

SUBJECT: Using compensatory education allotment for dyslexia programs

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 7 ayes — Grusendorf, Oliveira, Branch, Dawson, Eissler, Griggs, Madden
0 nays
2 absent — Dutton, Hochberg

WITNESSES: For — Sandi Borden, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; Lindsay Gustafson, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Joe Kopec, Texas Association of Secondary School Principals; Karen Soehnge, Texas Association of School Administrators.

Against — None

BACKGROUND: Education Code, sec. 28.006, requires school districts to conduct a reading assessment of kindergarten, first grade, and second grade students if funding is appropriated for this purpose. Education Code, sec. 38.003, requires that students in public schools be tested for dyslexia and related disorders and that school districts provide for the treatment of these disorders.

Under Education Code, sec. 42.152(c), school districts receive a compensatory education allotment to fund supplemental programs and services designed to eliminate any disparity in performance on assessment tests and for students at risk of dropping out of school. The compensatory education allotment may be used only for such expenses as costs for program and student evaluation, instructional materials and other supplies, salaries for teachers of at-risk students, smaller class sizes, and individualized instruction.

DIGEST: HB 1691 would amend Education Code, sec. 42.152, to stipulate that programs to diagnose dyslexia or to treat students who have dyslexia or related disorders may be funded by the compensatory education allotment.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2003.

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SUPPORTERS SAY:	HB 1692 would clarify that school districts can use compensatory education funds to cover the cost of testing students for dyslexia and related disorders. It is currently unclear in the law whether compensatory education funds may be used to conduct general reading diagnostic tests that may be used to test for dyslexia and related disorders. While the law may not prohibit compensatory education funds from being used in this way, there is a great deal of confusion among school districts about this issue, and the bill would remove any doubt.
OPPONENTS SAY:	HB 1691 is unnecessary because there is nothing in the law to prohibit schools from using compensatory education funds to pay for reading tests and other diagnostic tools for identifying dyslexia and related disorders.
NOTES:	A related bill, SB 894 by Bivins, would require the State Board of Education to develop auditing systems for compensatory education funds to ensure that these funds are being spent appropriately. SB 894 was passed by the Senate on April 15 and has been referred to the House Public Education Committee.