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

**Bill Number** SB29/aSEC **Sponsor** Soules/Sariñana

**Tracking Number** .232678.1 **Committee Referrals** SEC/SFC;HGEIC/HEC

**Short Title** Math Requirements for Teaching License

**Original Date** 1/22/2026
**Analyst** Armatage **Last Updated** 2/17/2026

## FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

## BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of SEC Amendment

The Senate Education Committee Amendment to SB29 (SB29/aSEC) amends the bill to apply to teacher licenses issued on or after July 1, 2028 rather than July 1, 2027.

The amendment adds new language that requires PED to adopt grade-specific mathematics assessments that can be administered with minimal impact on instructional time and to provide for timely reporting of assessment results that can be integrated with instructional support for teachers and students.

The amendment strikes language that would have given school districts and charter schools a 30 calendar day deadline from the start of the school year to administer a mathematics screening assessment to students in kindergarten through third grade.

The amendment eliminates the requirement for school districts and charter schools to notify parents of a student's risk of not achieving grade level proficiency in mathematics. Rather, parents only need to be notified if a mathematics screening assessment shows a student displays characteristics of a mathematics difficulty. The amendment also changes the parent notification deadline from 30 calendar days from determination to 30 days from determination.

The amendment specifies that school districts and charter schools must provide parents of students identified as having a mathematics difficulty with monthly written reports on student progress.

Synopsis of Original Bill

Senate Bill 29 (SB29) creates a statewide framework to address mathematics instruction by increasing teacher preparation requirements, creating requirements for a statewide mathematics instructional leadership framework, adding requirements for school district and charter school

professional learning plans, and creating a system of screening and family notification regarding mathematics performance among kindergarten through third-grade (K-3) students.

SB29 would add state requirements for teacher licensure to require individuals seeking an elementary teaching license, and those seeking a secondary mathematics teaching endorsement, to complete at least six hours of mathematics methods courses. This requirement would apply to licenses issued on or after July 1, 2027.

SB29 also requires the Public Education Department (PED), in consultation with the Mathematics and Science Advisory Council (MSAC), to develop a mathematics instructional leadership framework providing standards for mathematical content, instruction, ongoing professional learning, mathematics coaching, and program evaluation.

SB29 also amends the Mathematics and Science Education Act to require PED to develop guidelines for school districts and charter schools to use when developing mathematics professional learning plans, mathematics screening assessments in kindergarten through third grade, mathematics support plans, and mathematics intervention services. PED would be required to provide school districts and charter schools with technical assistance to implement the requirements of SB29. Should the bill pass, school districts and charter schools would be required to develop and implement elementary and secondary mathematics professional learning plans biannually, beginning in the 2027-2028 school year (SY28).

Beginning in SY28, SB29 requires school districts and charter schools to administer a mathematics screening assessment to every student in K-3 grades. If a student displays characteristics of a mathematics difficulty or is at risk of not reaching proficiency, SB29 requires the public school to notify the student's parents of the results of the screening assessment within 30 calendar days of the determination, and provide a mathematics support plan.

The bill also requires PED to report annually to the governor and the LESC on implementation of the proposed changes to the Mathematics and Science Education Act.

## FISCAL IMPACT

SB29/aSEC does not include an appropriation. The bill could have fiscal impacts for PED and school districts and charter schools, primarily driven by a need for staff at PED to develop and carry out the proposed mathematics approach, and for school districts and charter schools to develop and implement professional development plans in accordance with the bill. There could be a modest indeterminate fiscal impact on educator preparation programs (EPPs) that do not already require elementary and secondary math teacher candidates to complete at least six hours of mathematics methods courses.

According to the Legislative Finance Committee's fiscal impact report, the primary expected cost of SB29/aSEC would be providing evidence-based math interventions for students with identified math difficulties that are targeted, differentiated, and supplemental to core instruction beginning in FY28. LFC staff estimate such interventions could cost $7.8 million to $8.9 million if all K-3 students not proficient in math are provided high-impact tutoring. However, because SB29/aSEC was amended, only students with identified math difficulties (defined as those with an inability to perform at grade level when learning or applying mathematical concepts, as determined by screening or other assessments), and not students who are at risk of not achieving grade level math

proficiency, LESC staff estimate the associated intervention costs may be less. Additionally, schools may already offer such interventions, further reducing fiscal impact.

The Senate Finance Committee amendment to the House Appropriations and Finance Committee Substitute for House Bills 2 and 3 (HB2/HAFCS/aSFC) includes $29 million to PED for student reading and math interventions, $3 million to PED for science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) initiatives, and an additional $3 million to PED for the STEM network, all of which could potentially support the proposed requirements in SB29/aSEC for PED, school districts, and charter schools.

## SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

**Teacher Preparation.** This bill would require individuals seeking an elementary teaching license or a secondary mathematics teaching endorsement to complete at least six hours of mathematics methods courses. Math methods courses equip teachers with math-specific pedagogical skills. This requirement would apply to licenses issued on or after July 1, 2028.

In 2025, the National Council for Teacher Quality (NCTQ), a nonpartisan research and advocacy organization, reviewed math content and pedagogy at elementary teacher preparation programs in New Mexico and across the nation. None of New Mexico's programs earned a top rating for dedicating adequate instructional time to both content and pedagogy. NCTQ evaluated the number of credit hours required in the areas of numbers, operations, and algebraic thinking; geometry and measurement; data analysis and probability; and pedagogy. The most cited areas for improvement were coursework in geometry and measurement, as well as coursework in data analysis and probability. To strengthen math preparation for teachers in New Mexico, NCTQ recommended policymakers consider requiring teacher preparation programs to address math-specific pedagogy.

In a 2025 presentation to LESC, the MSAC recommended all EPPs include a minimum of three hours of mathematics methods aligned to national standards, including alternative licensure programs and special education licensure programs.

A 2025 LESC report on traditional undergraduate kindergarten through 8th grade (K-8) teacher preparation found programs in New Mexico vary substantially in both how many math courses teacher candidates are required to take and the nature of the courses. For example, while K-8 teacher candidates at Eastern New Mexico University (ENMU) complete four courses designed to teach educators the content and pedagogy necessary to teach math, candidates at the University of the Southwest (USW) complete two general education math courses. Should this bill pass, LESC staff expect two traditional educator preparation programs would be required to add math methods courses to their program for K-8 teachers. Additional secondary teacher licensure programs and alternative licensure programs would likely be required to add math methods courses.

**PED Instructional Leadership Framework.** This bill would require PED, in consultation with the MSAC, to develop a mathematics instructional leadership framework by December 31, 2026, defined as a structured, evidence-based model developed to strengthen mathematics teaching and learning. The framework would include:

- Defined roles and responsibilities of instructional leaders for supporting math instruction;
- Standards for high-quality math instruction and professional learning;
- Core competencies for math pedagogy, data use, and student engagement;

- Guidance for math coaching, mentoring, and collaborative planning;
- Procedures for monitoring, evaluating, and supporting continuously improving math teaching; and
- A description of technical assistance that may be provided to school districts and charter schools to support math instruction.

**Professional Learning Plans**. The bill would require school districts and charter schools to develop and implement an elementary and secondary mathematics professional learning plan beginning in SY28, in accordance with standards developed by PED. Learning plans would include:

- Goals for teacher content knowledge and instructional practices in math;
- A description of professional learning activities and instructional supports; and
- A plan to monitor and evaluate professional learning in math over time.

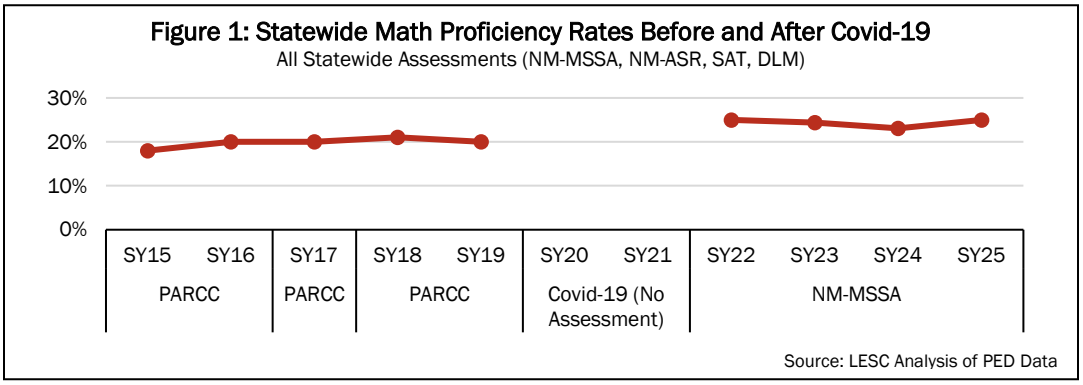
The bill would require these professional learning plans to be updated every two years in cooperation with teachers and school administrators.

