

SUBJECT: Revising requirements for school bus emergency evacuation training

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Eissler, Allen, Aycock, Farias, Jackson, Olivo, Patrick, Shelton

0 nays

3 absent — Hochberg, Dutton, Weber

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 2 — 31-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar

WITNESSES: For — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Amy Beneski, Texas Association of School Administrators; Portia Bosse, Texas State Teachers Association; Monty Exter, Association of Texas Professional Educators)

Against — None

On — David Ickert, Texas Association of School Boards; Ted Melina Raab, Texas AFT

BACKGROUND: A school district currently must conduct school bus emergency evacuation training at least twice each school year. Training sessions must be held in the fall and in the spring, and a portion of the training session must occur on a school bus and must last at least one hour.

The school district must conduct the training for both students and teachers, and training must be based on the recommendations of the most recent edition of the National School Transportation Specifications and Procedures, as adopted by the National Congress on School Transportation, or a similar school transportation safety manual.

DIGEST: SB 635 would amend Education Code, sec. 34.0021 to require school districts to conduct school bus emergency evacuation training at a minimum of once every school year.

A school district could conduct a bus emergency evacuation training

session via video, including student-made videos. The bill would delete requirements that training occur in the fall and spring and that part of the training be on a school bus.

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, 2009.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

By changing requirements for school bus emergency evacuation training, SB 635 would help students regain lost class time each academic year that would be better used to prepare for state-mandated exams and general educational enhancement. The bus emergency evacuation training via video provided for in the bill would be more than sufficient keep students safe, and school districts could retain the option of conducting an on-bus training session.

Young students are told to be wary of strangers, so conducting the training via video allows students to discuss the training with a familiar teacher instead of a bus driver who may be unfamiliar to the students.

The bill would financially benefit school districts because districts that do not use buses no longer would have to spend money on leasing buses to conduct the on-bus portion of the training. Also, school districts that do use buses would not be burdened with the high cost of wear and tear to the buses, and the cost of the bus driver's overtime.

Many school districts have facilities capable of creating an instructional video in the schools. Allowing school districts to create the instructional video at the student level would be a financial benefit to the school district and would give the students a unique educational experience.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

No apparent opposition