment of instructional materials, professional development of educators, and improvement plans. Recent national movements to incorporate the "science of reading" within public schools has spurred legislative action to retrain teachers, ban instructional approaches, and align operations to evidence-based practices. Unlike reading, however, an equivalent "science of math" does not yet exist because the body of research and evidence is more limited. Like the reading wars, advocates of math instruction often debate various aspects, including how much attention should be paid to procedural math knowledge (e.g., algorithms) and explicit instruction versus student discovery (or inquiry) and conceptual understandings of math.

Still, early screening practices outlined in this bill may lead to earlier interventions to address low math proficiency. In general, research indicates the use of data to identify student needs and

inform changes to instruction is a best practice.

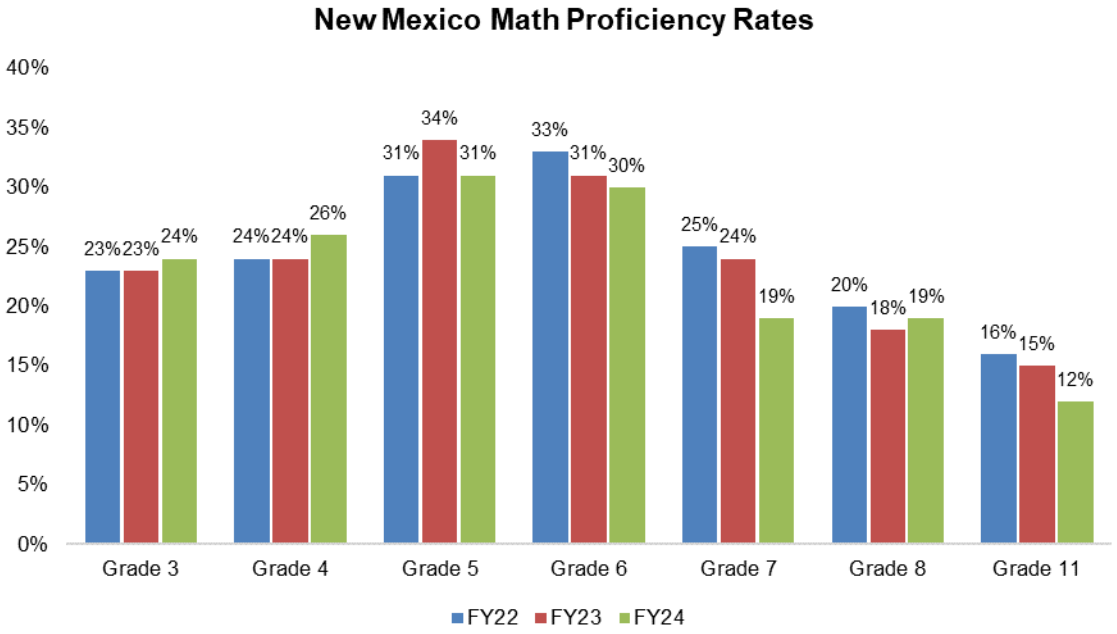
New Mexico uses a computer-adaptive reading assessment and intervention program for grades kindergarten through second grade called Istation and uses performance on the assessment as a component of the statewide accountability system for elementary schools. The Istation test calibrates the difficulty level of questions for each student as they answer to predict their reading ability and measures growth in ability over time. Istation has a math test component, however, New Mexico does not use it for accountability purposes. The state only starts assessing math proficiency on the annual standardized test (known as MSSA) beginning in third grade. Provisions of this bill may expand the use of kindergarten to second grade assessments for math and increase the need for professional learning for early mathematics.

Provisions of this bill define 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. By requiring a dyscalculia screener and defining dyscalculia as a specific learning disability, the number of students identified for special education may increase. A 2023 LFC evaluation of special education found New Mexico's special education population grew by 10 percent (an increase of 6,401 students) while total student enrollment declined by 8 percent (a decrease of 25.8 thousand students) over the last decade. The largest growth in special education identification was for students with specific learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, which increased by 37 percent.

Given the prevalence of students with poor math performance, the state could potentially overidentify instances of dyscalculia or math difficulties without clear guidelines and standardized identification methods. For example, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition* (DSM-5) classifies specific learning disabilities as neurodevelopmental disorders characterized by difficulties acquiring and applying academic skills. DSM-5 specifies that performance of at least 1.5 standard deviations below the population average, or below the 7th percentile, is required for greatest diagnostic certainty. These difficulties must persist for at least six months, despite targeted interventions, and cannot be accounted for by inadequate schooling or developmental delays.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

Provisions of this bill may affect math proficiency rates across the state. For FY24, only 23 percent of students in New Mexico tested proficient on grade-level math, which has remained consistently at this level for several years. Notably, performance on student math in the last three years has shown a trend of increasing proficiency between third grade and fifth grade before plummeting in high school.



Source: PED, MSAC

A 2024 national analysis of student math performance on i-Ready assessments by Curriculum Associates, the company that owns the test, found elementary students who scored above average on at least one of four math domains (numbers and operations, algebraic thinking, measurement, and geometry) were more likely to be on track for algebra success. However, algebraic thinking was a stronger predictor of student readiness in later years than the other domains. The analysis indicates the further behind any student is in algebraic thinking, the more their predicted score in later years declines. Notably, students' starting performance in earlier years did not predetermine later performance, and deficiencies in multiple math domains were associated with lower performance in later years.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Provisions of the bill require PED's Math and Science Bureau to monitor implementation of instructional materials for alignment with state standards, a role typically relegated to the Instructional Materials Bureau. PED must also create a math instructional leadership framework for school administrators that provides standards for math content, instruction, professional learning, coaching, and program evaluation.

The bill authorizes PED to determine minimum course requirements for teacher licenses from prekindergarten to ninth grade, special education, and alternative licenses without specification. As such, PED may need to update rules on minimum course requirements for the listed licenses (see "Technical Issues"). Additionally, the bill requires math coaches in public schools to hold a math specialist endorsement from a PED-approved program.

The bill further requires school districts and charter schools to develop and implement professional learning plans for elementary and secondary math in cooperation with teachers and school administrators, with updates every two years. Beginning in FY27, schools must begin assessing students' math performance using a PED-approved early numeracy screener before students complete second grade. Provisions of this bill would require schools to notify parents in

writing of any kindergarten to fifth grade student who has characteristics of dyscalculia or math difficulties 15 days after the numeracy screener or an interim assessment for grades three to five has been administered. If the student has dyscalculia or math difficulties, the written notice must include information about services and math improvement plans, monthly updates on the student's progress, and strategies for parents to use at home.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

This bill relates to Senate Bill 242, which requires educator preparation programs to teach the science of reading and provides parental notification for reading difficulties, and relates to House Bill 157, which creates new administrator licenses and preparation requirements.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

Provisions of the bill require PED to determine the minimum course requirements for the following licenses:

1. Prekindergarten through third grade,
2. Kindergarten through eighth grade,
3. Fifth grade through ninth grade,
4. Special education, and
5. Alternative licensure.

The bill implies but does not specify new requirements related to math. The sponsor may want to clarify the intent on minimum course requirements. Additionally, the scope of these requirements does not apply to secondary instructors, despite math performance declining substantially in secondary school.

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