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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Candelaria **ORIGINAL DATE** 01/28/15
LAST UPDATED _____ **HB** _____

SHORT TITLE Computer Programming for Language Credit **SB** 14

ANALYST Gudgel

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY15	FY16		
	NFI		

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Public Education Department (PED)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

Senate Bill 14 amends the Public School Code to allow a course in a modern, widely used computer programming language to satisfy required other than English requirements in all grades beginning with the 2015-2016 school year. Additionally, the bill allows a course in a modern, widely used computer programming language to satisfy the language other than English requirement for students entering ninth grade in 2015-2016 school year.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

NFI

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Current statute requires high school students complete one unit in a career cluster course, workplace readiness, or a language other than English to graduate. While statute does not preclude a computer programming course from satisfying the language other than English requirement, SB 14 ensures the course fulfills the requirement.

PED's analysis also notes nothing prohibits such a course being offered for credit in secondary schools. These classes could be offered as part of a career-technical program of study, or potentially to meet the language other than English requirement within a district and high school. Current statute does not define specific languages that may be offered, rather it states that each district must offer such courses and allows districts to determine what language courses to offer.

The department's analysis also notes a New Mexico diploma of excellence requires one unit in a career cluster course, workplace readiness, or a language other than English pursuant to Section 22-13-1 NMSA 1978 and school districts may already determine that computer programming is a career cluster course or a language course in order to meet graduation requirements.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

The bill creates a situation where school districts are able to offer a course in computer language that will satisfy a language other than English requirement beginning with the 2015-2016 school year but 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students will not be able to count a computer language course an "other than English language" course during the 2015-2016 school year, 11th and 12th students will not be able to do so during the 2016-2017 school year, and 12th grade students will not be able to do so during the 2017-2018 school year because of differences in amended language in Section 1 and Section 2.

Section 22-13-1.1 prohibits graduation requirements from changing for a student once the student enters ninth grade – the requirements they must meet are those that are in law when they begin ninth grade. It is unclear if this provision prohibits additional courses from being designated as able to satisfy particular broader requirements. The Legislature may wish to clarify this. LFC staff suggests the Legislature consider eliminating amendments to Sections 2 and 3 of the bill, as changes to Section 1 appear sufficient to ensure that a computer language course can count toward a language other than English requirement.

The amendment in Section 1 is limited to school districts – it appears that charter schools will not be able to offer a computer language course to satisfy language requirements. If the intent is for all public schools to be able to offer a computer language course the term "school district" should be changed to "public schools" or "school districts and charter schools".

RSG/je/bb