

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

H.B. 136
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Education
5/20/2009
Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Research shows that quality prekindergarten programs produce significant benefits for children. One recent Texas A&M University study found that every dollar spent on high-quality prekindergarten programs for a child produced at least a \$3.50 return in savings that would have been spent on that child's education later in life.

In Texas, a child is eligible for public school prekindergarten if the child is at least three years old and unable to speak and comprehend the English language, educationally disadvantaged, homeless, the child of an active duty member of the armed forces of the United States, the child of a member of the armed forces who was injured or killed while on active duty, or is or ever has been in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services following an adversary hearing.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many parents of eligible children are not aware of their children's eligibility. Additionally, the number of children in kindergarten meeting one of the prekindergarten eligibility standards is much higher than prekindergarten enrollment during the previous year in many school districts, indicating that many eligible children do not enroll. School district representatives have indicated that they develop their own prekindergarten outreach and public notification strategies without proper information or guidance from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) regarding successful strategies.

H.B. 136 requires TEA to develop joint strategies with other state agencies regarding methods to increase community awareness of prekindergarten programs through programs that provide information relating to public assistance programs. The bill requires TEA to report its actions to the legislature and requires school districts to report their actions to TEA.

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 Subchapter E, Chapter 29, Education Code, by adding Section 29.1534, as follows:

Sec. 29.1534. NOTIFICATION OF PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAMS. (a) Defines "prekindergarten program."

(b) Requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop joint strategies with other state agencies regarding methods to increase community awareness of prekindergarten programs through programs that provide information relating to public assistance programs.

(c) Authorizes TEA to develop outreach materials for use by school districts (district) to increase community awareness of prekindergarten programs.

(d) Requires each district to report annually to TEA the strategies implemented by the district to increase community awareness of prekindergarten programs offered by the district. Requires the district to report the information on a form

prescribed by the commissioner of education (commissioner). Authorizes a report required by this subsection to be combined, at the discretion of the commissioner, with another report that the district submits to TEA.

(e) Requires TEA, not later than the 90th day after the date TEA receives a report from a district as required by Subsection (d), to post the report on TEA's Internet website.

(f) Requires TEA, not later than April 1, 2010, to conduct a study to identify effective methods to communicate to the parent of an eligible child the availability of prekindergarten programs. Requires that the study include research on providing information regarding prekindergarten programs through public, private, and nonprofit institutions that provide assistance and support to families with children eligible for prekindergarten programs. Requires TEA, not later than May 1, 2010, to make recommendations to districts based on the study regarding the most effective methods to increase communication regarding the most effective methods to increase communication regarding the availability of prekindergarten programs. Provides that this subsection expires June 1, 2010.

(g) Requires TEA, not later than December 1, 2010, to prepare and deliver to the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the presiding officer of each legislative standing committee with primary jurisdiction over primary and secondary education a report detailing strategies developed under Subsection (b) to increase community awareness of prekindergarten programs. Provides that this subsection expires January 1, 2011.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2009.