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LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS
57th Legislature, 1st Session, 2025

Bill Number	<u>HB156/aSFC</u>	Sponsor	<u>Garratt/Stewart/Berghmans</u>
Tracking Number	<u>.229401.1</u>	Committee Referrals	<u>HEC/HAFC;SFC</u>
Short Title	<u>Increase Educational Salaries</u>		
Analyst	<u>Armatage</u>	Original Date	<u>1/29/2025</u>
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FOR THE LESGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis of SFC Amendment

The Senate Finance Committee amendment to HB156 (HB156/aSFC) would create a new section of Chapter 21 NMSA 1978 that would require teacher preparation programs to prepare teacher candidates to teach scientifically-based reading instruction (SBRI). Programs would be required to provide elementary teacher candidates at least 100 hours of supervised field experience in public school classrooms implementing the science of reading.

The Public Education Department (PED) would be required to, in collaboration with teacher preparation programs, develop teacher preparation standards related to the five components of the science of reading, including knowledge and skills to support struggling readers, those with dyslexia, and English learners.

As part of the state approval review process, state teacher preparation programs would be required to provide evidence of alignment with the state's statutory and regulatory requirements for structured and systematic science of reading instruction. Those who do not comply with these requirements would face corrective action plans or loss of state approval. PED's review of structured literacy compliance would include:

1. Evaluation of coursework and field experiences;
2. Assessment of faculty qualifications and professional development;
3. Documentation of how the program implements state-adopted literacy standards;
4. Collection of data demonstrating the effectiveness of graduates in applying science of reading practices during their first three years of teaching, as available through performance-based assessments or other state-approved measures; and
5. Evidence of partnerships with kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) public schools who emphasize science of reading instructional practices and use high-quality instructional materials.

As part of teacher preparation programs' annual educator accountability report, programs would be required to report:

1. A summary of program changes made to enhance science of reading instruction aligned to state standards;
2. Data on teacher candidate performance in science of reading instruction-related coursework and clinical experiences; and
3. Graduate impact data on student literacy outcomes.

HB156/aSFC would also specify that all public school students shall be taught to read using science of reading, structured literacy, and SBRI. HB156/aSFC also specifies literacy instruction for English learners shall include evidence-based practices for biliteracy, differentiation, and culturally and linguistically responsive instruction.

Synopsis of Bill

The proposed bill would amend the School Personnel Act to raise minimum salaries for teachers by \$5 thousand at each tier to be \$55 thousand for level 1 teachers, \$65 thousand for level 2 teachers, and \$75 thousand for level 3 teachers. Because minimum salaries for school counselors and school leaders are tied to minimum teacher salaries, raising minimum teacher salaries will also raise minimum salaries for these positions.

FISCAL IMPACT

The proposed bill does not include an appropriation.

LESC staff estimate raising minimum teacher salaries would cost the state between \$4.38 million and \$5.99 million, including a benefits ratio of 0.278, after 4 percent average salary increases for public school personnel. The House Appropriations and Finance Committee Substitute for House Bills 2 and 3 (HB2/HAFCS) contains an appropriation of \$135.1 million to the state equalization guarantee (SEG) for average salary increases of 4 percent for public school personnel and an appropriation of \$4.38 million to increase teacher minimum salaries by \$5,000 each.

LESC staff estimate costs associated with teacher preparation structured literacy requirements would be minimal.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Student Achievement. [Research](#) has shown teachers are the most important school-related factor influencing student outcomes, such as performance on reading and math assessments, likelihood of on-time high school graduation, and even college attendance, college completion, future earnings, and other distal outcomes. Significantly, the court in the *Martinez-Yazzie* consolidated education lawsuit found effective teachers were key to improving proficiency and concluded the quality of teaching for at-risk students was inadequate in New Mexico.

The need for highly effective teachers in New Mexico is particularly great, with only 38 percent of students proficient in reading and 24 percent of students proficient in math, according to data from the 2023-2024 school year (SY24). A high proportion of students are at risk, with one in four children living in poverty and higher than national averages of students identified as English

language learners or students with disabilities. Statewide academic achievement for these students continues to lag those of their peers.

