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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
57th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2026

Bill Number	<u>HM43</u>	Sponsor	<u>Gonzales</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.233116.2</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>HEC</u>
Short Title	<u>Study Framework for Public School Rankings</u>		
Analyst	<u>Ortiz</u>	Original Date	<u>2/11/2026</u>
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BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Memorial 43 (HM43) requests LESC and the Public Education Department (PED) to conduct a comprehensive study of the methodologies and various tools used to nationally rank public school performance in New Mexico and nearby states and use the Lexile framework to assess New Mexico public school performance to determine if existing tools are equitable and accurate. The memorial requests LESC and PED publish a final report, including its findings and recommendations, by November 1, 2026.

FISCAL IMPACT

Legislative memorials do not carry appropriations.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Memorial Study Parameters. HM43 requests LESC to collaborate with PED to conduct a comprehensive study of the methodologies and various tools used to evaluate public school performance in New Mexico and nearby states. The memorial requests PED and LESC to use the Lexile framework to evaluate student outcomes across the state's school districts and charter schools. The requested study asks that the study identify differences between school performance evaluation tools and their consideration of equitable evaluation and examine student outcomes in mathematics and reading; dropout and graduation rates; per-pupil funding levels; school safety indicators; class sizes; and instructor qualifications and credentials.

National Assessment of Educational Progress. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), otherwise known as the "Nation's Report Card," is a federally administered exam that measures student performance in reading and mathematics across the United States. Policymakers and stakeholders have used NAEP since 1969 to monitor academic performance nationwide. The assessment tests representative samples of students in fourth, eighth, and 12th grades nationwide to allow comparison across states and over time using a common framework.

NAEP monitors long-term trends rather than evaluating individual students or schools. It reports results at the national and state levels to provide an overview of student achievement. Since NAEP uses a standardized framework and consistent procedures, it serves as a common benchmark for comparing outcomes across states and demographic groups.

NAEP scores among New Mexico students rank lower than national averages. According to a PED [memo](#), student scores in 2024 were not significantly different from 2022 NAEP scores, except for fourth grade math proficiency scores. In math, 23 percent of fourth graders scored proficient or above (a 4 percent improvement from the state's 2022 NAEP scores) and 14 percent of eighth graders scored proficient or above. In reading, 20 percent of fourth graders scored proficient or above and 19 percent of eighth graders scored proficient or above.

Lexile Whitepaper. A recent [whitepaper](#) released by Evress Analytics, an education technology company that provides data integration and reporting services to school districts, suggests New Mexico students' Lexile growth in third to eighth grade generally matches or exceeds national trends when measured on a common Lexile scale. The Lexile framework, developed by MetaMetrics, a global education technology specializing in scientific measurement, measures text complexity and reading comprehension to help educators match students with appropriately challenging reading materials. Researchers at Evress Analytics converted reading results from several statewide assessments into a common Lexile scale to create a framework to monitor student growth over time and compare New Mexico's proficiency standards with its neighboring states.

The report suggests New Mexico sets higher Lexile thresholds for reading proficiency rates than nearby states, which may lead to lower reported proficiency rates even when student growth is comparable. It also highlights local challenges such as chronic absenteeism, economic barriers, student mobility, and English language learning.

The Lexile Framework and Other Measures. Lexile measures are generally used to measure reading comprehension and oral reading fluency relative to text complexity. Lexile measures do not measure overall literacy, which includes other factors beyond reading (such as interpretation of reading content at grade level). The state's summative assessments (the New Mexico Measures of Student Success and Achievement, or NM-MSSA, for grades three through eight; and the College Board's Scholastic Aptitude Test, or SAT, for students in 11th grade) assess broader measures of literacy, including student learning of statewide academic content and performance standards.

Student Outcomes. New Mexico's 2025 summative assessment revealed the state's student proficiency rates increased in reading and mathematics, though overall proficiency remained low in all core subjects. The SY25 results indicate positive trends in both reading and math, with growth in reading more pronounced. Assessment results indicated 43 percent of students were proficient in reading (up from 39 percent in SY24) and just under 25 percent of students proficient in math (up from 23 percent). The state's increased mathematics proficiency rates reversed a three-year decline trend.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

HM43 requests LESC and PED to conduct a comprehensive study of the methodologies and various tools used to nationally rank public school performance in New Mexico and nearby states and evaluate New Mexico public school performance using a Lexile framework, which would require LESC and PED staff time and resources. The impact to LESC staff is expected to be

minimal as this request aligns with LESC’s statutory role to conduct an ongoing study of education in New Mexico.

Should additional individuals and entities participate in the study, as requested, this would also require staff time and resources from New Mexico educators, the Legislative Finance Committee, and other individuals requested to participate as outlined in HM43.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Assessment Systems. PED maintains a system of summative, formative, and interim assessments to monitor student performance. Summative assessments are commonly used for school accountability and policymaking. Under federal law, students must be assessed in English and math once a year in third grade through eighth grade, and once in high school. State law (see Section 22-2C-4 NMSA 1978) mirrors these federal requirements but specifies the high school assessment should occur in 11th grade.

For reading and math, PED complies with state and federal laws by administering the NM-MSSA assessment in third through eighth grade. In science, students are tested in fifth and eighth grade with the New Mexico Assessment of Science Readiness (NM-ASR). Students in 11th grade are assessed in reading, math, and science using the SAT.

PED also requires some testing beyond what is mandated in statute, including the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) in 10th grade and Istation assessments in kindergarten through second grade. Tests such as Istation are formative examinations used to help inform instruction, while the PSAT is administered at the beginning of the school year.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- Public Education Department (PED)

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