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By:  Lambert H.B. No. 4383

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to measures to assist small and rural school districts in implementing a collegiate model and expanding broadband access, including the establishment of the Rural Schools and Communities Technical Assistance Center and a grant program.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Chapter 30, Education Code, is amended by adding Subchapter F to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER F. RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

Sec. 30.151.  DEFINITION. In this subchapter, "center" means the Rural Schools and Communities Technical Assistance Center.

Sec. 30.152.  ESTABLISHMENT; PURPOSE. The Rural Schools and Communities Technical Assistance Center is established to assist small and rural school districts with the implementation and expansion of the Collegiate Edu-Nation P-20 System Model for 21st Century School Transformation in cooperation with the agency and to further ensure better economic and life opportunities by facilitating the expansion of broadband development in rural communities.

Sec. 30.153.  DUTIES OF CENTER. (a) The center shall facilitate the tri-agency alignment for rural students by collaborating with the agency, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, and the Texas Workforce Commission.

(b)  The center shall assist participating school districts in implementing the Collegiate Edu-Nation P-20 System Model for 21st-Century School Transformation to:

(1)  combat generational poverty by fostering high aspirations and expectations among students, families, and communities for college and career success, with an emphasis on workforce shortage areas;

(2)  support attainment of the state's long-range master plan for higher education developed under Section 61.051; and

(3)  support implementation of the Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) programs in participating school districts under Subchapter N, Chapter 29.

Sec. 30.154.  SELECTION OF CENTER. The commissioner shall select a nonprofit organization to serve as the center and support school districts awarded a planning or implementation grant under this subchapter. The selected nonprofit organization must have:

(1)  an individual on staff who has previously implemented a collegiate model in a rural school district; and

(2)  a demonstrated history of:

(A)  successfully managing rural schools; and

(B)  supporting multiple rural school districts in implementing a collegiate model.

Sec. 30.155.  PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS. (a) The commissioner shall annually award planning grants to rural or small school districts, as determined by commissioner rule, to plan for the implementation of a collegiate model.

(b)  The agency shall evaluate each school district that receives a planning grant under Subsection (a). If the agency determines that the district successfully completed planning activities, the commissioner shall award the district a one-year grant to implement a collegiate model.

(c)  The agency shall evaluate each school district that receives an implementation grant under Subsection (b). If the agency determines that the district successfully completed implementation activities in the first year of implementation, the commissioner shall award the district an additional one-year implementation grant.

Sec. 30.156.  EXPECTED OUTCOMES. (a) By the conclusion of the second year of implementation of a collegiate model using a grant awarded under Section 30.155(c), the school district must:

(1)  have implemented:

(A)  a dual credit program or a joint high school and college credit program;

(B)  a Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) program under Subchapter N, Chapter 29;

(C)  a research-based college readiness program for grades 7 through 12;

(D)  student college and career coaching;

(E)  a common instructional framework and monthly instructional review and improvement cycles;

(F)  project-based learning experiences in a majority of courses offered by the district;

(G)  career and technical education programs;

(H)  work-based learning opportunities, including paid student apprenticeships in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics workforce shortage areas;

(I)  formal industry partnerships specific to local workforce needs as identified by regional offices of the Texas Workforce Commission;

(J)  research-based, nationally norm-referenced formative assessments; or

(K)  access to a personal laptop or other electronic device for each student; and

(2)  demonstrate progress toward the goal of 90 percent of graduating students concurrently earning a high school diploma and an associate degree or an industry-recognized certification by ensuring that at least 30 percent of high school students enrolled in the district are enrolled in college courses.

(b)  If a school district that received a grant under Section 30.155(c) does not achieve the expected outcomes under Subsection (a), the center shall work with the district to develop and implement an intervention plan to support the district in achieving those outcomes.

Sec. 30.157.  SUPPORT OF RURAL BROADBAND INITIATIVES. Each school district that receives a grant under Section 30.155 shall work closely with relevant state agencies to assist in expanding access, adoption, and use of broadband in rural areas to benefit educational opportunities and economic development.

SECTION 2.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.