

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 396
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Education
6-17-2003
Enrolled

DIGEST AND PURPOSE

Currently, Texas' school children are not all moving successfully through the school system into institutions of higher learning, as is evidenced by algebra pass rates, high school dropout rates, and the percent of Texans entering institutions of higher learning. Recent breakthroughs in neuroscience and brain plasticity research indicate that technology offers significant promise for removing barriers and increasing students' opportunity to learn. More efficient than computer labs, which are not cost effective and lack a focus on critical technical and analytical skills, is a one-to-one wireless laptop environment. Such an environment increases attendance, class participation, and achievement rates; decreases dropout rates; and stimulates students' quest for knowledge. S.B. 396 authorizes the establishment of a Technology Immersion Pilot Program, in which as many as five school districts would participate with, depending upon available funding, all or a portion of students at pilot schools receiving wireless mobile computing devices. This bill also requires the establishment of teams in participating districts to oversee and evaluate the project.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Education Agency in SECTION 1 (Section 32.151, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 32, Education Code, by adding Subchapter D, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER D. TECHNOLOGY IMMERSION PILOT PROJECT

Sec. 32.151. ESTABLISHMENT OF PILOT PROJECT. Authorizes the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to establish, by rule, the technology immersion pilot project to accomplish certain goals.

Sec. 32.152. PILOT PROJECT ADMINISTRATION. Requires TEA, if it establishes the pilot project under Section 32.151, to establish and develop procedures and criteria, respectively, to administer the pilot project and to perform certain functions in administering the project.

Sec. 32.153. PILOT PROJECT FUNDING. (a) Authorizes TEA, to implement the pilot project, to use any gift, grant, or donation given for the pilot project. Authorizes TEA to solicit and accept a gift, grant, or donation of any kind from any source, including from a foundation, private entity, governmental entity, and institution of higher education, for the implementation of the pilot project. Prohibits TEA from using money from the general revenue fund for purposes of the pilot project.

(b) Prohibits funds for the pilot project from being used for the construction of a building or other facility.

(c) Requires TEA to spend pilot project funds on certain items and activities.

(d) Prohibits TEA from allocating more than \$1 million for a school participating in the pilot project.

(e) Authorizes the pilot project to be implemented only if sufficient funds are available under this section for that purpose.

Sec. 32.154. DISTRICT OR SCHOOL SELECTION. (a) Authorizes a school district to apply to TEA for the establishment of a technology immersion pilot project for the entire district, or for a particular school, or group of schools.

(b) Requires TEA to select participating schools and districts based on need. Establishes certain criteria TEA is required to consider.

(c) Requires TEA, if possible, to select at least five schools to participate in the pilot project, with at least one project including grades 6-12. Authorizes TEA to select at least one entire school district and at least one entire school in a second district to participate in the pilot project.

Sec. 32.155. COMMUNITY EDUCATIONAL PIPELINE PROGRESS TEAM. (a) Requires each participating school district or school to establish a community educational pipeline progress team (team) to assist in developing and implementing the technology immersion pilot project.

(b) Requires the board of trustees of a participating school district, or of a district in which a participating school is located, to appoint the team members. Establishes certain types of individuals authorized to serve on the team.

(c) Requires the team to develop an academic improvement plan detailing how the pilot project should be implemented in the participating school or school district. Requires certain issues be considered in developing the plan.

(d) Requires the team to recommend to the board of trustees how to use the funds in implementing the academic improvement plan, and authorizes the team to recommend changes in the plan annually. Requires TEA to approve the plan, or any changes, before disbursing funds to the board.

(e) Requires the board of trustees of each participating district to send an annual progress report to TEA not later than August 1 each year the district participates in the pilot project. Requires the report to state, in detail, the type of plan being used in the district or school, and certain effects of the pilot program on the district or school.

Sec. 32.156. COMPUTER RETENTION. Authorizes each participating student to retain the wireless mobile computing device provided under the pilot project as long as the student is enrolled in a participating school district. Authorizes the student to retain the wireless mobile computing device after the project expires.

Sec. 32.157. PILOT PROJECT EVALUATION; EXPIRATION. (a) Authorizes TEA, after the expiration of the three-year pilot project, to review the pilot project based on the annual reports the agency receives from the board of trustees of participating school districts. Authorizes TEA to include the review of the pilot project in the comprehensive annual report required under Section 39.182 that covers the 2006-2007 school year.

(b) Provides that this subchapter expires on August 31, 2007.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2003.