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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Papen & Martinez, K **ORIGINAL DATE** 01/30/14
LAST UPDATED 02/18/14 **HB** _____

SHORT TITLE Science Early Education Program **SB** 161/aSEC

ANALYST Armstrong

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY14	FY15		
	\$110.0	Nonrecurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY14	FY15	FY16		
	\$110.0		Nonrecurring	Science Early Education Fund

(Parenthesis () Indicate Revenue Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Department of Information Technology (DOIT)

Public Education Department (PED)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of SEC Amendment

The Senate Education Committee's amendment limits the Science Early Education Program pilot project to integrating physics into the sixth through eighth grade curriculum, removing chemistry and computer programming.

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 161 establishes the Science Early Education Program as a five-year pilot project to incorporate physics, computer programming, and chemistry into the sixth through eighth grade curricula. The bill creates the Science Early Education Fund and appropriates \$110 thousand to

this fund. 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 may participate.

The bill provides that 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.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The bill's appropriation of \$110 thousand is a nonrecurring expense to the General Fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY19 shall revert. LFC guidance is that pilot programs are generally considered recurring appropriations and renewed annually. However, the appropriation in SB 161 is deemed nonrecurring because it is spread over several fiscal years. An alternative is to limit the appropriation to one year, deem it as recurring, and fund it in future General Appropriation Acts on an annual basis.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

PED is struggling to effectively maintain day-to-day operations and a number of current initiatives. Given ongoing vacancy levels, the department may not have sufficient staff to effectively administer this new initiative while maintaining quality administration of existing initiatives. SB 161 requires that student progress shall be measured through standardized assessments in science and mathematics at the end of grades six, seven and eight. 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, seven and eight as required by SB161. According to PED, assessment development would be costly and there are not existing resources to support this work.

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 or whether the appropriation is sufficient. SB 161 requires PED to administer the program, contract with an organization to provide professional development and teaching materials, establish reporting and evaluation requirements including assessments, and annually provide interim and final reports on program efficacy to the Legislature and governor. All of these new duties will require some funding, and this is before PED awards grants from the fund to applicant schools.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Under SB 161, and in addition to administering the program and contracting with an organization to provide professional development and teaching materials, PED must establish reporting and evaluation requirements for participating schools, including student and program assessments. The department must also provide interim and final reports annually to the Legislature and to the governor on the program's efficacy.