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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR: Taylor , JP DATE TYPED: 2/27/03 HB 673

SHORT TITLE: Experimental Community Learning Center SB _____

ANALYST: Dunbar

APPROPRIATION

Appropriation Contained		Estimated Additional Impact		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY03	FY04	FY03	FY04		
	\$150.0		See Narrative	Recurring	GF

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Relates to SB582, HB104, SB404, SB 636

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Responses Received From

Department of Health (DOH)
New Mexico State Department of Education (NMSDE)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 673 appropriates \$150,000 from the general fund to the Department of Health (DOH) for expenditure in fiscal year 2004 for an experiential community learning center based on a five-acre farm school, involving learners of all ages in mental, physical and spiritual development. The bill proposes utilizing research and advanced learning concepts to design and implement quality educational programs in leadership training, entrepreneurship, the arts, agriculture and the environment.

Significant Issues

Positive youth development has been demonstrated to decrease problem behavior such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy and violence, as well as promoting positive outcomes. Goals of positive youth development include youth being intellectually reflective, en route to a lifetime of meaningful work, good citizens, caring, ethical, and healthy (Carnegie Council on Adolescent

Development, 1989). Youth development programs are developmentally appropriate and foster the above competencies in addition to skill building, for decision making, problem solving, conflict resolution, critical thinking and leadership to meet the challenges they will face as they mature. They expose youth to opportunities, services and supports in their communities.

HB 673 recommends specific evidence-based strategies or interventions that are endorsed by the National Dropout Prevention Center: family involvement, early childhood education, reading/writing programs, mentoring/tutoring, service-learning programs, and alternative schooling.

NMSDE points out that studies support the efficacy of experiential learning that engages learners in activities that have a direct relationship between the content of what is to be learned, the context of the learner and the environment in which the learning experience occurs. Experiential learning can provide innovative strategies to address leadership and entrepreneurship by promoting:

- Thinking and talking and by giving people experiences that are relevant, memorable and compelling,
- Facilitating discussions in ways that directly and indirectly improve performance with a focus on the 'bottom-line',
- Recognizing the connections between individual goals and the goals of their organization,
- Opportunities to 'be' together in ways that allow individuals to 'do' things more effectively. (Source: <http://www.odysseypen.com/company/philosophy.asp>)

A key distinction of experiential learning, according to NMSDE, is that it addresses the needs and wants of the learner. The qualities of experiential learning include personal involvement, self-initiation, evaluated by the learner and capable of pervasive effects on the learner. Experiential learning is equivalent to personal change and growth. All human beings have a natural propensity to learn therefore the role of the teacher is to facilitate such learning. This includes: (1) setting a positive climate for learning, (2) clarifying the purposes of the learner(s), (3) organizing and making available learning resources, (4) balancing intellectual and emotional components of learning and (5) sharing feelings and thoughts with learners but not dominating. (Rogers, C.R. & Freiberg, H.J. (1994). *Freedom to Learn* (3rd Ed). Columbus, OH: Merrill/Macmillan.)

The legislation provides funding for programs that can:

- Create a supportive environment that promotes engaged learning,
- Motivate students to learn,
- Students explore leadership opportunities,
- Students explore career opportunities,
- Encourage students to set goals,
- Improve self-esteem and coping skills,
- Students become productive New Mexico citizens.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$150.0 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY 04 shall revert to the general fund.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

The DOH would need to develop a Request for Proposals and a contract with a five-acre farm school. This appropriation may require additional staff.

RELATIONSHIP

HB 673 relates to:

- SB 582, which would support Rio Grande High School Cluster dropout prevention programs, including mentorship and student leadership programs, through the SDE at a cost of \$350,000.
- HB 104, which would establish a dropout prevention pilot project through the SDE at a cost of \$246,000.
- SB 404, which would establish dropout prevention programs at Bernalillo, Valley, Los Lunas, Rio Grande and West Mesa high schools in Bernalillo, Sandoval and Valencia counties through the SDE at a cost of \$1,000,000.
- SB 636 which would appropriate \$250,000 from the general fund to the Department of Health (DOH) for expenditure in fiscal year 2004 for an experiential community learning center that provides academic mentoring, substance abuse prevention, experiential education, wilderness adventure and parental support for students twelve to seventeen years of age in a school district with a student enrollment in excess of sixty thousand students.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

The effectiveness of alternative approaches to youth development and substance abuse prevention depends on the nature of the alternatives offered. If the alternative activity offered is not attractive or appropriate to the target group, it will not garner participation. Recently, preventionists have involved youth in the development of alternatives programs.

- Community service has been related to increased sense of well-being and more positive attitudes toward people, the future, and the community and allows youth to “give back” to their community.
- Mentoring programs provide youth with structured time with adults and are related to reductions in substance use and increases in positive attitudes toward others, the future, and school. Also, participation in these programs is related to increased school attendance. The more highly involved the mentor, the greater the positive results.
- Provision of organized recreation/cultural activities by community agencies can decrease substance use and delinquency by providing both drug-free alternatives and monitoring and supervision of children.

Youth development programs, such as the experiential community-learning center proposed in HB 673, contribute to dropout prevention effectiveness. The dropout issue is a critical educational and public health issue for the State of New Mexico. Dropout prevention strategies are currently being funded and evaluated in three New Mexico school districts through a federal grant administered by the Department of Health.

According to the National Dropout Prevention Center effective dropout prevention strategies include the following: family involvement, early childhood education, reading/writing programs,

mentoring/tutoring, service-learning programs, alternative schooling, out-of-school experiences, career education/workforce readiness, and violence prevention/conflict resolution. . The experiential community-learning center outlined in HB 673 fits within the effective strategies guidelines. Dropout prevention strategies must be carried out over many years to be effective.

BD/njw