

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE  
BILL ANALYSIS**

**Bill Number:** HJM 27

**50th Legislature, 1st Session, 2011**

**Tracking Number:** .183701.1

**Short Title:** Study & Draft of Literacy Law for NM

**Sponsor(s):** Representative Mimi Stewart and Others

**Analyst:** Pamela Herman

**Date:** February 11, 2011

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**Bill Summary:**

HJM 27 requests that the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) work with the Public Education Department (PED), the Office of Education Accountability (OEA), the New Mexico Business Roundtable for Educational Excellence, and others to study and draft a literacy law for New Mexico.

HJM 27 further requests that the proposed literacy law provide for:

- the teaching of the science of reading and scientifically based reading instruction for students in teacher preparation programs, including best practices for identifying the best method of teaching children who learn to read differently;
- licensure requirements for teachers that include knowledge of scientifically based reading instruction and more stringent requirements for teachers of reading;
- screening and assessment of students' reading abilities; and
- the provision of scientifically based reading instruction for all students and remediation of students who are determined to have dyslexia and other reading difficulties.

Finally, HJM 27 requests that the LESC present a report, to include recommendations for a model literacy law, to the Legislature by January 1, 2012.

**Fiscal Impact:**

Legislative memorials do not include an appropriation.

**Substantive Issues:**

According to the Education Commission of the States (ECS), there are growing concerns that the disconnect between teacher preparation programs and K-12 schools has resulted in teacher candidates who are not optimally prepared to teach today's diverse population of students to new, more rigorous standards. Given the continued struggles of a more than half of the nation's elementary students in the area of reading, as demonstrated on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) that showed only 31 percent of the nation's fourth graders

proficient or better in reading, the preparation of new teachers to teach reading has been a matter of increasing concern.

In 2010, the LESC heard a presentation regarding the Florida reading initiative, implemented through Executive Orders and legislative enactments starting in 2001 (see Attachment). Advocates for the “Florida model” credit the initiative with raising the NAEP reading scores of Florida fourth graders as follows:

- scores of all fourth graders increased by 12 points (over one grade level) between 2002 and 2009;
- scores of Hispanic fourth graders increased by 14 points (about 2.5 grade levels); and
- scores of low-income Hispanic fourth graders increased by 16 points (about 1.5 grade levels).

According to testimony presented to the LESC, the Florida initiative included a multi-pronged approach to the science of reading:

- aligning state academic standards in language arts with the research;
- training classroom teachers to teach reading based on the research;
- requiring teacher preparation programs to document that they addressed 61 specific scientifically based competencies in teaching reading;
- providing schools with reading coaches and interventionists who have earned reading endorsements and certifications in the science of reading;
- requiring school districts to use only approved elementary reading programs; and
- requiring third grade students to demonstrate reading skills above the basic level on a state test in order to be promoted to fourth grade, and providing those retained with intensive interventions to bring them to proficiency in reading.

### **Background:**

- ECS notes that reading ability is the foundational skill for success in formal education. However, the performance of New Mexico fourth graders on reading assessments is among the lowest in the nation:
  - just 20 percent of New Mexico fourth graders tested proficient or better on the 2009 NAEP, the only assessment that provides comparable data among states;
  - this performance was not significantly different from that in 1991; and
  - it was lower than the performance of 43 other states, the same as seven, and better only than the District of Columbia.
- In April of 2000, the National Reading Panel, a congressionally chartered group that included, as the charter required, 14 of the nation’s “leading scientists in reading research,” issued the report *Teaching Children to Read*. Based on a meta-analysis of approximately 100,000 research studies to assess the status of research-based knowledge on teaching reading, the report identified five research-validated components of effective reading instruction:
  - *phonemic awareness*: teaching students to manipulate the sounds of spoken language;

- *phonics*: systematic, intensive teaching of the letter-sound correspondence in written language, beginning as early as kindergarten;
  - *fluency*: developing speed, accuracy and proper expression in oral reading;
  - *vocabulary development*: both direct and indirect instruction in words and their meanings in various contexts; and
  - *text comprehension*: explicit instruction in a combination of techniques for understanding different types of texts.
- The National Reading Panel report included specific research-based findings regarding what teachers need to know to teach reading effectively. The findings specified the need for teachers to thoroughly understand multiple approaches to teaching each of the five components; to understand how to diagnose the needs of each student and assess responses to a range of individualized approaches; and to know how to integrate the components into a complete instructional program.
  - In 2001, the Legislature passed LESC-endorsed legislation that amended then-current law regarding educational requirements for teacher licensure. The new provisions required that:
    - a person seeking standard or alternative elementary licensure have completed six hours of reading courses; and a person seeking standard or alternative secondary licensure have completed three hours of reading courses in subject matter content; and
    - PED withhold approval from a college of education or teacher preparation program that fails to offer a course on teaching reading that:
      - is based upon current research;<sup>1</sup>
      - aligns with department-adopted reading standards; and
      - includes strategies and assessment measures to ensure that beginning teachers are proficient in teaching reading.
  - In 2003, the LESC heard a presentation describing how PED was implementing the statutory requirement regarding research-based reading in teacher preparation programs.
  - In 2009, however, the LESC heard testimony concerning a report by the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) entitled *Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers: Are New Mexico's Education School Graduates Ready to Teach Reading and Mathematics in Elementary Classrooms?* The report claimed, based on a review of the curricula and syllabi of reading courses in teacher preparation programs in the state, that most programs in New Mexico were not preparing candidates to teach the science of reading, and that the programs used a wide variety of reading textbooks most of which did not address the science of reading.
  - While pointing out flaws in the methodology of the NCTQ report at the December 2009 LESC meeting, the New Mexico Deans and Directors of Colleges of Education agreed to work with the LESC and its staff to formulate HJM 16 for the 2010 legislative session, and volunteered to sponsor the HJM 16 study. One recommendation of the HJM 16 report was to rigorously assess elementary teacher candidate knowledge of how to teach reading based on the scientific research as a condition for elementary licensure, either

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<sup>1</sup> In 2003, the statute was amended to refer to “*scientifically-based reading* research.”

through the New Mexico Teacher Content Knowledge Assessment in Elementary Education or through a separate exam. In response to that recommendation, the LESC endorsed HB 74, *Science of Teaching Reading Requirement*.

**Related Bills:**

HB 70 *No Funds for Certain School Education Pgms.*

HB 74 *Science of Teaching Reading Requirement*