

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
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S.B. 1557  
By: Carona  
Education  
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As Filed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Ensuring quality public education is a fundamental and enduring duty of the state. As education methods evolve, so does the state's accountability system. As policymakers consider changes to accomplish better accountability and more effective assessments, it is paramount that local input and contemporary research be considered. School districts around the state are one of our best resources to create a next generation accountability system that is effective, efficient, and innovative.

S.B. 1557 would create a Texas High Performance Schools Consortium. Based on an application process, the consortium would be comprised of up to 20 school districts and one open-enrollment charter school. The consortium would be granted flexibility to adopt new approaches to curriculum and assessment requirements. The consortium would emphasize digital learning, high priority "power standards," and an accountability system that reduces the number of assessments and allows for greater parent and community involvement.

As proposed, S.B. 1557 amends current law relating to the establishment of the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium. relating to establishment of the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 1 (Section 7.0561, Education Code) of this bill.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 7, Education Code, by adding Section 7.0561 as follows:

Sec. 7.0561. TEXAS HIGH PERFORMANCE SCHOOLS CONSORTIUM. (a) Provides that the Texas High Performance Schools Consortium is created for the purpose of informing the governor, legislature, and commissioner of education (commissioner) about ways to transform public schools to improve student learning through the development of innovative, next-generation learning standards and assessment and accountability systems.

(b) Authorizes one or more school districts, up to a maximum of 20, to apply to the commissioner to be included in the consortium of school districts. Requires that the districts selected include a representative range of district types and sizes and diverse student populations. Authorizes the commissioner to select upon application an exemplary open-enrollment charter school to participate in the consortium.

(c) Authorizes the commissioner to waive one or more requirements, restrictions, or prohibitions under:

(1) Subchapter B (Advancement, Placement, Credit, and Academic Achievement Record), Chapter 28 (Courses of Study; Advancement);

(2) Sections 31.1011 (Textbook Credits) and 31.073(b)(1) (relating to state textbook credits); and

(3) Chapter 39 (Public School System Accountability).

(d) Requires the commissioner, with input from interested school districts and other stakeholders, to adopt rules to create the consortium, according to the following principles for a next generation of higher performing public schools:

(1) engagement of students in digital learning, including the use of electronic textbooks and instructional materials adopted under Subchapters B (Texas Education Agency) and B-1, Chapter 31 (Textbooks), and courses offered through the state virtual school network under Subchapter 30A (State Virtual School Network);

(2) emphasis on learning standards that focus on high-priority "power standards" identified in coordination with districts participating in the consortium;

(3) use of multiple assessments for learning that have meaning and importance and that continuously inform students, parents, campuses, and districts about the extent to which learning is occurring and what schools are doing to improve;

(4) an effective and efficient accountability system that:

(A) balances academic excellence and local values to inspire learning; and

(B) at the state level, uses a stratified random sampling of students or other objective methodology to hold districts and schools accountable while reducing the number of state assessments that students are required to take; and

(5) local control that enables communities and parents to be involved in the important decisions regarding the education of their children.

(e) Requires that the application include a detailed plan for assessments and accountability, which will both support improved instruction and learning and provide evidence of the accurate evaluation of the quality of the campuses, and which shall include:

(1) a thorough plan for accountability for student learning, including issues regarding compliance with federal law;

(2) clear descriptions of each assessed curricular aim in the "power standards";

(3) a plan for resources to support teachers in improving student learning; and

(4) other provisions that may be established by the commissioner.

(f) Requires the commissioner to convene consortium leaders periodically to discuss ways to transform learning opportunities for all students, build cross-district support systems and training, and share best practice tools and processes.

(g) Authorizes the commissioner or a school district that participates in the consortium to accept gifts, grants, or donations from any source, including a foundation, private entity, or governmental entity for the implementation of this section.

(h) Authorizes the commissioner, to cover administration costs, to charge a fee to a school district or open-enrollment charter school that is selected to participate in the consortium.

SECTION 2. (a) Requires the commissioner to adopt rules under Section 7.0561, Education Code, as added by this Act, not later than December 1, 2011. Requires the commissioner to seek a federal waiver, if needed, for implementation.

(b) Requires the commissioner to make the application available not later than January 1, 2012, for school districts to apply not later than March 1, 2012, and to begin the consortium not later than the 2012-13 school year.

(c) Requires the commissioner, with the assistance of the consortium, to submit progress reports to the legislature by December 1, 2012, and December 1, 2014.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2011.