

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 500
By: Eissler
Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Texas will begin a new student assessment program during the 2011-2012 school year named the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). Legislation enacted by the 81st Legislature provided a transition period for schools moving from the existing Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills program (TAKS) to STAAR by suspending accountability ratings, among other provisions, but did not provide a similar transition for students. That legislation has led to a confusing and complicated set of assessments standards for students to graduate. H.B. 500 provides a transition period for students by allowing students to meet their graduation requirement through either assessment program and establishes clearer graduation requirements for students.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 2 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 500 amends the Education Code to remove the requirement that a school district adopt a policy that requires a student's performance on an end-of-course assessment instrument for certain secondary-level courses to account for 15 percent of the student's final grade for the course and to instead require a district to adopt a policy addressing whether a student's performance on such a test will be used by the district in determining the student's final grade for the course and, if so, the manner in which the student's performance will be used in determining the final grade. The bill makes a conforming change as it relates to subsequent administrations of such a test and makes the district policy applicable beginning with the 2011-2012 school year.

H.B. 500, in a provision of law requiring a student to achieve, in each subject in the foundation curriculum, a cumulative score that is at least equal to the product of the number of end-of-course instruments administered to the student in that subject and a scale score that indicates satisfactory performance, as determined by the commissioner of education, in order to receive a high school diploma, requires the commissioner, for each such scale score that is not based on a 100-point scale scoring system, to provide for the conversion, in accordance with commissioner rule, of the scale score to an equivalent score based on a 100-point scale scoring system. The bill makes conforming and nonsubstantive changes.

H.B. 500 replaces the requirement that a student, in addition to satisfying the cumulative score requirements, achieve a score that meets or exceeds the satisfactory score determined by the commissioner for English III and Algebra II end-of-course tests in order to graduate under the recommended high school program with a requirement that a student, in lieu of satisfying the cumulative score requirements, achieve such a score on those end-of-course tests, as well as on the end-of-course test for biology, chemistry, or physics, and the end-of-course test for world geography, world history, or United States history. The bill requires a student, in lieu of satisfying the cumulative score requirements, in order to graduate under the minimum high

school program, to achieve a score that meets or exceeds the satisfactory score on end-of-course tests for English III; Algebra I; biology, chemistry, or physics; and world geography, world history, or United States history.

H.B. 500 authorizes, rather than requires, a student who failed to achieve a minimum score on an end-of-course test to retake the test and removes a provision that authorizes other students to retake an end-of-course test for any reason. The bill makes these provisions applicable beginning with the 2011-2012 school year.

H.B. 500 adds the determination of a district that a student, on completion of grade 11, is unlikely to satisfy the alternative score requirements for receiving a high school diploma that are set out by the bill's provisions as a condition under which the district is required to require the student to enroll in an appropriate, rather than a corresponding, content-area college preparatory course for which an end-of-course test has been adopted, if available. The bill authorizes a student to use the student's score on the end-of-course test for the college preparatory course towards satisfying the score requirements applicable to the student under the secondary-level performance requirements, rather than towards satisfying the cumulative score requirements.

H.B. 500, in temporary provisions setting out the period under which the transition from general high school subject tests to end-of-course tests is made, as implemented by commissioner rule, requires a student entering the ninth grade during the 2011-2012 or 2012-2013 school year to be administered each secondary-level end-of-course test for a course in which the student is enrolled and for which an end-of-course test is administered. The bill prohibits such a student from receiving a high school diploma unless the student achieves a score that meets or exceeds the satisfactory score as determined by the commissioner on certain end-of-course tests or has performed satisfactorily on each exit-level test required by provisions of law as they existed before amendment by Chapter 1312 (S.B. No. 1031), Acts of the 80th Legislature, Regular Session, 2007, as that performance was determined according to those provisions. The bill prohibits a student entering the ninth grade during the 2013-2014 school year or a later school year from receiving a high school diploma unless the student has satisfied the secondary-level cumulative score requirements or the alternative score requirements, as applicable to the student.

H.B. 500 adds each student subject to the score requirements for the advanced high school program, to the alternative score requirements set out by the bill, or to the requirement under the transition period for a student entering the ninth grade during the 2011-2012 or 2012-2013 school year to the students entitled to notice of the specific requirements applicable to the student under rules adopted by the commissioner. The bill extends from September 1, 2015, to September 1, 2017, the expiration date of the temporary provisions relating to the notification entitlement and the commissioner's transition plan.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2011.