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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR: Miera DATE TYPED: 3/14/03 HB HJM 35/aSEC

SHORT TITLE: Study Educational Assistant Education SB _____

ANALYST: L. Baca

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY03	FY04	FY03	FY04		
	NFI				

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Responses Received From

State Department of Education (SDE)
Commission on Higher Education (CHE)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of SEC Amendment

The Senate Education Committee Amendment adds “substitute teachers” to the group of para-professionals whose training and certification needs are to be included in the study.

Synopsis of Original Bill

House Joint Memorial 35 requests that the State Department of Education (SDE), in cooperation with the Commission on Higher Education (CHE), study the training and certification needs of educational assistants and identify needs and resources related to improving their knowledge, skills and status, in light of the requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), and directs that the findings be reported to the Legislative Education study Committee not later than November 1, 2003.

Significant Issues

HJM 35 requests a study that will enable New Mexico to comply with the requirements of the

NCLB as related to credentialing/licensure requirements for educational assistants. These requirements of the NCLB must be met by existing educational assistants no later than four years after the NCLB was enacted while those hired after 2001 must meet one of three requirements as a condition of employment.

According to the data in HJM 35, New Mexico school districts employ an estimated 5,600 educational assistants during the 2000-2001 school year, over half of whom instructional duties in programs supported by Title 1 funds. Of the nearly 3,000 education assistants who provide Title 1 or special education services in classrooms, 95% do not meet the qualifications set forth in the NCLB.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

SDE and CHE would carry out the request of this memorial with existing staff. The requests of this legislation could be met through the P-16 Partnership between the State Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education and the Teacher Education Accountability Council (TEAC).

Citing results of a study conducted by the New Mexico Coalition of School Administrators, the CHE reports that 56 districts are partnering with a higher education institution or a Regional Education Center (REC) to address requirements for educational assistants, and 43 districts are waiting for the statewide assessment to be conducted.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

It is nearly impossible to estimate the value of a well-trained and caring education assistant. Encouraged by school district administrators and their own initiatives, some educational assistants have completed degree programs and become very effective instructors. The study conducted by SDE, CHE and school district administrators might also consider developing career ladder avenues for educational assistants as one of several ways to help overcome the shortage of properly licensed teachers as well as to meet the requirements of Title 1 and the NCLB.

For example, using training funds from federally funded bilingual programs, education assistants from school districts in West Las Vegas, Las Vegas City, Mora, Taos, and Espanola completed degree programs, earned the certification pursued, and were hired in a public school district. Thus, school districts were able to fill vacancies with properly licensed teachers who, despite the recent awarding of a degree, were already "seasoned" classroom performers.

LRB/njw