

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill No: SB 31

48th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2008

Short Title: Expand Schools in Dual Credit Program

Sponsor(s): Senators Cynthia Nava and Mary Jane M. García and
Representative Nora Espinoza

Analyst: David Harrell

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FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

Bill Summary:

SB 31 makes two substantive changes in the dual credit legislation enacted in 2007:

- it extends eligibility for the program to students at state-supported schools; and
- it allows students to take classes for dual credit during the summer semester, as well as the fall and winter semesters.

On the first point, the bill excludes one state-supported school – the New Mexico Military Institute (NMMI) – from participation in the dual credit program at the request of the institute; and on the second, it opens the summer semester to students who have met the other eligibility criteria and who have not graduated or earned a GED.

SB 31 also clarifies that the Public Education Department (PED) and the Higher Education Department (HED) must evaluate the impact of the dual credit program on charter schools and, now, state-supported schools, in addition to the impact upon school districts and public postsecondary educational institutions.

Finally, SB 31 is the subject of Senate Executive Message 32.

Fiscal Impact:

SB 31 makes no appropriation. The bill may have a fiscal impact, however, through its potential to increase the number of students taking classes for dual credit and, with the availability of the summer term, the number of classes taken for dual credit.

In addition, as the bill analyses by both HED and PED point out, the bill may have a fiscal impact upon the state-supported schools being included in the program because the dual credit legislation requires the schools to provide the textbooks for the dual credit courses that their students take.

Issues:

During the 2007 interim, the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) heard two progress reports on the implementation of the committee-endorsed legislation enacted in 2007. During the first of the two reports, the LESC identified two issues in the legislation that needed to be addressed.

- One was the definition of eligible students as those “enrolled . . . in a regular public school or charter school.” As currently worded, this definition would seem to exclude students enrolled in the New Mexico School for the Deaf, the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and the other state-supported schools. The committee believed that those students should have the same opportunity for dual credit as students in regular public schools or charter schools.
- The other issue was the academic terms in which dual credit courses may be offered. Under current law, a student must be enrolled in one-half or more of the minimum course requirements prescribed by PED to be eligible to participate in the dual credit program. When read literally, that provision seems to limit enrollment in dual credit to the fall and spring terms, as the HED and PED rules indicate. However, summer is often cited as the optimum time for dual credit because it allows students to focus almost exclusively on the dual credit class and because it would provide academic gains rather than the losses customarily associated with the summer break.

SB 31 addresses both of these issues. In doing so, as noted above, it excludes NMMI from participation at the request of the institute. As NMMI explains, the institute is “a unique school in the New Mexico education system . . . that integrates four-year college preparatory high school with a two-year junior college in which there is embedded a one year federal service academy prep program.” Including NMMI in the statutory and regulatory provisions of the dual credit program, according to the institute, would undercut the mission of the school and put its accreditation at risk.

Finally, the state-supported schools to which SB 31 would apply include the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the New Mexico School for the Deaf, Sequoyah Adolescent Treatment Center, the Mimbres School (the Children’s Psychiatric Center), and the juvenile justice facilities operated by the Children, Youth and Families Department: Mountain View High School (the New Mexico Boys’ School), Foothill High School (Youth Diagnostic and Development Center), Sierra Blanca High School, and the Aztec Youth Academy (J. Paul Taylor Center).

Background:

Enacted in 2007, LESC-sponsored legislation provides a dual credit program that allows high school students to enroll in college classes and earn credit toward high school graduation and a postsecondary degree or certificate simultaneously. One purpose of this legislation is to standardize formerly inconsistent arrangements throughout the state, thereby providing equal access to dual credit opportunities to all public school students in New Mexico. To accomplish this purpose, the legislation defines the program, establishes student eligibility criteria, provides a uniform funding mechanism, requires uniform administrative procedures, requires HED and PED to promulgate rules to address certain details of the program, and requires HED and PED to evaluate the effects of the program upon the students and institutions involved. The program is to be fully implemented by the beginning of school year 2008-2009.

Related Bills:

None