

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>SB345</u>	<b>Sponsor</b>	<u>Figueroa</u>
<b>Tracking Number</b>	<u>.230530.1</u>	<b>Committee Referrals</b>	<u>SEC/SFC</u>
<b>Short Title</b>	<u>Teacher &amp; Instructional Support Licensure</u>		
<b>Analyst</b>	<u>Armatage</u>	<b>Original Date</b>	<u>2/17/2025</u>
		<b>Last Updated</b>	<u></u>

---

---

## BILL SUMMARY

### Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 345 (SB345) would amend the School Personnel Act to allow applicants for a level 1 teaching license to complete a teacher portfolio instead of passing required teacher assessments, except for the teaching reading assessment. SB345 would codify current practices for licensure in place by the Public Education Department (PED).

SB345 would also codify reciprocity requirements for instructional support providers (ISPs) licensed in another state. Individuals would be eligible to receive a level 2 or level 3 license if they meet the qualifications of that license.

The bill would go into effect on June 30, 2025.

## FISCAL IMPACT

The bill does not include an appropriation. Any potential fiscal impact is expected to be minimal.

## SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

**Level 1 Teacher Licensure.** Prior to July 2022, candidates for initial kindergarten through 12th grade teacher licensure in New Mexico were required to pass various Praxis exams, depending on licensure area. For example, elementary licensure testing requirements included exams in core subject areas, elementary education, and teaching reading. See **Table 1: Comparison of Level 1 Elementary Teacher Licensure Exam Requirements in 2022 and 2025.**

However, beginning in July 2022, PED issued a [memo](#) requiring all department-approved teacher preparation programs to adopt a standardized portfolio to serve as a rigorous approval process for becoming a licensed educator in New Mexico, in lieu of the previously required Praxis exams. PED made these changes after [identifying](#) required testing as a barrier to entering the teaching profession. At the time, PED planned to eliminate Praxis examination pathways to licensure in spring 2024. However, PED issued an additional [memo](#) in May 2024 extending the examination

pathways to licensure through January 2026. Until that time, candidates may opt to complete either the previously required Praxis examinations or the comprehensive portfolio. See **Table 1: Evolution of PED’s Exam and Portfolio Requirements for Level 1 Elementary Teacher Licensure From 2022 to 2026.**

Of note, two Praxis exams required in state law continue to be required for elementary teacher licensure and special education teacher licensure: The Praxis Teaching Reading: Elementary exam and the Special Education: Foundational Knowledge exam.

SB345 would amend the School Personnel Act to allow level 1 teacher candidates to either complete the New Mexico Teacher Exams or the New Mexico teacher portfolio.

This appears to conflict with PED’s current approach to transition from one method of competency demonstration (exam) to another method (portfolio), rather than allowing candidates the choice between either. However, allowing candidates to choose between exams and a portfolio could be beneficial for candidates and reduce the administrative workload of reviewing portfolios. National research both suggests teacher scores on licensure exams are [predictive](#) of their students’ future gains in the classroom, and that licensure exams can be a [barrier](#) to growing the teacher workforce.

**Table1: Evolution of PED’s Exam and Portfolio Requirements for Level 1 Elementary Teacher Licensure From 2022 to 2026**

Exam	Required prior to July 2022	July 2022 – January 2026	Beginning January 2026
Core Academic Skills for Educators: Reading	✓	Either these exams <u>or</u> the portfolio	No longer an approved pathway to licensure
Core Academic Skills for Educators: Math	✓		
Core Academic Skills for Educators: Writing	✓		
Elementary Education: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	✓		
Teaching Reading: Elementary Assessment	✓	✓	✓
New Mexico Comprehensive Portfolio		Either the portfolio <u>or</u> the exams	✓

Source: LESC Files and PED Licensure Bureau Website

**Instructional Support Providers.** The School Personnel Act defines the following as ISPs who must obtain licensure from PED:

- Educational assistants;
- School counselors;
- School social workers;
- School nurses;
- Speech-language pathologists;
- Psychologists;
- Physical therapists and physical therapy assistants;
- Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants;
- Recreational therapists;
- Marriage and family therapists;
- Interpreters for the deaf;

- Diagnosticians;
- Attendance coaches;
- Practical nurses;
- School health assistants;
- School business officials;
- Rehabilitation counselors;
- Athletic coaches; and
- Educational alcohol and drug abuse counselors and substance abuse associates.

**ISP Licensure Advancement.** PED administrative code includes a single licensure advancement pathway for all ISPs that is based on years of experience at each licensure level. To progress from a level 1 license to a level 2 license, ISPs must work for three years on a level 1 license. To progress from a level 2 license to a level 3 license, ISPs must work for three years on a level 2 license.

Unlike teacher or administrator licenses, ISP licensure levels are not tied to state mandated minimum salaries, though school districts may choose to establish salary schedules based on the licensure levels.

**Reciprocity Requirements for ISPs.** PED’s licensure requirements for some ISPs include provisions that clarify how an individual from another state could apply for initial ISP licensure in New Mexico, while others are less clear. PED administrative code does not specify whether an ISP licensed in another state could be eligible to apply for a level 2 or level 3 license in New Mexico if they meet the required years of experience. However, PED’s licensure bureau website specifies ISPs must work for three years on a level 1 license to progress to a level 2 license, and three years on a level 2 license to progress to a level 3 license. This seems to imply that only ISPs who have already obtained a level 1 license would be eligible to progress in license levels, thus potentially excluding out of state ISPs.

SB345 would codify a pathway for ISPs licensed out of state to obtain a level 2 or level 3 license in New Mexico. These individuals would be required to:

1. Have professional experience;
2. Hold a professional license in addition to a school license, if applicable;
3. Demonstrate the required competencies; and
4. Meet other requirements and qualifications for the license sought.

This language is likely vague in an effort to accommodate the varying licensure requirements for the wide range of ISPs. While this may be appropriate for statutory language, PED would likely need to write additional administrative code to clarify these requirements for each ISP license.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS**

PED would need to update administrative code and establish licensing procedures for out of state candidates.

## **RELATED BILLS**

Relates to HB195, School Nurse Salary Tiers & Minimums, which would establish new requirements for school nurse licensure levels and tie salaries for school nurses to teacher minimum salaries.

Relates to HB201, Raise School Employee Minimum Wage, which would require local education agencies to pay full time public school employees a minimum annual salary of \$30 thousand and would codify a minimum \$15 hourly wage rate for public school employees.

Relates to HB156, Increase Educational Salaries, which would increase minimum teacher salaries by \$5 thousand at each licensure level, to \$55 thousand for a level 1 teacher, \$65 thousand for a level 2 teacher, and \$75 thousand for a level 3 teacher.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

- LESC Files
- New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority (NMPSIA)
- Department of Public Safety (DPS)
- New Mexico Regional Cooperatives (NMRECA)

**AA/mca/jkh**