

SUBJECT: Decisions by site-based school committees regarding teacher service days

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 6 ayes — Grusendorf, Dutton, Eissler, Griggs, Hochberg, Madden

2 nays — Branch, Dawson

1 absent — Oliveira

WITNESSES: For — Tim Bacon, Texas State Teachers' Association; Lonnie Hollingsworth, Texas Classroom Teachers' Association; JoHannah Whitsett, Association of Texas Professional Educators

Against — David Hodgins, Texas Association of School Boards, Texas Association of School Administrators

On — Ted Melina Raab, Texas Federation of Teachers

BACKGROUND: Texas school districts that have not received an exemption are required to provide at least 180 days of instruction, while teachers employed under a ten-month contract must provide a minimum of 187 days of service. Texas law does not specify how teachers must spend in-service days that they are required to work when the district does not provide instruction.

Under Education Code, sec 21.451, school districts must provide staff development in accordance with minimum TEA standards for program planning, preparation and development and must include training in technology, conflict resolution, discipline strategies, and issues related to the instruction of special education students and students with disabilities. The staff development must be predominantly campus-based and must be developed and approved by campus-level committees.

Education Code, sec. 11.253, requires school districts to have policies and procedures to ensure that effective planning and site-based decision making occur at each school campus. These policies and procedures must establish campus-level planning and decision-making committees that include representative professional staff, parents of students enrolled in the district,

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and community members. The campus-level committee must be involved in decisions related to planning, budgeting, curriculum, staffing patterns, staff development and school organization and must approve the portions of the campus plan addressing campus staff development needs.

DIGEST: HB 860 would require campus-level committees in schools with exemplary ratings to approve the use of educators' service days. The bill would apply beginning with the 2003-04 school year.

The bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2003.

SUPPORTERS SAY: HB 860 would give high-performing schools more flexibility in deciding how teachers should use their non-instructional in-service days. The bill would allow campus committees to reward teachers by allowing them to use their time to make good schools even better. Committees still could require teachers to participate in relevant district-wide activities, such as training on issues related to sexual harassment.

Since campus-level committees include teacher representatives, HB 860 would give teachers a greater role in decisions about how their time could best be used.

OPPONENTS SAY: HB 860 would take away the authority of school districts to meet training goals and would have a negative impact on local control of school districts by allowing campus committees to determine how in-service days would be used. Some district-wide training programs, such as training on sexual harassment issues, are intended to help even the best teachers do a better job. There are many other incentives already in place to reward good teachers.

OTHER OPPONENTS SAY: HB 860 is not broad enough because it would not apply to districts that used processes other than site-based management, such as district-level consultation.