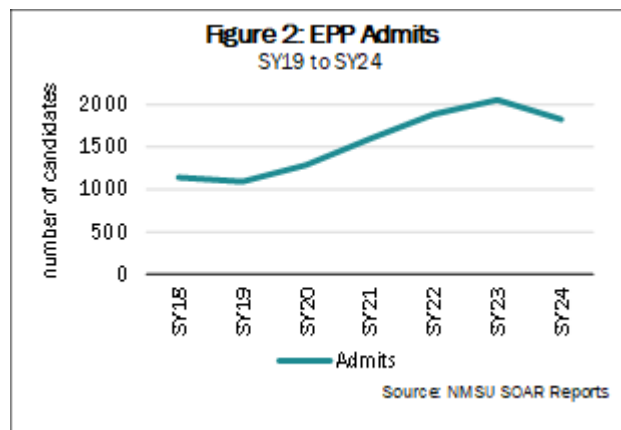
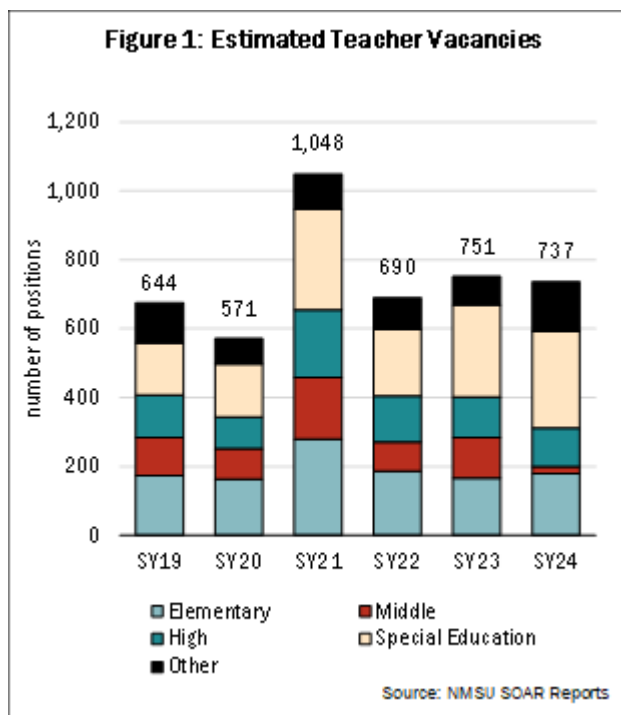
Educator Vacancies. The *New Mexico Educator Vacancy Report* produced by the Southwest Outreach Academic Research Evaluation and Policy Center at New Mexico State University estimates New Mexico had 737 teacher vacancies at the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year (SY25), a 2 percent decrease from the prior year. The teaching areas with the highest need were special education (280 vacancies) and elementary teachers (179 vacancies). Educational assistants accounted for nearly 30 percent (356 vacancies) of all educator vacancies reported. Although this data represents the best information currently available, estimations are imprecise, based on a single snapshot of public job postings.

While the number of teacher candidates completing educator preparation programs in New Mexico continues to recover after nearly a decade of plummeting, the number of teacher candidates admitted to educator preparation programs decreased in SY24 for the first time since 2019—from 2,055 in SY23 to 1,826 in SY24.

Educator Recruitment and Retention. Raising teacher minimum salaries is an important mechanism to attract individuals to the profession and incentive teachers to move to the next licensure tier.

National [research](#) shows teacher salaries can affect the quality and quantity of individuals preparing to become teachers, with individuals more likely to choose the teaching profession when salaries are competitive with other occupations. In 2019, the Economic Policy Institute, a national think tank, [estimated](#) the national average wage penalty (meaning the gap between the wages of a specific group of workers compared with other works that have similar education levels) for teachers was 19 percent. New Mexico ranked the third highest nationally in its teacher wage penalty at an estimated 29.5 percent. New Mexico's national average teacher salary ranking improved after raising teacher minimum salaries and instituting substantial school personnel salary raises in FY22. However, New Mexico's average teaching salary remains below the national average, and thus, teachers in the state likely continue to face a substantial wage penalty.

In FY22, the Legislature increased teacher minimum salaries by \$10 thousand for each tier to be \$50 thousand for level one teachers, \$60 thousand for level two teachers, and \$70 thousand for level three teachers. In SY24, LESC staff estimate average teacher salaries were \$56 thousand amongst level one teachers, \$67 thousand amongst level two teachers, and \$76 thousand amongst level three teachers. This shows the teachers affected by again raising tier minimum salaries would



primarily be brand new teachers and those moving from one tier to the next who work in school districts who have adopted teaching salary schedules aligned with state salary minimums. Some school district salary schedules already exceed state minimums.

New Mexico's average teaching salary is now the highest in the region, but it remains below the national average. In addition, a 2023 LFC analysis found average teacher salaries in some of the state's highest living wage counties were well below the living wage for one adult and one child. And according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the \$50 thousand minimum level one teacher salary established in 2022 would need to increase to \$54.8 thousand in 2024 to account for rising inflation.

Implications for Other State Agencies. The New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD) notes the department contracts educators who are not subject to the School Personnel Act, though these educators do receive salary increases provided by the Legislature. Although NMCD is not required to match salaries for their contracted educators to state legislated minimums, NMCD notes raising teacher minimum salaries could put pressure on NMCD to increase pay for contracted educators.

The Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD) notes raising teacher minimum salaries would impact prekindergarten teacher salaries. School-based prekindergarten teachers are included in LESC's cost estimations for HB156/aSFC. ECECD runs a pay parity program for community-based prekindergarten teachers. Through this program, teachers meeting certain requirements may apply to ECECD for funds to bring their salary into alignment with state teacher salary minimums. According to ECECD, there are currently 634 community-based prekindergarten teachers. While there is no statutory requirement for community-based prekindergarten teachers to be compensated at teacher minimum salaries, at \$5,000 per current community-based prekindergarten teacher, continuing ECECD's pay parity program could cost as much as \$3.17 million. However, as the pay parity program only applies to certain prekindergarten teachers—and some prekindergarten teachers may already be compensated at or above the new proposed teacher minimum salaries, the total cost would likely be less.

Programmatic Requirements for Teacher Preparation Programs. HB156/aSFC would require teacher preparation programs to offer courses and student teaching sufficient for level 1 licensure that meets specific science of reading requirements. While state law requires current elementary educators to receive structured literacy professional development training, it does not require EPPs to teach the science of reading, or provide guidelines on how to implement structured literacy instruction. However, in October 2023, PED issued a memo stating, "effective immediately, all [EPPs] in New Mexico must adopt and implement an English Language Arts and Teaching of Reading core curriculum requirements that align with the science of reading and structured literacy." PED cited their statutory authority to approve New Mexico's teacher preparation curricula and programs at two- and four-year postsecondary education institutions and general requirements for EPPs, including the Educator Accountability Report system and approval, governed by rule in NMAC 6.65.3.

Field Experience Requirements for Teacher Preparation Programs. HB156/aSFC would require teacher preparation programs to provide elementary teacher candidates a minimum of 100 hours of field experience in public school classrooms under the supervision of a teacher trained in the science of reading and implementing scientifically based reading instruction. Currently, traditional teacher candidates are required to complete 16 weeks of student teaching. Presumably, the 100 hours of field experience HB156/aSFC would require could be a portion of the 16 weeks

already required. Alternative teacher licensure candidates are not required to complete field experience prior to becoming a teacher of record. Thus, it's unclear whether these candidates would need to meet the requirement of 100 hours of supervised field experience prior to becoming the teacher of record. If not, to meet this requirement, supervising principals may need to arrange for classroom coverage for these candidates to complete supervised field experience hours prior to receiving a full level 1 teaching license.

Teacher Preparation Program Approval Process. Since 2024—the deadline set in the October 2023 PED memo—PED has used the EPP approval process to ensure EPPs have established and implemented a science of reading aligned curriculum for undergraduate and graduate degree programs. PED evaluates EPPs within their existing site visit review process based on the quality review rubric within the curriculum design and instructional delivery components of the Educator Accountability Report. The rubric rates EPPs' development of curricula design and delivery based on their alignment of top priority areas, including literacy, with accepted teaching standards. EPPs were also directed to conduct a programmatic review to ensure course and syllabi alignment with the science of reading and a structured literacy approach. The memo stated PED “may request document of course alignment and syllabi refinement beginning in 2024.” HB156/aSFC appears to codify PED department guidance to ensure this practice continues beyond the current administration.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

PED would need to work with teacher preparation programs to develop teacher preparation standards related to the five components of the science of reading.

PED would also need to work with the [Professional Practices and Standards Council](#) (PPSC), the advisory body responsible for holding approved educator preparation programs accountable to required regulations, to revise the PPSC manual for educator preparation programs and program approval rubrics.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Structured Literacy and the Science of Reading. The science of reading is an interdisciplinary body of research that explains how individuals learn to read and the best practices for reading instruction, and structured literacy is research-based practices within the classroom. Together, this body of research and practices form SBRI. Structured literacy is an umbrella term coined by the International Dyslexia Association in 2016 to describe a science-based, explicit, systematic, cumulative approach to reading and writing instruction. Structured literacy is an approach to reading instruction where teachers carefully structure important literacy skills, concepts, and the sequence of instruction to facilitate children's literacy learning as much as possible. This approach is helpful for all students and can be beneficial not only for students with reading disabilities, but also for other at-risk students including English learners and struggling adolescents ([IDA, 2019](#)).

As noted in PED's [Statewide Literacy Framework](#), New Mexico is on a strategic path to ensure all literacy instruction is evidence-based, beginning with the passage of Laws 2019, Chapter 256 (SB398) which required:

- Universal dyslexia screening for first grade students;
- Early interventions for students displaying characteristics of dyslexia; and
- School districts to develop and implement a literacy professional development plan to implement structured literacy training for all elementary school teachers.

HB156/aSFC relates to the pedagogical approach known as structured literacy, and to the professional development program known as LETRS, both of which PED supports extensively. As outlined in LESC’s October 2024 [Review of Structured Literacy Support Models](#) policy brief, through the Structured Literacy New Mexico initiative PED provides general literacy supports such as LETRS professional learning for all elementary educators, and additional supports to schools selected as “model” and “support” schools.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- LESC Files
- Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) Files
- New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority (NMPSIA)
- New Mexico Educational Retirement Board (NMERB)
- Early Childhood Education and Care Department (ECECD)
- New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD)
- Public Education Department (PED)
- New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NMSBVI)
- New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD)

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