

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1460
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Texas has more than 775,000 English language learners (ELLs) in programs up to grade 12, and these students speak more than 120 different languages. Due to the number of languages and student concentrations, districts vary in the way they educate their ELLs, and differences exist within bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs. Between the years 2005-2008, students with limited English proficiency have improved on every area tested by the TAKS test, but secondary students still lag behind those in the elementary grades.

Many of these students have the foundation skills of English but struggle with more advanced English skills such as vocabulary and comprehension. Expectations shift dramatically as students move from learning to read to reading to learn. Regardless of the language of core instruction or the age at which students are transitioned to English-only programs, the vast majority of students require support for acquiring academic English.

As proposed, S.B. 1460 requires the commissioner of education (commissioner) to design, establish, and make available professional development academies for teachers who provide instruction to students of limited English proficiency at the seventh grade level or above. S.B. 1460 requires the commissioner to require a teacher to attend a professional development academy if the teacher provides instruction at the seventh grade level or above at a certain campus and in certain programs to students with certain limited proficiencies. This bill entitles teachers to a stipend for receiving training in the academies.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 1 (Section 21.4553, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter J, Chapter 21, Education Code, by adding Section 21.4553, as follows:

Sec. 21.4553. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACADEMIES FOR TEACHERS OF CERTAIN STUDENTS OF LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY. (a) Requires the commissioner of education (commissioner) to design, establish, and make available professional development academies for teachers who provide instruction to students of limited English proficiency (LEP) at the seventh grade level or above.

(b) Requires that a professional development academy established under this section be designed to include training for teachers in research-based practices for improving general English language development in LEP students; teaching LEP students at the seventh grade level or above the English language, including specific vocabulary, as necessary for the students to understand and succeed academically in reading and other English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies; and improving access to learning by LEP students.

(c) Requires the commissioner by rule to require a teacher to attend a professional development academy established under this section if the teacher provides instruction at the seventh grade level or above; at a campus at which, as determined by the commissioner in accordance with commissioner rule, the

academic performance of LEP students needs improvement; and in a bilingual education or special language program or to LEP students in reading, English language arts, mathematics, science, or social studies.

(d) Requires the commissioner by rule to adopt criteria for the selection of teachers, other than teachers described by Subsection (c), who are authorized to attend a professional development academy established under this section.

(e) Entitles a teacher who attends a professional development academy established under this section, from funds appropriated for the purpose, to receive a stipend in the amount determined by the commissioner. Provides that 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 (Minimum Salary Schedule for Certain Professional Staff).

(f) Requires regional education service centers, on request of the commissioner, to assist the commissioner and Texas Education Agency with activities related to the design, establishment, and operation of professional development academies under this section. Authorizes the commissioner to seek additional assistance from other public and private providers.

(g) Requires the commissioner, from funds appropriated for purposes of this section, to conduct or contract with a public or private entity to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the professional development academies established under this section. Sets forth certain requirements of the evaluation.

(h) Requires the commissioner, not later than December 1, 2012, to prepare and deliver to each member of the legislature a report describing the results of the evaluation required by Subsection (g). Provides that Subsection (g) and this subsection expire September 1, 2013.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2009.