

STATE OF NEW MEXICO
LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

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June 15, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Legislative Education Study Committee

FR: Ms. Eilani Gerstner

RE: STAFF REPORT: PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT (PED) PLAN TO COLLECT AND REPORT COURSE INFORMATION (RESPONSE TO LESC REQUEST)

During the 2009 interim, the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) received a staff report on the implementation of high school redesign measures enacted in 2007, including new graduation requirements for freshmen entering high school in school year 2009-2010 (the Diploma of Excellence). Among concerns raised by the committee during the presentation was that the number of students who meet graduation requirements in law cannot be reported because the Student Teacher Accountability Reporting System (STARS) at the Public Education Department (PED) tracks course enrollment, rather than course completion.

In response to the committee's concerns, the LESC requested that PED provide a report to the committee during the second LESC meeting of the 2010 interim outlining how the department can address data collection and reporting issues related to course offerings and course completion in order to determine the extent to which (1) students are meeting the Diploma of Excellence graduation requirements, and (2) schools are meeting statutory course offering requirements (see Attachment 1).

In response, the Secretary of Public Education informed the LESC that PED would need at least 18 months to implement a plan for the collection of course completion and grades, and that the department could prepare a report for the second meeting of the 2010 interim to describe how such reporting could be achieved (see Attachment 2).

Attachment 3 to this report provides a letter with PED's response for the LESC's second meeting of the 2010 interim. The letter indicates that a thorough report on PED's plan to collect and report course grades will be available for the August 2010 LESC meeting. The department also indicates that:

- PED has created an assurances document for school district superintendents and charter school administrators to certify that their graduating students have met graduation requirements in law;
- once the assurances have been signed and submitted to PED, the department will assign staff to conduct spot checks to verify that graduating students have met the course requirements in law; and
- PED is creating a rule to require school districts to report courses offered, courses enrolled in, and student grades.

PED also notes that the department is operating under limited capacity because of funding and staffing cuts, and therefore lacks the resources to provide oversight over course and grade reporting.

Background

At the August 2009 interim LESC meeting, the committee received a staff report on the implementation of high school redesign measures enacted in 2007 and effective for students entering their freshman year in school year 2009-2010. To review how previous graduation and course offering requirements had been implemented, the report also provided information on other requirements in law that pre-dated the high school redesign measures.

However, findings in the report indicated that course requirements already in effect could not be tracked at the state level, and that some students who graduated in school year 2008-2009 may not have met current graduation requirements in law. For example, PED reported that:

- although legislation enacted in 2005 required that, effective school year 2005-2006, students entering grade 9 take one-half unit in New Mexico history in order to graduate, as many as 44 percent of students who graduated in school year 2008-2009 and were subject to the New Mexico history requirement did not take the course or another comparable course; and
- although legislation enacted in 2003 required that service learning be offered for elective credit, PED reported that it was not possible to tell if districts offered this course because STARS does not collect data on course offerings, only course enrollments.

Earlier reports from PED indicated that the department lacked statutory authority to collect grades from school districts, except for courses related to the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006*. However, the *Public School Code* was amended in 2007 to require PED to adopt a standardized alphabetic or numeric grading system based on the 4.0 scale or 100 percent scale to be used by all public schools for grades 5 through 12. PED indicates that the department rule in place for this standardized grading system may be revised to include the collection of the courses grades from districts and charter schools. The department has also reported that grades are currently being collected for dual credit courses.

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ATTACHMENT 1

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David Harrell, PhD, Deputy Director

January 19, 2010

Dr. Veronica C. García
Secretary of Public Education
Public Education Department
300 Don Gaspar, Room 109
Santa Fe, NM 87501-2786

Dear Dr. García:

On behalf of the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC), we are writing to request that the Public Education Department (PED) provide a report to the committee during the second LESC meeting of the 2010 interim outlining how the department can address data collection and reporting issues related to course offerings and course completion.

As you may recall, at the August 2009 LESC interim meeting, the committee heard a staff report on the implementation of middle and high school measures enacted into law in 2007. Among concerns voiced by the committee were that the number of students who meet the graduation requirements in current law cannot be reported because the Student Teacher Accountability Reporting System at PED tracks course enrollment, but not course completion, and grades are not reported by schools in a consistent manner. In order to determine the extent to which (1) students are meeting the Diploma of Excellence requirements, and (2) schools are meeting statutory course offering requirements, the committee requested that PED examine this issue.

