

SUBJECT: Creating a UIL sports program for students with intellectual disabilities

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 12 ayes — Dutton, Lozano, Allen, Allison, K. Bell, Bernal, Buckley, Huberty, K. King, Meza, Talarico, VanDeaver

0 nays

1 absent — M. González

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 29 — 31-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar

WITNESSES: No public hearing.

BACKGROUND: School districts may, but are not required to, provide inclusive sports programs for students with disabilities. Interested parties contend that the University Interscholastic League should establish an inclusive sports program so that students with intellectual disabilities have opportunities, similar to those enjoyed by other students to participate in team athletic activities.

DIGEST: SB 776 would require the University Interscholastic League (UIL) to ensure that students with intellectual disabilities had an opportunity to participate in team athletic activities by establishing and maintaining an inclusive sports program. UIL would have to adopt rules as necessary to establish, maintain, and expand the inclusive sports program. The rules would have to:

- accommodate inclusive team sports offered through the program at participating public middle schools, junior high schools, and high schools;
- establish eligibility requirements for participation in each inclusive team sport offered through the program
- identify best practices for school districts to incorporate inclusive sports; and

- require the program to incorporate activities that promoted bullying prevention, moral intelligence, character development, leadership development, physical fitness, and positive school culture.

In adopting the rules, UIL would have to consider and incorporate as appropriate:

- federal guidance regarding access to extracurricular athletics for students with intellectual disabilities;
- guidance available from nationally recognized organizations that promoted inclusion and acceptance among students with and without disabilities;
- information regarding inclusive sports programs that had been successfully implemented in Texas, in other states, and by nonprofit organizations;
- input from school districts and the Texas Education Agency; and
- guidance provided by impacted stakeholders, including by parents of students with intellectual disabilities.

In maintaining the inclusive sports program, UIL would have to require, to the greatest extent possible, that students who participated in the program were subject to the same rules and requirements as students who participated in other UIL athletic programs, including grade and discipline requirements and student safety requirements. UIL also would have to require, to the greatest extent possible, that team sports provided through the program were organized similarly to other UIL athletic programs, including with respect to team practices, seasonal play, and local and statewide competitions.

In addition to using funds made available or appropriated for the program, UIL or an affiliated partner could accept gifts, grants, or monetary donations from public and private sources.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.

NOTES:

The House companion bill, HB 2193 by Dominguez, was considered by

the House Public Education Committee in a public hearing on April 13, reported favorably as substituted on April 23, and placed on the General State Calendar for May 12.