

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
77R8402 BDH-D

S.B. 975
By: Shapleigh
Education
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As Filed

DIGEST AND PURPOSE

Currently, the traditional classroom instruction model is used by the majority of K-12 educational systems in Texas. Technological advances have made other teaching paradigms possible. As proposed, S.B. 975 directs the commissioner of education to oversee a pilot “electronic courses” program and to provide assessment of the program before December, 2002. The commissioner is given the responsibility of selecting school districts with a higher than average number of at-risk students or a higher than average dropout rate. Participating districts will continue to receive local and state funding for each student participating in an electronic course, providing potential revenue savings that may be diverted to finance computers and other resources.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

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

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 29Z, Education Code, by adding Section 29.903, as follows:

Sec. 29.903. ELECTRONIC COURSES. (a) Defines “electronic course.”

- (b) Requires the commissioner of education (commissioner) to implement a program under which a school district is authorized to offer an electronic course to students enrolled in the district or to students enrolled in another district, as provided by an agreement between the districts. Prohibits a district from requiring a student to enroll in an electronic course.
- (c) Requires the commissioner to select school districts to participate in the program based on applications submitted by the districts. Prohibits the commissioner from requiring a district to participate in the program. Authorizes the commissioner to determine the number of districts permitted to participate in the program, provided that the commissioner shall, to the extent possible, permit the participation of rural and urban districts with a higher than average number of at-risk students, as determined by the commissioner, or dropout rate.
- (d) Requires a school district seeking to participate in the program to submit a written application to the commissioner not later than January 1 preceding the school year the district proposes to participate in the program, or an earlier date set by the commissioner. Requires the application to include certain information.
- (e) Authorizes the commissioner to waive any requirement, restriction, or prohibition imposed by this code relating to the computation of daily attendance to the extent necessary to implement a program under this section.

(f) Authorizes the commissioner to cooperate with the comptroller, the Department of Information Resources, or any other state agency or commission in adopting technical standards for auditing or verifying student attendance in an electronic course.

(g) Requires the commissioner, not later than December 1, 2002, to submit a report to the lieutenant governor and the speaker of the house of representatives. Requires the report to include certain information.

(h) Provides that this section expires September 1, 2003.

SECTION 2. Requires the commissioner of education, not later than May 1, 2002, to implement the program required by Section 29.903, Education Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2001.