

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE  
BILL ANALYSIS**

**Bill No: SB 460**

**48th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2008**

**Short Title: College & Workplace Readiness Assessments**

**Sponsor(s): Senator Cynthia Nava**

**Analyst: Pamela Herman**

**Date: February 3, 2008**

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**Bill Summary:**

SB 460 amends current statute requiring the Public Education Department (PED) to create a statewide college and workplace readiness assessment system.

- SB 460 specifies the assessments to be administered at each grade level:
  - in grade 9, a short-cycle diagnostic assessment in reading, language arts, and mathematics to be locally administered in the fall and at least two additional times during the year, instead of a high school readiness assessment in English, reading, mathematics, and science in the fall semester;
  - in grade 10, a short-cycle diagnostic assessment in reading, language arts, and mathematics that also serves as an early indicator of college readiness, to be locally administered at least three times during the year, instead of a college readiness assessment in English, reading, and mathematics;
  - in grade 11 in the fall, one or more of the following chosen by the student:
    - a college placement assessment;
    - a workforce readiness assessment; or
    - an alternative demonstration of competency using standards-based indicators.
- SB 460 requires the results of the grades 9 and 10 assessments to be reported no later than four weeks after administration in an easily understandable and useful form to students, parents, and public schools.
- SB 460 allows PED to adopt commercially available standards based assessments or approve a school district's or charter school's short-cycle assessments that meet the requirements of this section.
- SB 460 also amends the statute establishing the graduation examination by permitting the 11<sup>th</sup> grade state standards-based assessment required to comply with the federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* for school accountability to also serve as the assessment required for graduation beginning with school year 2010-2011.

**Fiscal Impact:**

- SB 460 does not carry an appropriation; however, according to PED, \$3.0 million will be needed to have the diagnostic assessments in place by fall 2008.

- CS/HB 2, *General Appropriation Act of 2008*, includes a nonrecurring appropriation to PED in the amount of \$4.0 million for assessment and test development, and language directing that the period of time for expending the \$1.5 million appropriated to PED in 2007 for the 11<sup>th</sup> grade exit examination be extended through FY 09.
- PED also will have approximately \$4.63 million in federal funds for assessments in FY 09.

**Issues:**

- Throughout the 2006 interim, the LESC heard presentations regarding the readiness of New Mexico high school students for college and the workplace. The committee heard the following testimony:
  - almost half of the state’s high school graduates need remediation in college;
  - there is a strong correlation between a high school coursework and college success;
  - according to representatives of business and industry, and reports of research studies, preparation for high-paying careers in the trades often requires language and mathematics skills as rigorous as those needed for college; and
  - according to school administrators and others, the low expectations embodied in the current high school graduation exam, and open-entry admissions policies at many public postsecondary institutions mislead many students about the level of preparation they need for success in college and job training.
- In response to these concerns, in 2007, the LESC endorsed legislation that was enacted to:
  - create a three-part College and Workplace Readiness assessment system for all high school students in New Mexico beginning in school year 2008-2009;
  - alter the required high school graduation test by mandating a standards-based assessment or portfolio of standards based indicators beginning in school year 2010-2011; and
  - eliminate the 9<sup>th</sup> grade standards based assessments required for school accountability.
- To streamline the process of developing legislation to amend the College and Workplace Assessment system, a work group was established including the chairs of the Senate and House Education committees, the secretaries of Higher Education and Public Education, and the Director of the LESC in January, 2008. SB 460 is the result of that collaborative process.
- The Higher Education Department states that SB 460 would enable the department to continue work already underway to:
  - collaborate with PED to comply with the 2003 statute that requires alignment of high school curricula and end-of-course tests with the placement tests administered by two- and four-year public postsecondary institutions in New Mexico;
  - work with postsecondary institutions to conduct a crosswalk of college placement exams to ensure consistency in placement decisions statewide; and
  - work with those institutions to determine which elements of New Mexico standards are key to college readiness for purposes of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade short-cycle assessments that also serve as early indicators of college readiness.

**Related Bill:**

HB 503 *College & Workplace Readiness Assessments* (identical)