

By: Carona

S.B. No. 1557

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the establishment of the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium.

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

SECTION 1. Section 7.0561, Education Code, is added to read as follows:

Sec. 7.0561. TEXAS HIGH PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS CONSORTIUM.

(a) The Texas High Performance Schools Consortium is created for the purpose of informing the governor, legislature, and commissioner about ways to transform public schools to improve student learning through the development of innovative, next-generation learning standards and assessment and accountability systems.

(b) One or more school districts, up to a maximum of 20, may apply to the commissioner to be included in the consortium of school districts. The districts selected shall include a representative range of district types and sizes and diverse student populations. The commissioner may select upon application an exemplary open-enrollment charter school to participate in the consortium.

(c) The commissioner may waive one or more requirements, restrictions, or prohibitions under

(1) Subchapter B, Chapter 28;

(2) Sections 31.1011 and 31.073(b)(1) (state textbook credits); and

1 (3) Chapter 39.

2 (d) With input from interested school districts and other
3 stakeholders, the commissioner shall adopt rules to create the
4 consortium, according to the following principles for a next
5 generation of higher performing public schools:

6 (1) engagement of students in digital learning,
7 including the use of electronic textbooks and instructional
8 materials adopted under Subchapters B and B-1, Chapter 31, and
9 courses offered through the state virtual school network under
10 Subchapter 30A;

11 (2) emphasis on learning standards that focus on
12 high-priority "power standards" identified in coordination with
13 districts participating in the consortium;

14 (3) use of multiple assessments for learning that have
15 meaning and importance and that continuously inform students,
16 parents, campuses, and districts about the extent to which learning
17 is occurring and what schools are doing to improve;

18 (4) an effective and efficient accountability system
19 that:

20 (A) balances academic excellence and local
21 values to inspire learning; and

22 (B) at the state level, uses a stratified random
23 sampling of students or other objective methodology to hold
24 districts and schools accountable while reducing the number of
25 state assessments that students are required to take; and

26 (5) local control that enables communities and parents
27 to be involved in the important decisions regarding the education

1 of their children.

2 (e) The application shall include a detailed plan for
3 assessments and accountability, which will both support improved
4 instruction and learning and provide evidence of the accurate
5 evaluation of the quality of the campuses, and which shall include:

6 (1) a thorough plan for accountability for student
7 learning, including issues regarding compliance with federal law;

8 (2) clear descriptions of each assessed curricular aim
9 in the "power standards";

10 (3) a plan for resources to support teachers in
11 improving student learning; and

12 (4) other provisions that may be established by the
13 commissioner.

14 (f) The commissioner shall convene consortium leaders
15 periodically to discuss ways to transform learning opportunities
16 for all students, build cross-district support systems and
17 training, and share best practice tools and processes.

18 (g) The commissioner or a school district that participates
19 in the consortium may accept gifts, grants, or donations from any
20 source, including a foundation, private entity, or governmental
21 entity for the implementation of this section.

22 (h) To cover administration costs, the commissioner may
23 charge a fee to a school district or open-enrollment charter school
24 that is selected to participate in the consortium.

25 SECTION 2. (a) The commissioner shall adopt rules under
26 Section 7.0561, Education Code, as added by this Act, not later than
27 December 1, 2011. The commissioner shall seek a federal waiver, if

1 needed, for implementation.

2 (b) The commissioner shall make the application available
3 not later than January 1, 2012, for school districts to apply not
4 later than March 1, 2012 and to begin the consortium not later than
5 the 2012-13 school year.

6 (c) With the assistance of the consortium, the commissioner
7 shall submit progress reports to the Legislature by December 1,
8 2012, and December 1, 2014.

9 SECTION 3. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
10 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
11 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
12 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
13 Act takes effect September 1, 2011.