

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE  
BILL ANALYSIS**

**Bill No:** SB 490

**48th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2008**

**Short Title:** Middle School College & Career Preparation

**Sponsor(s):** Senator Howie C. Morales

**Analyst:** Pamela Herman

**Date:** February 1, 2008 (revised)

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**Bill Summary:**

SB 490 appropriates funds to the Higher Education Department (HED) to develop a collaborative college and career preparation campaign focusing on middle school students.

**Fiscal Impact:**

- \$500,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to HED for expenditure in FY 09. The bill contains a reversion clause.
- HED states that the request contained in HB 490 was not submitted to the department for review and is not included in the department's funding recommendations for FY 09.

**Issues:**

- National authorities on education quality report that, compared to other states, New Mexico sees a relatively high percentage of its high school graduates going on to pursue some form of postsecondary education. However, at approximately 11 percent, the state has among the lowest rates of ninth graders who complete a bachelor's degree, for the following reasons:
  - a high percentage of students, estimated at between 35 and 40 percent, drop out of high school without finishing; and
  - students who enroll in postsecondary education are often poorly prepared, as data show that approximately 49 percent of recent New Mexico high school graduates who enroll in public postsecondary institutions requiring remediation in their first semester.
- The lack of good information about preparing and planning for college may contribute to this problem. In November 2007, the Institute of Higher Education Policy released results of a major national survey, cited by HED in its analysis of HB 490, entitled *From Aspirations to Action: The Role of Middle School Parents in Making the Dream of College a Reality*. Reported findings include the following:
  - nine out of 10 middle school parents expect their children to go to college, but more than 80 percent report they don't know what specific steps are necessary to get them there;
  - more than 45 percent of parents surveyed had not taken any of the college planning actions about which the survey inquired;
  - more than one-third of parents reported having no sources of information on college preparation or admission; and
  - less than 20 percent of parents reported taking steps such as researching colleges, meeting with teachers or counselors, and looking into the college admission process.

- HED states that it is working with the Public Education Department (PED) and other agencies to create a statewide education collaborative within New Mexico to improve the college-going rate by increasing access to information regarding college and other postsecondary educational opportunities through a “statewide web portal” targeting middle school students. The portal would provide students and parents information on the following:
  - career planning and training;
  - academic preparation for postsecondary education and the workplace; and
  - student financial aid and other information about the affordability of college.
- HED has a federal grant for a GEAR Up Program now in its second year. GEAR Up provides early college awareness and readiness services to a cohort of 5,500 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, about one quarter of the state’s eighth graders, who are in 33 middle and junior high schools in 21 school districts around the state.

**Related Bills:**

SB 33a *Develop Improved Student Advisement Plan*  
HB 266 *Campaign to Promote Value of Education*