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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
56th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2024

Bill Number	<u>HM29</u>	Sponsor	<u>Gurrola/Lara/Romero, GA/Garratt/Thomson</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.227618.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>HEC</u>
Short Title	<u>Study Teacher Recruitment & Retention</u>		
Analyst	<u>Armatage</u>	Original Date	<u>2/1/2024</u>
		Last Updated	<u></u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Memorial 29 (HM29) requests the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) to study compensation and career advancement opportunities for New Mexico public school teachers.

FISCAL IMPACT

Legislative memorials do not carry appropriations.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Report Scope. HM29 requests LESC to study public teacher compensation and career advancement opportunities, including salary differential pay based on teacher credentials or staffing needs; costs of living and housing availability statewide; and career advancement opportunities that do not require teachers to leave the classroom and that better support the needs of teachers and students.

Educator Vacancies. According to the 2023 New Mexico Educator Vacancy [Report](#) by New Mexico State University's Southwest Outreach Academic Research Evaluation and Policy Center, New Mexico had an estimated 751 teacher vacancies at the beginning of SY24, a 9 percent increase from the prior year. A 2022 [report](#) by LESC found New Mexico continues to face challenges in staffing all schools with diverse, well-prepared educators who remain in the profession. Educators are the most important school-based factor on student outcomes, with the largest positive effect for at-risk students. Teacher shortages are not uniform, with some teaching areas and some schools suffering more than others. A 2023 LESC [report](#) found the greatest need for additional teachers is in special education, and the vast majority of bilingual-endorsed teachers in the state choose not to teach in bilingual programs, negatively impacting English learners. A 2023 report by the [House Memorial 18](#) working group reported the racial diversity of teachers in New Mexico does not reflect the diversity of students in New Mexico and offered recommendations to address this disparity. Reporting for HM29 could draw on these findings and recommendations and build on them.

Compensation. As a result of recent legislative investments in teacher compensation, New Mexico’s average teaching salary is now regionally competitive. However, it still falls about \$5,000 below the projected national average. A 2023 Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) [report](#) found the average teacher salary in New Mexico’s highest cost of living counties falls below a living wage for one adult supporting one child. For teachers or prospective teachers in these areas in particular, other professions may be more attractive or financially necessary for some families. According to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#), teachers are among the nation’s most educated workers but earn far less on average than their similarly educated peers. Teachers who face financial constraints, and are able to switch career paths, may do so. In rural areas of the state with lower costs of living, lack of housing infrastructure can pose a greater barrier for school districts to hire new employees who are unable to secure housing in the area.

Educator Pipeline. Ensuring educators are well-prepared before leading their own classroom is crucial for both student outcomes and for teacher retention. Following recent legislative investments in teacher compensation, more teacher candidates have entered the teacher pipeline in New Mexico. However, [more candidates](#) are completing alternative licensure programs, with little to no classroom experience before teaching, than traditional preparation programs. Some research suggests alternatively licensed teachers may have higher rates of attrition than their traditionally prepared peers. A growing body of research suggests teacher residency programs produce more diverse teacher candidates with lower attrition rates; and their students demonstrate stronger outcomes than those of teachers with less extensive clinical experience. Given these promising outcomes, the Legislature has appropriated \$33 million for teacher residency programs in New Mexico since FY20. In 2023, LESC published a [memorandum](#) outlining long term plans to evaluate educator clinical experiences in the state. This research could inform an HM29 report.

Educator Retention. New Mexico’s teacher workforce is becoming [less experienced](#), suggesting the state may be struggling to retain experienced teachers or may have an aging workforce that is retiring. New Mexico also faces churn with less experienced educators, with an estimated 1,500 level 1 teachers leaving their classrooms each year. A 2023 report by McKinsey & Company, a national consultation firm, found the [most cited](#) reasons for leaving the teaching profession are compensation, unreasonable expectations, and an inability to protect one’s wellbeing. While recent Legislative investment into teacher salary minimums may have contributed to an increase in teacher candidates, school districts have voiced concern that the new salary minimums have caused salary compaction for their more experienced employees. Some [studies](#) suggest innovative staffing models can improve teacher retention and improve student outcomes. Such models typically reduce student to teacher ratios through co-teaching, and provide experienced teachers with a history of strong student outcomes an opportunity for career advancement and leadership without leaving the classroom to become a school administrator. In New Mexico, [Carlsbad Municipal Schools’ pilot](#) of an innovative staffing model through the national organization, [Opportunity Culture](#), has produced initial promising results on student outcomes and teacher satisfaction.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

LESC staff would be required to work with representatives from the Public Education Department, the LFC, the Higher Education Department, teacher unions, teacher preparation programs, and the leadership of school districts and charter schools to produce and publish a report by December 31, 2024.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files

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