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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

ORIGINAL DATE 2/4/08

SPONSOR  P. Campos  LAST UPDATED \_\_\_\_\_ HB \_\_\_\_\_

SHORT TITLE  Language Development & Reading Pilot Program  SB  468

ANALYST  Haug

### APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY08	FY09		
	\$2,000.0	Recurring	General Fund

(Parenthesis ( ) Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

#### Responses Received From

Public Education Department (PED)

Department of Finance & Administration (DFA)

### SUMMARY

#### Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 468 appropriates \$2,000.0 from the general fund to the Public Education Department for expenditure in Fiscal Years 2009 and 2010 to establish a pilot research program for a contractor to provide participating schools and participating students an intensive neuroscience-driven language development and reading proficiency intervention.

Senate Bill 468 requires the Public Education Department to:

- Adopt criteria for selection of a contractor which include neuroscience-based, scientifically validated intervention methods and instructional tools that have been proven to accelerate learning, cognitive ability and language and reading proficiency.
- Consider the results for inclusion within a school improvement, corrective action and school restructuring framework.
- Report to the Legislative Education Study Committee no later than October 1, 2010 a description of the assessment of student progress from participation in the pilot program.

Senate Bill 468 requires a school participating in the pilot program:

- To select high-risk, English-language-learning, special education and below-proficient-reading students to participate in the program.
- Assess each selected student before the student enters and after the student leaves the pilot program to measure the student's progress.

## **FISCAL IMPLICATIONS**

The appropriation of \$2,000.0 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2010 shall revert to the general fund.

## **SIGNIFICANT ISSUES**

According to the PED,

The term “neuroscience-driven language development” is geared toward using multiple senses in directing instruction. For instance, the program would use the auditory, visual and language skills in tandem to direct instruction in literacy. These programs are designed to leverage new neuroscience research and principles in order to increase student literacy by helping a student's brain to more efficiently process information. In addition to building specific skills, these programs work with memory, attention, processing rate and sequencing. The idea is to re-wire the brains of struggling learners to establish new neuropathways in the brain so that students can more efficiently learn the materials expected of them in the classroom.

While this legislation directs the pilot program to use a neuroscience-driven language development reading intervention program, not all struggling learners may respond to this methodology. Student needs should determine which intervention program and/or instructional strategies are to be utilized and would need to be addressed in the RFP process.

Current best practices endorse the use of a continuum of programs, combined with flexible grouping, to allow students to achieve proficiency and then move to the next level of instruction or to exit interventions completely. This continuum of programs also ensures that students are matched with the most appropriate intervention that is designed to help those particular individuals make substantial gains. This is especially crucial for students with disabilities as these students are often many years below grade level in their reading ability. It is the responsibility of the IEP Team to determine what services the student needs and how these services are to be provided. The pilot could identify another type of intervention program to help address students' needs.

The neuroscience-driven language development assumes that the ability to process language is a prerequisite to learning content. Therefore, using a multi-sensory approach of visual and auditory techniques to enrich language development may assist struggling learners in achieving proficiency.

Paragraph C directs the PED to consider the research from this pilot project for inclusion within the School Improvement Framework. Currently the school improvement framework does not identify a specific curriculum, but allows each school to select scientifically based programs, of which this could be one.

The DFA states in discussing whether these training techniques provide lasting results:

The Society for Neuroscience, in an article entitled, “Brain Plasticity, Language Processing and Reading,” discusses the potential promise of neuroscience-based techniques for assisting in reading, especially for students who are second language learners, and students with other reading, speech or hearing difficulties. However, the article itself highlights the need for continued research, indicating that work with English Language Learner adults yields positive but possibly short-termed results, stating that the improvements subjects in one study lasted “at least three months.”

The DFA notes that in addition to questions about the long-term effectiveness of neuroscience-based programs, there are additional issues that should be considered:

- The Public Education Department is currently engaged in several large-scale projects designed to assist in improving reading outcomes for students including Reading First, Kindergarten Plus, Kindergarten-Three Plus and America’s Choice. It is important to fully understand whether current efforts are producing results prior to potentially diluting efforts with the addition of another project.
- The PED will need to establish criteria for the program, develop and run a Request for Proposals, manage and evaluate the program for two years. PED reports that they will need an additional FTE in order to manage a pilot program of this size.
- A short-cycle assessment will need to be used to establish whether or not students are making progress. Currently, New Mexico’s school districts are allowed to select their own short cycle assessment, which means that different assessments are in use in different schools. In addition, SB 468 does not specify which grade levels will be participating in a pilot. This means that PED will need to select or establish a short cycle assessment that accurately measures student reading achievement levels pre- and post-exposure to the program at all school levels (elementary, middle and high).
- PED will need to establish and carry out a comprehensive evaluation plan that looks at program implementation fidelity in each school to ensure that schools are implementing the pilot program uniformly, as well as analyzing student progress. SB 468 does not state that funding can be used for administrative or evaluative purposes.