

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1697
By: Shapiro
Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Despite improvements in elementary reading scores, eighth grade reading scores for Texas students have steadily declined. Some students who read well in the language arts have problems when reading in other subject areas. Students below their appropriate reading level will have a more difficult time in dealing with advanced coursework and college preparation courses. While elementary teachers often receive specialized training in teaching reading, teachers in middle school grades often lack the needed training to effectively teach students to read.

As proposed, this bill requires the commissioner of education to establish reading academies that provide specialized training for sixth through eighth grade core curriculum teachers so that they receive training unique to the needs of their subject areas. The bill requires teachers at campuses identified as academically unacceptable in reading to attend these academies.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Commissioner of Education (§ 21.001. DEFINITION. In this chapter, "commissioner" includes a person designated by the commissioner.) in SECTION 1 and to the Commissioner of Education in SECTION 3 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

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

The bill provides that the Commissioner of Education or the commissioner's designee (commissioner) shall develop and make available reading academies for teachers who provide instruction to students at the sixth through eighth grade levels. Such a reading academy must include training in:

- (1) for a teacher providing instruction in reading to students at the seventh or eighth grade level:
 - (A) administration of the reading instrument required by Section 28.006(c-1); and
 - (B) interpretation of the results of the reading instrument required by Section 28.006(c-1) and strategies, based on scientific research regarding effective reading instruction, for long-term intensive intervention to target identified student needs in word recognition, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension;
- (2) for a teacher providing instruction in reading to students at the sixth, seventh, or eighth grade level:
 - (A) strategies to be implemented in English language arts and other subject areas for multisyllable word reading, vocabulary development, and comprehension of expository and narrative text;
 - (B) an adaptation framework that enables teachers to respond to differing student strengths and needs, including adaptations for students of limited English proficiency or students receiving special education services under Subchapter A, Chapter 29;
 - (C) collaborative strategies to increase active student involvement and motivation to read; and
 - (D) other areas identified by the commissioner as essential components of reading instruction; and
- (3) for a teacher providing instruction in mathematics, science, or social studies to students at the sixth, seventh, or eighth grade level:

- (A) strategies for incorporating reading instruction into the curriculum for the subject area taught by the teacher; and
- (B) other areas identified by the commissioner.

The bill provides that the commissioner by rule shall require a teacher to attend a reading academy if the teacher provides instruction in reading, mathematics, science, or social studies to students at the sixth, seventh, or eighth grade level at a campus that is considered academically unacceptable under Section 39.132 on the basis of student performance on the reading assessment instrument administered under Section 39.023(a) to students in any grade level at the campus. The bill provides that the commissioner shall adopt criteria for selection of teachers, other than teachers described above in this paragraph, who may attend a reading academy.

The bill provides that, from funds appropriated for that purpose, a teacher who attends a reading academy is entitled to receive a stipend in the amount determined by the commissioner. A stipend received under this subsection is not considered in determining whether a district is paying the teacher the minimum monthly salary under Section 21.402.

The bill provides that, on request of the commissioner, regional education service centers shall assist the commissioner and the Texas Education Agency (agency) with training and other activities relating to the development and operation of reading academies.

The bill provides that, from funds appropriated for purposes of Section 21.4551, as added by this bill, the commissioner shall conduct or contract with a public or private entity to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the reading academies developed under such section. The evaluation must:

- (1) use qualitative, quantitative, and expert review methodologies, including:
 - (A) direct observations;
 - (B) follow-up interviews and surveys with participating teachers and administrators; and
 - (C) analysis of student data submitted through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) and student assessment results to measure reading progress achieved by students receiving instruction from teachers who attended a reading academy in comparison to:
 - (i) reading progress achieved by those students in preceding years; and
 - (ii) reading progress achieved by students receiving instruction from teachers who did not attend a reading academy; and
- (2) include an analysis of financial data to assess the cost-effectiveness of the reading academies.

The bill provides that, not later than December 1, 2010, the commissioner shall prepare and deliver to each member of the legislature a report describing the results of the evaluation as described in the paragraph immediately above.

The bill provides that each school district shall administer at the beginning of the seventh grade a reading instrument adopted by the commissioner to each student whose performance on the assessment instrument in reading administered under Section 39.023(a) to the student in grade six did not demonstrate reading proficiency, as determined by the commissioner. The district shall administer the reading instrument in accordance with the commissioner's recommendations under Subsection (a)(1) of Section 28.006. The bill provides that a school district shall provide additional reading instruction and intervention to each student in seventh grade assessed as described above in this paragraph, as appropriate to improve the student's reading skills in the relevant areas identified through the assessment instrument. Training and support for activities required by this subsection shall be provided by regional education service centers and teacher reading academies established under Section 21.4551.

The bill provides that the commissioner may adopt rules requiring a school district that receives federal funding under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. Section 6301 et seq.) to use that funding to provide supplemental educational services under 20 U.S.C. Section 6316 in conjunction with the accelerated instruction provided under Section 28.0211, provided that the rules may not conflict with federal law governing the use of that funding. The bill provides that the commissioner shall certify, not later than July 1 of each school year or as soon as practicable thereafter, whether sufficient funds have been appropriated statewide for the purposes of Section 28.0211. A determination by the commissioner is final and

may not be appealed. For purposes of certification, the commissioner may not consider Foundation School Program funds. Section 28.0211 may be implemented only if the commissioner certifies that sufficient funds have been appropriated during a school year for administering the accelerated instruction programs specified under this section, including teacher training for that purpose.

The bill provides that Subsection (l), Section 28.0211, Education Code, is repealed.

The bill provides that, for purposes of Subsection (c-1), Section 28.006, Education Code, as added by this Act, the commissioner of education shall adopt the reading instrument developed by the Texas Education Agency under the Adolescent Literacy Initiative established in accordance with Rider 48b, page III-14, Chapter 1369, Acts of the 79th Legislature, Regular Session, 2005 (General Appropriations Act).

The bill provides that the commissioner of education shall establish the teacher reading academies required by Section 21.4551, Education Code, as added by this Act, not later than June 1, 2008, and require teachers to begin attending the academies in accordance with that section on the basis of student performance data for the 2007-2008 school year.

The bill provides that the Act applies beginning with the 2007-2008 school year.

EFFECTIVE DATE

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