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HOUSE MEMORIAL 4

56TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2024

INTRODUCED BY

Joy Garratt and Yanira Gurrola

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE TO STUDY
MIDDLE SCHOOL EDUCATION.

WHEREAS, the middle school years represent a crucial and formative period in a student's educational journey, laying the foundation for future academic and career success; and

WHEREAS, a wealth of educational research underscores the significance of the middle school years in shaping a student's cognitive, social and emotional development, recognizing this period as a pivotal juncture in a student's development and academic trajectory; and

WHEREAS, middle school serves as a bridge between the elementary and high school levels and is a vital transitional phase when students begin to explore a more diverse and advanced curriculum as they prepare for academic and career

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1 pursuits in high school and beyond; and

2 WHEREAS, studies consistently highlight the unique role of
3 middle schools in fostering essential skills such as critical
4 thinking, problem solving and effective communication that are
5 foundational to success in both academic achievement and future
6 career pathways; and

7 WHEREAS, middle school is a pivotal time for students to
8 explore a broad range of subjects and extracurricular
9 activities, fostering a well-rounded education that nurtures
10 diverse talents and interests; and

11 WHEREAS, evidence-based research emphasizes the role of
12 dedicated and skilled teachers in middle schools, as they
13 contribute significantly to students' academic achievements,
14 character development and overall well-being; and

15 WHEREAS, emerging brain research shows early adolescence
16 is the second period of immense brain development, and schools
17 can be better designed to be more developmentally appropriate;
18 and

19 WHEREAS, data in New Mexico shows that student achievement
20 in mathematics, reading and science and in school engagement
21 begins to decline in middle school years as chronic absenteeism
22 begins to rise; and

23 WHEREAS, access to mathematics courses in middle school
24 years, and taking algebra 1 by the end of eighth grade, has
25 been found to be key for students to have sufficient time to

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1 take more advanced courses in their high school years,
2 particularly courses related to science, technology,
3 engineering and mathematics pathways; and

4 WHEREAS, a positive middle school experience contributes
5 significantly to students' self-esteem, social skills and
6 overall well-being, providing a much more successful transition
7 to high school and beyond; and

8 WHEREAS, recognizing the importance of middle school
9 education is integral to ensuring a strong and vibrant future
10 for communities and fostering a society with well-prepared,
11 intellectually engaged and socially responsible citizens;

12 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF
13 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the legislative
14 education study committee be requested to study the structure,
15 curriculum, funding and design of middle schools and make
16 recommendations to the legislature and the governor on methods
17 and means of enhancing the quality of middle school education
18 in New Mexico that equitably serves all students in New Mexico,
19 including those students described in the *Yazzie/Martinez*
20 lawsuit as students with disabilities, economically
21 disadvantaged students, English language learners and Native
22 American students; and

23 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the legislative education
24 study committee be requested to work with a representative
25 group of youth, including representatives that reflect New

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1 Mexico's student demographics and the student groups named in
2 the *Yazzie/Martinez* lawsuit; teacher preparation program
3 leaders, middle school teachers and educational leaders; school
4 counselors and other instructional support providers; school
5 safety and school resource officers; higher education
6 institutions; health professionals; community members; and the
7 public education department in its middle school study; and

8 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the legislative education
9 study committee be requested to submit a copy of its research
10 findings and recommendations to the governor and the
11 legislature and to publish its report by December 31, 2024; and

12 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this be memorial be
13 transmitted to the director of the legislative education study
14 committee and the secretary of public education.