

proficiency. This emphasis on achieving literacy is consistent with the State Board of Education performance standards for all grade levels. The bill, however, appears at odds with 22-2-8.6.F. NMSA 1978 which provides options other than retention for students lacking reading proficiency and more specifically with 22-2-8.6.F(b) NMSA 1978 which allows the child to be promoted if the parent or guardian to refuse to allow his child to be retained.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$10,000.0 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2004 shall revert to the general fund.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

According to an SDE analysis prepared for an earlier legislative session, state standardized measurements provide scores that places a student's reading ability to be at one of the following levels: below basic, basic, proficient, or advanced. Students who score in the proficient range are considered to be reading at grade level.

According to the 2002 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 55% of New Mexico's fourth graders scored below basic in reading.

What is not as clear, however, is the impact of retention on students. Available research shows a high correlation between retention and school dropouts. The record of scholastic achievement of retained students is less conclusive, but the use of more intensive and different instructional strategies is suggested.

It is clear that additional resources will be needed to meet the requirements of this bill, and the appropriation contained in this bill intends provide the financial support for these additional demands on public school districts.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

1. If the state board has performance standards that address this matter, do we really need a law?
2. Will implementation of this bill penalize students who are from poor families or who come from families who are culturally and/or linguistically different?
3. Will the provisions of this bill supersede the section of law that allows a parent or guardian to allow a parent or guardian to refuse to have his child retained?
4. What effect does retention have on the student emotionally as well as academically?

LRB/lr