

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE  
BILL ANALYSIS**

**Bill No: SB 154**

**49th Legislature, 1st Session, 2009**

**Short Title: Expand Authority of LESC**

**Sponsor(s): Senators Cynthia Nava and Mary Jane M. García**

**Analyst: David Harrell**

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**FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE**

**Bill Summary:**

SB 154 amends the enabling legislation for the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) to include higher education under the committee's authority to "conduct a continuing study of all education in New Mexico."

**Fiscal Impact:**

SB 154 makes no appropriation.

**Issues:**

The only permanent, nonpartisan legislative committee dedicated to public education in the country, the LESC is currently authorized to "conduct a continuing study of all education in New Mexico, the laws governing such education and the policies and costs of the New Mexico educational system provided that such studies shall not . . . related to higher education, deal with any subject other than the training of certified teaching personnel in post-secondary institutions." By striking the language beginning with the word "provided," SB 154 extends the committee's authority into higher education as well. This expansion is a logical extension of the direction that the committee's work has taken in recent years.

While distinctions between secondary and postsecondary education will always exist, the current direction of public education, both in New Mexico and across the country, is toward a seamless continuum of education from preschool to graduate school, often called P-20. As early as the 2001 interim, the LESC began its formal study of this educational continuum.

- At that time, both in New Mexico and in certain other states, the vision of a coherent, flexible continuum was beginning to emerge, especially in terms of the National Conference of State Legislatures, which identified major goals of the P-20 system, among them expanded access to preschool, smooth transitions from one educational level to the next, closing the achievement gap, and improving college readiness.
- Since then, this approach has become more the norm than the exception. A compilation by the Education Commission of the States in June 2006 found that at least 30 states, New Mexico among them, were engaged in some variation of the education continuum, whether K-16, P-16, or P-20.

Many of the LESC's recent initiatives have been in support of this P-20 concept. At the early education level, for example, the LESC has supported full-day kindergarten, New Mexico PreK, and Kindergarten Plus; at the elementary and secondary level, the committee has supported the three-tiered licensure system for teachers and school administrators, K-3 Plus, the Next Step Plans, and increased rigor in graduation requirements. In terms of SB 154, a number of other committee initiatives have created or reinforced bridges between secondary and postsecondary education.

- One example is the recently enacted Dual Credit Program. In this case, during the 2007 legislative session, the LESC took the lead in developing legislation creating a uniform, state-supported statewide program, designed through collaboration with the departments of Public Education and Higher Education, K-12 schools and districts, postsecondary institutions, and professional associations. Then during the 2008 interim, an LESC work group comprising similar constituencies presented recommendations for funding textbooks for dual credit courses, resulting in HB 139, also endorsed by the LESC and introduced during this legislative session.
- Committee testimony provides another example.
  - Even with regard to the committee's current authority, through testimony over the years the LESC has realized that teacher preparation is not the sole province of colleges of education. For one thing, teacher candidates take their content-area courses in other segments of a university, colleges of arts and sciences in particular. For another thing, students often switch majors, moving from one college to another, or go into teaching after working in another field, like science or engineering.
  - More recently, in an effort to determine to what extent public postsecondary institutions and local public school districts communicate and coordinate their efforts to prepare students for college-level coursework and the work force, throughout the 2008 interim the LESC heard testimony and engaged in discussions with representatives of all of New Mexico's 28 state and tribal two- and four-year institutions of higher education. Presidents and other officers of the institutions described their institutional missions and, within that context, the goals of their initiatives, the strategies they are using, the challenges they have faced, their evaluation of these initiatives, and any data they have gathered showing results to date.
- Also during the 2008 interim, the LESC received a report from the Office of Education Accountability (OEA), in collaboration with the Public Education Department (PED) and the Higher Education Department (HED), that described these agencies' study, in collaboration with school districts and institutions of higher education, in response to Senate Joint Memorial 3 (2008).
  - Endorsed by the LESC, SJM 3 requested that these agencies develop a plan to enhance the recruitment, preparation, mentoring, evaluation, professional development, and support for school principals and other school leaders.
  - In response to the recommendations in that report, the LESC has endorsed legislation for the 2009 session that would:

- appropriate funds to HED to develop and implement the School Leadership Institute, to be housed at a postsecondary institution (SB 124); and
- include academic and demographic data about candidates for administrative licensure in the Teacher Education Accountability Reporting System (SB 123).

Central to a P-20 system is a reliable longitudinal data system. Toward that end, the LESC has either endorsed or supported a series of initiatives, among them:

- comprehensive education reform legislation in 2003 that, among other provisions, required PED to issue a state identification number to each public school student;
- language in the *General Appropriation Act of 2005* to establish a comprehensive data warehouse at PED to begin to collect and store student, teacher, course, testing, and financial data in one comprehensive system, supported by subsequent appropriations to PED of approximately \$14.0 million (including \$2.9 million for FY 09);
- House Memorial 42 (2006), which led to the Data Sharing Task Force convened by HED in response to a request from the LESC to plan the implementation of a common P-20 student ID;
- legislation enacted in 2007 that requires PED to collaborate with teacher preparation programs and with HED to create the uniform statewide teacher education accountability system (TEARS) noted above, to measure and track teacher candidates from pre-entry to post-graduation in order to benchmark the productivity and accountability of New Mexico’s teacher work force. Testimony during the 2008 interim presented the first TEARS report, supplemented by testimony from a representative of the deans and directors of New Mexico teacher preparation programs; and
- legislation endorsed for the 2009 session to codify the requirements for a comprehensive P-20 data system at PED that collects, integrates, and reports data from PED, HED, and other agencies.

Finally, HED’s analysis of SB 154 indicates that, without legislation requiring it, both HED and postsecondary educational institutions “already collaborate extensively with the LESC and the Public Education Department on issues related to P-20 policy and programs.” While that statement is true, expanding the authority of the LESC would not only facilitate such initiatives but also increase the committee’s oversight as a means of ensuring the consistency of such initiatives. As the OEA analysis notes, SB 154 would provide the LESC with the authority to request data and studies from HED and from postsecondary institutions, as the committee now does with PED and public schools.

**Related Bills:**

- SB 123 *Administrators in Accountability Reporting*
- SB 124 *Create School Leadership Institute*
- SB 152 *Require Freshman Year Outcomes Reports*
- SB 317 *Use of Student ID Numbers on Transcripts*
- HB 139 *Create Dual Credit Textbook Fund*