

LFC Requester: Liu



**PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
BILL ANALYSIS
2025 REGULAR SESSION**

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Check all that apply:

Original Amendment
Correction Substitute

Date Prepared: 02/28 /25
Bill No: [SB242/aSEC/aSFC](#)

Agency Name and Code: PED - 924

Sponsor: Stewart

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Short Title: ADVANCING THE SCIENCE
OF READING ACT

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SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT
(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY26	FY27		
None	None	N/A	NFA

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY26	FY27	FY28		
None	None	None	N/A	NFA

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY26	FY27	FY28	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total	None	None	None	N/A	N/A	NFA

Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act: The [General Appropriation Act of 2025](#) (GAA), would appropriate \$14 million to the Public Education Department (PED) for early literacy support and \$30 million to the PED for a reading intervention program based in the science of reading. The GAA would also appropriate \$5.2 million from the public education reform fund for training secondary educators in evidence-based reading instruction, contingent on the passage of [Senate Bill 201](#) or similar legislation. The general fund appropriation to the state equalization guarantee distribution includes \$59 million

for school districts and charter schools to meet teacher mentorship requirements pursuant to Section 22-10A-9 NMSA 1978, create an educational plan pursuant to Section 22-8-6 NMSA 1978, provide scientifically based literacy programs pursuant to Section 22-13-29 NMSA 1978 and Section 22-13-32 NMSA 1978, provide career technical education programs pursuant to Section 22-1-12 NMSA 1978 and implement the community school framework pursuant to Section 22-32-6 NMSA 1978.

SECTION III: NARRATIVE

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of SFC Amendment: The Senate Finance Committee (SFC) amendment to Senate Bill 242/aSFC (SB242/aSEC/aSFC) would modify requirements for licensure to specify public school classrooms be used for supervised field experience and adjust the alternative level one licensure requirements by providing a training timeframe in structured literacy and the science of reading. The SFC amendment would also extend the exclusion of balanced literacy and the inclusion of high-quality instructional material to all public post-secondary teacher and administrator preparation programs.

Synopsis of SEC Amendment: The Senate Education Committee (SEC) amendment to Senate Bill 242 (SB242/aSEC) would clarify language by revising the title “student teacher” to “pre-service teacher” to indicate a student enrolled in a teacher preparation program. The SEC amendment would also include alternative licensure candidates in the exemption of the sixteen-week requirement of student teaching. Finally, the SEC amendment would also adjust the PED’s role in monitoring and enforcing the Science of Reading Act by removing the previous requirement that PED work with stakeholders to develop specific standards related to the five components of the science of reading.

Synopsis of Original Bill: Senate Bill 242 (SB242) would create the “Advancing the Science of Reading Act” and amend sections of the Public-School Code to improve instructional approaches to literacy with an emphasis across teacher preparation programs. Specifically, the bill would disallow balanced literacy as a teaching method and establish additional requirements for licensure with an emphasis on the science of reading and the use of high-quality instructional materials to teach reading during student teaching/supervised field experience in New Mexico public schools. SB242 would also require teacher preparation programs to train teacher candidates to identify students not reading at grade level, require in-service teachers to provide appropriate interventions with parental notification and employ literacy coordinators to oversee implementation of the act.

This bill does not provide an effective date. Laws go into effect 90 days after the adjournment of the Legislature enacting them, unless a later date is specified. If enacted, this bill would become effective June 20, 2025.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

SB242/aSEC/aSFC does not contain an appropriation.

The FY26 executive budget recommendation includes \$49 million for literacy initiatives.

- \$30 million for reading programs
- \$14 million for science of reading structured literacy training and coaching supports
- \$5 million for secondary literacy support

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Scientific reading instruction (SRI) is grounded in the research on how students learn to read, and emphasizes phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. This is closely tied to structured literacy by using explicit, systematic, and sequential instruction to help students break down reading and writing skills into a logical sequence that follows a natural progression of language development. The PED launched the structured literacy initiative to train over 9,000 teachers in the science of reading, which resulted in a [5 percent](#) increase in reading proficiency for grades 3–8 for the 2023-2024 school year. The science of reading develops proficient readers and demonstrates measurable results that can close the achievement gap. In 2013, Mississippi passed the [Literacy-Based Promotion Act](#), requiring the science of reading in literacy instruction, teacher training in the science of reading, and funding for literacy coaches. This evidence-based approach to literacy instruction resulted in significant reading gains over the past decade for Mississippi students. The benefits of science-based literacy instruction increased reading proficiency for New Mexico students participating in the summer reading program and continued investment would ensure New Mexico maintains its progress.

Summer reading program. The state of New Mexico launched the [summer reading program](#) (SRP) in the summer of 2024 to combat low proficiency numbers in reading across the state. 117 statewide programs participated in offering free structured literacy instruction to kindergarten through eighth grade students based on the science of reading with high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science of reading. Students participating in the program showed an average 5 percentage point gain in reading proficiency.

SB242a would ensure that every school in the state has access to a highly trained literacy teacher that is able to identify and support struggling readers in classrooms. The Public Education Department launched a state-wide literacy initiative in 2020 that required K–5 teachers to enroll in Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LTRS) training. This initiative laid the groundwork to bring the science of reading to New Mexico’s classrooms. The provisions of the amendment would maintain the training of teachers in the science of reading but would shift the focus to pre-service teachers. This shift in focus allows pre-service teachers to focus on core components of reading instruction, with in-depth focus on phonemic awareness and access to reliable resources and support. This consolidation of reading instruction in education preparation programs would also ensure consistency across teacher literacy training with the additional benefit of frequently teaching the essential components of reading in specific classrooms across the state. School districts would also benefit from programs aligned to the science of reading since recruiting new teachers has been a logistic and financial challenge. The amendments of SB242 require that pre-service teachers are equipped with the skills of scientifically based reading instruction (i.e., 100 hours of supervised field experience), which may guarantee school districts are recruiting qualified teachers.

