

From: Webster, Melinda
Sent time: Thursday, December 08, 2011 9:32:55 AM
To: Cari Miller (Cari@excelined.org) <Cari@excelined.org>
Subject: RE: The New Mexican: Governor seeks \$17M to sharpen kids' reading skills

That's awesome! Thanks for sharing.

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From: Cari Miller (Cari@excelined.org) [mailto:Cari@excelined.org]
Sent: Thursday, December 08, 2011 9:15 AM
To: Webster, Melinda
Subject: FW: The New Mexican: Governor seeks \$17M to sharpen kids' reading skills

FYI~

From: Nadia Hagberg (Nadia@excelined.org)
Sent: Thursday, December 08, 2011 9:05 AM
To: Jaryn Emhof (jaryn@excelined.org); Clare Crowson (Clare@excelined.org); Mandy Clark (mandy@excelined.org); Alexis Franz (Alexis@excelined.org); Mary Laura Bragg (MaryLaura@excelined.org); Cari Miller (Cari@excelined.org); Matthew Ladner (ladner55@gmail.com); Christy Hovanetz (christyh@excelined.org); Erin Price (Erin@excelined.org); Deirdre Finn (dfinn@excelined.org); Patricia Levesque (patricia@excelined.org)
Subject: The New Mexican: Governor seeks \$17M to sharpen kids' reading skills

Governor seeks \$17M to sharpen kids' reading skills

Robert Nott | The New Mexican
December 07, 2011

Gov. Susana Martinez said Wednesday that she will ask lawmakers in January to approve a new \$17 million-a-year reading initiative.

Flanked by Senate Minority Floor Leader Stuart Ingle, R-Portales, and Secretary of Education-designate Hanna Skandera in the library of Wood Gormley Elementary School in Santa Fe, Martinez announced the plan, which includes funding for pre-kindergarten literacy programs, reading coaches to assist teachers, after-school and summer reading instruction and screening tools to assess reading proficiency. Her plan also would end social promotion by requiring third-graders to read at grade level before moving on to the fourth grade.

Ingle and Sen. John Arthur Smith, D-Deming, plan to sponsor the bill, Martinez said.

Martinez said 80 percent of New Mexico's fourth-grade students cannot read at a proficient level. She said studies indicate that a student is four times more likely to drop out of high school if he or she cannot read by the fourth grade.

The governor spoke of visiting third-grade teacher Verna Harrison's classroom in Artesia and discovering that most of those children were reading beyond their grade level, thanks to Harrison's hands-on, intervention-driven approach.

It was clear during Wednesday's event that Martinez and Skandera were stressing the early-intervention components of the bill and de-emphasizing the possibility of holding kids back in the third grade, since the latter notion may remain unpopular with some parents.

Martinez and Skandera first introduced a social-promotion bill last February. Though the governor claimed the bill gained momentum, the 2011 regular session ended before a final vote could be held.

Martinez attempted to resurrect that bill during September's special session, but it quickly lost steam after one of its major advocates, Senate Majority Whip Mary Jane Garcia, announced that she would no longer support the bill. At that time, Garcia, D-Dofia Ana, said she had been fielding calls from parents pleading with her not to hold their kids back a grade.

Martinez and Ingle both acknowledged that parents play a pivotal role in student success when it comes to reading.

"Parents have to realize the schools can't do it all," Ingle said, recalling how his father would read *Outdoor Life* with him when he was a boy. Ingle also was required to read to his baby sitter.

"We can't legislate parental involvement, but parental involvement is the fix-all for education," he said, adding, "We'll get this passed. It may not be easy, but we've got to get it passed."

Asked whether her proposed educational reforms scare legislators and the public, Martinez said, "The fact that we're 49th in the nation when it comes to education should scare people ... into action.

"We won't implement anything that doesn't have a proven record," she said, emphasizing that she and Skandera are researching and borrowing reforms that work in other states.

Martinez and Skandera also reiterated their plan to push a retooled teacher-evaluation bill through the next session. Though specifics remain unclear at this point, it's likely the bill would tie student test scores to teacher evaluations in some manner.

The duo succeeded in convincing legislators to enact an A-to-F grading system for the state's schools beginning with the autumn 2012 semester. Skandera said preliminary grades will be released for schools by year's end.

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