

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

C.S.S.B. 729
By: Bivins
Education
3-6-97
Committee Report (Substituted)

DIGEST

Currently, state law sets forth requirements for testing and remedial coursework. However, the state spends approximately \$75 million per year on remedial and developmental courses for higher education institutions and no accountability measures exist to show the effectiveness for higher education remedial programs. This bill addresses the accountability system for remedial coursework by establishing measures for the evaluation of the Texas Academic Skills Program.

PURPOSE

As proposed, C.S.S.B. 729 addresses the accountability system for remedial coursework by establishing measures for the evaluation of the Texas Academic Skills Program.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 51.306, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 51.306. New heading: TEXAS ACADEMIC SKILLS PROGRAM. (a) Defines "general academic teaching institution," "public junior college," and "public technical institute." Makes conforming changes.

(b) Requires each undergraduate student who enters a public institution of higher education to be tested for certain skills prior to enrolling in any coursework. Requires the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (board) to prescribe circumstances under which a student who has not been tested may enroll in coursework. Requires a student who is permitted to enroll without taking the test prescribed by the board to take the test under Subsection (c) of this section by the end of the semester of enrollment. Deletes categories of students required to take the test before entering public institutions of higher education. Makes conforming changes.

(c) Requires the institution to use the Texas Academic Skills Program Test (test) for purposes of Subsection (b) of this section. Authorizes the board to prescribe an alternative test instrument for an institution to use to test a student. Requires each alternative test instrument to be correlated with the test. Makes conforming changes.

(e) Makes a conforming and nonsubstantive change.

(f) Requires the student to retake the portion of the test for which remediation was required on completion of the remedial coursework or program. Makes a conforming change.

(g) Prohibits the student from enrolling in more than 60 semester hours until the student's test results meet or exceed the minimum standards in each skill area: reading, writing, and mathematics, rather than in all test scores. Makes conforming and nonsubstantive changes.

(h) Prohibits a general academic teaching institution from receiving funding for remedial coursework taken by a student exceeding six semester credit hours in each skill area, and prohibits a public junior college or public technical institute from receiving funding for coursework in excess of nine semester credit hours in each skill area. Requires the board to develop a performance funding formula by which institutions may receive additional funding for each student who successfully completes remediation. Makes conforming and nonsubstantive changes.

(i) and (j) Makes no change.

(k) Requires the board to publish annually a summary of the report required in Section 51.403(e) of this code identifying certain information. Requires the summary to include the number of students at each high school who took and passed the test while enrolled in high school. Requires the board to publish an annual report that summarizes the total number of students meeting certain requirements by institution of higher education for each academic year. Makes conforming and nonsubstantive changes.

(l) Provides that a student who performs at or above a level set by the board on the exit-level assessment required under Section 39.023 of this code is exempt from this section. Provides that this exemption is in effect from the date a student takes the assessment and achieves the set score level. Makes conforming and nonsubstantive changes.

(m) Makes conforming and nonsubstantive changes.

(n) Makes no change.

(o) Provides that a student at an institution of higher education is exempt from the requirements of this section if the student enrolls on a temporary basis at the institution of higher education and meets certain requirements.

(p) Requires a student to present certain information to the institution of higher education at which the student seeks the exemption as evidence of enrollment in another institution.

(q) Sets forth provisions for termination of exemptions if a student meets certain requirements.

(r) Sets forth provisions to which this section does not apply. Makes conforming changes.

(s) Requires an institution of higher education to provide certain information to students to whom this section applies, rather than under Subsection (b) of this section. Makes conforming changes.

(t) Deletes existing Subsection (q).

(u) Provides that a student may have certain disorders as defined by Section 38.003 of this code, rather than Section 21.924(a). Deletes existing Subsection (u). Makes conforming changes.

(v) Requires a student who has passed the exit-level assessment required under Section 39.023 of this code to be encouraged to take the test while enrolled in high school unless the student's scores on the exit-level assessment or on the Scholastic Assessment Test or the American College Test exempt the student from the test as required by this section. Requires the Texas Education Agency to work with the board to encourage eligible students to take the test, but taking the test shall be voluntary.

(w) Sets forth provisions that apply to high school students taking the test required by this section. Deletes existing Subsections (r) and (s) regarding exemptions.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 51.403(e), Education Code, to require institutions of higher education to report student performance to a student's last high school attended, rather than the junior college, as established by the coordinating board, rather than the coordinating board, Texas College and University System, and the State Board of Education. Requires each high school receiving a report concerning five or more students from the same institution of higher education to release to a generally circulated newspaper certain information. Requires the high school to release the information by the 30th day after the date on which the high school receives the report.

SECTION 3. (a) Effective date: September 1, 1997, except as provided by Subsection (b).

(b) Provides that the change in law made by this Act to Section 51.306(b), Education Code, takes effect with the fall semester of 1998.

SECTION 4. Emergency clause.

SUMMARY OF COMMITTEE CHANGES

Amends SECTION 1, Section 51.306 (b), Education Code, to require the board to prescribe circumstances, rather than exceptional circumstances, under which a student who has not been tested may enroll in coursework. Requires a student who is permitted to enroll without taking the test to take the test under Subsection (c) of this section by the end of the semester of enrollment.

Amends SECTION 1, Section 51.306(w)(1), Education Code, to require test scores of a high school student to be reported only to the student and the student's parents, except as authorized by the student rather than reporting the test scores to the student and the student's parents.