

No Model Is the Best, Study Says

By David Miles

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SANTA FE— How a state governs its public schools has no relationship to student test scores, according to a study by a New Mexico math and science education group.

The study by the Coalition for Excellence in Science and Math Education analyzed student scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress test for five education governance models.

"There was no correlation between state governance model and student achievement," said Marshall Berman, a member of the coalition and a former state Board of Education member.

The math and science organization has taken a position against a proposed constitutional amendment to create a governor-appointed secretary of public education.

The proposal will appear as Constitutional Amendment 1 on ballots for a statewide special election on Sept. 23. Also on the ballot is Constitutional Amendment 2, which would increase the annual payout from a state permanent fund to public schools and other beneficiaries.

Supporters formed New Mexico Citizens for Accountability and Reform in Education, a political action committee to raise money in favor of both amendments.

Amanda Cooper, secretary of New Mexico CARES and manager of the pro-amendments campaign, said an education secretary would make the governor more accountable for public schools.

She also said the new post would ensure adequate funding for newly enacted school reforms, such as a three-tiered teacher licensing system with higher annual salaries and more rigorous qualifications for teachers.

"You need to have a secretary to make sure all those reforms are put into place," Cooper said Monday.

A 1996 report by a study group of the National Association of State Boards of Education did not recommend a specific education governance model. But the report also said attributes of any governance system should include a top school administrator reporting to a policy-making state board of education.

The study found that states where the governor appointed both the state school board and the top state school officer experienced the greatest turnover of top officers.

The proposed constitutional amendment would create a governor-appointed secretary of public education and a 10-member elected Public Education Commission.