

- SUBJECT:** Alternative graduation requirements for students failing the TAAS test
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Sadler, Dutton, Dunnam, Hardcastle, Hochberg, Olivo  
0 nays  
3 absent — Grusendorf, Oliveira, Smith
- WITNESSES:** For — Felicia Escobar, National Council of La Raza; Carol Holst, Parents Unified to Reform TAAS Testing; Al Kauffman, MALDEF; Linda McNeil; Kris Sloan; Angela Valenzuela  
Against — None  
On — Rene Lara, Texas Federation of Teachers
- BACKGROUND:** Under Education Code, sec. 39.025, a student may not receive a high school diploma until the student has complete curriculum requirements successfully and has passed the exit-level Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) examination for English, mathematics, social studies, and science. A student may retake a test for a subject area that the student previously failed.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 2118 would require the education commissioner to prescribe by June 1, 2002, compensatory alternative graduation criteria that students could meet to graduate and receive diplomas without passing the TAAS test. The alternative graduation criteria would have to include a student's:
- ! grade-point average beginning in grade 9;
  - ! current class ranking;
  - ! performance on the individual TAAS assessment tests;
  - ! combined scores, using only the student's highest scores on the TAAS assessment tests; and
  - ! overall academic performance beginning in grade 9, as evaluated by two or more of the student's teachers.

A committee composed of the student's high school principal and two certified high school teachers of the school district would have to determine whether a student who did not pass the TAAS exam had met the alternative graduation criteria. The committee would have to consider the criteria after the first time the student took the TAAS test, after receiving a written request from the student's parent, and when the principal determined that the student was within one month of completing all other requirements for a high school diploma besides passing the TAAS exam.

The commissioner would have to adopt rules for the selection and operation of the committee, including notifying the student and the student's high school registrar of the committee's decision. A school district could issue a certificate of course work completion to a student who successfully completed the curriculum requirements but did not pass the TAAS test or complete the alternative criteria.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2001, and would apply beginning with the 2002-03 school year.

NOTES:

In the committee substitute, the alternative criteria would have to include the student's current class ranking rather than 12th grade class ranking. The substitute also specified that the alternative criteria would have to be compensatory. It added provisions regarding when the committee would have to determine if the student had met the alternative graduation criteria and requiring that the two teachers on the committee be certified.