Trends in student literacy. [39 percent](#) of students in New Mexico (61,102) received a proficient or advanced (PL3/PL4) score during the 2023-2024 school year, consistent with the previous school year at 38.2 percent (57,016 students). This means that more than half (61 percent) of students in New Mexico are reading at a basic or below basic level. At the national level, fourth and eighth grade students experienced a decrease in average reading scores in [2024](#) by two points compared to their results in 2022. One [factor contributing](#) to low literacy is the use of instructional methodologies that are not based in the science of reading and in the lack of early intervention when reading difficulties are identified. Teachers can also limit reading success by not receiving [explicit instruction](#) (training and on-going professional learning) in identifying

children at risk of reading failure or how to teach reading skills that align with the current science on how students learn.

Trends in literacy instruction: A recent report from Education Week found most elementary special education and K-2 teachers (72 percent) in the U.S. use balanced literacy, rather than a more explicit, systematic phonics-related instruction. Many teachers also enter the profession without any training in the science of reading/structured literacy reading instruction despite overwhelming evidence that all children can learn to read. In NM more than half of elementary teacher candidates are entering the profession as alternatively licensed teachers and SB242 would assure that they would have training in the science of reading/structured literacy during their teacher preparation program. The science of reading became a legislative priority when NM SB398 (2019) was passed and signed by the Governor. NM is replacing balanced literacy with structured, phonics-based literacy instruction, including definitions and screenings for dyslexia. A timeline is linked [here](#). SB398 also initiated screening efforts for all first-grade students and HB481 provided guidance in purchasing materials that align with the science of reading. The bill would reinforce links to interventions and high-quality instructional materials by requiring defined standards in teacher preparation programs aligned with the science of reading. As of 2024, 37 states have incorporated reading instruction standards for teacher preparation programs including instructional materials, coaching, and professional development related to evidence-based reading instruction.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

Currently, 62 percent of New Mexico students are not proficient in reading. With a 38 percent proficiency rate in reading in 2024, improving reading proficiency is an imperative. The use of effective reading materials helps prevent early literacy struggles, which can lead to long-term academic challenges, and students who develop strong foundational reading skills in early grades are more likely to succeed in all subjects and avoid the need for remedial education. Additionally, high-quality reading instruction can help reduce disparities in literacy rates among students from different socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds and can even reduce the cost of remediation and intervention needed as well as possibly reducing the number of students who are incorrectly identified as having a learning disability. Research-based materials ensure all students have access to equitable, high-quality instruction, regardless of their school or district funding levels.

As a model, Utah sets specific, detailed standards for teacher prep programs aligned to the science of reading. As a result, the average 2024 NAEP reading score for fourth grade was [higher than 25 states](#), and the average score of fourth grade students in Utah was higher (219) than the national average for students in the nation (214). Similar results were reported for [8th grade students](#) in Utah. Schools in Utah are shifting to literacy instruction rooted in the science of reading and providing significant training and resources to educators at every level in support of the science of reading including communities, families, and businesses. This bill is working with the educator preparation programs so that pre-service teachers come into the profession prepared to teach reading rather than relying on professional development for LETRS solely. Effective reading materials help prevent early literacy struggles, which can lead to long-term academic challenges.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

A comprehensive approach to literacy reform would require the PED to align training for teacher candidates with stringent licensure requirements and change how teacher preparation programs prepare candidates to teach literacy, with an emphasis on the science of reading/structured literacy, to support students with reading difficulties and those with dyslexia. The PED would also need to lead and train literacy coordinators to be employed at each state-approved teacher preparation program to support faculty in delivering the science of reading/structured literacy-aligned coursework, ensure candidates receive appropriate field experience, and maintain the latest science of reading research to implement the provisions of the bill.

The PED will need to amend licensure rules to accommodate the provisions of SB242.

SB242 directs the department to design and provide school districts and charter schools with parent notification templates.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

Relates to House Bill 455, Pre-K through 3rd Grade Math & Reading Help, which proposes to appropriate \$1 million to the Early Childhood Education and Care Department to provide targeted online math and reading support grounded in the science of reading.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

None.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

The PED is responsible for the oversight of all Teacher Preparation Programs across the state. Accreditation of the programs is one component of this oversight.

In 2019, the Legislature passed HB398 that moves the state's reading instruction to be structured literacy. The bill allows for the upskilling of all elementary teachers by providing professional development in LTRS. The plan has been a roll up of grade level since 2020 and now the next step is this bill, SB242 where Teacher Preparation programs will be required to ensure that all pre-service teachers are trained in Structured Literacy.

Literacy is critical for employment; individuals with low reading skills have fewer job opportunities and lower earning potential. Unemployment and financial instability are major risk factors for criminal activity and incarceration. A study by the National Institute for Literacy found that 70 percent of incarcerated adults in the U.S. function at the lowest levels of literacy. The Annie E. Casey Foundation reports that students who are not proficient in reading by 3rd grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma. Some states use 3rd and 4th grade reading scores as indicators to project future prison bed needs.

Improving reading skills in early grades can break this cycle by increasing graduation rates, improving job prospects, and reducing reliance on the criminal justice system.

Policies like the **Advancing the Science of Reading Act** could lead to long-term reductions in

incarceration rates by ensuring students receive evidence-based reading instruction early.

ALTERNATIVES

None.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

None.

AMENDMENTS

None.