

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill Number: HB 74a

50th Legislature, 1st Session, 2011

Tracking Number: .183948.1

Short Title: Science of Teaching Reading Requirement

Sponsor(s): Representatives Mimi Stewart and Jimmie C. Hall and Others

Analyst: Pamela Herman

Date: February 24, 2011

FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

AS AMENDED

The House Education Committee amendments change the date the new assessment must be in effect to January 1, 2013 from July 1, 2012.

Original Bill Summary:

HB 74 amends the *School Personnel Act* to require that, as of July 1, 2012, the New Mexico teacher assessment that candidates must pass for standard or alternative Level 1 elementary teacher licensure must include a rigorous assessment of a candidate's knowledge of the science of teaching reading.

Original Fiscal Impact:

HB 74 does not contain an appropriation.

Fiscal Issues:

According to the Public Education Department (PED), if an additional test is added to the New Mexico Teacher Assessment (NMTA), each candidate for elementary licensure would be required to pay an additional \$89 in testing fees.

Substantive Issues:

In the 2010 regular session, the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) endorsed and the Legislature passed HJM 16, *Study Reading Curricula in Teacher Education*, in response to ongoing legislative interest in and concern about the adequacy of preparation of new teachers to teach reading in the state's public schools. The memorial requested that the New Mexico Deans and Directors of Colleges of Education form a work group to:

- examine the curricula and assigned text materials of all required reading courses in programs that prepare teachers for state licensure;
- determine if those courses meet the statutory requirement that they be based on current scientifically based research; and
- report the results of its study to the LESC in the 2010 interim, with findings and recommendations.

Work Group Findings

The HJM 16 Work Group report stated that, based on a review by six reading experts of syllabi and materials for each required reading course offered by the nine public (as well as two private) elementary education teacher licensure programs in New Mexico, its findings included the following:

- while the reviewers' assessments pointed to a wide variance among the programs in the degree to which their required reading courses for elementary teachers prepared candidates in the science of reading instruction, *every program showed room for improvement on one or more of the criteria used in the reviews*; and
- *on the whole, New Mexico teacher education programs "missed the target" in addressing the science of reading instruction to a disappointing degree.* While there were bright spots, among reviewers' most critical comments regarding specific, identified weaknesses in some programs across the state were the following:
 - "no evidence of instruction based on current national research in reading as made apparent through review of syllabi";
 - "inadequate texts or texts that run counter to the research," "texts [that] appear to support whole-language approach, not scientifically based current research"; and "texts that are theoretical but lack support for teachers on how to teach"; and
 - "teachers will not be prepared to teach reading after taking these classes."

Work Group Recommendations

The work group report made five specific recommendations:

1. *Rigorously assess candidate knowledge of how to teach reading based on the scientific research as a condition for elementary licensure, either through the New Mexico Teacher Content Knowledge Assessment in Elementary Education or through a separate exam. Request that the LESC sponsor legislation to make the new assessment requirement explicit in statutory licensure requirements during the 2011 legislative session.*
2. Convene a statewide gathering of programs in early spring 2011 for faculty to review the issues raised in the report, to share texts, supplemental resources, syllabi, instructional activities and assessments, and other resources and approaches, for the purpose of strengthening reading instruction statewide.
3. Develop a list of recommended texts that address the five essential elements of literacy instruction, among which programs would be encouraged but not required to select for coursework beginning in the 2011-2012 academic year.
4. During the 2011 legislative interim, convene the Deans and Directors at an LESC meeting to present the approaches and solutions developed at the spring gathering.
5. Include review of required reading courses based on alignment with scientific research as part of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education accreditation review process.

Finally, the work group indicated that it believed that:

- the most effective way to ensure that reading coursework met the requirements of the law would be to require candidates to show command of the science of reading in order to be licensed;
- eight years of attempting to regulate reading course content through law and rule has not been successful in ensuring rigorous curricula of the science of reading across all elementary teacher preparation programs in New Mexico; and
- it will then be the responsibility of each program to do whatever it deems most effective to ensure that its candidates succeed on the licensure exam.

