

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1026
By: Bohac
Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

There have been calls to include character traits in the essential knowledge and skills for kindergarten through grade 12 students. H.B. 1026 seeks to address these calls by requiring the State Board of Education to integrate certain character traits into the essential knowledge and skills and by making the adoption of a character education program mandatory for public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools.

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 State Board of Education in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 1026 amends the Education Code to remove the authorization for a public school district to provide a character education program that stresses certain positive character traits using integrated teaching strategies; to require the State Board of Education (SBOE) to integrate the positive character traits instead into the essential knowledge and skills adopted for kindergarten through grade 12, as appropriate; and to include gratitude among the positive character traits. The bill requires the SBOE to create a report that identifies the manner in which the character traits have been integrated into the curriculum and to make the report publicly available on the SBOE's website. The bill requires each district and open-enrollment charter school to adopt a character education program that includes the positive character traits and to submit the adopted program to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) annually, in a manner determined by the commissioner of education.

H.B. 1026 requires the annual designation by TEA of each school that provides a character education program as a Character Plus School to be made using the services of a center for education research. The bill includes among the criteria for such designation the school's provision of a program that demonstrates a correlation between the character education program adopted by the school, an increase in student attendance levels, and a decrease in student disciplinary problems. The bill removes the requirement that TEA include certain data related to the programs in the TEA comprehensive biennial report and removes the federal government as a source from which TEA may accept money to use in assisting districts in implementing character education programs. The bill authorizes the SBOE to adopt rules as necessary to implement the bill's provisions. The bill applies beginning with the 2019-2020 school year.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2019.