

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill No: SB 329

48th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2008

Short Title: Create Statewide Service Learning Framework

Sponsor(s): Senator Cynthia Nava and Others

Analyst: Pamela Herman

Date: January 29, 2008

FOR THE LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

Bill Summary:

SB 329 appropriates funds to the Public Education Department (PED) for the development of a statewide service learning framework.

SB 329 requires PED, in collaboration with the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD), to appoint a task force to develop a framework that addresses the need for consistent, fair, and equitable implementation of service learning programs for academic credit. The framework must include factors such as:

- standardizing the definition of service learning;
- aligning service learning with standards and benchmarks;
- professional development;
- data collection in the Student Teacher Accountability Reporting System (STARS); and
- an evaluation component.

Fiscal Impact:

\$30,000 is appropriated from the General Fund to PED for expenditure in FY 09. The bill contains a reversion clause.

Issues:

- Since FY 00, service learning has received a total of \$410,000 from the General Fund in the form of appropriations or allocations from the Teacher Professional Development Fund.
- According to PED and CYFD, beginning in 2004, legislative appropriations have supported a Service-Learning Project Director under the umbrella of the New Mexico Forum for Youth in Community, and have provided mini-grants to eight Regional Centers for Service Learning.
- In 2007, the Legislature passed SJM 51, *Study Service Learning Program with Credit*, requesting PED and CYFD to study the benefits of implementing a service learning program that grants academic credit to high school students and students in the 8th grade entering high school. The memorial defined service learning as “an instructional method that lends relevance to academic content by engaging students in meaningful service that is linked to curriculum.”

- The report of the departments' findings and recommendations in response to SJM 51, presented to the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) in January 2008, included the following:
 - Some of the benefits of service learning for students, schools, and the community are:
 - preparing students for college and the workforce;
 - enhancing students' personal, social, educational, and emotional development;
 - supporting the rigor and relevance of education by providing hands-on activities;
 - building the relationships among schools, students, and communities; and
 - promoting the recognition and awareness of communities' needs;
 - There is growing research suggesting a direct correlation between service learning and student achievement, although it is not yet possible to accurately measure these outcomes in New Mexico; and
 - Funding and support from many entities have sustained service learning projects and programs throughout the years, including the federal Learn and Serve America program, private foundations, universities, school districts, and Americorps-VISTA staff provided by the New Mexico Commission for Community Volunteerism, as well as General Fund appropriations. However, this support has not been sufficient or consistent and many programs have sustained themselves with little or no funding.
- The report included two recommendations:
 - Appoint a statewide service learning task force charged with developing a service-learning framework for New Mexico, composed of representatives of state agencies, service-learning organizations, and community-based groups and directed to complete tasks such as those named in SB 329; and
 - Appropriate \$30,000 for FY 09, in addition to the \$70,000 in recurring funds appropriated for service learning, to support the work of the task force in developing the framework. The task force should present a draft proposed policy on service learning for New Mexico to the LESC in a future interim.
- Based on the recommendations contained in the report and the committee's previous support for service learning programs, the LESC endorsed SB 329.

Related Bill:

SB 324 *Community Service Learning Opportunities*