

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1470
By: West
Public Education
Committee Report (Amended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Currently, there is a necessity to modify the high school equivalency program (HSEP) in order to more effectively assess a student's knowledge. The HSEP funding requirement has proven to be a disincentive for numerous high schools and HSEP fails to ensure accountability due to its lacks of performance standards. S.B. 1470 modifies the high school equivalency program operated by a school district or open-enrollment charter school.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, institution, or agency.

ANALYSIS

S. B. 1470 amends the Education Code to permit any school district or open-enrollment charter school to apply for authorization to operate a program under the section on high school equivalency programs. The bill deletes language that restricts such authorization to school districts or open-enrollment charter schools that on May 1, 2001, were operating a similar program as authorized by the Texas Education Agency (agency). The bill provides that a school district or open-enrollment charter school, authorized by the commissioner of education (commissioner) on or before August 31, 2003 to operate a program under Section 29.087, may continue to operate that program.

The bill provides that a student is eligible to participate in a high school equivalency program if the student was ordered by a court under Article 45.054, Code of Criminal Procedure, as added by Chapter 1514, Acts of the 77th Legislature, Regular Session, 2001, or by the Texas Youth Commission to meet certain requirements. The bill provides that a student is eligible if, in addition to other conditions, at least two school years have elapsed since the student first enrolled in ninth grade and the student has accumulated less than one half, rather than a quarter, of the credits required to graduate under the minimum graduation requirements of the district or school.

The bill requires that a student participating in a high school equivalency program, other than one who has been ordered to participate by the Texas Youth Commission, must have taken the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and performed satisfactorily on that test before entering the program. The bill requires the he board of trustees or the governing body operating the program to adopt a policy that establishes the level of performance considered to be satisfactory. The bill deletes certain current provisions relating to the performance on assessment instruments of students participating in the program.

The bill repeals Section 29.087(o), Education Code relating to the expiration date of the section on high school equivalency programs.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Upon passage, or, if the Act does not receive the necessary vote, the Act takes effect September 1, 2003.

EXPLANATION OF AMENDMENTS

Committee Amendment No. 1 provides that a student is eligible if, in addition to other conditions, at least two school years have elapsed since the student first enrolled in ninth grade and the student has accumulated less than one third of the credits required to graduate under the minimum graduation requirements of the district or school. Committee Amendment No. 1 deletes certain language in Section 29.087(f) and provides that a student participating in a high school equivalency program must have taken the essential knowledge and skills assessment instruments for grade 9 before entering the program and must take each grade level assessment instrument administered during the period in which the student is enrolled in the program. Committee Amendment No. 1 prohibits a student participating in the program from taking the high school equivalency examination unless the student required assessment instruments.