

- SUBJECT:** Creating a Master Technology Teacher Certification and grant program
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — Sadler, Dutton, Grusendorf, Hardcastle, Hochberg, Oliveira, Olivo, Smith  
0 nays  
1 absent — Dunnam
- WITNESSES:** For — Steve Kester, American Electronics Association  
Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** In 1999, the 76th Legislature created a Master Reading Teacher Program (Education Code, sec. 21.410) and a Master Reading Teacher Certification (sec. 21.0481) to reward experienced teachers with special training in reading instruction and peer-mentoring. The program awards \$5,000 grant stipends to teachers in high-need schools who earn the special reading certification and who work with other teachers and students to improve student reading performance.
- Education Code, sec. 21.453 sets forth guidelines for the staff development account, which is an account in the general revenue fund partially composed of gifts, grants, and donations for the purposes of staff development in high need school districts. School districts that use this account must pay to the commissioner for deposit in the account an amount equal to one-half of the cost of the resources provided to the district.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 1475 would create a Master Technology Teacher Grant Program and a Master Technology Teacher Certification.

**Master Technology Teacher Grant Program**

*Establishment of grant program.* The bill would require the commissioner to establish a program to encourage teachers to become certified master technology teachers and work with other teachers and students to increase

the use of technology in the classroom. The bill would require the commissioner to use appropriated funds to make \$5,000 grants to school districts to pay stipends to selected certified teachers, with preference going to teachers on high-need campuses. The commissioner would establish criteria for identifying high-need campuses and would use those criteria to identify and rank campuses in order of greatest need. The bill would allow the commissioner to adopt rules as necessary to implement the program.

*Initial grant application and distribution.* School districts would apply for grants to pay stipends to certified teachers. The commissioner would be required to approve an application if a district applied within the period and in the manner required by the commissioner and agreed to use the grant only for the purpose of paying a stipend to a certified teacher who taught in the district, whose primary duties included serving as a technology training mentor and who satisfied any other requirements established by rule by the commissioner.

*Grant application and distribution in subsequent years.* The bill would require the commissioner to adopt rules governing distribution of grants after the year in which the initial grant was awarded. A district that received a grant would not be required to reapply for two years if the district continued to pay the stipend and notified the commissioner in writing, according to the manner prescribed by the commissioner, that the circumstances on which the grant was based had not changed.

*Grant reduction.* The grant amount to the school district for the teacher's stipend would be \$5,000. The commissioner would be required to reduce the grant under two circumstances. First, the commissioner would be required to reduce the grant proportionately to the extent a teacher did not meet the requirements for the entire school year. Second, the commissioner would be permitted to reduce the grant if appropriated state funds were insufficient to fully fund a grant. The bill would not create a property right to a grant or stipend. A school district only would be entitled to a grant under the program to the extent the commissioner granted it and only to the extent that sufficient state funds were appropriated for the program.

*Finality of commissioner's decision.* The commissioner's decision regarding the amount of money granted to a school district would be final and unappealable.

*Disbursement of funds to school districts.* Grants distributed under the program would be in addition to any funding the district received under the Foundation School Program (FSP). The bill would require the commissioner to distribute grants with the FSP payment to which the district was entitled as soon as practicable after the end of the school year, as determined by the commissioner. The commissioner would have discretion to determine the timing of grant distribution for schools not receiving an FSP payment.

*Eligibility.* School districts affected by the equalized wealth provisions of Education Code, ch. 41 would be eligible for grants under this program.

*Stipend distribution.* Districts with more certified teachers than available grants would be required to adopt a local policy regarding selection of certified teachers who would receive grants. A district would be required to pay a stipend for two additional consecutive school years to a teacher the district had selected and paid a stipend for a school year, if that teacher remained eligible, and the district received a grant for those years. The district's decision would not be appealable. Districts would be prohibited from splitting a stipend among several teachers, but would be permitted to use local money to pay additional stipends in amounts determined by the district. Stipends would not be counted toward a determination of whether a district was paying the statutorily-required minimum-monthly salary.

