

By: Kolkhorst, West

S.B. No. 972

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to training academies for public school teachers who provide reading comprehension instruction to students in grades four and five.

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

SECTION 1. Subchapter J, Chapter 21, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 21.4554 to read as follows:

Sec. 21.4554. READING-TO-LEARN ACADEMIES. (a) The commissioner shall develop and make available reading-to-learn academies for teachers who provide reading comprehension instruction to students at the fourth or fifth grade level.

(b) A reading-to-learn academy developed under this section:

(1) must include effective instructional practices that promote student development of reading comprehension and inferential and critical thinking;

(2) must provide training in the use of empirically validated instructional methods that are appropriate for struggling readers;

(3) may include material on writing instruction; and

(4) must provide participating teachers with access to the academy training materials through the Internet after the teachers attend the academy.

(c) The commissioner shall adopt criteria for selecting

teachers who may attend a reading-to-learn academy. In adopting selection criteria under this subsection, the commissioner shall:

(1) require granting a priority to teachers employed by a school district at a campus at which 50 percent or more of the students enrolled are educationally disadvantaged; and

(2) provide a process through which a teacher not employed at a campus described by Subdivision (1) may attend the academy if the academy has available space and the school district employing the teacher pays the costs of the teacher's attendance.

(d) From funds appropriated for that purpose, a teacher who attends a reading-to-learn academy is entitled to receive a stipend in the amount determined by the commissioner. A stipend received under this subsection is not considered in determining whether a district is paying the teacher the minimum monthly salary under Section 21.402.

(e) On request of the commissioner, regional education service centers shall assist the commissioner and agency with training and other activities relating to the development and operation of reading-to-learn academies.

(f) This section expires September 1, 2027.

SECTION 2. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2015.