

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 975
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Texas' high school graduation rate ranks 43rd in the nation. The latest American Communities Survey five-year estimates for 2005-2009 indicates that less than 60 percent of the adults in Hidalgo County over the age of 25 completed high school.

Public schools face the challenge of helping all students graduate, but many students fail to graduate on time and are classified as dropouts. As a consequence, many of these students struggle to find gainful employment and are unable to pursue higher education.

Many school districts lack the resources to fully address this challenge, but there are several excellent programs in place in the Rio Grande Valley that, if applied on a wider scale, could improve the high school graduation rate in South Texas.

S.B. 975 replicates the dropout recovery program currently operated by Pharr-San Juan Alamo Independent School District, known as the College Career and Technology Advancement Academy. The bill allows South Texas College to run the program in order to serve more students in Hidalgo County.

The bill facilitates high school graduation for students under 26 years of age who have dropped-out of high school, and lack three or fewer credits or failed a portion of the exit examination and therefore do not meet the qualifications necessary to complete and receive a high school diploma. In an effort to increase the number of high school graduates and the number of students participating in higher education, the bill allows South Texas College to partner with one or more high schools in Hidalgo County to operate a dropout recovery program designed to promote high school completion and successfully transition students to college and a career.

As proposed, S.B. 975 amends current law relating to the operation of dropout recovery programs by certain public junior colleges in partnership with school districts.

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 29, Education Code, by adding Subchapter K, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER K. PUBLIC JUNIOR COLLEGE AND SCHOOL DISTRICT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM TO PROVIDE DROPOUT RECOVERY

Sec. 29.401. APPLICABILITY. (a) Provides that this subchapter applies only to a public junior college, as defined by Section 61.003 (Definitions), located in a county:

- (1) with a population of 750,000 or more; and
- (2) with less than 65 percent of the population 25 years and older having graduated from high school, according to the most recent American

Community Survey five-year estimates compiled by the United States Census Bureau.

(b) Provides that the application of this subchapter to a public junior college is not affected if, after the public junior college enters into a partnership and begins providing a dropout recovery program as provided by this subchapter, the county's demographics under Subsection (a)(2) change and the county no longer meets the requirements under Subsection (a)(2).

Sec. 29.402. PARTNERSHIP. (a) Authorizes a public junior college to partner with one or more school districts located in the public junior college district to provide on the campus of the public junior college a dropout recovery program for students described by Subsection (b).

(b) Provides that a person who is under 26 years of age is eligible to enroll in a dropout recovery program under this subchapter if the person:

(1) is required to complete not more than three course credits to complete the curriculum requirements for the minimum, recommended, or advanced high school program, as appropriate, for high school graduation; or

(2) has failed to perform satisfactorily on an end-of-course assessment instrument administered under Section 39.023(c) (requiring TEA to adopt end-of-course assessment instruments for secondary level courses in certain subjects) or an assessment instrument administered under Section 39.023(c) as that section existed before amendment by Chapter 1312 (S.B. 1031), Acts of the 80th Legislature, Regular Session, 2007.

(c) Requires a public junior college under this section to:

(1) design a dropout recovery curriculum that includes career and technology education courses in collaboration with one or more school districts located in the public junior college district; and

(2) offer advanced academic and transition opportunities, including dual credit courses and college preparatory courses, such as advanced placement courses.

Sec. 29.403. FINANCING. (a) Authorizes a public junior college district to receive for each student enrolled in a dropout recovery program under this subchapter an amount equal to the total average per student funding amount in the school district the student would otherwise attend school during the preceding school year for maintenance and operations, including state and local funding, but excluding money from the available school fund.

(b) Provides that a student who is enrolled in a program under this subchapter is included in determining the average daily attendance under Section 42.005 (Average Daily Attendance) of the school district in which the student would otherwise attend school.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2011.