



405 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87102
505-242-6640

Erik Bose
Executive Director

Legislative Education Study Committee

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Dear Committee Members:

I appreciate your taking the time to consider my views on the At-Risk Index. ABQ Charter Academy is a drop-out recovery high school. 100% of our scholars have dropped out of a traditional school and have a history of school failure, 90% are Title I eligible, 30% special education or on a 504 Plan and all have returned to our school to receive their Free and Appropriate Public Education. Our school is specifically designed and chartered to support scholars who have been previously unsuccessful at traditional public high schools throughout the state by providing an individualized program that meets the scholar at their ability level.

I appreciate that SB141 supports the idea of investing more money into the programs that support the neediest students. My understanding is that one At-Risk Index is calculated for all the schools within the district, which means that my drop-out recovery high school is funded at the same at-risk index multiplier level as any other school within the APS boundary. If the intent is really to put money where it is needed, the way the At-Risk Index is calculated needs to be individualized for each school, so the aid for each school is proportionate to the number of at-risk students being served there.

I believe that the index is calculated using a number of factors including Title I eligibility, ELL status and mobility. There are several questions we need to think about: Are these the best and only measures? Is the data being collected to meet the purpose of deciding if a student is worthy of at-risk funding? Is Title I data inclusive of all students who are at-risk and are all schools collecting this data? Are there other issues that cause a student to be labeled at-risk? How is mobility calculated? Research shows that if a



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student demonstrates over time that they are over-aged and/or under-credited they are more likely to drop-out than those who are in the correct grade at the traditional age. Is there a way to report this data and have it count towards the at-risk factor?

I have heard the issue behind the idea of allowing each school to have its own index is mainly data collection and then using that data in deciding what realities cause students to be labeled at-risk, which allows them to receive the additional funding to support their learning. I we should find ways to collect meaningful data to support individual At-Risk indicators for schools that serve high At-Risk populations.

As with any funding change that takes place, especially with the limited funding available to NM schools, there are potential winners and potential losers. Schools with a high proportion of At- Risk students who have a history of being unsuccessful in school will get much needed financial support with a change to the At-Risk Index. Other schools who serve a more balanced student body will see little or less financial support.

Again, thank you for providing a venue for me and other educational leaders to share our ideas about this matter. I ask that you look to create legislation that takes into account all of the students who will be affected and make sure the money is going where it is needed most. We rely on and effectively use the funds we receive, and any change in the overall amount will affect the programs we can provide.

Yours in Education,

Erik Bose