



New Mexico Senate Republican Office

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Contact: 505-986-4702



SENATOR GAY G. KERNAN
R - Hobbs - 42

Bill to help At-Risk Students at More Schools Passed Senate

*SB 32

K-3 PLUS ELIGIBILITY

Sponsor Senator Kernan in Senate Education

Santa Fe--More elementary schools will be able to apply for the successful K-3 Plus program if SB 32 becomes law. That program aims to narrow the achievement gap between at-risk elementary students and other students. It does that by starting the school year 25 days earlier for struggling, at-risk students in kindergarten through third grade at some eligible schools.

SB 32 opens up the eligibility to more schools. It allows elementary schools that serve specific grade levels between kindergarten and third grade, so called "grade-level" schools, to apply for the K-3 Plus program in certain circumstances.

"This bill makes the K-3 Plus more equitable to all of our schools. While this valuable program is not a guarantee because of limited funding, all schools would be eligible to apply and determine if their at-risk students will benefit from 25 more instructional days," Senator Kernan said.

Senator Kernan said she her bill was endorsed by the Legislative Education Study committee and that she is pleased the bill passed the Senate and will be sent to the House for consideration.

Currently, school districts that teach all of the children in the community in a specific grade in one school do not tend to qualify for the program. That is because eligibility is based on a percentage of students who qualify for the Free and Reduced School Lunch program. When all of the students in a specific grade in a community are all together in one school, the percentage of low-income students is diluted, automatically disqualifying the "grade-level" school.

SB 32 amends the Public School Code to allow students in grade-specific schools that feed into K-3 Plus-eligible schools and participating schools to apply for a K-3 Plus program. Schools districts such as Carlsbad would benefit from the bill.

K-3 Plus was established in 2007 as a six-year pilot project that permitted schools with high numbers of at-risk students to **begin the school year 25 days earlier for kindergarten through third grade.** The purpose of the pilot was to demonstrate that increased instructional time in kindergarten and the early grades narrows the achievement gap between at-risk students and other students. The optional K-3 Plus program **became permanent 2012.**

The bill also adds new language requiring the Public Education Department (PED) to prioritize funding to school districts and charter schools that participate in K-3

Plus. It also removes obsolete language in the bill now that the program is permanent. The bill includes an emergency clause.