

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
78R2395 SLO-D

S.B. 396
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Education
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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. As proposed, S.B. 396 establishes 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 laptops. 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. Requires 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 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 obtain funds from the telecommunications infrastructure fund for the pilot project.

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

(c) Prohibits TEA from allocating more than \$1 million per participating school.

Sec. 32.154. DISTRICT OR SCHOOL SELECTION. (a) Authorizes a school district to apply to TEA for a technology immersion pilot project for the entire district, 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. Requires TEA to select at least one entire school district and one entire school in another 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).

(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 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. Specifies certain information required to be in the report.

Sec. 32.156. COMPUTER RETENTION. Authorizes each participating student to keep the laptop computer provided under the pilot project as long as the student is enrolled in a participating school district. Authorizes the student to keep the laptop after the project expires.

Sec. 32.157. PILOT PROJECT EVALUATION; EXPIRATION. (a) Requires TEA to review the three-year pilot project, based on participating school districts' annual reports, after its expiration, and to include the evaluation in its annual report covering the 2006-2007 school year.

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

SECTION 2. Requires TEA to adopt rules to implement Chapter 32D, Education Code, as added by this Act, not later than January 1, 2004, and to make the pilot project available for participation beginning with the 2004-2005 school year.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2003.