

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1903
By: West
Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Since 2006, school districts have been required to provide high school students the opportunity to earn the equivalent of at least 12 semester credit hours of college credit. Statute refers to these programs as college credit programs. These credits may be earned through dual credit, advanced placement, or International Baccalaureate programs. Dual credit programs include academic dual credit, early college high schools, and career and technical education dual credit. These options are offered through partnerships between high schools and community colleges or other institutions of higher education, with the structures of the partnerships varying across programs. Statutory changes in recent biennia have expanded the availability and diversity of dual credit opportunities and the number of dual credits a student may earn.

In September 2015, limitations on the number of dual credits that students may enroll in per semester and grade limitations on when a student may begin dual credit courses were removed. As a result of these changes, the number of dual credit students, the number of credit hours taken, and the state's investment in these programs has grown.

Dual credit fall enrollment grew from more than 42,100 students in 2005 to more than 133,000 students in 2015. By fall 2015, the state was investing approximately \$39.6 million in higher education formula funds for fall enrollment semester credit hours for dual credit courses. In addition, other state funding sources such as public education formula funds may finance dual credit courses. As dual credit programs expand and more high school students earn greater amounts of dual credit, the state would benefit from a comprehensive strategy to administer and evaluate these programs and their outcomes for students.

Amending statute to align goals and requirements among the three programs would increase rigor, consistency, and quality across partnerships and programs. Increasing the evaluation capacity of the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board would enable dual credit programs to be more accountable to the state and provide needed insight into the effectiveness and efficiency of these programs.

Amend statute to require the Texas Education Agency and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to develop and align goals for all dual credit programs to ensure the availability of standard outcomes on which these programs could be evaluated.

Amend statute to ensure that partnerships are structured to achieve state goals by requiring memoranda of understanding for all dual credit programs to contain program-specific goals and quality assurances. These memoranda should be posted annually on each participating school district's and institution of higher education partner's website.

As proposed, S.B. 1903 amends current law relating to statewide goals for dual credit programs provided by school districts.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 28.009, Education Code, by adding Subsections (b-1) and (b-2), as follows:

(b-1) Requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to jointly develop statewide goals for dual credit programs, including early college high school programs, career and technical education dual credit programs, and joint high school and college credit programs provided under Section 130.008 (Courses for Joint High School and Junior College Credit), to provide uniform standards for evaluating those programs. Requires that the goals address, at a minimum, a dual credit program's achievement of enrollment in and acceleration through postsecondary education, performance in college-level coursework, and the development of an effective bridge between secondary and postsecondary education in the state.

(b-2) Requires any agreement, including a memorandum of understanding or articulation agreement, between a school district and public institution of higher education to provide a dual credit program described by Subsection (b-1) to include certain information, establish certain credits, roles, and responsibilities, and be posted in a certain manner.

SECTION 2. Requires TEA and THECB to, not later than August 31, 2018, jointly develop the statewide goals required under Section 28.009(b-1), Education Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3. Makes application of Section 28.008(b-2), Education Code, as added by this Act, prospective to September 1, 2018.

SECTION 4. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2017.