**Student Screening and Family Notification**. The bill would require schools, beginning in SY28, to notify parents if their K-3 student is identified as having characteristics of math difficulty within 30 days of the determination. Schools would be required to provide parents a mathematics support plan that includes:

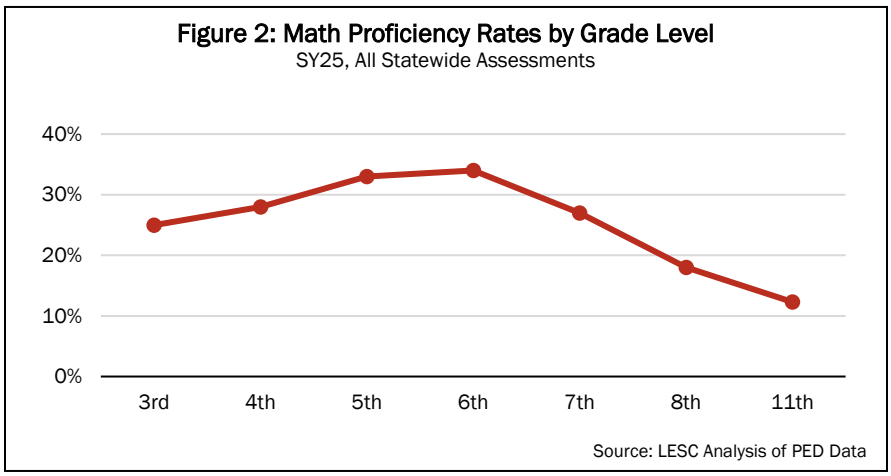
- A description of the student's math screening assessment results and specific areas of need;
- Math interventions to be provided;
- Goals and a timeline for monitoring student progress; and
- Assurance that the parents will receive monthly written reports on the student's progress.

The bill would define "math difficulty" as a student's inability to perform at grade level when learning or applying mathematical concepts, as determined by screening or other assessments. Given that nearly 75 percent of students in New Mexico are not proficient in math, these provisions could impact most students and their families.

**State of Math Education.** Math achievement is a serious concern in New Mexico. One in four students are proficient in math in New Mexico, with even lower proficiency rates for students with disabilities, as well as students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and English learners. In the consolidated *Martinez-Yazzie* lawsuit, the court pointed to low proficiency rates in math overall, as well as the persistent achievement gap between student subgroups, as part of evidence the state violated students' fundamental rights. As shown in **Figure 1: Statewide Math Proficiency Rates Before and After Covid-19**, in SY25, math proficiency increased, reaching the highest level in the past decade, however, only a quarter of students statewide are proficient in math.




New Mexico's math achievement varies by grade level, with younger students showing greater levels of proficiency. As shown in **Figure 2: Math Proficiency Rates by Grade Level**, proficiency rates begin to decline in sixth grade, as students are introduced to higher-level math concepts. By 11th grade, only 12 percent of students reach proficiency in math, raising concerns that students may be ill-prepared for college-level math courses when they exit high school. LESC analysis has highlighted how intensive interventions in early grades and in middle school may help change students' math trajectories.




The state of math achievement is also a concern nationally. Results from the 2022 Program for International Assessment (PISA), an international exam that measures reading, mathematics, and science literacy of 15-year-olds, showed reading and science results in the U.S. held steady between 2018 and 2022, while mathematics achievement decreased during the same time. In math, the U.S. scored 26th among the 81 countries that participated in PISA in 2022. For comparison, the U.S. ranked sixth in reading skills and 10th in science skills in 2022.

As students in the U.S. have consistently fallen behind on international assessments, there has been deliberate conversation about what can be done at all levels of policy (federal, state, and local) to improve mathematics outcomes. The state policy conversation has largely centered around options to support math instruction that mirror the type of approaches implemented regarding literacy. This has been complicated, however, by a lack of universal consensus from mathematics experts on a "science of math" that is analogous to established science of reading approaches.

There is, however, a substantial body of research supporting effective mathematics teaching and learning (for example, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' (NCTM) Principles to Actions). Effective mathematics instruction requires a complex interaction of core numeracy skills, mastery of concepts in a linear and sequential way, and interventions to address deficits that

recognize the inherent complexity in teaching math. According to NCTM's Principals to Actions, consistent implementation of effective teaching and learning of mathematics are possible only when school mathematics programs have in place:

- A commitment to access and equity;
- A powerful curriculum;
- Appropriate tools and technology;
- Meaningful and aligned assessment; and
- A culture of professionalism.

It is important to note the bill requires PED to develop and implement a mathematics instructional leadership framework for K-12 mathematics instruction and practice, but it will be up to PED to incorporate essential elements of school mathematics programs as outlined by NCTM in other research related to math instruction.

**LESC Study of Mathematics.** LESC's efforts to define and articulate a comprehensive math approach began in November 2022, when staff presented a review of math data, practices, and initial considerations to improve math following staggering drops in student performance following the Covid-19 pandemic. This triggered LESC's inclusion of math in its research agenda for the 2023 and 2024 interims, prompting three policy briefs during that time, each identifying discrete elements of the system that were impacted through corresponding policy changes such as updating high school graduation requirements during the 2024 session and reinstating funding for science, technology, engineering, arts and math during the 2025 legislative session. A 2025 LESC brief described the complexity of effective math instruction and high-impact policy levers that could result in a more cohesive mathematics system.

