

SUBJECT: Home-schooled students taking PSAT and AP tests in public schools

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 6 ayes — Eissler, Zedler, Hochberg, Mowery, Olivo, Patrick
0 nays
3 absent — Branch, Delisi, Dutton

WITNESSES: For — Tim Lambert, Texas Home School Coalition; Cynthia Lewis;
Rosalia Guerrero Luera
Against — None
On — Portia Bosse, Texas State Teachers Association; Jackie Lain, Texas
Association of School Boards; Elena Lincoln, Association of Texas
Professional Educators

BACKGROUND: The College Board sponsors the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude
Test/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) to high
school students in the 11th grade to qualify for National Merit
scholarships and as practice for the SAT test. Students in 10th grade also
have the option of taking the PSAT/NMSQT.
The College Board also offers 37 Advanced Placement (AP) courses and
tests for high school students. Students may qualify for college credits on
the basis of their scores on AP tests.
PSAT/NMSQT and AP tests are administered by schools on uniform test
dates established by the College Board.

DIGEST: CSHB 1844 would require school districts to allow home-schooled
students to attend public school to participate in the administration of the
PSAT/NMSQT or a college AP test administered by the district. School
districts would not have to pay the cost for a home-schooled student to
take the test.

School districts would have to post the test dates on their web sites and announce that home-schooled students were eligible to take the tests. Districts that did not have web site would have to publish the information in at least one newspaper in the county in which the district's central administrative office was located. This information would have to be posted or published at the same time and with the same frequency as information provided to students in the district.

The bill would authorize TEA to adopt rules to implement the bill. 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, 2007, and would apply beginning with the 2007-08 school year.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 1844 would help ensure that home-schooled students had access to the same college readiness tests as public school students. While most school districts already allow home-schooled students to take these tests alongside public school students, some districts have policies prohibiting such practices. This can limit a home-schooled student's access to scholarships through the National Merit Scholarship program and prevent students from receiving college credit for their performance on AP tests.

The families of home-schooled students pay school district taxes and should have access to tests that are administered only through schools. The cost of taking the test would have to be borne by the student, so the bill would not present any additional expense for school districts.

On its web site, the College Board actively encourages home-schooled students to take these tests. School districts should not be allowed to restrict participation because of logistical or administrative concerns.

In 2003, the 78th Legislature prohibited higher education institutions from treating home-schooled and nontraditional students differently from public school students in the admissions process. CSHB 1844 would extend this principle to the high school testing process by ensuring that home-schooled students have access to a variety of standardized tests.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

School districts should have the option of deciding whether home-schooled students can participate in College Board tests administered by the district. Accommodating home-schooled students could create administrative burdens or space problems for schools.

NOTES:

The committee substitute specifies that school districts would not be required to pay for home-schooled students to participate in tests. Instead of requiring districts to publish notice of tests within 30 days, the committee substitute would require notice of tests at the same time and with the same frequency as information provided to students who attend district schools.