

tions to the legislative education study committee by November 2006, and that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the directors of these agencies as well as the director of the Legislative Education Study Committee for appropriate dissemination.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

As a joint memorial enactment of this legislation carries no direct appropriation. Therefore, it is inferred that those costs directly associated with production of this study, such as staff time, supplies, printing, and possibly travel would come from the budgets of the aforementioned agencies.

In the long run, however, after the study has been completed and if the proposed Office of School Readiness is formed, significant costs associated with its operation could arise, including hiring of new FTEs, renting of office space, and administrative overhead. The formation of the proposed office may necessitate the reassignment of staff and associated administrative and fiscal functions as well.

*Therefore, while this memorial does not incur any substantial appropriation at this time, it is conceivable and probable that it will necessitate funding appropriations in future fiscal periods.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

According to the Public Education Department, to participate successfully in public school, children need to have certain skills and abilities. When children begin school with the necessary characteristics, they are more likely to succeed both in school and later in life. In most states, the only measure of “school readiness” for school entry is the child’s age. Many states are exploring how to create an efficient and coordinated early education and school readiness system.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

The Governor’s Schools that Work agenda includes increasing the level of excellence for all students, PreK-20.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

There is no known conflict, duplication, companionship, or relationship of other legislation to this Joint Memorial

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

According to the Department of Finance & Administration, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) indicates that the concept of school readiness must be defined within a broader context that includes children, schools and the community. Children’s readiness is generally agreed to include: physical well-being and motor development; social and emotional development; approaches to learning; language development; and cognition and general knowledge. School readiness is based on the concept of “ready schools.” ECS states, “Such schools work toward continuity and alignment between early care and education programs and elementary schools, and are committed to the success of all children.” Community readiness is founded upon the idea that “communities offer services and supports that encourage parents to be their child’s first teacher and that allow all children access to high-quality early care and education,” including

access to nutrition, health care, mental health care and parenting classes.

Currently, two other states (Tennessee and North Carolina) have formed a state-level office specifically for pre-kindergarten children that coordinate various services for these populations. Several other states have a pre-kindergarten office located in the Departments of Education or Health and Human Services, including: Maine, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Vermont, Wisconsin, Washington DC, Arkansas, Florida and New York. Two states have cabinet level agencies, including Georgia and Massachusetts.

Currently, New Mexico splits responsibilities for Pre-K education between two agencies: the Public Education Department and Children, Youth and Families Department. Various state agencies hold administrative and fiscal responsibilities for state-supported early care and education programs, including Family, Infant, Toddler; child care; child development; special education services for developmentally delayed three and four year olds; Even Start; GRADS; and federally supported programs, such as Head Start and Early Head Start.

Findings from the proposed study may shed light on several key policy issues, among them:

- Whether the formation of an office of school readiness is appropriate, desirable and feasible for New Mexico;
- Under what agency such an office should be located or if it should stand alone;
- Whether duplication of services exist;
- What the fiscal dimensions of the programs are that serve the state's population of newborn to four year old children; and
- How a governance structure as proposed in the Office of School Readiness can best be: representative, legitimate, authoritative and sustainable.

ALTERNATIVES

SJM 6 could conceivably be made stronger by expanding the scope of the study beyond a singular focus on the feasibility of the creation of an office of school readiness to include consideration of, among other things: creation of a department of school readiness, whether it should be a cabinet agency, and what would be the likely staffing and funding requirements.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

This proposed study of the feasibility of creating an Office of School Readiness that would coordinate the range of publicly funded programs and services for children from birth through age four currently offered by multiple agencies will not be conducted. Fiscally, a wealth of information regarding redundancies in funding and agency staffing, among other resource redundancies, would not be produced.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Legislative Finance Committee has expressed concerns as to availability of performance data with the existing Pre-K program, prior to a state-wide “roll-out” of the Pre-K program. Could this proposed study facilitate addressing these concerns?

PD/yr