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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
54th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2020

Bill Number	<u>SB74</u>	Sponsor	<u>Stewart</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.216205.2</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>SEC/SFC</u>
Short Title	<u>Voluntary Early Reading Development Program</u>		
Analyst	<u>Andrews</u>	Original Date	<u>1/29/2020</u>
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FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 74 (SB74) would create a statewide, voluntary early reading professional development summer program for teachers. The training would include a detailed framework for structured literacy training and training for working with kindergarten through second grade students who demonstrate characteristics of reading disabilities, including dyslexia.

FISCAL IMPACT

SB74 appropriates \$3 million from the public education reform fund to the early reading professional development fund for expenditure in FY21. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY21 shall not revert to the public education reform fund.

SB74 would create the early reading professional development fund; money in the fund would be subject to appropriation by the Legislature, and appropriated to the Public Education Department (PED) for the purpose of implementing the program.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

SB74 targets professional development funding for structured literacy training to kindergarten through second grade teachers. Research shows third grade is a “pivot point” when students shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Sociologist Dr. Donald Hernandez with Hunter College, City University of New York, found students who were not proficient in reading by the end of third grade were four times more likely to drop out of school than students who were proficient in reading.

Early Literacy in New Mexico. The percent of third graders achieving reading proficiency in New Mexico’s standards-based assessment remains below 30 percent. In addition, on New Mexico’s standards-based assessment in FY19, economically disadvantaged third graders

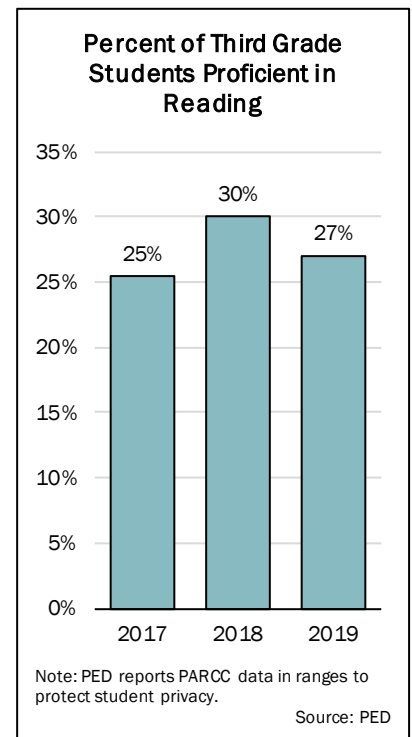
performed 24 percentage points below non-economically disadvantaged third graders in achieving reading proficiency. The scale of the achievement gap was a focal point in the *Martinez* and *Yazzie* consolidated lawsuit. The district court cited proficiency rates as evidence the state was not upholding its constitutional obligation to provide New Mexico students the opportunity to obtain an education that prepares them for college or a career. The district court found New Mexico has failed its most at-risk populations, including low-income students, Native American students, English learners, and students with disabilities, and ruled the state was to take immediate steps to correct these deficiencies by April 15, 2019.

Structured Literacy. Structured literacy is an umbrella term that encompasses all evidence-based approaches at helping students with learning disabilities in the area of reading, such as dyslexia, learn to read and write proficiently. Structured literacy is explicit, systematic reading instruction that focuses on phonological awareness, word recognition, phonics and decoding, spelling, and syntax. Research shows structured literacy approaches are especially suited for students with reading disabilities, but benefit all students. In particular, research indicates that English learners and students from low-income backgrounds benefit from

the highly explicit teaching characteristics of structured literacy. This means structured literacy could especially address the achievement gap between at-risk students – defined in the *Martinez* and *Yazzie* consolidated lawsuit as Native American, English learning, low-income and special education students – and their peers. However, research also suggests that educators should differentiate instruction for high-achieving students, for example, students with strong foundational reading skills would likely profit from more instructional time devoted to independent reading than students with significant decoding difficulties.

Teacher Preparation. The latest review of New Mexico’s teacher preparation programs by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) demonstrates much work remains to ensure aspiring teachers are prepared to teach all children to read. According to the NCTQ 2020 analysis, New Mexico now ranks 24th nationally in their Teacher Prep Review, about the same since NCTQ last rated programs in 2016. The NCTQ Teacher Prep Review assigns a team of literacy experts to examine every course a program requires in early reading, looking at the planned topics to be covered in each class, readings, assignments, practice opportunities, and tests, as well as rating the quality of the textbooks used in each course. These experts look for clear evidence of dedicated course time as well as measures where aspiring teachers demonstrate their knowledge of the five key components of the science of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. According to the NCTQ 2020 ranking, four of New Mexico’s eight traditional teacher preparation programs earned an A or B rating, but all alternative teacher preparation programs earned a D or F rating.

Laws 2011, Chapter 95 (HB74) required the New Mexico teacher assessment to include a rigorous assessment of a teacher candidate’s knowledge of the science of teaching reading. While this ensures all new teachers understand the science of teaching reading, this does not address teachers currently in the classroom.



ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

SB74 amends the statewide reading initiative in current law, including adding a voluntary early reading professional development summer program for kindergarten through second grade teachers. Funds would be prioritized to high-poverty elementary schools in which 80 percent or more of the elementary school's students are eligible for free or reduced-fee lunch. PED would adopt rules to ensure the program includes scientifically researched and evidence-based instructional reading strategies that improve reading performance for all students, including explicit, systemic and sequential approaches to teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and text comprehension and multisensory intervention strategies. The PED rules would also ensure the program includes strategies appropriate for the instruction of English learners and students with disabilities.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

In 2001, the governor of Florida created *Just Read, Florida!* through executive order, a comprehensive, coordinated reading initiative aimed at helping every student become a successful, independent reader. In 2018, *Just Read, Florida!* created a summer literacy institute to increase the expertise of school district literacy teams.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files

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