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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 1/15/15

SPONSOR Papen LAST UPDATED _____ HB _____

SHORT TITLE Science Early Education Program Pilot SB 161

ANALYST Chavez

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY15	FY16		
\$250.0		Nonrecurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY14	FY15	FY16	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total		See Fiscal Implications				

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates House Bill 310

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Public Education Department (PED)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 161 appropriates \$250 thousand from the general fund to the Public Education Department for the purpose of creating a Science Early Education Program as a five year pilot project for physics education for students in sixth through eighth grades at high poverty schools. The bill also creates the Science Early Education Fund. The bill declares an emergency.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$250 thousand contained in this bill is a nonrecurring expense to the

general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY20 shall revert to the general fund. It is anticipated the funding will become recurring after FY20.

SB 161 requires PED to administer the program as well as to seek public and private grants and donations for the science early education program. Other than a 10 percent cap on the amount of the fund available to PED for program administration, it is unclear what proportion of the appropriated funds is available for the bill's various provisions.

A school which receives a grant from PED for the science early education program will be required to provide half of the funding for the program. As the program has not been developed and the level of awards to be given to schools has not been established by PED, it is difficult to predict what the impact would be on the operating budgets of schools selected to participate in the program.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

SB 161 adds a new section to the Public School Code to establish the Science Early Education Program as a five-year pilot project to incorporate hands-on, age-appropriate physics education into the sixth through eighth grade curricula. PED must administer the program and contract with an organization to provide professional development and teaching materials. Under the pilot project, schools with 85 percent or more students eligible for free or reduced-fee lunch (though no more than 10 schools in total) may participate. (See technical issues.)

The bill provides school districts may apply, on behalf of their schools, to PED for a grant from the Science Early Education Fund. PED must select and award grants to four schools in regions that are distinct in location and population density, and selected schools shall match the grant awarded from PED. Additionally, participating students must undergo evaluations at the beginning of the program and further standardized assessments in science and mathematics at the end of grades six, seven, and eight to measure student progress through standardized assessments in science and mathematics at the end of grades six, seven and eight.

However, PED notes that currently the NM Standards Based Assessment (NMSBA) in science is only administered in grades four, seven and eleven. New assessments would need to be created and put in place to evaluate the progress in grades six and eight as required, as well as tests for the beginning of the program that are not currently mandated or adopted by PED.

Additionally, PED indicates that the term "physics" is undefined as used in the bill, and that physics is often associated with complex math procedures, and excludes chemistry from the proposed program. PED also states that it is important to ensure the program is aligned to the common core math standards for grades six through eight.

DUPLICATION

House Bill 310 is a duplicate.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

For FY15, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food Nutrition Service has implemented a new program - the Community Eligibility Provision. This provision replaces the old method of

determining eligibility for free or reduced lunches with direct certification of students through qualification through the Human Services Departments' SNAP and TANF programs. This results in a lower percentage of eligible students although with a more favorable reimbursement rate. PED suggests the Legislature may wish to insert on page 2, line 13; after lunch "or fifty-four percent eligible through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision", which is roughly equal to the 85 percent standard under the traditional qualification process.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Given that high poverty schools only receive a slightly higher amount of SEG funding for at-risk students, and the cost of educating these students is known to be more costly, is the 50 percent match by school districts too much of a burden for those schools to participate in the program?

KC/bb/je