

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 560
By: Lucio
Education
5/25/2021
Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

With over one million English language learners in our schools, bilingual education is a major undertaking for the Texas school system. These students rely on qualified bilingual teachers to help them to understand their grade level subjects while building their English skills. Unfortunately, the number of bilingual teachers has fallen by 20 percent over the last decade, even as the bilingual student population continues to grow. Without a sufficient number of qualified teachers, bilingual students find themselves in inadequate bilingual education programs that fail to prepare them for academic and future career success.

S.B. 560 tackles both of these problems by commissioning the Texas Education Agency, in coordination with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Workforce Commission, to create a strategic plan to improve bilingual education in Texas. The plan will identify strategies to increase the pipeline of qualified bilingual teachers and to implement more high quality bilingual programs in Texas schools. With the plan developed under S.B. 560, Texas bilingual students will receive the quality education they need for success in school and beyond.

(Original Author's / Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

S.B. 560 amends current law relating to developing a strategic plan for the improvement and expansion of high-quality bilingual education.

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 Subchapter B, Chapter 29, Education Code, by adding Section 29.067, as follows:

Sec. 29.067. STRATEGIC PLAN TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND BILINGUAL EDUCATION. (a) Defines "general academic teaching institution."

(b) Requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA), in collaboration with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Texas Workforce Commission, to develop a strategic plan that sets tangible goals and establishes timelines to:

- (1) increase the number of educators certified under Subchapter B (Certification of Educators), Chapter 21 (Educators), in bilingual education instruction;
- (2) increase the number of dual language immersion/one-way and two-way program models used in public schools;
- (3) educate families and school district employees regarding the importance of bilingual education in early childhood;

(4) adopt a uniform process for:

(A) identifying students in prekindergarten through 12th grade of limited English proficiency;

(B) monitoring the bilingual learning of students in prekindergarten through 12th grade; and

(C) collecting data regarding the identification and monitoring under Paragraphs (A) and (B); and

(5) increase the number of bilingual and multilingual high school graduates.

(c) Provides that TEA, in developing the strategic plan:

(1) is required to consult with appropriate representatives of general academic teaching institutions, public schools, early childhood education programs, and parents and legal guardians of public school students;

(2) is authorized to collaborate with representatives of state, regional, and local agencies, nonprofit organizations, social services providers, faith-based organizations, and the business community; and

(3) is required to study the use of the Bilingual Target Language Proficiency Test to certify educators in bilingual education instruction and:

(A) determine the impact of using that test to assess the critical competencies necessary to instruct bilingual programs at each grade level and determine if any barriers to the certification of bilingual educators exist based on differences between the dialect of the educator and the dialect used on the test; and

(B) make recommendations to modify or revise the assessments used to certify educators in bilingual education instruction to enhance the competency of educators serving bilingual programs.

(d) Requires TEA to submit the plan developed under this section to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the Texas House of Representatives (house), and each member of the standing committees of the Texas Senate and house having primary jurisdiction over public education not later than December 1, 2022.

(e) Provides that this section expires January 1, 2023.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2021.