

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill No: SB 33

48th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2008

Short Title: Develop Improved Student Advisement Plan

Sponsor(s): Senator Cynthia Nava

Analyst: Pamela Herman

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FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

Original Bill Summary:

- SB 33 amends current law to require the Secretary of Public Education, in collaboration with the Secretary of Higher Education, to develop a plan to improve student advisement beginning in grade 6 to increase student college and workplace awareness and readiness.
- The plan developed by the task force shall:
 - be based on the Next Step Plan process;
 - identify ways that, in developing the interim and final Next Step Plans required in law, each student and family have adequate, useful, and accurate information necessary to understand how to prepare for postsecondary education and career training that is consistent with the student's interests, aspirations, and aptitudes; and
 - identify the types of information that shall be included in the advice a student receives, how it may be delivered, and how to involve appropriate postsecondary educational institutions and workforce organizations in the advisement process.
- In developing the plan, the secretaries shall consult with representatives of postsecondary education institutions, public schools, labor and workforce development agencies, and the business community.

Fiscal Impact:

\$250,000 is appropriated to the Public Education Department (PED) from the General Fund for expenditure in FY 09 to develop a plan to improve student advisement beginning in grade 6. The bill contains a reversion clause.

Issues:

During the 2007 interim and in previous years, the LESC has heard testimony regarding the preparation of many New Mexico students for success in high school and postsecondary education. For example:

- many students are not emerging from middle school prepared to succeed in high school. PED data show that 25 percent or more of students have slipped off track to graduate from high school on time by 10th grade;

- only about half of New Mexico high school students who take the ACT test are pursuing the recommended college preparatory core curriculum, and those who don't score an average of almost 2 points lower on the ACT than those who do; and
- between 49 and 50 percent of New Mexico high school graduates who attend in-state public postsecondary institutions in the fall after they graduate must take one or more remedial courses; the percentage of ethnic and racial minority students taking remedial courses is measurably higher.

HB 33 is a response to this information and testimony of educators at the high school and college level to the LESC in 2006 that students need better advisement beginning in middle school or earlier, so they fully understand the demands and opportunities of college and workplace preparation.

Testimony to the LESC in recent years has also described partnerships between school districts and postsecondary institutions that are currently in place, such as ENLACE and GEAR-UP, that can serve as models for more meaningful awareness and advisement programs beginning in grade 6. These include joint advisement and placement testing initiatives, college awareness and study skills courses; family awareness campaigns, career cluster and dual credit programs, college campus visits, and enhanced communication between college and school district staff.

PED notes that if SB 33 is enacted, a teacher advisement system, in large schools at least, would be necessary for the plan to succeed, because in those schools the counselor's average caseload is 300 students. PED also notes the potential impact of HB 33 on special education students and the need to coordinate with special education teachers and advisors.

Other legislative action:

Other legislative initiatives to bolster student preparation for life after high school include the following:

- In 2003, the Legislature passed a bill creating the Next Step Plan process to provide students beginning in grade 8, and every subsequent year until graduation, with an opportunity to plan their high school coursework, and next steps after graduation, to support their educational and career goals.
- In 2007, the LESC endorsed and the Legislature passed a package of legislation to improve student preparation for college and careers by:
 - appropriating funds to enable New Mexico to participate in the American Diploma Project initiative of Achieve, Inc., to align high school standards with college and career readiness standards, an effort that will be substantially complete by spring 2008;
 - increasing the rigor of the coursework needed for high school graduation by establishing the New Mexico Diploma of Excellence, which reflects the recommended college preparatory core curriculum¹, for students entering grade 9 in school year 2009-2010;

¹ four years each of English and social studies, and three years each of natural science, including two lab sciences, and math including Algebra II.

- changing the high school assessment system to ensure it provides students, parents, and schools with information about a student's readiness for high school, college, and careers in time to remedy any deficiencies or take advantage of accelerated learning opportunities;
- requiring school districts to offer Algebra I in grade 8; and
- requiring districts to make dual credit, Advanced Placement, and distance learning programs available to all students, and requiring students to take at least one such course to graduate.

Related Bills:

SB 32 *Post-secondary Reporting to High Schools*

SB 58 *ENLACE Program at Certain Colleges*