

- SUBJECT:** Restricting written reports required of public school classroom teachers
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 5 ayes — Grusendorf, Oliveira, Dawson, Hochberg, Madden
0 nays
4 absent — Branch, Dutton, Eissler, Griggs
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 10 — 29-1 (Ogden)
- WITNESSES:** For — Lindsay Gustafson, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Julian Shaddix, Texas Association of Secondary School Principals; Marjorie Wall, Texas State Teachers Association; JoHannah Whitsett, Association of Texas Professional Educators

Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** SB 1 by Ratliff, enacted by the 74th Legislature in 1995, amended the Education Code to repeal the Paper Work Reduction Act of 1986, which attempted to reduce the requirements for written reports by classroom teachers. SB 1 also eliminated the authority of the State Board of Education (SBOE) to adopt rules related to the act.
- DIGEST:** Beginning with the 2003-04 school year, the board of trustees of each school district would have to limit redundant requests for information and the number and length of written reports a classroom teacher was required to prepare. A classroom teacher would have to prepare only the following written reports:
- any report concerning the health, safety, or welfare of a student;
 - a report of a student's grade on a particular assignment or examination;
 - a report of a student's academic progress in a class or course;
 - a report of a student's grades at the end of a grade reporting period;
 - a textbook report;
 - a unit or weekly lesson plan report that outlined, in a brief and general manner, the information to be presented during each period at the secondary level or in each subject or topic at the elementary level;

- an attendance report;
- any report required for accreditation review;
- any information required by a school district relating to a complaint, grievance, or actual or potential litigation and that required the classroom teacher's involvement; or
- any other report specifically required by law, rule or regulation.

The school board would have to review paperwork requirements imposed on teachers and transfer to non-instructional staff any reporting task that reasonably could be accomplished by that staff.

SB 13 would not preclude a school district from collecting essential information, in addition to information previously specified, from a classroom teacher on agreement between the classroom teacher and the district.

The 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, 2003.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

Since the repeal of the Paperwork Reduction Act in 1995, teachers increasingly have complained of burdensome, needlessly detailed, or duplicative paperwork. For example, because of increasing accountability and testing in the public schools, the paperwork requirements between the 2002-03 and the 2003-04 school years alone increased dramatically. Teachers must turn in lesson plans that detail how every item relates to specific portions of the curriculum, yet they are not provided with a coding system, so it involves copious amounts of writing each day. Teachers also are subject to dual attendance reporting requirements. Paperwork takes time away from what teachers do best — teach. SB 13 would restrict the number of written reports required of classroom teachers and would send a message to school officials that the Legislature expects teachers to spend more time teaching students and less time laboring over superfluous written reports.

Excessive amounts of paperwork are driving good teachers out of the classroom. A recent survey of former teachers found that 10 percent left the profession because of too much paperwork. With a teacher shortage of up to 50,000 teachers, any measure that potentially could retain an extra 10 percent of teaching professionals would help districts struggling to fill classrooms with highly qualified teachers in time for full implementation of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

By making the collection of essential information contingent on an agreement between a classroom teacher and a district, the bill could create a situation where a school district could not collect certain information from a teacher simply because he or she refused to agree. Often principals need a range of information in order to make professional decisions. School boards should not be forced to hinder principals' abilities to run local campuses.

**OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:**

The objective of reducing paperwork and administrative burdens on teachers already is addressed in current law. Texas law contains provisions to reduce paperwork and limit the amount of reporting required of governmental entities. Texas also has made great strides in reducing the number of rules and regulations placed on school districts by eliminating duplicative and unnecessary requirements. Texas leads the nation in the number of waivers granted under the federal Ed-Flex statute, which reduces regulatory requirements imposed by federal law.

NOTES:

A similar bill, HB 106 by Gutierrez, passed both Houses during the 77th Legislature in 2001, but was vetoed by the governor. In explaining why he vetoed the bill, Gov. Perry said that it "would substantially undermine local control by limiting the authority of a school district to request information from teachers," and that measures to reduce paperwork and administrative burdens already exist.

In 1999, the same bill, HB 87 by Gutierrez, passed the House but died in the Senate Education Committee.