

Short Title: Middle & High School Literacy Initiative

Sponsor(s): Senator Mary Jane M. García and Others

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Date: January 24, 2008

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## FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

### Bill Summary:

- SB 154 appropriates funds to the Public School Reading Proficiency Fund for the Middle and High School Literacy Initiative.
- The appropriation is to be used for grants to school districts and charter schools that meet eligibility requirements established by the Public Education Department (PED) for scientifically based literacy programs to improve proficiency of students in grades 6 through 12.
- No more than 3.0 percent of the total appropriation may be used for evaluation purposes.

### Fiscal Impact:

- \$3.0 million is appropriated from the General Fund to the Public School Reading Proficiency Fund for expenditure in FY 09 and subsequent fiscal years. The bill contains a non-reversion clause.
- In 2007, legislation was considered that would appropriate \$3.0 million to the fund for the Middle and High School Literacy Initiative. However, the legislation did not pass.
- HB 3, *Education Appropriation Act*, includes an appropriation for \$3.0 million for the Middle and High School Literacy Initiative.

### Issues:

HB 154 would appropriate funds to implement legislation enacted in 2007 as part of a package of LESC-endorsed legislation aimed at college and workplace readiness and high school redesign. The statute, designed to address the need to improve literacy skills of students past the primary grades by establishing the Middle and High School Literacy Initiative, provides as follows:

- School districts and charter schools may create comprehensive, coordinated Middle and High School Literacy Initiatives to provide scientifically based literacy programs to improve the reading and writing proficiency of students in grades 6 through 12.
- The design of such initiatives must be based upon scientific research that shows that using the methods and materials proposed is effective in improving reading proficiency beyond the primary grades, and shall include, at a minimum:

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to guide and individualize instruction; and  
ion component.

- A Middle and High School Literacy Initiative shall also incorporate some or all of the following elements:
  - direct, explicit comprehension instruction;
  - teacher teams, including language arts and content area instructors who implement mutually reinforcing practices;
  - strategies to encourage motivation and self-directed learning;
  - text-based collaborative learning by groups of students;
  - strategic tutoring;
  - diverse texts;
  - a technology component; and
  - extended time for literacy.
- School districts and charter schools that meet department eligibility requirements may apply to the department for awards from the Public School Reading Proficiency Fund for support for their Middle and High School Literacy Initiatives, in the form prescribed by the department.

HB 154 and the Middle and High School Literacy Initiative are intended to respond to the fact that, while students in the primary grades in New Mexico and the nation are showing gains in reading achievement, national research shows that many adolescent readers are still struggling, particularly in the area of reading comprehension. For example:

- in spring 2007, only about 40 percent of sixth graders and 47 percent of eleventh graders demonstrated proficiency in reading on state standards-based assessments; and
- in 2006, just over 31 percent of recent high school graduates who were enrolled as freshmen in New Mexico public postsecondary institutions took remedial courses in literacy.

HB 154 would fund middle and high school literacy programs designed to address the research-based recommendations of *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy* published in 2004 by the Alliance for Excellent Education for the Carnegie Corporation of New York, a review of current literature on successful literacy programs for students past the primary grades. Testimony to the LESC in recent interims about adolescent literacy programs being implemented in some New Mexico middle and high schools supports the viability of the recommendations contained in *Reading Next*.

### **Related Bills:**

SB 397 *Summer Literacy Camp Program*  
HB 3 *Education Appropriation Act*  
HB 241, *Public School Funding Formula Changes*  
HB 323 *Rural Literacy Programs*