

BILL ANALYSIS

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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Despite improvements in elementary reading scores, eighth grade reading scores for Texas students have steadily declined. Some students who read well in the language arts have problems when reading on other subject areas. Students below their appropriate reading level will have a more difficult time in dealing with advanced coursework and college preparation courses. While elementary teachers often receive specialized training in teaching reading, teachers in middle school grades often lack the needed training to effectively teach students to read.

As proposed, S.B. 1697 requires the commissioner of education to establish reading academies that provide specialized training for sixth through eighth grade core curriculum teachers so that they receive training unique to the needs of their subject areas. The bill requires teachers at campuses identified as academically unacceptable in reading to attend these academies.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 1 (Sections 21.4551, Education Code) and SECTION 3 (Section 28.0211, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter J, Chapter 21, Education Code, by adding Section 21.4551, as follows:

Sec. 21.4551. TEACHER READING ACADEMIES. (a) Requires the commissioner of education (commissioner) to develop and make available reading academies (academies) for teachers who provide instruction to students at the sixth through eighth grade levels.

(b) Sets forth what an academy developed under this section is required to include.

(c) Requires the commissioner by rule to require a teacher to attend an academy if the teacher provides instruction in reading, mathematics, science, or social studies to students at the sixth, seventh, or eighth grade level at a campus considered academically unacceptable under Section 39.132 (Sanctions for Academically Unacceptable and Certain Other Campuses) on the basis of student performance on the reading assessment instrument administered under Section 39.023(a) to students in any grade level at the campus.

(d) Requires the commissioner to adopt criteria for selection of teachers, other than teachers described by Subsection (c), who may attend an academy.

(e) Entitles a teacher who attends an academy to a stipend in the amount determined by the commissioner from funds appropriated for that purpose. Provides that a stipend received under this subsection is not considered in determining whether a district is paying the teacher the minimum monthly salary under Section 21.402 (Minimum Salary Schedule for Certain Professional Staff).

(f) Requires regional education service centers, on request of the commissioner, to assist the commissioner and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) with training and other activities relating to the development and operation of academies.

(g) Requires the commissioner to conduct or contract with a public or private entity to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the reading academies developed under this section from funds appropriated for purposes of this section. Sets forth the requirements of the evaluation.

(h) Requires the commissioner to prepare and deliver to each member of the legislature a report describing the results of the evaluation required by Subsection (g) not later than December 1, 2010. Provides that Subsection (g) and this subsection expire September 1, 2011.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 28.006, Education Code, by adding Subsections (c-1) and (g-1), as follows:

(c-1) Requires each school district to administer at the beginning of the seventh grade a reading instrument adopted by the commissioner to each student whose performance on the sixth grade reading assessment instrument administered under Section 39.023(a) did not demonstrate reading proficiency, as determined by the commissioner. Requires the district to administer the instrument in accordance with the commissioner's recommendations under Subsection (a)(1) (regarding the administration of such reading instruments).

(g-1) Requires a district to provide additional reading instruction and intervention to each student in seventh grade assessed under Subsection (c-1), as appropriate, to improve the student's reading skills in the relevant areas identified through the assessment instrument. Requires training and support for activities required by this subsection to be provided by regional education service centers and teacher academies established under Section 21.4551.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 28.0211, Education Code, by adding Subsection (l-1) and amending Subsection (m), as follows:

(l-1) Authorizes the commissioner to adopt rules requiring a district receiving federal funding under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1964 (20 U.S.C. Section 6301 et seq.) to use that funding to provide supplemental educational services under 20 U.S.C. Section 6316 (Academic Assessment and Local Educational Agency and School Improvement) in conjunction with the accelerated instruction provided under this section, provided that the rules may not conflict with federal law governing the use of that funding.

(m) Makes a conforming change.

SECTION 4. Repealer: Section 28.0211(l) (Satisfactory Performance on Assessment Instruments Required; Accelerated Instruction), Education Code.

SECTION 5. Requires the commissioner to adopt the reading instrument developed by TEA under the Adolescent Literacy Initiative established in accordance with Rider 48b, page III-14, Chapter 1369, Acts of the 79th Legislature, Regular Session, 2005 (General Appropriations Act), for purposes of Section 28.006(c-1), Education Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 6. Requires the commissioner to establish the academies required by Section 21.4551, Education Code, as added by this Act, not later than June 1, 2008, and require teachers to begin attending the academies in accordance with that section on the basis of student performance data for the 2007-2008 school year.

SECTION 7. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2007-2008 school year.

SECTION 8. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2007.