



LFC Requester: Jorgensen

**PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
BILL ANALYSIS
2026 REGULAR SESSION**

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Check all that apply:

Original Amendment
Correction Substitute

Date Prepared: February 3 2026

Bill No: SB216

Committee Referrals: SIRC/SFC

Agency Name and Code: PED - 924

Sponsor: Pinto

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Short Title: CERTIFICATE FOR NATIVE AMERICAN LANGUAGES

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SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY27	FY28		
\$500.0	None	Nonrecurring	General Fund

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY27	FY28	FY29		
None	None	None	N/A	NFA

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY27	FY28	FY29	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total	None	None	None	N/A	N/A	NFA

Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act: The General Fund appropriation to the state equalization guarantee includes sufficient funding to provide all persons holding a Native American Language and Culture Certificate and working in an instructional capacity a salary in accordance with Section 22-10A-13 NMSA 1978 of the School Personnel Act.

SECTION III: NARRATIVE

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis: House Bill 216 (HB216) would appropriate \$500,000 to the Public Education Department in FY27 to issue Native American Language and Culture (520 NALC) certifications.

This bill does not provide an effective date. Laws go into effect 90 days after the adjournment of the Legislature enacting them, unless a later date is specified. If enacted, this bill would become effective May 20, 2026.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The bill would appropriate \$500,000 from the General Fund to the PED for expenditure in FY27 to issue certificates pursuant to [Section 22-10A-13 NMSA 1978](#) to persons proficient in a Native American language and culture of an Indian nation, tribe or pueblo located wholly or partially in New Mexico. Any unexpended balance remaining at the end of FY27 shall revert to the general fund.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

520 NALC certifications are state-issued certifications that certify Native language and culture experts to teach in New Mexico public schools. The certifications confirm an individual's proficiency in a Pueblo, Tribe, or Nation's language and culture. Certified individuals may serve as instructors and must be paid at least the Level I teacher minimum salary if they work full-time. Schools are instructed to include 520 NALC certificate holders in salaries tied to SEG funds and count them as regular classroom teachers. Pueblos, Tribes, and Nations develop the standards and competency criteria for their language and culture. They review and approve standards and criteria for Native language assessments, certify applicants once they pass the assessment, and notify the PED that the applicant is qualified.

There are currently 151 520 NALC holders teaching in New Mexico public schools. 134 of them are currently teaching language and culture. This number does not include any additional 520 NALC holders that are teaching in private and locally controlled schools. 520 NALC certifications are currently available for nine different languages. The Indian Education Division has used Indian Education Funds to release a grant to schools to support 520 NALC instructor salaries, though this grant funding availability varies from year to year. The Indian Education Division has also deemed salaries for 520 NALC holders as eligible costs to be included when school districts and charter schools apply for allocation-based awards through the Indian Education Fund.

Funding from this bill would be designated for the issuance of 520 NALC certifications. As certification standards and issuance are under the authority of Pueblos, Tribes, and Nations, the PED may distribute the funds to go toward assessment and standards development and administration to the Pueblos, Tribes, and Nations with whom the department has executed an appropriate memorandum of agreement, as required by Section 22-10A-13 NMSA 1978 and Rule 6.63.14 NMAC.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

In 2011, [Teresa McCarty](#) of Arizona State University compiled research and literature on the role of Native languages and culture in student achievement. She found compelling evidence that Native language and culture programs have beneficial effects on student achievement, as well as motivation, self-esteem, and cultural pride. She also found that taking time to teach Native languages does not detract from student achievement in English. [The Institute of Education Sciences](#) corroborates McCarty's report, finding that Native language acquisition can help improve English language acquisition. Providing funding to the 520 NALC program in New Mexico may provide the program with sustained longevity and the possibility of growth to additional Native languages and students, benefitting students' achievement in education.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The number of 520 NALC holders can vary each year. The department must cross-verify active certifications before distribution of funds and must ensure that funds are spent on 520 holders that are teaching language in culture in a public school.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

Relates to House Bill 116, Bilingual Multicultural Education Act Changes, which would require eligible bilingual multicultural education programs to use a home or heritage language as the primary mode of instruction or to use a language revitalization instructional model that has been approved by the department.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

None.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

None.

ALTERNATIVES

None.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

None.

AMENDMENTS

None.