

LFC Requester:	Helms
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**AGENCY BILL ANALYSIS
2023 REGULAR SESSION**

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Check all that apply:

Original **Amendment**
Correction **Substitute**

Date Prepared: 02/03/23
Bill No: [SB289](#)

Sponsor: <u>Gonzales</u>	Agency Name and Code Number: <u>PED - 924</u>
Short Title: <u>K-12 OUTDOOR EDUCATION PROGRAM</u>	Person Writing: <u>Gregory Frostad</u>
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SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY23	FY24		
None	None	N/A	NFA

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY23	FY24	FY25		
None	None	None	N/A	NFA

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY23	FY24	FY25	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total	None	\$400.0	None	None	N/A	NFA

(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

Duplicates/Conflicts with/Companion to/Relates to:

[SB9, Create Legacy Permanent Funds](#)

Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act: N/A

SECTION III: NARRATIVE

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis: Senate Bill 289 (SB289) would require the Public Education Department (PED) to

establish a “scope and sequence,” as well as academic content and instructional standards, for outdoor learning and environmental education in kindergarten through 12th grade. The bill would require that PED integrate outdoor learning standards with core subject areas and other subject areas in schools, coordinate with teacher preparation programs to support outdoor learning education for new teachers, and encourage community-based organizations to develop complementary programming.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

SB289 does not contain an appropriation.

While the work of developing both a “scope and sequence,” as SB289 would require, is not in the purview of PED (see Significant Issues section below), the cost of developing integrated outdoor learning standards and scope is estimated to be \$400,000.

Legislative support for outdoor and environmental education in New Mexico has increased since 2007, when \$250,000 was appropriated to PED and \$20,000 to the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department for the Outdoor Classroom Initiative. According to the 2005 Senate Joint Memorial 24 (SJM24) the initiative was proposed to "improve academic achievement and encourage resource stewardship by engaging New Mexico's children in heritage education." In the spring of 2022, PED received a \$500,000 legislative appropriation to expand outdoor learning opportunities after a multi-agency task force recommended the department issue grants to schools and create two outdoor learning specialist positions to establish an Outdoor Learning Program. In August 2022 PED distributed a total of \$300,000 in grant funding to 10 recipients to explore a variety of topics, from creating new outdoor learning spaces to integrating outdoor experiences into core subjects.

Next steps toward the ambitious outcomes required of SB289 will require additional increase in funding.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

Sequence of instruction is determined by school districts and charter schools. Developing both a scope and sequence, as required by SB289, may constitute an overreach on the part of PED, which instead recommends a process of developing outdoor learning and environmental education content standards and working with stakeholders to also develop a scope integrated with other subjects’ current standards and scopes, as found in existing [New Mexico Instructional Scope \(NMIS\)](#). The cost of the development of a NMIS for outdoor learning is estimated at \$400,000.

Integrating outdoor and environmental education into core and other subject areas may benefit children’s learning and mental health. A 2022 review, [Zhang, et al, \(2020\) The Association between Green Space and Adolescents’ Mental Well-Being: A Systematic Review - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#) of 147 studies spanning two decades concluded that “nature-specific outdoor learning has measurable socio-emotional, academic and wellbeing benefits” and recommended that outdoor learning be “incorporated into every child’s school experience” and teacher preparation and professional development “include a focus on how natural settings can be used effectively for learning.”

Outdoor and environmental education may benefit New Mexico’s historically marginalized and at-risk students the most. According to a 2018 report of a pilot study in Oregon ([Braun \(2018\), Outdoor School for All: Diverse Programming and Outcomes in Oregon; 2018 Pilot Study Evaluation](#)), outdoor learning improved academic performance in core subjects of science and social studies for most students, especially for children from historically marginalized groups and those needing substantial supports, positively impacting learning outcomes for at-risk as well as American Indian/Native Alaskan, Black, and Hispanic students. General learning outcomes that improved as a result of outdoor learning included students’ interest in school and motivation to learn, self-efficacy, cooperation and collaboration, positive school behaviors, and 21st century skills.

PED created reentry guidance for the SY21 that provided administrators, teachers, and families with practical tools, resources, and best practices to safely facilitate learning outdoors: [New Mexico Outdoor Learning | Guidance for 2020-2021 School Reentry](#).

A Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) analysis of Senate Bill 32 (SB32) 2022 quoted the Economic Development Department (EDD), which houses the Outdoor Recreation Division (ORD), stating that “In order to avoid duplication of efforts, it would be imperative for the new staff at the outdoor learning program within PED to work closely with the Outdoor Recreation Division and its existing outdoor education programs, including the outdoor equity fund grant and paid outdoor high school internship program. There is great potential to team up and expand efforts in this space with the creation of a formal outdoor learning program within PED.” ORD [website](#) describes access to the outdoors as "a basic human right – yet it’s one that has often been denied to many of our youth. As a result, our underrepresented kids have not had the chance to experience some of the best of New Mexico: Its outside world.”

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

N/A

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

SB289 would require PED to promulgate new rule for academic content and instructional standards for outdoor learning in kindergarten through 12th grade and to develop and integrate scope with contributions from a large committee of educators from all regions of the state, representing all grade levels K-12. As written, SB289 would require PED to also develop a sequence of instruction, which is not within the purview of PED. (See Amendments section below.)

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

Outdoor learning instruction and outdoor activity access are supported across multiple agencies in Senate Bill 9 (SB9). However, the same recommendations and funding level are not yet allocated to PED for sustaining robust outdoor learning programs that support initiatives across agencies and bureaus within PED to support equitable outcomes and access for all students.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

N/A

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

The [Outdoor Recreation Cradle to Career New Mexico 2021 Report](#) identified existing federal,

state, tribal, and local opportunities that provide outdoor access, programming, and internships within the state's outdoor industry. This report created an alignment with the [New Mexico Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Strategy \(SCORP\)](#), supported the interagency task force to promote outdoor classrooms, and promoted inventory of outdoor education programs and opportunities as well as a pilot outdoor industry capstone for high school students.

The development of academic content and learning standards and an instructional scope, as called for by SB289, would be an important step toward integrating New Mexico's outdoor recreation economic plan with interdisciplinary outdoor learning and environmental education in schools while positively impacting learning outcomes for students.

ALTERNATIVES

The PED recommends updating the [New Mexico Environmental Literacy Plan](#) and adopting this revised plan to support implementing a scope to integrate outdoor learning and environmental education in core academics.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

N/A

AMENDMENTS

The sponsor may wish to amend SB289 to remove any instance of the term "sequence."