BILL ANALYSIS

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Computer science and coding skills are in strong demand in the Texas job market. However, despite ample job openings and a high median salary, too few Texas students were exposed to computer science curriculum in the most recent school year. H.B. 3298 seeks to ensure students in Texas develop knowledge and skills in computer science by providing for the creation of the computer science strategic advisory committee and a biennial reporting requirement.

H.B. 3298 amends current law relating to computer science and technology education, training, and curriculum.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 1 (Section 21.466, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter J, Chapter 21, Education Code, by adding Section 21.466, as follows:

> Sec. 21.466. COMPUTER SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT PROGRAM. (a) Defines "institution of higher education."

>> (b) Requires the commissioner of education (commissioner) to establish a competitive professional development grant program to encourage teachers to:

>>> (1) obtain computer science certification; and

>>> (2) continue professional development in coding, computational thinking, cybersecurity, and computer science education.

>> (c) Requires the commissioner, from money appropriated for the purpose, to make grants to eligible providers that offer:

>>> (1) professional development for classroom teachers to ensure teachers maintain a working knowledge of current computer industry standard tools and resources; and

>>> (2) training for computer science certification for teachers in accordance with certification requirements adopted by the State Board for Educator Certification.

>> (d) Requires a provider, to be eligible to receive a grant under this section, to:

>>> (1) be an institution of higher education, regional education service center, or school district or partnership of multiple school districts or a nonprofit entity approved by the commissioner that has demonstrated experience in providing professional development through a statewide network; and

(2) meet eligibility standards established by commissioner rule.

(e) Requires an eligible provider receiving a grant under this section to:

(1) provide the training or professional development described by Subsection (c) and establish professional development hubs in each education service center region;

(2) serve high-need campuses;

(3) have established partnerships with institution of higher education faculty with expertise in cybersecurity, computing, and computer science education; and

(4) develop partnerships with computer industry professionals.

(f) Authorizes the commissioner to adopt rules as necessary to implement this section.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 28, Education Code, by adding Section 28.0181, as follows:

Sec. 28.0181. COMPUTER SCIENCE STRATEGIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE. (a) Defines "advisory committee."

(b) Requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to establish the computer science strategic advisory committee as a permanent advisory committee to TEA to develop and provide recommendations for increasing computer science instruction and participation in public schools.

(c) Provides that the advisory committee is composed of at least 11 members. Requires the members to include:

(1) two members appointed by the governor;

(2) two members appointed by the lieutenant governor;

(3) two members appointed by the speaker of the Texas House of Representatives (house);

(4) one member appointed by the chair of the Texas Senate (senate) committee with primary jurisdiction over primary and secondary education;

(5) one member appointed by the chair of the senate committee with primary jurisdiction over higher education;

(6) one member appointed by the chair of the house committee with primary jurisdiction over primary and secondary education;

(7) one member appointed by the chair of the house committee with primary jurisdiction over higher education;

(8) one member appointed by the chair of the State Board of Education (SBOE); and

(9) any other members added by the advisory committee in a manner determined by the committee in the committee's discretion.

(d) Requires the governor, lieutenant governor, and speaker of the house, in appointing members to the advisory committee, to coordinate appointments to ensure that the six individuals appointed to the advisory committee collectively by those officers include:

(1) three educators who teach in a public school and are certified in computer science;

(2) one parent or person standing in parental relation to a student enrolled in a public school;

(3) one person employed in the technology industry; and

(4) one faculty member of an institution of higher education.

(e) Requires the governor to designate a member of the advisory committee as the presiding officer of the advisory committee to serve in that capacity at the pleasure of the governor.

(f) Authorizes the advisory committee to hold public meetings.

(g) Provides that members of the advisory committee are not entitled to compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses incurred in fulfilling committee duties.

(h) Requires TEA to appoint a TEA employee to support the advisory committee.

(i) Requires the advisory committee, not later than January 1 of each odd-numbered year, to submit to the governor and the legislature a report that includes recommended changes to state law, including funding proposals and timelines for the implementation of the recommended changes. Requires that the report include recommendations that are intended to:

(1) increase the number of certified computer science teachers;

(2) increase the number of public high schools offering computer science courses;

(3) increase the number of high school students enrolled in computer science courses;

(4) encourage the enrollment of diverse student populations in computer science courses; and

(5) expand computer science learning opportunities, including computer programming, computer coding, cybersecurity, and computational thinking, in public schools.

SECTION 3. Repealer: Section 5, Chapter 1149 (H.B. 2984), Acts of the 86th Legislature, Regular Session, 2019.

SECTION 4. Requires the commissioner, not later than December 31, 2021, to establish the grant program required under Section 21.466, Education Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 5. Requires the appropriate persons, as provided by Section 28.0181(c), Education Code, as added by this Act, to appoint members to the computer science strategic advisory committee as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act.

SECTION 6. Requires SBOE, not later than December 31, 2022, to review and revise, as needed, the essential knowledge and skills of the technology applications curriculum as required by Section 28.002(c-3), Education Code, as added by Chapter 1149 (H.B. 2984), Acts of the 86th Legislature, Regular Session, 2019.

SECTION 7. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2021.