As always, the LESC and our staff look forward to working with your staff on this initiative.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Senator Cynthia Nava.

Senator Cynthia Nava, Chair

Handwritten signature of Representative Rick Miera.

Representative Rick Miera, Vice Chair

xc: Legislative Education Study Committee



STATE OF NEW MEXICO
PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
300 DON GASPAR
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO 87501-2786
Telephone (505) 827-5800
www.ped.state.nm.us

RECEIVED
MAR 19 2010
LESC

DR. VERONICA C. GARCÍA
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

BILL RICHARDSON
Governor

March 19, 2010

The Honorable Cynthia Nava, Chair
Legislative Education Study Committee
State Capitol North
325 Don Gaspar, Suite 200
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Sen. Nava:

The Public Education Department (PED) is in receipt of your letter dated January 19, 2010 requesting a report to the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) at its second interim meeting on how the department can address data collection and reporting issues related to course offerings and course completion.

In order to respond to the LESC, a plan will need to be developed as course completion per student has never been a required data field in the Student Teacher Accountability Reporting System (STARS). Further, the only grades collected in STARS are for the *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006*. The PED anticipates that at least 18 months will be needed to implement a plan for the collection of course completion and grades. Please note that districts will experience fiscal impact to collect this data as data extracts will need to be modified or developed.

Overall, successful implementation of such a plan will depend upon districts' software vendors, the type of support they offer and district cooperation, and this will need to be determined. As I stated at a recent meeting of the House Education Committee, the PED collects data as required by statute or regulation. There is currently no statute or regulation that requires reporting of course completion or grades.

The PED anticipates that it will be able to prepare a report at the LESC's second interim meeting on how such reporting can be achieved. We expect that accomplishing this data reporting will likely not be possible until FY 12.

Truly,



Veronica C. García, Ed.D.
Secretary of Education

VCG/rmw

cc: The Honorable Rick Miera, Vice Chair, Legislative Education Study Committee
Legislative Education Study Committee
Frances Maestas, Director, Legislative Education Study Committee ✓
Robert Piro, Chief Information Officer, Public Education Department



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RECEIVED
JUN 10 2010
LESC

DR. VERONICA C. GARCÍA
SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

BILL RICHARDSON
Governor

June 9, 2010

MEMORANDUM

TO: Frances Maestas, Director, Legislative Education Study Committee

FROM: *fw*
Ruth Williams, Manager, Legislative and Community Relations Bureau, Public Education Department

RE: **STATUS OF PED PLAN TO COLLECT AND REPORT COURSE INFORMATION**

The PED is on track to provide a thorough report at the LESC's August 2010 meeting on its plan to collect and report course information through STARS. Please note the current status of our efforts:

1. The PED is updating the information reported in the August 2009 LESC staff report entitled, "High School Redesign: Implementation of Provisions in Law." This will provide the percentages of students who have successfully completed courses as required under the recent high school redesign legislation. District and charter school reporting has improved over the past year due to new codes put in place in the STARS manual.
2. The PED has created an assurances document that is pending release to districts and charter schools. The document will require superintendents and charter school administrators to assure the PED that their graduating students are in compliance with Section 22-13-1.1 NMSA 1978 and 6.29.1.9 NMAC. Once the assurances document has been signed and returned by superintendents and charter school administrators, the PED will assign staff to conduct spot checks in districts and charter schools to ensure that graduating students are meeting course requirements.
3. The PED is finalizing its new STARS manual for the 2010-2011 school year. The manual, which does not have the force of statute or regulation, will include course completion codes to be submitted per student to STARS.

4. The PED has under advisement the creation of a rule to require districts to report courses offered, courses enrolled in and grades. We are concerned about placing additional burdens on districts, charter schools and PED staff during a time when resources are being reduced.

As stated above, the PED is operating under limited capacity due to cutbacks in funding and staff. We currently lack the resources to provide the oversight and monitoring that requiring course and grade reporting will entail. However, we are committed to working with the LESC on this important reporting.

Thank you.

cc: The Honorable Cynthia Nava, Chair, Legislative Education Study Committee
The Honorable Rick Miera, Vice-Chair, Legislative Education Study Committee
Dr. Veronica C. García, Secretary of Education, Public Education Department
Dr. Sheila Hyde, Deputy Secretary, Public Education Department
Robert Piro, Assistant Secretary, Public Education Department
Willie Brown, General Counsel, Public Education Department
Dr. Melissa Lomax, Director, Public Education Department