

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1576
By: Shapiro
Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The move to end-of-course tests for Algebra I, Algebra II, and geometry will require high school students to demonstrate higher levels of mathematics knowledge than do the current comprehensive Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills mathematics tests. Unfortunately, many students enter high school under prepared to develop algebraic reasoning. There are many reasons for this, including inadequate preparation of numbers and numerical concepts in the primary and intermediate grades; poor understanding of rational numbers and related mathematical knowledge such as fractions, decimals, and proportional reasoning; weaknesses in teacher preparation to teach mathematics; and a disposition toward low self-expectations in mathematics.

S.B. 1576 establishes an algebra instruction grant program for schools that have a disproportionate number of students performing at an unsatisfactory level on statewide standardized mathematics tests in grades five through seven. The bill requires the commissioner of education to develop a comprehensive, research-based intervention plan to assist the districts that receive a grant. The bill requires a grant to support sustained improvement in a district's pre-algebra mathematics instruction in grades five through eight and specifies permissible uses of grant funds.

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

S.B. 1576 amends the Education Code to require the commissioner of education, from funds appropriated for such purpose, to establish a program under which a grant is awarded to a school district to implement an algebra instruction program. The bill prohibits the commissioner from using more than \$50 million for the program from the funds appropriated for use by school districts in providing accelerated instruction to a student who has failed to perform satisfactorily on a statewide standardized test. The bill requires the commissioner to develop a comprehensive intervention plan to assist a school district with a disproportionate number of students who fail to perform satisfactorily on the statewide standardized mathematics test administered in grades five through seven. The bill requires the plan to be based on high-quality research.

S.B. 1576 requires the commissioner to establish application criteria for receiving a grant under the program that require a district applying for a grant to submit a local intervention plan that meets the standards adopted by the commissioner. The bill requires the commissioner, in awarding such grants, to give preference to districts with the lowest rates of satisfactory performance on a statewide standardized mathematics test administered in grades five through seven. The bill requires such a grant to support sustained improvement in a district's pre-algebra mathematics instruction in grades five through eight and target students who will be administered the Algebra I end-of-course test beginning in the 2011-2012 school year. The bill

authorizes the use of a grant awarded under the program to provide:

- training and payment of state intervention coaches to assist school districts in implementing the grant;
- training and instructional materials in pre-algebra skills in grades five through eight;
- professional development of mathematics teachers assigned to grades five through eight;
- flexibility in the school day for instruction;
- instructional services; and
- technology as part of instructional activities.

S.B. 1576 authorizes the commissioner to condition a grant on the implementation of the comprehensive intervention plan and to withhold or recover any funds not spent as provided by such plan. The bill establishes that the commissioner's decision regarding such a condition or the withholding or recovering of funds is final and prohibits such decision from being appealed. The bill authorizes the commissioner to require a district to make financial and other commitments as part of a grant application.

S.B. 1576 requires the commissioner to establish guidelines for implementing the grant program and to adopt rules necessary to administer the program.

S.B. 1576 establishes that its provisions do not make an appropriation and that the provisions take effect only if a specific appropriation for the implementation of the provisions is provided in a general appropriations act of the 81st Legislature.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the act does not receive the necessary vote, the act takes effect September 1, 2009.