*Audit and proof.* Each district receiving a grant would be required to provide proof to the commissioner of the certified status of a teacher to whom the district was paying a stipend. The bill would permit the commissioner to audit the expenditure of money appropriated for this program. A district's use of grant money would be verified as part of the district audit.

### **Master Technology Teacher Certification**

*Establishment of certification program.* The bill would require the State Board of Education to establish a master technology teacher certificate and issue a certificate to each eligible person.

*Eligibility.* To be eligible for the certificate, a person would be required either to (1) hold a technology applications certificate, complete the required course, and perform satisfactorily on the examination, or (2) hold a teaching certificate, have three years of teaching experience, complete a knowledge- and skills-based course including specific training, perform satisfactorily on an exam the board develops in cooperation with the Telecommunications Infrastructure Fund Board (TIF), and satisfy any other requirements prescribed by the board.

*Required course.* The board would be permitted to provide the required course for option (1) above in cooperation with regional education service centers and other public or private entities.

*Implementation.* The bill would require the board to propose rules establishing the requirements and examination for certification not later than September 1, 2003.

**Effective date.** This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2001.

SUPPORTERS  
SAY:

To succeed in the modern economy, students need familiarity with, and skills in using, modern technology. CSHB 1475 would encourage teachers to pursue further training in technology education, allowing schools to more effectively use existing technology. Texas has been relatively successful at integrating computers into classrooms, but many teachers are not trained in using technology in the classroom. As a result, few teachers currently incorporate technology into their teaching plans. The bill would provide teachers with the opportunity and incentives to learn about technology and how to incorporate it into the classroom.

Master Technology Teachers would be able to take what they learn in their training back to their school districts and mentor other teachers in the use of classroom technology. This would work in the same manner as the highly successful Master Reading Teacher program.

This bill would allow Texas to increase the quality of education by integrating technology in the regular school classroom without spending much

money to do so. Funding for the test development costs would come from TIF. The costs of test administration would be offset partially or totally by testing and certification application fees. Because of the bill's 2004 implementation date, the program would not require grant funding for stipends during the 2002-2003 biennium. In future biennia, these funds could be paid using appropriated funds, local money from school districts, and funds from the staff development account. Because this account is partially composed of gifts, grants, and donations, the program's grants/stipends could be supplemented with private donations and grants from industry.

The program would focus on technology instruction techniques and teaching teachers how to use technology in their other subjects, including core curriculum classes. These skills in technology instruction and basic familiarity with technology would remain useful and applicable even as technology changes.

Employers and technology industry members would participate in the planning stages of the program to provide input on which technology skills will be important to students in their future jobs.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

This program would be expensive, and the funds would be appropriated better toward other purposes. Priority for specialty teacher certification programs should go to core curriculum subjects such as math. In addition, technology is changing at a rapid pace. Without additional periodic training, a certified teacher's technology skills quickly would become outdated.

NOTES:

The committee substitute removed all references to open-enrollment charter schools in the bill, to be consistent with the Master Reading Teacher Program.

The committee substitute added satisfactory performance on an examination to the requirements for certification. It also integrated principles of the Technology Education Coalition's "Professional Development Initiative" in sec. 2 of the bill.

The committee substitute gave the commissioner discretion regarding distribution of funds if there was insufficient funding for the program. The

bill as filed would have required the commissioner to reduce the amount of the grant paid to each district under these circumstances.

The committee substitute changed the implementation date to September 1, 2003, eliminating stipend payments during the next biennium.

The committee substitute required training in the use of applications to meet the educational needs of students with disabilities. It directed SBEC to plan the program and test in conjunction with TIF.

According to the fiscal note, SBEC would incur test-development costs for the new exam and approved training programs, costing about \$503,000 in fiscal 2002-03. The total cost of the program beginning in fiscal 2004, when the stipends would begin, would be \$2.7 million, \$7.3 million in fiscal 2005, and \$8.6 million in fiscal 2006.