

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 1632
By: Eissler
Public Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Texas students need to become proficient in the use of technology if they are to compete successfully for positions in the 21st century workforce. A workforce skilled in the use of technology is crucial to a dynamic and expanding Texas economy. Furthermore, students that are proficient in the use of technology have access to on-line resources that can significantly improve their academic performance.

Texas must continue and expand efforts to integrate technology into the classroom. This bill is intended to accomplish that objective by continuing and expanding a technology immersion pilot project in participating schools, with the goal of improving academic achievement and progress.

The Texas Technology Immersion Pilot (TxTIP) has been in effect for three years at a number of middle schools in Texas. Students who started in 6th grade with the project will be going to high school in the fall. To be able to facilitate ongoing research into the effectiveness of the pilot project, it should be expanded into the high schools these students will be attending. This will provide the kinds of longitudinal research needed to answer how students having these tools perform academically in high school, as well as how it may impact dropout rates, enrollment in higher education and 21st century workforce preparedness. This bill is also intended to ensure that the pilot project will reach a geographically diverse group of Texas students by having a participating school in each senatorial district.

The bill will also promote the use of technology in public schools by authorizing the Commissioner of Education to enter into agreements with public broadcasting stations for online instructional content and educational materials.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that the bill modifies rulemaking authority previously granted to the Texas Education Agency in Section 32.151, Education Code. (Please refer to SECTION 2 of this bill.)

ANALYSIS

This bill authorizes the Commissioner of Education (commissioner) to enter into an agreement with a public broadcasting station, or a consortium of stations, under which such station(s) will provide online instructional content and educational materials. Under an agreement with such station(s), the commissioner is authorized to use funds appropriated to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to make the instructional materials available through the stations for instruction, professional development, and adult education. To the extent practicable, an agreement must provide access to these instructional materials and online content to people located in all parts of Texas. In order to provide high quality online instructional materials, the commissioner may use federal funds that can be used for this purpose, or unexpended balances of funds appropriated to TEA for educational purposes, including adult education.

This bill also amends Sections 32.151 and 32.152 of the Education Code to provide that TEA may by rule establish a technology immersion pilot project in participating schools to improve academic achievement and certain specified progress measures. TEA shall establish a procedure and criteria for the administration of the pilot project. In administering the project, the agency shall select participating schools; define the conditions for the distribution and use of the computer equipment and other technologies, purchase and distribute computer equipment and

other technology in a way that provides different technologies to different participating campuses; enter into contracts to implement the pilot project; monitor local pilot project implementation; and conduct a final evaluation of the pilot project including an evaluation of the different technologies distributed under the project.

This bill provides that the agency may use money from the general revenue fund for purposes of the pilot project, and further provides that TEA shall use pilot project funds for the purchase of interactive whole group learning and assessment tools for each participating classroom.

This bill amends the heading to Section 32.154, Education Code, to read "SCHOOL SELECTION," and strikes references to "district" in the amended provisions of such Section.

This bill amends Section 32.154, Education Code, to provide, in pertinent part, that in addition to school districts and schools selected before September 1, 2007, TEA must select each high school to which a district regularly assigns students who were enrolled in grade 8 during the 2006-2007 school year at a district school participating in the pilot project, and one middle or junior high school and one high school in each state senatorial district, for participation in the pilot project for the 2007-2008 and subsequent school years.

The bill provides that, with the exception of the schools described in the paragraph above, TEA shall select participating schools for the pilot project based on the criteria set forth in detail in the bill.

The bill repeals Sections 32.154(a) and (c), Education Code.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Upon passage, or, if the Act does not receive the necessary vote, the Act takes effect September 1, 2007.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL TO SUBSTITUTE

This committee substitute does not include provisions that were included in SECTION 1 of the original bill, which provided that each school district or open-enrollment charter school is entitled to an allotment, for purposes of implementing a long range technology plan, of \$200 for each student in average daily attendance or a greater amount for any year provided by appropriation, and further provided that the above provision applies beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, and that for the 2007-2008 through 2010-2011 school years, a school district is entitled to an allotment in specific amounts as detailed in SECTION 1.

The provisions describing the required elements and outcomes of the long range technology plan that were in SECTION 1 of the original bill are not included in the substitute, nor are provisions relating to TEA evaluation of available technological solutions, and provisions relating to the funding of the allotment as described in SECTION 1 of the original bill.

The original bill does not amend Section 32.151 or Section 32.152 of the Education Code, relating to the establishment of the technology immersion pilot project and pilot project administration. The substitute bill amends these provisions in the manner specified above in the ANALYSIS section.

The original bill does not amend Subsection (c) of Section 32.153, Education Code, relating to TEA use of pilot project funds. The substitute amends this Subsection to provide that TEA shall use pilot project funds for the purchase of interactive whole group learning and assessment tools for each participating classroom.