LFC Requester: **Liu**

PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
BILL ANALYSIS
2025 REGULAR SESSION

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Check all that apply:
Original X **Amendment** ____
Correction ____ **Substitute** ____

Date Prepared: 03/11 /25
Bill No: SM22

Agency Name and Code: PED - 924

Sponsor: Gonzales

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Short Title: K-12 WATER CONSERVATION CURRICULUM

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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	None	N/A	NFA

Duplicates/Relates to Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act: None.

SECTION III: NARRATIVE

BILL SUMMARY

Synopsis: Senate Memorial 22 (SM22) would request the Public Education Department (PED) to study the feasibility of developing a water conservation and management curriculum to be incorporated into multiple subjects including math, science, and history for kindergarten through twelfth grade education. Additionally, SM22 requests that the PED publish these findings in a report and present this report to the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) on or before December 1, 2025.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

This memorial does not contain an appropriation.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The study of water conservation and management is topical for students in New Mexico given the arid climate and the role of water in the cultural and historical context of the state. New Mexico science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) science standards (NM STEM-Ready!) for K-5 currently include several areas related to the role of water in ecosystems and the relationship to plants and animals, such as the kindergarten section titled Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems: Animals, Plants, and Their Environments. This theme continues through fifth grade and beyond with courses on the Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems and core expectations regarding natural resources, and the impact of humans on the Earth's systems. Similarly, the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) include courses on Earth's Systems, Earth and Human Activity, and Human Sustainability in grades 9-12 which promote the importance of key resources such as fresh water in human activity and natural systems.

New Mexico Social Studies Standards curriculum also include water-resource education focused on analyzing multiple perspectives of how water use, policy, and management have changed over the centuries in New Mexico. Students are also tasked with evaluating the importance of preserving the state's resources. This focus on New Mexico takes place in the broader context of how water and natural resources have shaped both the country nationally and the human impact on the environment.

NM STEM-Ready! Math does not currently have any courses that explicitly focus on water conservation and management. However, the New Mexico Math Framework emphasizes that educators should build on students' lived experiences and culture, leveraging their strengths and challenging spaces of marginality which may indicate a role for the water conservation and management given its significance for many of New Mexico's diverse communities.

The PED also currently oversees programming for outdoor education through the Outdoor Learning Initiative. This was initiated by the Cradle to Career New Mexico Report in 2021 which summarizes the overarching goal to engage all New Mexicans as stewards of the state's land and water resources. House Bill 2 from 2022 appropriated $500 thousand for outdoor learning initiatives, leading to the establishment of the Outdoor Learning Program at the PED, which consists of two outdoor learning specialists and up to $300,000 for local educational

agencies to initiate outdoor learning programs, which may include environmental education connecting to natural and water resources in New Mexico.

Nationally, several states offer free supplementary material for educators including California's Department of Water Resources, Texas' Water Development Board, and Minnesota's Department of Natural Resources. There is also an international nonprofit (the Project WET Foundation) aimed at providing workshops and activities for educators to teach students about water issues, which provides a K-12 curriculum titled Water Education Today (WET). This nonprofit is locally partnered with the Santa Fe Watershed Association. The United States Geological Survey also offers free resources for teachers for water education through their Water Science School.

PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

None.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

SM22 requests the PED to study the feasibility of developing a water conservation and management curriculum which could be a significant undertaking and require department staff and resources to establish a comprehensive understanding of how this could be incorporated into existing K-12 education.

The implementation of a water conservation and management curriculum into math, science and history standards would be a large administrative burden for the PED, as it would necessitate updating the entirety of current curricula for K-12 education in those subjects in the state to include the focus requested in the memorial. This would also place a burden on school districts, as they would need to implement the curricular changes in the classroom.

Implementation of water conservation and management may be more readily accommodating in science, given the current courses provided through NM STEM Ready! as well as the NGSS focus on ecosystems and the role of humans in theses systems. Additionally, history and social science curricula in New Mexico include several areas that could be expanded to emphasize water conservation and management more consciously.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

Relates to Senate Bill 60 which proposes to create a six-year pilot project, the "High School Water Management and Conservation Project," to study the feasibility of offering practical and environmental education to high school students and the outcomes of this instruction.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

SM22 requests that the PED study the feasibility of incorporating water conservation and management curriculum into "other subjects including" math, science, and history. With the broad range of subjects covered in K-12 education and difficulty of studying and subsequently potentially implementing the new curriculum, it may be beneficial for the sponsor to clarify if the intention is to cover every subject, such as art or music, or if the intention is to focus on these three subjects specifically.

OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

None.

ALTERNATIVES

None.

WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL

None.

AMENDMENTS

See, “"Technical Issues”", above, for potential amendments to the memorial.