

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 83
By: Zwiener
Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Current standardized testing in Texas is limited in its responsiveness, which is an essential factor in the development of an individual student's reading and writing skills. The use of standardized testing has not led to any closure of achievement gaps between low-income students and their affluent peers. While standardized testing seeks to equalize assessment in a way to level the playing field for all students, these assessments are often produced en masse and therefore are not individualized by region, shifting demographics, or the many cultural identities, experiences, and academic needs of students. Despite the insistence that testing is the only way to show that students have met the criteria for academic advancement, other ways could better illustrate the depth and understanding of student learning while allowing students more agency. A writing portfolio assessment as an alternative to the standardized reading test and the English I or II end-of-course test is innovative. This alternative assessment would promote self-directed learning, allowing students to monitor their progress and become aware of their strengths and weaknesses and how they can improve their skills. An assessment is meant to illustrate a student's mastery of essential knowledge and skills of a particular subject, and the writing portfolio assessment will be able to do that while being structured around the individuality of each student. H.B. 83 seeks to address this issue by authorizing a public school district to elect to use a writing portfolio assessment to assess writing performance for students enrolled in the district as an alternative to administering the portion of a statewide standardized reading test for grades three through eight or an English I or English II end-of-course test that is not presented in a multiple choice format.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 83 amends the Education Code to authorize a public school district to elect to use a writing portfolio assessment to assess writing performance for students enrolled in the district as an alternative to administering the portion of a statewide standardized reading test for grades three through eight or an English I or English II end-of-course test that is not presented in a multiple choice format. A district that elects to use a writing portfolio assessment is not required to administer the portion of those reading and English tests that is not presented in a multiple choice format during the period the district is administering the writing portfolio assessment. The bill requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA), to the greatest extent practicable, to apply cost savings that result from that exemption to offset the costs accrued under the bill's provisions.

H.B. 83 requires a district that elects to use a writing portfolio assessment to design the assessment in consultation with a public or private institution of higher education and submit the assessment to TEA for approval. The bill requires TEA to approve the assessment if it is determined to be valid and reliable by the institution that consulted on the design and it satisfies specified design criteria with regard to the testing of student writing ability and improvement.

H.B. 83 authorizes a district that elects to use a writing portfolio assessment to adopt a policy allowing the assessment to be scored by a classroom teacher assigned to the same campus as the student to whom the assessment is administered. The bill authorizes the district to coordinate with the regional education service center for the district's region in grading the assessments.

H.B. 83 requires the commissioner of education to adopt rules as necessary to implement the bill's provisions. The bill applies beginning with the 2023-2024 school year.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2023.