

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.S.B. 1453
By: Taylor
Education
4/13/2019
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Many school districts require students to purchase expensive graphing calculators for middle and high school math courses and standardized tests, while low- and no-cost digital calculator applications with the same functionality are available.

While the STAAR Calculator Policy does not prevent the use of secure calculator applications, schools and districts are not always certain what is or is not allowed.

Our districts have already spent over \$5 million on calculators this biennium—money that could have been spent on instructional materials, blended learning opportunities or technology improvements. Before spending taxpayer dollars on handheld calculating devices or requiring parents to shell out a hefty sum—often over \$100—districts should look to high-quality, no-cost calculator applications.

S.B. 1453 requires school districts to permit students enrolled in courses that require the use of a handheld graphing calculator to use a calculator application that provides the same functionality, unless the district makes available to the student a graphing calculator at no cost to the student.

S.B. 1453 will also require TEA to conduct an evaluation of best practices on calculating devices on standardized tests, update the related policy, and maintain and post an approved list of calculating devices and applications, with information on cost and functionality. (Original Author's/Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

C.S.S.B. 1453 amends current law relating to the use of calculator applications in place of graphing calculators in public schools.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Education Agency in SECTION 1 (Section 25.904, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter Z, Chapter 25, Education Code, by adding Section 25.904, as follows:

Sec. 25.904. USE OF CALCULATOR APPLICATION IN PLACE OF GRAPHING CALCULATOR. (a) Requires a school district to permit a student enrolled in a course that requires the student to use a graphing calculator to use a calculator application on a computing device, including a personal laptop, or tablet computer, that provides the same functionality, unless the district makes available to the student a graphing calculator at no cost to the student.

(b) Authorizes a school district to adopt policies related to student use of a computing device.

(c) Provides that to the extent this section conflicts with Section 37.082 (Possession of Paging Devices), this section prevails.

(d) Requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to conduct an evaluation of best practices for the use of a calculator application on a computing device by a student during an assessment instrument administered under Section 39.023 (Adoption and Administration of Instruments). Requires TEA, on completion of the evaluation, to adopt rules establishing a policy for the permitted use of a calculator application on a computing device. Requires the rules to specify the types of calculator applications and computing devices students are authorized to use and the circumstances under which each calculator application and computing device is authorized to be used. Requires TEA to post to TEA's Internet website and communicate to each school district the policy adopted under this subsection and a list of approved calculator applications and computing devices, including information relating to the cost and functionality of each listed calculator application and computing device.

SECTION 2. Requires TEA, not later than January 1, 2020, to adopt rules establishing a policy for the use of a calculator application on a computing device as required by Section 25.904(d), Education Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2019–2020 school year.

SECTION 4. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2019.