LESC research on mathematics has consistently informed recommendations that the Legislature consider requiring professional learning for all teachers, requiring both content and pedagogical skills for pre-service teachers, and funding targeted interventions for students to increase student achievement and address learning gaps. This bill would require professional development plans and implementation for elementary and secondary mathematics, require math methods courses for teacher licensure, and support targeted interventions for students identified as having math difficulty.

## ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

SB29/aSEC would require PED's Math and Science Bureau to monitor the implementation of instructional materials and ensure programs are aligned with state academic content and performance standards. PED's Instructional Materials Bureau vets instructional materials through a review process to determine alignment with New Mexico Content Standards and Benchmarks and inform school districts and charter schools to the efficacy of the process and provide them access to high quality instructional materials (HQIM). According to the Instructional Materials Bureau, 63 percent of districts have purchased HQIM for K-12 for math. The Math and Science Bureau and the Instructional Materials Bureau could collaborate to carry out the provisions of the bill and ensure efforts are not duplicative.

The bill would require MSAC to collaborate with PED to develop guidelines for school districts and charter schools to use when developing math professional learning plans, screening

assessments, support plans, and intervention services. MSAC would be required to collaborate with PED to develop the mathematics instructional leadership framework as set forth in the bill.

School districts and charter schools would need to develop and implement professional development plans in accordance with the bill, and update these plans every two years. It is important to note that school districts and charter schools are also required to develop and regularly update several other plans, including literacy professional development plans and school safety plans.

Educator preparation programs not already requiring six hours of math methods would need to respond to updated course requirements for math education programs

## OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

**State Approaches to Support Math**. State legislative policy can support mathematics success by allocating funding and resources, ensuring well-developed methods to approve instructional materials, directing professional learning and development expected of educators, and providing mechanisms to drive interventions and supports. Primary levers of state policy tend to focus on improving the quality of instruction (for example, reviewing teacher preparation standards or requiring professional learning of current educators), aligning state systems for a cohesive approach (for example, ensuring funding is used for high quality instructional materials), or providing for assessment and intervention tactics to support students (for example, creating/funding tutoring programs or creating methods to identify students in need).

A policy outline focused on early math achievement published by the Education Commission of the States, a national nonprofit that tracks and researches educational policy, found state actions have largely centered on three topics:

1. Assessment and intervention;
2. Curriculum; and
3. Workforce supports.

A 2024 state policy scan from the Education Commission of the States indicates eight states—Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia—have enacted legislation related to math instruction and supports between 2022 and 2024. State policy has taken many forms, with some states directing additional study, some establishing required supports for early numeracy, some directing screening and interventions, and others requiring reporting to legislative bodies, among other state options.

- Arkansas passed Senate Bill 294 in 2023 which requires monitoring and intervention plans for third through eighth grade students who fall below grade level in math, as well as requiring its state education secretary to engage with stakeholders with expertise in early numeracy.
- Florida passed House Bill 7039 during its 2023 legislative session, requiring supports for students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade who show "deficiency in mathematics or dyscalculia," including parent notification and school district monitoring. Florida also requires its department of education to provide lists of approved math interventions, programs, curricula, and supplemental materials and requires its department of education

to provide legislative recommendations regarding teacher preparation and math professional development.

- Virginia passed House Bill 938 in 2022 requiring its board of education to convene a group of stakeholders to advise its General Assembly on ways to promote excellence in math instruction.

***Martinez-Yazzie***. In 2019, the 1st Judicial Court issued a final judgement and order on the consolidated Martinez-Yazzie education sufficiency lawsuit, finding New Mexico's public education system failed to provide a constitutionally sufficient and adequate education for at-risk students, defined as English learners, Native American students, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families. The court pointed to high school graduation rates, student test scores, and college remediation rates as indicators of how the state is not meeting its constitutional obligation to ensure all students are college, career, and civics ready. The court's findings suggested overall public school funding levels, financing methods, and PED oversight were deficient. As such, the court enjoined the state to provide sufficient resources, including instructional materials, properly trained staff, and curricular offerings necessary for providing the opportunity for a sufficient education for all at-risk students. However, the court stopped short of prescribing specific remedies and deferred decisions on how to achieve education sufficiency to the legislative and executive branch instead.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

- LESC Files
- LFC Files
- Public Education Department (PED)
- New Mexico Regional Education Cooperatives (REC)
- University of New Mexico (UNM)
- New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology (NMT)

**AA/mca/jkh**