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SENATE MEMORIAL 59

51ST LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2013

INTRODUCED BY

Linda M. Lopez

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THAT THE PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT PROVIDE SCHOOL DISTRICTS A GUIDE FOR INTERWEAVING A TOLERANCE CURRICULUM INTO THE EXISTING CONTENT STANDARDS FOR KINDERGARTEN THROUGH TWELFTH GRADE WITH THE AIM OF CREATING SCHOOLS ACROSS NEW MEXICO IN WHICH CHILDREN CAN LEARN IN AN ENVIRONMENT OF RESPECT, SAFETY AND DIVERSITY AND THAT THE PUBLIC EDUCATION DEPARTMENT CONSIDER REQUIRING CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITY EDUCATION FOR ALL TEACHERS.

WHEREAS, children learn best in an environment in which they know they are safe from bullies and others, as they can open their minds to new information when they are not under attack; and

WHEREAS, children who do not look or act like the majority of their peers often struggle to maintain an appearance of

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1 normalcy, denying that they need special attention, though they
2 could more readily accept academic help in an atmosphere where
3 the help itself does not cause ridicule; and

4 WHEREAS, New Mexico prides itself on its diversity, but,
5 even so, those who are a bit different are often under such
6 social pressure that their learning suffers; and

7 WHEREAS, a damaged learning environment can damage
8 students; damaged students often lag behind their peers in
9 academic performance; and damaged and ridiculed students often
10 have more reason to drop out of school than to stay; and

11 WHEREAS, school drop-outs suffer personal tragedy, the
12 burden of inadequate skill sets and, ultimately, the burden of
13 poverty; and

14 WHEREAS, poverty is a plague that affects every New
15 Mexican because taxpayers underwrite the children of those who
16 are unable to earn a living, because state-funded prisons feed
17 the poor who have turned to crime and because out-of-state
18 businesses reject New Mexico workers again and again for their
19 lack of academic achievement; and

20 WHEREAS, the curriculum for kindergarten through twelfth
21 grade that is already in place throughout New Mexico contains
22 standards and benchmarks that define the academic content that
23 every school child is responsible to know; and

24 WHEREAS, that same curriculum could be enhanced by a
25 companion curriculum that emphasizes diversity and tolerance

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1 within the content standards; and

2 WHEREAS, schools could incorporate diversity exercises and
3 lessons into their academic curricula; for instance, in math,
4 there could be a discussion of minority representation; in
5 English, a discussion of language acquisition such that English
6 language learners are respectfully included in the discussion;
7 in history, a lesson on the means of incorporating cultural
8 differences across the world and within the history of the
9 United States; and in health, a discussion of the challenges
10 faced by those with physical, developmental and mental health
11 disabilities;

12 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE
13 OF NEW MEXICO that the public education department be requested
14 to provide suggestions for interweaving a tolerance and
15 diversity curriculum into the existing content standards for
16 kindergarten through twelfth grade; and

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the public education
18 department be requested to prepare and disseminate to all New
19 Mexico school districts a guide for inclusion of tolerance and
20 diversity teaching; and

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the public education
22 department include in its rules an expanded emphasis on
23 tolerance and diversity as part of the standard curriculum,
24 based on the guide it develops in response to this memorial;
25 and

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1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the public education
2 department present its report and guide to the legislative
3 education study committee in the 2013 interim; and

4 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the public education
5 department be requested to consider requiring cultural
6 diversity and cultural sensitivity education for new teachers
7 and as part of continuing education for all teachers, and to
8 convene a working group to make recommendations regarding the
9 form and content of courses to satisfy this requirement; and

10 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the working group present its
11 recommendations regarding the form and content of cultural
12 diversity and cultural sensitivity courses for new teachers and
13 as part of continuing education for all teachers, to the
14 legislative education study committee by August 1, 2013; and

15 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be
16 transmitted to the secretary of public education and the
17 governor.