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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
55th Legislature, 1st Session, 2021

Bill Number	<u>HB221/aHSEIC</u>	Sponsor	<u>Garratt/Pope/Herrera</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.219248.2</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>HEC/HSEIC</u>
Short Title	<u>K-2nd Grade Assessment Changes</u>		
Analyst	<u>Hoxie</u>	Original Date	<u>2/9/2021</u>
		Last Updated	<u>3/3/2021</u>

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of Amendment

The House State Government, Elections and Indian Affairs Committee amendment to House Bill 221 (HB221/aHSEIC) phases in the development and implementation of the kindergarten through second grade observational assessment tool over four years. HB221/aHSEIC establishes benchmarks for the Public Education Department (PED) to meet over the four years:

- During the 2021-2022 school year, PED shall develop the kindergarten observational assessment.
- During the 2022-2023 school year, students shall begin to use the kindergarten observational assessment, and PED shall develop the first and second grade observational assessment.
- During the 2023-2024 school year, first grade students shall begin to use the first grade observational assessment.
- During the 2024-2025 school year, second grade students shall begin to use the second grade observational assessment.

Synopsis of Original Bill

House Bill 221 (HB221) requires the Public Education Department (PED) change assessment requirements for kindergarten through second grade students and adds three specific subject areas to the list of required instruction for kindergarten through third grade. It also expands screening and monitoring progress for students in reading and language arts skills to include kindergarten through second grade.

FISCAL IMPACT

HB221/aHSEIC does not contain an appropriation. HB2/HAFCS includes \$7.2 million for standards-based assessments, which PED indicates will be used for assessments in kindergarten through 11th grade.

HB221/aHSEIC requires PED to develop or purchase an observational assessment that measures developmental milestones, social and emotional skills, and academic standards. The cost of acquiring or developing such an assessment is unclear. Once an assessment is purchased or developed, there may be additional costs associated with implementation, including training, data collection systems, and assessment materials.

PED notes the department currently spends about \$1 million annually to provide the Istation assessment for public schools to assess students in kindergarten through second grade in reading and mathematics.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Additional Instructional Topics. HB221/aHSEIC amends Section 22-13-1 NMSA 1978 to add vocabulary, fluency, and writing to the daily instructional topics covered in all kindergarten through third grade classrooms. Currently, daily instruction for kindergarten through third grade classes is required to include “instruction in reading and language arts skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics and comprehension, and in mathematics.” By adding vocabulary, fluency, and writing to required daily instructional topics, HB221/aHSEIC aligns instruction more closely with recommendations from PED’s Statewide Literacy Framework, which provides guidance on the components of a comprehensive literacy system, and Istation, the adaptive reading assessment currently being used in New Mexico’s elementary schools.

Observational Assessments. The Early Childhood Education and Care Department notes observation-based tools provide the opportunity to assess children in settings that are familiar, non-threatening, and allow children of different abilities, languages, and backgrounds to demonstrate their learning. Observational tools provide teachers with data to support their student’s learning, identify any developmental concerns early on, and participate in program accountability measures. In order to evaluate students through observational assessments with fidelity, teachers implementing these tools need professional development and coaching.

Prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers are provided with an observational tool to support student learning. While not considered part of New Mexico’s core assessment program for public schools, the early childhood and kindergarten observation tools are used to assess prekindergarten and kindergarten students. The tools are a series of rubrics designed to track students’ physical development, literacy, mathematics, scientific reasoning, sense of self, family, and community, and approaches to learning. The two tools are meant to act as a bridge between prekindergarten programs and school entry into kindergarten.

PED prekindergarten programs use the Early Childhood Observation Tool (ECOT) to record the NM Preschool Observational Assessment. The tool was developed for kindergarten under the Race to the Top grant, and expanded for preschool in 2017. ECOT also houses the Kindergarten Observation Tool data, allowing for data sharing between preschool and kindergarten teachers.

According to PED, developing an observational assessment to meet the requirements of HB221/aHSEIC would build on the ECOT system. PED indicates they would be required to hire additional staff to oversee the development and implementation of this new observational assessment.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

PED will need to develop a monitoring for progress kindergarten through second grade observational assessment, which assesses social-emotional skills, academic standards, and development milestones.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

Subsection B of the bill adds new language that when monitoring progress of students reading and language arts skill development in kindergarten through second grade, the department must purchase or develop an observational tool that combines “development milestones; essential skills, including social-emotional skills, and academic standards.” It should be noted that neither the Public School Code nor the bill define “developmental milestones,” “essential skills,” or “social and emotional skills.” Absent specific direction in rulemaking by PED, these terms may be open to interpretation and implemented differently from district to district. The sponsors may want to consider defining these terms to ensure proper and consistent implementation.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Social and Emotional Learning. Social and emotional learning is typically defined as the process of developing the self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills. Research shows social and emotional learning plays a significant role in a child’s academic readiness and success. A variety of tools exist to assess social and emotional learning. New Mexico’s Kindergarten Observation Tool, an observational assessment appropriate for children through first grade, includes indicators relating to social and emotional intelligences, including self-control, personal responsibility, interacting with others, and conflict resolution.

Istation Indicators of Progress. All New Mexico elementary teachers have access to the Istation indicators of progress assessment. Istation is a literacy test that assesses kindergarten through second-grade students in listening, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, vocabulary, and other essential reading skills. The test is computer-adaptive, meaning difficulty is adjusted based on how well the student is performing. Although the Istation assessment is an assessment tool to progress monitor student’s literacy skill growth, it is not an observational assessment and does not currently provide data on students’ social-emotional skills.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- Early Childhood Education and Care Department
- Public Education Department

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