F I S C A L   I M P A C T   R E P O R T

SPONSOR	Lopez/Stapleton	**ORIGINAL DATE** 02/19/13 **LAST UPDATED**	**HB**
SHORT TITLE	Statewide Digital Learning Task Force		**SB** 377

ANALYST Roberts

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY13	**FY14**		
	$30.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to SB 137

SOURCES OF INFORMATION
LFC Files

Responses Received From
Public Education Department (PED)
Public School Facilities Authority (PSFA)
University of New Mexico (UNM)
New Mexico State University (NMSU)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 377 (SB 377) creates a new Statewide Digital Learning Task force and appropriates $30 thousand dollars to the Legislative Council Service for use in 2013 and 2014 to support the task force. The task force will make recommendations to the Legislature and the governor on implementing a statewide digital learning system by December 15, 2013. The appropriation will pay for expenses of the statewide digital learning task force and the cost of a contractor to study and advice the task force in making recommendations to implement a statewide digital learning system.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of $30.0 thousand contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund for expenditure in fiscal years 2013 and 2014. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY14 shall revert to the general fund.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The University of New Mexico (UNM) cites that school districts and institution of higher learning in New Mexico are currently using assorted learning management systems with limited learning plans and no real measure of their effectiveness. A unified set of standards that provide assurance of a quality learning system and the content that is being delivered with the system is highly desirable. Implementation of a statewide learning system together with the implementation of common core standards seems to imply that these two initiatives would be connected.

The Public Education Department (PED) notes that the task force would approve a request for proposals and select a contractor to examine and evaluate the efficacy of digital learning plans from other states, identify quality standards and definitions for various digital learning methods and formats, conduct an accounting of digital learning systems already in place throughout the state, estimate cost and cost savings of the implementation of a statewide digital learning system, identify potential funding and technology transition strategies, and make recommendations to update and align the Statewide Cyber Academy Act and existing distance learning rules with proposed statewide digital learning system.

The PED further notes, that while task forces can provide helpful insight and planning, there is a breadth of national research on how effective digital learning options can be extended to students, so the work of SB 377 could be duplicative of work already completed.

The Public School Facilities Authority (PSFA) cites that multiple agencies and statewide programs exist that are working to address similar objectives associated with digital learning and literacy in New Mexico with no single point of oversight defined to ensure duplication of effort is avoided and resources leveraged to meet common objectives and outcomes.

The PSFA adds:

Broadband availability throughout the state of NM is a significant requirement for the implementation and success of digital learning and literacy. The Department of Information Technology (DoIT) and the PSFA are managing the NM Broadband Program (NMBBP) and the PSFA Information Technology Advisory Group (ITAG) respectively, addressing both statewide broadband coverage and educational information technologies in schools. Both entities should be included, at a minimum, in the list of staff to provide technical assistance.

In August 2012, the Statewide Broadband Summit was convened by the New Mexico State Library, as part of its Fast Forward New Mexico (FFNM) project that is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce. The outcome of this summit produced 18 recommendations, which included Digital Literacy, that are intended to contribute to a DoIT statewide strategic plan scheduled for completion in late 2013 as part of the NMBBP. These recommendations listed in the final report, August 3, 2012, should be considered and addressed as part of the comprehensive study identified in Section 1, Paragraph G.

The date of appointment for the Digital Learning Task Force is unknown which has the potential to significantly compress the time available and required for adequate research in order to make legitimate and accurate recommendations to the Legislature and the governor by December 15, 2013.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The LCS would be responsible for establishing the Statewide Digital Learning Task Force to develop a work plan and budget for approval by the New Mexico Legislative Council. The LCS will also be responsible for administering the $30 thousand dollars from the general fund for fiscal years 2013 and 2014, to pay for the expenses of the statewide digital learning task force and the cost of a contractor to study and advice the task force in making recommendations to implement a statewide digital learning system.

ALTERNATIVES

The PSFA notes that it may be appropriate to expand the development scope of the DoIT Statewide Strategic Plan scheduled for completion in late 2013 as part of the NMBBP to include digital learning, or align the development of the comprehensive study from the proposed Digital Learning Task Force with the DoIT Statewide Strategic Plan to avoid duplication of effort and consuming limited resources for information that will be common to both.

AMENDMENTS

The New Mexico State University (NMSU) proposes to include two higher education leaders on the taskforce and the University further notes that transition from kindergarten through twelfth grade to higher education within dual credit and early high school will need to be understood fully by the task force.

The PSFA proposes to include the DoIT and the PSFA in the list of staff identified in Section 1, Paragraph E of SB 377.

MIR/svb