



LFC Requester: Liu

**PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
BILL ANALYSIS
2025 REGULAR SESSION**

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Check all that apply:

Original Amendment
Correction Substitute

Date Prepared: 01/31 /25
Bill No: SB242

Agency Name and Code: PED - 924

Sponsor: Stewart

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Short Title: ADVANCING THE SCIENCE
OF READING ACT

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SECTION II: FISCAL IMPACT
(Parenthesis () Indicate Expenditure Decreases)

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY26	FY27		
None	None	N/A	NFA

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY26	FY27	FY28		
None	None	None	N/A	NFA

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY26	FY27	FY28	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
Total	None	None	None	N/A	N/A	NFA

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

SECTION III: NARRATIVE

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis: Senate Bill 242 (SB242) would create the “Advancing the Science of Reading Act” and amend sections of the Public-School Code to improve instructional approaches to literacy with an emphasis across teacher preparation programs. Specifically, the bill would disallow balanced literacy as a teaching method and establish additional requirements for licensure with an emphasis on the science of reading and the use of high-quality instructional materials to teach reading during student teaching/supervised field experience in New Mexico public schools. SB242 would also require teacher preparation programs to train teacher candidates to identify students not reading at grade level, require in-service teachers to provide appropriate interventions with parental notification and employ literacy coordinators to oversee implementation of the act.

This bill does not provide an effective date. Laws go into effect 90 days after the adjournment of the Legislature enacting them, unless a later date is specified. If enacted, this bill would become effective June 20, 2025.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

This bill does not contain an appropriation.

The FY26 executive budget recommendation includes a total of \$49 million for literacy initiatives.

- \$30 million for reading programs
- \$14 million for science of reading structured literacy training and coaching supports
- \$5 million for secondary literacy support

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

In order to combat low proficiency numbers in reading across the State in the summer of 2024, the State of New Mexico launched the [Summer Reading Program](#) (SRP). 117 statewide programs participated to offer free structured literacy instruction to kindergarten through eighth grade students using high-quality, science of reading-based instructional materials. Students participating in the Summer Reading Program showed an average 5 percent gain in reading growth. Aligned preparation of teacher candidates in structured literacy in NM’s teacher preparation programs can reduce the rate of reading failure and ensure New Mexico continues to support every student in literacy.

This bill is a next step in ensuring that every student in the State has access to a highly trained teacher who is ready to teach reading and to respond appropriately when students are struggling. Over the last five years, teachers in the classroom have been required to take professional development called LTRS in order to bring the Science of Reading to New Mexico’s classroom. This bill now shifts from training in service teachers to ensuring that all pre-service teachers learn the essential components of structured literacy in their educator preparation program thereby decreasing the need to train teachers once they are in the classroom backfilling their knowledge and skills.

In addition to making sure that pre-service teachers are learning how to teach reading, this bill

will ensure that pre-service teachers have opportunity to practice during their field experience and student under the tutelage of a highly qualified teacher who is also using high quality instructional materials. By mandating high-quality instructional materials, the bill ensures that students are taught using research-backed strategies proven to improve literacy. The bill ensures that materials used are culturally and linguistically relevant, supporting equitable learning for all students. This is particularly important in New Mexico, where diverse student populations need inclusive, effective literacy instruction. Furthermore, it also requires 100 hours of supervised field experience, ensuring new teachers learn to implement effective reading strategies before entering the classroom.

Trends in student literacy: [39 percent](#) of students in New Mexico (61,102) received a proficient or advanced (PL3/PL4) score for SY24, consistent with the previous school year at 38.2 percent (57,016 students). This means that more than half (61 percent) of students in New Mexico are reading at a basic or below basic level. At the national level, fourth and eighth grade students experienced a decrease in average reading scores in [2024](#) by two points compared to their results in 2022. One [factor contributing](#) to low literacy is the use of instructional methodologies that are not based in the science of reading and in the lack of early intervention when reading difficulties are identified. Teachers can also limit reading success by not receiving [explicit instruction](#) (training and on-going professional learning) in identifying children at risk of reading failure or how to teach reading skills that align with the current science on how students learn.

