

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 713
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

New teachers report that their first years in the classroom are often the most difficult, and teacher turnover statistics confirm that educators are much more likely to leave the field in their first few years in the profession. One proven method of improving beginning teachers' performance is through a mentoring relationship with a more experienced educator. There are provisions for establishing mentor teacher programs in current law, but little direction as to what such programs should entail, leading to mentor programs of widely varying quality. Without effective mentoring, beginning teachers will be less likely to develop their teaching skills, manage challenges in the classroom, or remain in the teaching profession.

S.B. 713 will improve the quality of beginning teacher mentoring by codifying best practices for mentoring programs, including mentor continuity, workload, and training. The bill also incentivizes districts to set up mentoring arrangements by providing a mentor program allotment out of already allocated funds that can be used for mentor stipends, facilitating release time for mentors and mentees, or training mentors. By aiding in the development of beginning teachers, S.B. 713 will help to lower teacher turnover rates and improve the quality of instruction from the next generation of educators.

As proposed, S.B. 713 amends current law relating to a school district assigning a mentor teacher to a new classroom teacher.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the commissioner of education (commissioner) is modified in SECTION 1 (Section 21.458, Education Code) of this bill.

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the commissioner is rescinded in SECTION 3 of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 21.458, Education Code, by adding Subsections (a-1), (b-1), (f), and (g) and amending Subsections (b) and (d), as follows:

(a-1) Requires a teacher, to be assigned as a mentor, to agree to serve as a mentor teacher for at least two school years. Requires the assignment to begin on the first day of employment of the classroom teacher to whom the mentor teacher is assigned.

(b) Requires the commissioner of education (commissioner) to adopt rules necessary to administer this section, including rules concerning the duties and qualifications of a teacher who serves as a mentor and the number of classroom teachers that may be assigned to a mentor. Requires the rules concerning qualifications to require that to serve as a mentor a teacher is required to:

(1)–(2) makes no change to these subdivisions; and

(3) makes a nonsubstantive change; and

(4) demonstrate interpersonal skills, instructional effectiveness, and leadership

skills.

(b-1) Requires a school district to provide training to mentor teachers and any appropriate district and campus employees who work with the classroom teacher or supervise the classroom teacher. Requires the training to be completed by the mentor teacher and the district and campus employees before the beginning of the school year. Requires the district to also provide supplemental training to mentor teachers and employees during the school year. Requires the training to include content related to best mentorship practices.

(d) Requires the commissioner, in adopting rules under this section, rather than under Subsection (c), to rely on research-based mentoring programs that, through external evaluation, have demonstrated success.

(f) Requires a mentor teacher to meet with each classroom teacher assigned to the mentor at least once a week for an individual mentoring session lasting at least 45 minutes, with not less than 12 hours of meeting time each semester. Requires the mentoring sessions to address the following topics:

(1) orientation to the context, policies, and practices of the school district;

(2) data-driven instructional practices;

(3) specific instructional coaching cycles, including coaching regarding conferences between parents and the classroom teacher;

(4) professional development; and

(5) professional expectations.

(g) Requires a school district to:

(1) designate a specific time during the regularly contracted school day for meetings between mentor teachers and classroom teachers assigned to a mentor; and

(2) schedule release time or a reduced teaching load for mentor teachers and classroom teachers under this section to facilitate mentoring activities, including classroom observations or participation in supportive coaching.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter C, Chapter 42, Education Code, by adding Section 42.161, as follows:

Sec. 42.161. MENTOR PROGRAM ALLOTMENT. (a) Entitles a school district that has implemented a mentoring program for classroom teachers who have less than two years of teaching experience under Section 21.458 (Mentors) to an allotment as determined under Subsection (b) to fund the mentoring program and to provide stipends for mentor teachers.

(b) Requires the commissioner to adopt a formula to determine the amount to which each district described by Subsection (a) is entitled.

(c) Authorizes funding provided to districts under this section to be used only for providing:

(1) mentor teacher stipends;

(2) scheduled release time for mentor teachers and the classroom teachers to whom they are assigned for meeting and engaging in mentoring activities; and

(3) mentoring support through providers of mentor training.

SECTION 3. Repealer: Section 21.458(c) (relating to the requirement that the commissioner adopt rules and provide funding to school districts that assign mentor teachers under this section), Education Code.

SECTION 4. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2019–2020 school year.

SECTION 5. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2019.