

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 975
By: Hinojosa
Higher Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Texas' high school graduation rate ranks 43rd in the nation. The latest American Community Survey five-year estimates for 2005-2009 indicate that less than 60 percent of the adults in Hidalgo County over the age of 25 completed high school.

Public schools face the challenge of helping all students graduate, but many students fail to graduate on time and are classified as dropouts. As a consequence, many of these students struggle to find gainful employment and are unable to pursue higher education.

Many school districts lack the resources to fully address this challenge, but there are several excellent programs in place in the Rio Grande Valley that, if applied on a wider scale, could improve the high school graduation rate in South Texas.

S.B. 975 replicates the dropout recovery program currently operated by Pharr-San Juan Alamo Independent School District, known as the College Career and Technology Advancement Academy. The bill allows South Texas College to run the program in order to serve more students in Hidalgo County.

The bill facilitates high school graduation for students under 26 years of age who have dropped out of high school, and lack three or fewer credits or failed a portion of the exit examination and therefore do not meet the qualifications necessary to complete and receive a high school diploma. In an effort to increase the number of high school graduates and the number of students participating in higher education, the bill allows South Texas College to partner with one or more high schools in Hidalgo County to operate a dropout recovery program designed to promote high school completion and successfully transition students to college and a career.

S.B. 975 amends current law relating to the operation of dropout recovery programs by public junior colleges in partnership with school districts.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 29, Education Code, by adding Subchapter K, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER K. PUBLIC JUNIOR COLLEGE AND SCHOOL DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM TO PROVIDE DROPOUT RECOVERY

Sec. 29.401. **APPLICABILITY.** (a) Provides that this subchapter applies only to a public junior college, as defined by Section 61.003 (Definitions), located in a county:

- (1) with a population of 750,000 or more; and
- (2) with less than 65 percent of the population 25 years and older having graduated from high school, according to the most recent American

Community Survey five-year estimates compiled by the United States Census Bureau.

(b) Provides that the application of this subchapter to a public junior college is not affected if, after the public junior college enters into a partnership and begins providing a dropout recovery program as provided by this subchapter, the county's demographics under Subsection (a)(2) change and the county no longer meets the requirements under Subsection (a)(2).

(c) Provides that this subchapter applies only to a school district with a dropout rate that is higher than 15 percent. Provides that the application of this subchapter to a district is not affected if, after the district enters into a partnership as provided by this subsection, the district's dropout rate changes and the district no longer meets the requirements under this subsection.

(d) Provides that this section expires September 1, 2013.

Sec. 29.402. PARTNERSHIP. (a) Authorizes a public junior college, beginning September 1, 2012, to enter into an articulation agreement to partner with one or more school districts located in the public junior college district to provide on the campus of the public junior college a dropout recovery program for students described by Subsection (b) to successfully complete and receive a diploma from a high school of the appropriate partnering school district.

(b) Provides that a person who is under 26 years of age is eligible to enroll in a dropout recovery program under this subchapter if the person:

(1) is required to complete not more than three course credits to complete the curriculum requirements for the minimum, recommended, or advanced high school program, as appropriate, for high school graduation; or

(2) has failed to perform satisfactorily on an end-of-course assessment instrument administered under Section 39.023(c) (requiring TEA to adopt end-of-course assessment instruments for secondary level courses in certain subjects) or an assessment instrument administered under Section 39.023(c) as that section existed before amendment by Chapter 1312 (S.B. 1031), Acts of the 80th Legislature, Regular Session, 2007.

(c) Requires a public junior college under this section to:

(1) design a dropout recovery curriculum that includes career and technology education courses that lead to industry or career certification; and

(2) integrate into the dropout recovery curriculum research-based strategies to assist students in becoming able academically to pursue postsecondary education, including:

(A) high quality, college readiness instruction with strong academic and social supports;

(B) secondary to postsecondary bridging that builds college readiness skills, provides a plan for college completion, and ensures transition counseling; and

(C) information concerning appropriate supports available in the first year of postsecondary enrollment to ensure postsecondary persistence and success, to the extent funds are available for the purpose;

(3) offer advanced academic and transition opportunities, including dual credit courses and college preparatory courses, such as advanced placement courses; and

(4) coordinate with each partnering school district to provide in the articulation agreement that the district retains accountability for student attendance, student completion of high school course requirements, and student performance on assessment instruments as necessary for the student to receive a diploma from a high school of the partnering school district.

(d) Requires that a dropout recovery program provided under this subchapter comply with the requirements of Sections 29.081(e) (relating to authorizing a school district to use a private or public community-based dropout recovery education program if the program meets certain requirements) and (f) (relating to requiring the commissioner of education to include students in a program under Subsection (e) in computing the district's average daily attendance for funding purposes).

Sec. 29.403. FINANCING. (a) Authorizes a public junior college district to receive from each partnering school district for each student from that district enrolled in a dropout recovery program under this subchapter an amount negotiated between the junior college district and that partnering district not to exceed the total average per student funding amount in that district during the preceding school year for maintenance and operations, including state and local funding, but excluding money from the available school fund.

(b) Provides that a student who is enrolled in a program under this subchapter is included in determining the average daily attendance under Section 42.005 (Average Daily Attendance) of the partnering school district.

Sec. 29.404. OTHER FUNDING. (a) Provides that, to the extent consistent with the General Appropriations Act, a public junior college under this subchapter is eligible to receive dropout prevention and intervention program funds appropriated to the agency.

(b) Authorizes a public junior college under this subchapter to receive gifts, grants, and donations to use for the purposes of this subchapter.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2011.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Upon passage, or, if the Act does not receive the necessary vote, the Act takes effect September 1, 2011.