

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 840
By: Lucio
Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Current law does not require that a training program for teachers and paraprofessionals who work with students with disabilities be made available. In 2004, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was reauthorized, adding the requirements that special education services be based on "peer reviewed research to the extent practicable" and that schools support professional development for all personnel who work with children with disabilities to ensure they have "the skills and knowledge necessary to improve the academic and functional performance of children with disabilities, including the use of scientifically-based instructional practices." In addition to the IDEA requirements, the federal No Child Left Behind Act requires that special education students receive their instruction in the core academic subjects from "highly qualified teachers."

This bill requires the Commissioner of Education (commissioner) to develop and make available training based on scientifically based research at professional development institutes for teachers and paraprofessionals who work with students with disabilities, including autism spectrum disorders. The bill requires that the commissioner pay a stipend to each teacher or paraprofessional who completes training.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

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

ANALYSIS

Note: Unless otherwise specified, statutory references in this BILL ANALYSIS are to the Education Code.

This bill relates to professional development institutes for public school teachers and paraprofessionals regarding education of students with disabilities.

The bill amends Subchapter J, Chapter 21, Education Code, by adding Section 21.461 to provide that the commissioner shall develop and make available professional development institutes for teachers and paraprofessionals relating to research-based instructional services for students with disabilities, including autism spectrum disorders. A professional development institute must address: disability-specific information necessary to enable a teacher or paraprofessional to work effectively in the classroom with students with disabilities; instructional techniques proven by scientifically based research to be effective in teaching the curriculum required under Section 28.002 to students with disabilities; and appropriate management of behaviors related to a student's disability that may affect the student's performance. The commissioner shall adopt criteria for selection of teachers and paraprofessionals authorized to attend a professional development institute. The commissioner must give priority to teachers and paraprofessionals who have a significant level of professional contact with students with autism spectrum disorders. From funds appropriated for the purpose, the commissioner shall pay a stipend to each teacher or paraprofessional who completes a professional development institute. The commissioner shall determine the amount of the stipend paid.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2007.

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