

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 742
By: Strama
Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Within the education system, interested parties have identified three persistent, critical deficiencies that contribute to the suppression of student achievement. First, the amount of learning loss experienced by economically disadvantaged students during the summer recess increases the achievement gap between these students and their peers who are not economically disadvantaged. Second, a lack of real-world, classroom-based training and development for new teachers hampers growth and increases new teacher attrition. Finally, the education system fails to compensate the best teachers for taking on meaningful additional responsibility while remaining classroom teachers. H.B. 742 seeks to address these concerns by creating a grant program under which additional summer educational opportunities will be provided for certain students.

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

H.B. 742 amends the Education Code to require the commissioner of education, beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, to establish and administer a competitive program to provide grants to not more than 10 school districts to use in providing instructional programs to students in prekindergarten through eighth grade during the period in which school is recessed for the summer. The bill provides that the program is for districts to provide summer instruction primarily for students who are educationally disadvantaged and sets out the purposes for which the program must be designed. The bill requires, as conditions of eligibility for participation in the program, that a school district have an enrollment of students who are educationally disadvantaged that is greater than 50 percent of total district enrollment; apply to the commissioner in the manner and within the time prescribed by commissioner rule; and provide as part of the application materials a plan that is designed to achieve the purposes of the program. The bill requires the commissioner, in selecting eligible school districts to participate in the program, to select those districts that provide plans that are the most innovative and represent a variety of approaches so that the effectiveness of various plans can be compared and evaluated.

H.B. 742 restricts grant funding to money appropriated for the program and to any gifts, grants, or donations made to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) that may be used for and that the commissioner applies to funding the program. The bill requires the commissioner, in accordance with commissioner rule and based on the amount available for the program, to determine the amount of each grant awarded. The bill restricts the use of a grant awarded to a school district to the implementation and administration of a plan designed to achieve the purposes of the program, including providing compensation for summer employment for the district's highest performing teachers and in accordance with commissioner rule.

H.B. 742 requires each district participating in the program to provide to TEA, in the manner and within the time prescribed by commissioner rule, an annual written report that includes information regarding the district's implementation of the plan and sets out the information required to be included in the report. The bill requires TEA to contract with an experienced and recognized third-party program evaluator to determine and prepare a report regarding the effectiveness of the program. The bill requires the evaluator's report to include the evaluator's best effort to project the cost and academic effects of implementing the best practices of the program in school districts throughout Texas and to describe the effectiveness of the program in improving academic performance among participating students, improving the professional development and performance of new teachers, and rewarding and retaining the highest performing teachers.

H.B. 742 requires TEA, not later than November 1 of each even-numbered year, to submit to each member of the legislature a report specifically describing the results of the program and authorizes the report to be in the form of a summary of the information required to be included in the school districts' report to TEA and the third-party evaluator's report. The bill requires the commissioner to adopt rules as necessary to administer the program.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2013.