

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE  
BILL ANALYSIS**

**Bill Number:** HJM 29

**51st Legislature, 1st Session, 2013**

**Tracking Number:** .191961.1

**Short Title:** LESC A-F School Grading System Study

**Sponsor(s):** Representative Mimi Stewart and Others

**Analyst:** Travis Dulany

**Date:** February 12, 2013

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**Bill Summary:**

HJM 29 requests that the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) convene a work group to study the New Mexico A-F school grading system.

The work group is further requested to answer questions such as:

- how the value-added model is used to predict students' scores;
- how stable the confidence intervals are for making the predictions;
- how decisions are made on what constitutes each grade;
- what interventions for D and F schools are provided and how well they are working;
- how the grading system accounts for poverty and other demographic differences in student populations;
- to what extent standardized test scores are good measures of a school's effectiveness; and
- how the A-F grading system helps schools improve their performance.

Additionally, the work group is to be composed of representatives of the following groups:

- teachers;
- local school superintendents;
- charter schools;
- the Native American and Hispanic communities;
- school assessment administrators;
- statistical experts; and
- other experts and interested persons.

Finally, HJM 29 requests that the work group report its findings and recommendations to the LESG by October 1, 2013.

**Fiscal Impact:**

Legislative memorials do not carry appropriations.

## **Substantive Issues:**

Throughout the 2012 interim, the LESC heard testimony about the school grading system, as provided both in statute and Public Education Department (PED) rule. This testimony addressed basic provisions, the calculation of the school grades, the assignment of preliminary and final grades, the instructional audits that resulted from the grades, and issues and questions in general.

While this testimony covered a wide range of topics and details and addressed some questions and concerns, a number of other aspects of the A-F grading system remained unclear or unresolved, among them:

- the short timeline for implementation of the school grading system;
- the means through which the grading system addresses circumstances beyond a school's control, such as the effects of poverty and the high percentages of English language learners;
- lessons learned from the pilot schools;
- the uses and validity of the value-added model;
- the role of the New Mexico School Leadership Institute;
- the way in which appeals of school grades are handled;
- the need for more guidance from PED to make the A-F school grading system understandable and useful;
- the status and provisions of the PED *School Grading Technical Guide* and the need for a peer review of the guide by educational statisticians; and
- the relationship between the A-F grades and the calculation of adequate yearly progress (AYP), which is still required in state law despite the waiver from certain provisions of the federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*;

HJM 29 addresses a number of these points.

## **Background:**

Enacted in 2011, the *A-B-C-D-F Schools Rating Act* created a new public school accountability system that, beginning in school year 2011-2012, was to operate in addition to, and separate from, the existing adequate yearly progress (AYP) system created in state and federal law. Among its provisions, the legislation requires that:

- all public schools be graded annually on an A-F scale;
- the rating scale for elementary and middle schools include factors such as student proficiency and growth, as well as growth of the lowest 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of students;
- the rating scale for high schools include additional academic indicators such as high school graduation rates and growth in those rates;
- parents of a student in a public school rated F for two of the last four years have the right to transfer the student to any public school in the state or continue schooling through the statewide cyber academy; and
- PED ensure that a local school board or charter school governing body is prioritizing the resources of a public school rated D or F until the school earns a grade of C or better for two consecutive years.

While the overall grading system is prescribed in law, the details and many of the substantive provisions are in PED rule, first promulgated in December 2011 and then revised in May 2012.

**Committee Referrals:**

HEC

**Related Bills:**

HJM 30 *Study Uses of Standardized Test Scores*

SJM 34 *Study A-F School Grading System (Identical)*