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HOUSE BILL 197

**51ST LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2014**

INTRODUCED BY

William "Bill" R. Rehm

AN ACT

RELATING TO EDUCATION; CREATING A PILOT PROJECT TO ASSIGN SOCIAL WORKERS TO "F" OR "D" RATED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS TO WORK WITH TEACHERS, AT-RISK STUDENTS AND FAMILIES TO OVERCOME STUDENTS' CHALLENGES TO LEARNING; REQUIRING REPORTS; MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

SECTION 1. A new section of the Public School Code is enacted to read:

"[NEW MATERIAL] WHOLE STUDENT FOCUS PILOT PROJECT-- ELIGIBILITY--APPLICATION--REPORTING AND EVALUATION--FUND CREATED.--

A. The "whole student focus pilot project" is created as an eight-year study beginning by the second semester of the 2014-2015 school year to provide school social workers

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1 in "F" or "D" rated elementary schools who will serve as the  
2 critical link between teachers and students at risk of failure  
3 and their families. The purpose of the pilot project is to  
4 demonstrate that data-driven, evidence-based interventions with  
5 students and their families in grades one through four will  
6 improve each student's academic achievement and the social,  
7 emotional and behavioral competence of students and their  
8 families.

9 B. The pilot project shall include at least ten  
10 elementary schools from across the state with as fair as  
11 practicable representation of small, medium and large urban and  
12 rural schools. Priority for at least one-half of the pilot  
13 project slots shall be given to "F" rated schools.

14 C. The department shall design the whole student  
15 focus pilot project in such a way that participating school  
16 social workers work a varied schedule that aligns with the  
17 needs of teachers and the at-risk students and their families  
18 and shall endeavor to schedule home visits at times convenient  
19 to the student's parent or caregiver. The designed pilot  
20 project may provide that school social workers be assigned to  
21 work with a particular at-risk student cohort and follow them  
22 through grades one through four.

23 D. A participating school social worker shall meet  
24 regularly with an at-risk student's teacher to identify the  
25 academic or other challenges faced by the student and then work

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1 with the teacher, the student and the student's family to  
2 assist them to meet those challenges. The social worker shall  
3 coordinate social services or other services needed by the  
4 student or family. The children, youth and families  
5 department, the human services department, the department of  
6 health and other state agencies shall assist the department as  
7 requested in the pilot project's design and implementation,  
8 including data collection and assessment.

9 E. The whole student focus pilot project shall be  
10 administered by the department, and the department shall  
11 determine application requirements and procedures and the  
12 criteria for evaluating applications in accordance with this  
13 section.

14 F. A school district with an identified elementary  
15 school that has received an "F" or "D" school rating for two  
16 years or more may apply for the elementary school to  
17 participate in the whole student focus pilot project. The  
18 school district shall agree to pay one-half the salary and  
19 benefits of participating social workers and to provide office  
20 space, computers and other furniture, equipment and supplies  
21 for them. The school district must demonstrate that its pilot  
22 project will meet all department standards and employ only  
23 qualified school social workers. The department shall provide  
24 additional professional development for participating school  
25 social workers on how young students learn.

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1           G. At-risk students participating in the whole  
2 student focus pilot project shall be evaluated at the beginning  
3 of the pilot project. The student's progress in academic  
4 achievement shall be measured through standardized assessments,  
5 and the student's social, emotional and behavioral competence  
6 shall be measured by other assessments adopted by the  
7 department. The families of participating students shall be  
8 evaluated at the beginning of the pilot project, and the  
9 family's progress in social, emotional and behavioral  
10 competence, if applicable, shall be evaluated periodically and  
11 at the end of the pilot project. Data shall also be collected  
12 on social and other services provided to the student or family.

13           H. The department shall establish reporting and  
14 evaluation requirements for participating elementary schools,  
15 including student, family and pilot project assessments. The  
16 department shall provide interim and final reports annually to  
17 the legislature and the governor on the efficacy of the whole  
18 student focus pilot project.

19           I. In addition to legislative appropriations for  
20 the whole student focus pilot project, the department shall  
21 actively seek public and private grants and donations. Grants  
22 and donations shall be deposited in the "whole student focus  
23 fund", created in the state treasury. Income from investment  
24 of the fund shall be deposited in the fund. The department  
25 shall administer the fund, and money in the fund is

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1 appropriated to the department to carry out the whole student  
2 focus pilot project. If applicable, money attributable to a  
3 grant or donation shall be expended in accordance with the  
4 terms of the grant or donation. Unless otherwise specified by  
5 the terms of a grant or donation, money in the fund at the end  
6 of the pilot project shall revert to the general fund. Money  
7 in the fund shall not revert until the pilot project has been  
8 completed. Expenditures from the fund shall be by warrants of  
9 the secretary of finance and administration drawn pursuant to  
10 vouchers signed by the secretary of public education or the  
11 secretary's authorized representative."

12 SECTION 2. APPROPRIATION.--Five hundred thousand dollars  
13 (\$500,000) is appropriated from the general fund to the whole  
14 student focus fund for expenditure in fiscal year 2015 and  
15 subsequent fiscal years for the public education department to  
16 conduct the whole student focus pilot project. Any unexpended  
17 or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of a fiscal year  
18 shall not revert to the general fund except as provided in  
19 Section 1 of this act.