

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 935
By: Kolkhorst
Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Reading, interested parties note, is a critically important skill and serves as the foundation on which other learning is built. Many students in Texas are not reading at a satisfactory level, which limits their ability to excel in other subjects. The parties suggest that, due to the importance of reading, all students, including those in low-performing schools, should be taught by well-trained literacy specialists with access to a wide range of educational support and training. S.B. 935 seeks to implement such teaching through the establishment of a reading excellence team pilot program.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

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. 935 amends the Education Code to require the commissioner of education, not later than September 1, 2016, to establish a reading excellence team pilot program using funds appropriated for that purpose. The bill makes a school district eligible to participate in the pilot program if, as determined by the commissioner, the district has low student performance on the reading instrument administered by each school district at the kindergarten and first and second grade levels or on the third grade statewide standardized reading test.

S.B. 935 requires the pilot program to establish reading excellence teams composed of reading instruction specialists, to allow an eligible school district to request the assistance of a reading excellence team, and to provide a reading excellence team to a requesting eligible school district to review with the district the test results to determine campuses and classrooms for kindergarten through third grade with the greatest need of assistance and to work with teachers on such campuses and in such classrooms to provide training necessary to improve student reading outcomes. The bill requires the commissioner to adopt rules to administer the pilot program, including rules establishing qualifications and criteria for selecting reading instruction specialists for a reading excellence team. The bill's provisions expire September 1, 2021.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2015.