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HOUSE BILL 374

46TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2003

INTRODUCED BY

Mimi Stewart

AN ACT

RELATING TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION; ESTABLISHING AN OFFICIAL STATE GOAL THAT ALL NEW MEXICO CHILDREN ATTAIN LITERACY BY THE END OF THE THIRD GRADE; CREATING A TASK FORCE TO DEVELOP A PLAN TO ACHIEVE THAT GOAL.

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

Section 1. FINDINGS-- OFFICIAL STATE GOAL FOR LITERACY. --

A. The legislature finds that:

(1) New Mexico has a higher percentage of its children living in poverty than any other state;

(2) it is absolutely critical that our children break this cycle of poverty;

(3) learning to read and write at an early age instills a love of knowledge and information that leads to a better education, a higher paying job and, ultimately, new

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1 levels of opportunity and a better economy for all New  
2 Mexicans; and

3 (4) with a concentrated effort from our  
4 dedicated teachers and loving parents, it is a realistic goal  
5 that all of our children attain literacy at an early age.

6 B. The legislature declares the official state goal  
7 for literacy to be that, no later than July 1, 2005, all New  
8 Mexico children attain literacy by the end of the third grade.  
9 All state agencies, institutions and political subdivisions  
10 shall work toward the achievement of this goal.

11 Section 2. TEMPORARY PROVISION--LITERACY TASK FORCE--  
12 CREATION--DUTIES.--

13 A. There is created the "literacy task force"  
14 composed of nineteen members appointed as follows:

- 15 (1) the superintendent of public instruction;  
16 (2) two members of local school boards,  
17 appointed by the state board of education;  
18 (3) two local school district administrators,  
19 appointed by the governor;  
20 (4) three early childhood educators, appointed  
21 by the governor;  
22 (5) one early childhood development expert,  
23 appointed by the board of regents of the university of New  
24 Mexico;  
25 (6) one early childhood development expert,

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1 appointed by the board of regents of New Mexico state  
2 university;

3 (7) the chairman of the house education  
4 committee;

5 (8) the chairman of the senate education  
6 committee;

7 (9) two members of the house of  
8 representatives, one of whom shall be a member of the minority  
9 party, appointed by the speaker of the house;

10 (10) two members of the senate, one of whom  
11 shall be a member of the minority party, appointed by the  
12 president pro tempore of the senate; and

13 (11) three representatives of the public,  
14 appointed by the governor.

15 B. The literacy task force shall hold an  
16 organizational meeting within thirty days of its appointment at  
17 which it shall elect a chair and such other officers as it  
18 deems necessary. Thereafter, the task force shall meet at the  
19 call of the chair but no less frequently than once per month.

20 C. Public members of the literacy task force shall  
21 be paid per diem and mileage pursuant to the Per Diem and  
22 Mileage Act.

23 D. The task force shall be staffed jointly by the  
24 state department of public education, the legislative council  
25 service and the legislative education study committee.

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E. The literacy task force shall develop a plan containing specific steps so that, by July 1, 2005, all of the children in New Mexico will have attained literacy before the end of the third grade. In developing the plan, the task force shall:

(1) receive comments and recommendations from literacy experts and interested members of the public;

(2) consider the role of expanded early childhood education programs, after-school programs and the even start family literacy program;

(3) identify the costs associated with each step needed to implement the plan and the source of any additional needed money;

(4) identify legislation or rule changes necessary to implement the plan; and

(5) establish deadlines for completing each step so that the ultimate goal can be reached by July 1, 2005.

F. No later than December 15, 2003, the literacy task force shall submit the plan to the legislature and the governor.