

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
80R3391 CAS-D

H.B. 1700
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Education
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Since 2003, Texas Tech University at Junction (TTU-Junction) has operated a very successful K-12 outdoor science program called the Outdoor School. The program began with three partner school districts in the first year. In fiscal year 2006, Outdoor School enrolled 3,000 fifth grade students and teachers in week-long, residential science programs at TTU-Junction. The Outdoor School uses water and watershed issues as an integrating thread to bring together all aspects of the science, social studies, and language arts curriculum in project-based applications featuring real world problem-solving. Students address science and math learning objectives while dealing with contemporary problems concerning water supply, conservation, environmental concerns, and planning.

Participating school districts send up to 120 students and teachers to TTU-Junction for one week to participate in outdoor, hands-on, student-centered instruction which brings together the entire science curriculum using the environment as an integrating concept. The program addresses all of the Texas Education Agency science, math, and social studies concepts found in the TAKS test and has been successful in raising assessment test scores of participating elementary students. Of note, the greatest improvement has been noted in students from Title I schools who come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Primary curriculum for the Outdoor School involves aquatic biology, watershed ecology, and pioneer studies--history of pioneer migration and relationship to natural water supply. Secondary curriculum modules involve map-reading, orientation, wildlife biology, and range ecology. The Texas Parks and Wildlife's Project Wild curriculum is used at the Outdoor School.

H.B. 1700 implements nature science curriculum on a statewide level, developed by the State Board of Education, and made it available at the Outdoor School at TTU-Junction, the Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Center of Texas Tech University, and South Llano River State Park.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to any state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 28, Education Code, by adding Section 28.013, as follows:

Sec. 28.013. NATURE SCIENCE CURRICULUM PROJECT. (a) Requires the State Board of Education (SBOE) to assist certain entities in developing a nature science curriculum, in accordance with this section.

(b) Requires the nature science curriculum to be designed for students in grades six through 12, provide certain essential knowledge and skills, involve outdoor experiential learning projects in state parks regarding certain environmental themes, and be designed to be implemented in any state park, use state park resources for instruction, and be presented by classroom teachers and state park employees.

(c) Requires the Texas Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (T-STEM) Center of Texas Tech University to make the nature science curriculum available through the university's Internet website or through a separate Internet website developed by the center for that purpose.

(d) Requires the Texas Tech University Center at Junction, with assistance from South Llano River State Park, to present to classroom teachers and state park employees staff development courses in providing instruction in the nature science curriculum.

(e) Requires the nature science curriculum project to be implemented and maintained using money appropriated for those purposes.

SECTION 2. Requires the Texas Tech University Center at Junction, with assistance from South Llano River State Park, to present staff development courses as required by Section 28.013, Education Code, as added by this Act, beginning September 1, 2008.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2007.