If HB 74 were enacted, New Mexico would join a small but growing list of states that now require elementary teacher candidates to pass an assessment of their knowledge of the science of reading for licensure, including Connecticut, Virginia, California, Massachusetts, and Oklahoma.

Technical Issues:

PED indicates in its bill analysis that:

- the current test development process typically requires a minimum of 18 months; thus the July 1, 2012 implementation date in the HB 74 would not be achievable; and
- if HB 74 became effective on June 17, 2011, and implementation began immediately thereafter, the earliest the new assessment could be in place would be December 2013, according to documentation provided by PED from one testing company.

Background:

- The Education Commission on the State notes that reading ability is the foundational skill for success in formal education. However, the performance of New Mexico fourth graders on reading assessments is among the lowest in the nation:
 - just 20 percent of New Mexico fourth graders tested proficient or better on the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the only assessment that provides comparable data among states;
 - this performance was not significantly different from that in 1991; and
 - it was lower than the performance of 43 other states, the same as seven, and better only than the District of Columbia.
- In April 2000, the National Reading Panel, a congressionally chartered group that included, as the charter required, 14 of the nation's "leading scientists in reading research," issued the report *Teaching Children to Read*. Based on a meta-analysis of approximately 100,000 research studies to assess the status of research-based knowledge on teaching reading, the report identified five research-validated components of effective reading instruction:
 - *phonemic awareness*: teaching students to manipulate the sounds of spoken language;
 - *phonics*: systematic, intensive teaching of the letter-sound correspondence in written language, beginning as early as kindergarten;
 - *fluency*: developing speed, accuracy and proper expression in oral reading;

- *vocabulary development*: both direct and indirect instruction in words and their meanings in various contexts; and
 - *text comprehension*: explicit instruction in a combination of techniques for understanding different types of texts.
- The National Reading Panel report included specific research-based findings regarding what teachers need to know to teach reading effectively. The findings specified the need for teachers to thoroughly understand multiple approaches to teaching each of the five components, to understand how to diagnose the needs of each student and assess responses to a range of individualized approaches; and to know how to integrate the components into a complete instructional program.
 - In 2001, the Legislature passed LESC-endorsed legislation that amended then-current law regarding educational requirements for teacher licensure. The new provisions required that:
 - a person seeking standard or alternative elementary licensure have completed six hours of reading courses; and a person seeking standard or alternative secondary licensure have completed three hours of reading courses in subject matter content; and
 - PED withhold approval from a college of education or teacher preparation program that fails to offer a course on teaching reading that:
 - is based upon current research;¹
 - aligns with department-adopted reading standards; and
 - includes strategies and assessment measures to ensure that beginning teachers are proficient in teaching reading.
 - In 2003, the LESC heard a presentation describing how PED was implementing the statutory requirement regarding research-based reading in teacher preparation programs.
 - In 2009, however, the LESC heard testimony concerning a report by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) entitled *Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers: Are New Mexico's Education School Graduates Ready to Teach Reading and Mathematics in Elementary Classrooms?* The report claimed, based on a review of the curricula and syllabi of reading courses in teacher preparation programs in the state, that most programs in New Mexico were not preparing candidates to teach the science of reading, and that the programs used a wide variety of reading textbooks most of which did not address the science of reading.
 - While pointing out flaws in the methodology of the NCTQ report at the December 2009 LESC meeting, the New Mexico Deans and Directors of Colleges of Education agreed to work with the LESC and its staff to formulate HJM 16 for the 2010 legislative session, and volunteered to sponsor the HJM 16 study.

Related Bills:

HB 70 *No Funds for Certain School Education Pgms.*

HJM 21 *Improve Teacher Preparation Programs*

¹ In 2003, the statute was amended to refer to “*scientifically-based reading research.*”