Trends in literacy instruction: A recent report from Education Week found most elementary special education and K-2 teachers (72 percent) in the U.S. use balanced literacy, rather than a more explicit, systematic phonics-related instruction. Many teachers also enter the profession without any training in science of reading/structured literacy reading instruction despite overwhelming evidence that all children can learn to read. In NM more than half of elementary teacher candidates are entering the profession as alternatively licensed teachers and SB242 would assure that they would have training in the science of reading/structured literacy during their teacher preparation program. The science of reading became a legislative priority when NM SB398 (2019) was passed and signed by the Governor. NM is replacing balanced literacy with structured, phonics-based literacy instruction, including definitions and screenings for dyslexia. A timeline is linked [here](#). SB398 also initiated screening efforts for all first-grade students and HB481 provided guidance in purchasing materials that align with the science of reading. The bill would reinforce links to interventions and high-quality instructional materials by requiring defined standards in teacher preparation programs aligned with the science of reading. As of 2024, 37 states have incorporated reading instruction standards for teacher preparation programs including instructional materials, coaching, and professional development related to evidence-based reading instruction.

Scientific Reading Instruction (SRI) is grounded in the research on how students learn to read, and emphasizes phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. This is closely tied to structured literacy by using explicit, systematic, and sequential instruction to help students break down reading and writing skills into a logical sequence that follows a natural progression of language development. The New Mexico Public Education Department launched the Structured Literacy Initiative to train over 9,000 teachers in the science of reading training which resulted in a [5 percent](#) increase in reading proficiency for grades 3-8 since SY22. The science of reading develops proficient readers and demonstrates measurable results that can close the achievement gap. In 2013, Mississippi legislators passed the [Literacy-Based Promotion Act](#),

which required the science of reading, teacher training, and funding for literacy coaches, and experienced significant reading gains over the past decade. New Mexico is moving in a similar trajectory.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

Currently, 62 percent of New Mexico students are not proficient in reading. With a 38 percent proficiency rate in reading in 2024, improving reading proficiency is an imperative. The use of effective reading materials helps prevent early literacy struggles, which can lead to long-term academic challenges, and students who develop strong foundational reading skills in early grades are more likely to succeed in all subjects and avoid the need for remedial education. Additionally, high-quality reading instruction can help reduce disparities in literacy rates among students from different socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds and can even reduce the cost of remediation and intervention needed as well as possibly reducing the number of students who are incorrectly identified as having a learning disability. Research-based materials ensure all students have access to equitable, high-quality instruction, regardless of their school or district funding levels.

As a model, Utah sets specific, detailed standards for teacher prep programs aligned to the science of reading. As a result, the average 2024 NAEP reading score for fourth grade was [higher than 25 states](#), and the average score of fourth grade students in Utah was higher (219) than the national average for students in the nation (214). Similar results were reported for [8th grade students](#) in Utah. Schools in Utah are shifting to literacy instruction rooted in the science of reading and providing significant training and resources to educators at every level in support of the science of reading including communities, families, and businesses. This bill is working with the educator preparation programs so that pre-service teachers come into the profession prepared to teach reading rather than relying on professional development for LETRS solely. Effective reading materials help prevent early literacy struggles, which can lead to long-term academic challenges.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Literacy is critical for employment; individuals with low reading skills have fewer job opportunities and lower earning potential. Unemployment and financial instability are major risk factors for criminal activity and incarceration. A study by the National Institute for Literacy found that 70 percent of incarcerated adults in the U.S. function at the lowest levels of literacy. The Annie E. Casey Foundation reports that students who are not proficient in reading by 3rd grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma. Some states use 3rd and 4th grade reading scores as indicators to project future prison bed needs.

Improving reading skills in early grades can break this cycle by increasing graduation rates, improving job prospects, and reducing reliance on the criminal justice system.

Policies like the **Advancing the Science of Reading Act** could lead to long-term reductions in incarceration rates by ensuring students receive evidence-based reading instruction early.

A comprehensive approach to literacy reform would require the public education department (PED) to align training for teacher candidates with stringent licensure requirements and change how teacher preparation programs prepare candidates to teach literacy, with an emphasis on the science of reading/structured literacy, to support students with reading difficulties and those with dyslexia. The PED would also need to lead and train literacy coordinators to be employed at each

state-approved teacher preparation program to support faculty in delivering the science of reading/structured literacy-aligned coursework, ensure candidates receive appropriate field experience, and maintain the latest science of reading research to implement the provisions of the bill.

The PED will need to amend licensure rules to accommodate the provisions of SB242.

The PED will need to promulgate rule around parent notification, and intervention use.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

None.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

None.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

None.

ALTERNATIVES

None.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

None.

AMENDMENTS

None.