

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill No: HB 323

48th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2008

Short Title: Rural Literacy Programs

Sponsor(s): Representatives Ray Begaye and W. Ken Martinez

Analyst: Pamela Herman

Date: January 27, 2008

Bill Summary:

HB 323 appropriates funds to the Public Education Department (PED) for in-school, after-school, and summer supplementary literacy programs for children in rural areas targeting high-need underserved populations.

Fiscal Impact:

\$500,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to PED for expenditure in FY 09, contingent upon the receipt of not less than \$100,000 in matching funding from sources other than the State of New Mexico. The bill contains a reversion clause.

Issues:

- For FY 07 and FY 08, the Legislature has included language in the *General Appropriation Act* specifying that a portion of the funds appropriated to PED for the Indian Education Fund be directed to the rural literacy initiative in HB 323.
 - The *General Appropriation Act of 2006* included language directing that \$1.0 million of the appropriation to the Fund be used to support new after-school and summer literacy block programs for students in kindergarten through grade 8 in schools with a high proportion of Native American students, contingent on receipt of \$500,000 in matching funds from sources other than the state.
 - The *General Appropriation Act of 2007* included language directing that \$500,000 of the appropriation to the Fund be used for the rural literacy initiative, contingent on receipt of \$500,000 in matching funds from sources other than the state.
- The initiative in HB 323 has been provided by Save the Children, Inc., a national nonprofit education and humanitarian organization that responded to PED's request for proposals and contracted with PED to implement the initiative and supply the required \$500,000 annually in matching funds.
- According to Save the Children, 59 percent of fourth graders in New Mexico's rural communities who are eligible for free and reduced-fee lunch programs scored below the basic level of reading achievement on the National Assessment of Reading Programs, and quality after-school and summer literacy programs are not available in many New Mexico rural communities to supplement children's learning.

- Save the Children provided testimony to the Legislative Education Study Committee regarding the selection of schools for its program, the structure of its in-school, after-school, and summer components of the program, and the design of its program evaluation, as follows:
 - after-school literacy programs combine a one-hour literacy block provided by trained paraprofessionals with at least 30 minutes of physical activity, a nutritious snack, and site-specific additional enrichment such as homework help, math practice, or arts and crafts;
 - whole or half day summer programs include the literacy block with additional time for fluency building, read-alouds, vocabulary building games and the like; plus physical activity, reading one-on-one or in small group tutorials, nutritious snacks, and other activities such as field trips;
 - in-school tutorials for students in grades 2 through 8 selected by school staff are provided by trained paraprofessionals, with 30 minutes of guided independent reading practice using the program *Accelerated Reader*;
 - other resources, including a school-wide license for Renaissance Learning’s web-based software including *Accelerated Reader*, leveled reading assessments, and a collection of leveled books for the school library, are provided to each site; and
 - site-specific evaluation results show that participants made significant gains in both reading proficiency and comprehension, as follows:
 - the average child in the program read 47 books;
 - the proportion of children reading at grade level increased by 57 percent; and
 - almost 60 percent of students showed reading gains equivalent to attending an additional 2.9 months of school.

Related Bills:

HB 241 *Public School Funding Formula Changes*
SB 154 *Middle & High School Literacy Initiative*
SB 397 *Summer Literacy Camp Program*