

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill Number: SB 272a

50th Legislature, 1st Session, 2011

Tracking Number: .184184.2

Short Title: 3rd and 4th Grade Added to PED Grading System

Sponsor(s): Senator Sue Wilson Beffort and Others

Analyst: Pamela Herman

Date: February 24, 2011

AS AMENDED

The Senate Public Affairs Committee amendment spells out that the department standardized grading system is to be aligned with New Mexico academic content standards and benchmarks and performance standards.

The Senate Education Committee amendment strikes the word “all” in reference to public schools and adds the phrase “including charter schools.”

Original Bill Summary:

SB 272 amends the *Public School Code* to add grades 3 and 4 to the required standardized grading system currently required for grades 5 through 12 in the public schools.

Fiscal Impact:

SB 272 does not contain an appropriation.

Technical Issues:

On page 1, line 24, quoting current law, SB 272 refers to alignment with “New Mexico academic content and performance.” The sponsor may wish to consider amending this language to read “New Mexico academic content standards with benchmarks and performance standards.”

Substantive Issues:

- In 2007, legislation was enacted¹ to:
 - require the Public Education Department (PED) to adopt and promulgate rules to establish a standardized alphabetic or numeric grading system based on the 4.0 scale or 100 percent scale to be used in all public schools for grades 5 through 12, aligned with New Mexico academic content and performance;
 - require public schools to include results of standards-based assessments in the standardized grading system; and

¹ Laws 2007, Chapter 255

- permit public schools to augment the standardized system with a narrative or other method that measures a student’s academic, social, behavioral or other skills.
- In June 2009, PED promulgated a rule to establish the standardized grading system (see “Background,” below).
- According to the PED analysis, if enacted, SB 272:
 - might provide parents with more specific information about their child’s progress than broad proficiency rating (i.e., satisfactory, unsatisfactory, progressing) that are typically used in elementary school progress reports;
 - supports *Kids First: New Mexico Wins: A Blueprint for Raising Achievement*, the Governor’s education reform agenda, in providing increased accountability for and information about student performance;
 - a brief review of grading in random elementary schools in other states shows that:
 - ✓ in some elementary schools, students receive letter grades based on percentages starting at grade 3; and
 - ✓ in some state they receive letter grades starting as early as grade 2, so this proposal does not appear to be out of the norm of grading practices; and
 - districts and charter schools may have to amend local school board policy to align with the law, and may incur time and expense revising reporting procedures and report cards for third and fourth grade, as well as informing parents about the change.

Background:

PED agency rule implementing current law regarding standardized grading system required all schools and districts to implement the system by school year 2009-2010.

The rule² states that the system contains the following components:

- a written report to parents regarding the performance of their children tested with the New Mexico standards-based assessments;
- for grades 5 through 12, a standardized alphabetic grading system based on the 4.0 scale (i.e., a minimum of 4.0 or higher equals “A”; 3.0 equals “B”; 2.0 equals “C”; and 1.0 equals “D”);
- the possibility of a weighted score for certain courses, according to local policy;
- alignment of all district and school curriculum to the New Mexico content standards with benchmarks and performance standards; and
- all school report card grades to reflect standards based academic performance.

Related Bills:

None as of February 24, 2011.

² NMAC Section 6.29.1.9 (J)