

- SUBJECT:** Requiring instruction in the enrichment curriculum for accreditation
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Sadler, Dutton, Lengefeld, Oliveira, Olivo, Smith
2 nays — Grusendorf, Hochberg
1 absent — Dunnam
- WITNESSES:** For — Holly Eaton, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Robert Floyd, Texas Music Educators Association; Karen Miller, Texas Congress of Parents and Teachers; Nancy Oelklaud, Texas Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; Phyllis Thompson, Texas Foreign Language Association; Diane Farr
Against — None
On — Ann Smisko, Texas Education Agency
- BACKGROUND:** The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) curriculum approved by the State Board of Education in 1997 includes a foundation curriculum of English, math, science, and social studies and an enrichment curriculum of foreign languages, health, physical education, fine arts, economics, career and technology education, and technology applications. A district must use the TEKS foundation curriculum to be accredited. That curriculum also is used to develop textbooks and the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test. A district may use the TEKS enrichment curriculum to provide guidelines for courses in those areas.
- DIGEST:** HB 921 would require districts to provide instruction in the TEKS enrichment curriculum at the appropriate grade levels as a condition of accreditation. Human sexuality instruction, already developed by each district at the local level, specifically would not have to follow the TEKS curriculum, under existing sec. 28.004 of the Education Code.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house and would apply beginning with the 1999-2000 school year.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

The TEKS curriculum is a fully developed set of standards that districts should use in providing instruction to students in numerous subjects. It was developed over three years by groups of teachers and parents and included numerous revisions to incorporate public comments. Rather than let this curriculum go to waste, the state should require all districts to follow it at the appropriate grade levels.

The TEKS curriculum is not a restrictive document but simply outlines the essential knowledge and skills that students should have learned upon the completion of a particular grade level in each course of study. Individual districts and teachers can determine for themselves the best way to reach the objectives outlined in the TEKS curriculum.

Using the TEKS enrichment curriculum would ensure that students in every district had access to the same quality curriculum in subjects not covered by the foundation curriculum. Students in less wealthy districts should have the same opportunity to study these subjects as other students have, and requiring them to be included in the curriculum would ensure that districts would not overlook their value.

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) already reviews district curriculum in the foundation program for accreditation purposes. Adding the enrichment curriculum to that review would not burden the accreditation process nor change the focus of the accountability system, but would improve the quality of education offered by districts across the state.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Enactment of HB 921 would result in a significant shift in the way school district performance is judged. Currently, districts are judged on the basis of results. The accountability system, which has been lauded by numerous organizations on the national level and has produced dramatic improvements in student achievement, is based on outcomes. This bill would shift the focus of accreditation to inputs and would require TEA to judge what was being taught in the classroom rather than to focus on the results of that instruction.

This bill also could force smaller, poorer districts either to raise additional tax dollars or to cut other programs to be able to provide all the courses covered in the enrichment curriculum. Many districts, while they might like to offer such programs, simply do not have the student interest or the facilities or personnel to offer such courses.

NOTES: The companion bill, SB 255 by Armbrister, has been referred to the Senate Education Committee.