

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE  
BILL ANALYSIS**

**Bill Number:** SB 418

**51st Legislature, 1st Session, 2013**

**Tracking Number:** .191543.2

**Short Title:** Teacher Licensure Content Knowledge

**Sponsor(s):** Senator Gay G. Kernan

**Analyst:** LaNysha Adams

**Date:** February 28, 2013

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**Bill Summary:**

SB 418 amends the *School Personnel Act* to require, as of January 1, 2015, individual subject-matter assessments in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies of elementary school Level 1 teaching licensure candidates. The bill also allows the licensure candidates' passing grades to be valid for five years from the date that the candidates take the test.

**Fiscal Impact:**

SB 418 does not contain an appropriation.

**Fiscal Issues:**

According to the University of New Mexico bill analysis, requiring four additional content tests would pose a financial burden on licensure candidates. According to the "Test Fees and Payment Policies" on the New Mexico Teacher Assessment (NMTA) website, candidates pay \$114 for each content knowledge assessment (\$89 for each content knowledge assessment and \$25 for registration processing fee per test date).

The Public Education Department (PED) reports that there are no fiscal implications for the state because of the current contract with the National Evaluation Systems/Pearson (NES/Pearson).

**Substantive Issues:**

According to PED bill analysis, SB 418 would ensure that all elementary teachers have sufficient knowledge of core content subjects to implement the Common Core State Standards (see "Background," below). The PED analysis further states that, because the current Content Knowledge Assessment in Elementary Education produces a composite score, it does not ensure that elementary teacher candidates are appropriately prepared for all content areas.

**Technical Issue:**

One question that SB 418 may raise is whether the new assessment requirements are intended to apply to not only the standard Level 1 license in elementary education, but also to the alternative Level 1 license. The way the bill is drafted would suggest not. That is:

- the provisions for the alternative license, cited on page 4, line 14 of SB 418, do specifically require “a rigorous assessment of the candidate’s knowledge of the science of teaching reading,” which was added to both the standard and the alternative license in 2011; however,
- SB 418 does not amend the section about alternative licensure [Section 22-10A-8 NMSA 1978]; rather,
- it amends only Section 22-10A-7 NMSA 1978, which prescribes the requirements for a standard Level 1 license.

## **Background:**

### ***New Mexico Teacher Assessments***

According to PED, the department currently contracts with NES/Pearson to develop the New Mexico Teacher Assessments (NMTA). There are three major components of the NMTA:

- *Assessment of Teacher Basic Skills*, which is designed to measure fundamental communication and math skills that the state requires of classroom teachers and that are needed to complete a New Mexico educator preparation program. The basic skills test has four sub-areas in:
  - reading comprehension;
  - foundations of written communication;
  - mathematics; and
  - written communication-composition.
- *Assessment of Teacher Competency*, which is designed to measure a candidate’s professional and pedagogical knowledge and skills depending upon the kind of license sought.
- *Content Knowledge Assessments*, which is designed to measure the subject-matter knowledge and skills needed to teach effectively in New Mexico schools. The content knowledge assessments could take the form of middle or secondary level assessments in certain disciplines, foreign language assessments, or assessments in a number of other disciplines or fields.

According to the “Licensure Requirements” on the NMTA website:

- not including administrator and other types of licenses for school personnel, there are six kinds of teaching licenses that can be obtained in New Mexico, including:
  - Early Childhood (B-3);
  - Elementary Education (K-8);
  - Grades Pre-K to 12 Teaching;
  - Middle Level Education (5-9);
  - Secondary Education (7-12); and
  - Special Education (Pre-K to 12);
- a regular and alternative Level 1 teaching license in Elementary Education (K-8) requires successful passage of the following assessments:

- the New Mexico Assessment of Teacher Basic Skills;
  - the New Mexico Assessment of Teacher Competency (Elementary);
  - the New Mexico Content Knowledge Assessment in Elementary Education; and
  - the NES/Pearson Essential Components of Elementary Reading Instruction; and
- effective July 1, 2013, all new teachers seeking a Level 1 teaching license in Elementary Education (K-8) are required to pass the NES/Pearson Essential Components of Elementary Reading Instruction Assessment.

### ***Common Core State Standards***

In October 2010, New Mexico became the 39<sup>th</sup> state to adopt the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as a result of state-led efforts coordinated by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers to develop common standards across states K-12 in English language arts and mathematics. The CCSS:

- “are a clear set of shared goals and expectations for the knowledge and skills students need in English language arts and mathematics at each grade level to ultimately be prepared to graduate college and career ready”;
- insist that instruction in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language be a shared responsibility within the school. The K-5 standards include expectations for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language applicable to multiple content areas; and
- emphasize the teaching of informational texts because the reading framework of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) requires an increasing proportion of informational texts, compared to literary texts, on its assessment as students advance through the grades.
  - For example, on the fourth grade NAEP reading assessment, the distributions of informational passages compared to the literary passages are equal.
  - However, on the twelfth grade NAEP reading assessment, 30 percent of the passages are literary, and 70 percent of the passages are informational.

During school year 2013-2014, according to the *New Mexico Common Core State Standards Implementation Plan*, full implementation of the New Mexico CCSS will begin:

- for mathematics and English language arts in grades 4-12; and
- for literacy in social studies/history, science, and technical subjects in grades 6-12.

### ***Teaching of Reading***

In 2011, the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) endorsed and the Legislature passed HB 74a, *Science of Teaching Reading Requirement*, which amends the *School Personnel Act* to require, beginning January 1, 2013, a “rigorous assessment of the candidate’s knowledge of the science of teaching reading” to be included in the New Mexico teacher assessments examination for elementary Level 1 and alternative Level 1 licensure.

In November 2012, the LESL devoted an entire day to discuss reading initiatives statewide and to address what five selected states (Texas, North Carolina, Maryland, Kentucky, and Delaware)

have done to increase their fourth grade reading proficiency scores on the NAEP. During this LESC interim meeting, PED staff reported that the reading assessment required by HB 74a, *Science of Teaching Reading Requirement*, was:

- under contract with NES/Pearson;
- aligned with the CCSS;
- administered to its first cohort of teacher candidates in September 2012; and
- would not be finalized until sometime in 2013.

**Committee Referrals:**

SEC/SJC

**Related Bills:**

SB 316 *Teacher Licensing & Performance Ratings* (Identical to HB 276)

SB 475 *Evidence of Teacher Competency* (Identical to HB 481a)

SB 543 *Public School Dual Language Teachers*

HB 50 *No Funds for Certain School of Ed. Programs*

HB 167 *Teacher Licensure Content Knowledge* (Similar)

HB 192 *School Program Units for Certain Personnel*

HB 276 *Teacher Licensing & Performance Ratings* (Identical to SB 316)

HB 481a *Evidence of Teacher Competency* (Identical to SB 475)