

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 2864
By: Chisum
Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Developing skills in the use of technology is essential if today's students are to be prepared for higher education and ultimately for the workplace. Yet in rural areas of our State, the resources to assist students in the development of these skills are sometimes limited or non-existent. To address this issue, this bill would establish a pilot program to provide supplemental, technology-based instruction to students in rural school districts.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Commissioner of Education in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

The bill provides that the Commissioner of Education shall establish a pilot program under which state grant funds are provided to finance technology-based supplemental instruction to students at the sixth through 12th grade levels at participating campuses.

A campus is eligible to participate in the program and receive state grant funds if the campus is located in a school district that:

- has an enrollment of fewer than 5,000 students; and
- is not located in an area defined by the United States Office of Management and Budget as a standard metropolitan statistical area as of January 1, 2007.

The bill provides that the commissioner shall develop an application and selection process, and shall give priority to a campus that offers a relatively limited course selection to students, in comparison to the course selections generally offered to students in metropolitan areas.

A campus selected to participate in the program is entitled to receive state grant funds in an amount not to exceed \$200 each school year for each student in an eligible grade level served through the program.

The bill provides that state grant funds must be used to provide technology-based supplemental instruction for students at the eligible grade levels. Permissible expenditures under the program include costs incurred to provide:

- research-based instructional support;
- teacher training;
- academic tutoring or counseling;
- distance learning opportunities that use the Internet and are aligned with the essential knowledge and skills adopted under Section 28.002 for the subject areas of English language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, and languages other than English, as applicable; and
- distance learning opportunities that enable students to earn college credit in the subject areas of English language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, or languages other than English.

The bill provides that, as a condition of receiving a state grant, a campus must contribute additional funding for activities provided at the campus through the program, in an amount equal to at least \$100 each school year for each student in an eligible grade level served through the
H.B. 2864 80(R)

program. The bill specifies sources of funds that may be used for the required additional funding.

The bill provides that a campus participating in the program must make instructional support services available to students outside of regular school hours for at least 10 hours each week.

The commissioner shall pay the costs of the program using funds available for that purpose, not to exceed \$4 million each fiscal year or a greater amount specified by the General Appropriations Act.

The bill provides that, using funds available for the program in an amount not to exceed \$150,000 each fiscal year, the commissioner shall contract for an evaluation of the program's effectiveness in improving student performance. Not later than December 1, 2008, the commissioner shall deliver an interim report containing the results of the evaluation. Not later than December 1, 2010, the commissioner shall deliver a final report regarding the program to the Legislature.

The commissioner shall adopt rules necessary to implement the pilot program.

The pilot program expires September 1, 2011.

EFFECTIVE DATE

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