

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 129
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Education
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Children regularly encounter cyberbullying in social media, often do not know how to conduct themselves respectfully online, have difficulty navigating the Internet in a healthy manner, and sometimes cannot identify credible sources of information. To address these issues, current law requires that school districts incorporate "digital citizenship" instruction into their curriculum. The current definition of this term, however, is vague and hard for teachers to interpret and teach.

H.B. 129 would require students enrolled in the sixth grade to complete instruction in digital citizenship as part of a public school district's social studies curriculum. The bill would define "digital citizenship" as media literacy and the ability to identify credible sources of information; digital ethics, etiquette, respectful discourse with persons who have differing opinions, safety, security, digital footprint, and the identification of rhetoric that incites violence based on a person's race, religion, or political affiliation; and cyberbullying prevention and response.

H.B. 129 amends current law relating to digital citizenship instruction in public schools.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the State Board of Education is modified in SECTION 1 (Section 28.002, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 28.002(z), Education Code, as follows:

(z) Requires the State Board of Education by rule to require students enrolled in grade level six to complete instruction in digital citizenship as part of the district's social studies curriculum. Provides that, in this subsection:

- (1) makes no changes to this subdivision.
- (2) "Digital citizenship" means the standards of appropriate, responsible, and healthy online behavior, including:
 - (A) creates this paragraph from existing text and makes a nonsubstantive change;
 - (B) digital ethics, etiquette, respectful discourse with people who have differing opinions, safety, security, digital footprint, and the identification of rhetoric that incites violence based on a person's race, religion, or political affiliation;
 - (C) cyberbullying prevention and response; and
 - (D) the importance of the right to freedom of speech contained in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of the United States, including the central role that the right to freedom of speech has in the history of the United States and the applicability of protections for freedom of speech for online interaction.

SECTION 2. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2021.