

By: Shapleigh

S.B. No. 553

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1 AN ACT

2 relating to a dual language education pilot project in certain
3 school districts.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

5 SECTION 1. (a) This Act may be cited as the "21st Century
6 Texas Educational Competitiveness Act."

7 (b) In the 2002-2003 school year, over 50 percent of the
8 students enrolled in the first grade in the three largest school
9 districts in this state, the Houston, Dallas, and Fort Worth
10 Independent School Districts, were Hispanic. Forty percent of
11 those students were classified as students of limited English
12 proficiency. The data for those school districts represent a
13 growing statewide trend that will pose significant challenges to
14 educators of children who are required to learn in a language other
15 than the primary language spoken in the home. Dual language
16 education programs provide instruction in both English and the
17 native language of the non-English-speaking students. Those
18 programs promote bilingualism, biliteracy, and grade-level
19 academic achievement by placing both native English-speaking and
20 non-English-speaking students together in one classroom. Wayne
21 Thomas and Virginia Collier conducted a study in which they
22 examined the records of 700,000 students in various bilingual
23 education programs. The study found that those students who
24 received grade-level cognitive and academic instruction in both

1 their first and second languages for many years were succeeding at
2 the end of high school. In fact, by the eighth grade, nonnative
3 English speakers in dual language education programs were found to
4 outperform native English speakers on standardized tests. Those
5 programs also experience lower dropout rates than other bilingual
6 education programs. The 21st Century Texas Educational
7 Competitiveness Act establishes a pilot program to study the
8 effectiveness of dual language education.

9 SECTION 2. Subchapter B, Chapter 21, Education Code, is
10 amended by adding Section 21.0485 to read as follows:

11 Sec. 21.0485. DUAL LANGUAGE EDUCATION TEACHER
12 CERTIFICATION. (a) To ensure that there are teachers with special
13 training to work with other teachers and with students in a dual
14 language education program, the board shall establish a dual
15 language education teaching certificate.

16 (b) The board shall propose rules establishing the training
17 requirements, including the minimum academic qualifications, a
18 person must accomplish to obtain a certificate under this section.

19 (c) The board shall propose rules establishing the
20 requirements for a teacher who receives training in a foreign
21 country to obtain a certificate under this section.

22 SECTION 3. Subchapter A, Chapter 28, Education Code, is
23 amended by adding Section 28.0052 to read as follows:

24 Sec. 28.0052. DUAL LANGUAGE EDUCATION PILOT PROJECT. (a)
25 The commissioner shall establish a pilot project in school
26 districts selected by the commissioner under which the agency
27 examines dual language education programs and the effect of those

1 programs on a student's ability to graduate from high school.

2 (b) In selecting school districts under Subsection (a), the
3 commissioner shall:

4 (1) select districts that:

5 (A) will commit to at least a three-year dual
6 language education program; and

7 (B) demonstrate a substantially equal enrollment
8 of students with limited English proficiency and students whose
9 primary language is English or, if a district does not have a
10 sufficient number of limited English proficiency students to meet
11 the equal enrollment standard, include the enrollment of students
12 with limited English proficiency, students whose primary language
13 is English, and bilingual students; and

14 (2) give preference to a district that:

15 (A) demonstrates the potential for expanding the
16 program through middle school; and

17 (B) will implement the program at the
18 kindergarten level.

19 (c) The commissioner by rule shall require a district to
20 limit activities of the dual language education program during the
21 first year of the program to planning activities, including:

22 (1) hiring and training teachers and ensuring teacher
23 certification;

24 (2) establishing parental and community support for
25 the program; and

26 (3) acquiring adequate learning materials in both
27 program languages.

1 (d) A program that applies for the expansion of an existing
2 dual language education program is eligible for funding under the
3 pilot project.

4 (e) Funding provided for a dual language education program
5 may be used by a district for:

6 (1) classroom materials; and

7 (2) tuition and textbook expenses for students seeking
8 teacher certification under Section 21.0485.

9 (f) The agency shall report to the legislature describing
10 the agency's activities under the pilot project, the effect of the
11 project on grade-level completion and high school graduation rates,
12 and the recommendations arising from the project. The agency shall
13 submit an interim report under this subsection not later than
14 January 1, 2011, and a final report not later than January 1, 2013.

15 (g) This section expires August 1, 2013.

16 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
17 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
18 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
19 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
20 Act takes effect September 1, 2007.