

**SUBJECT:** School performance ratings on student report cards and district Web sites

**COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 8 ayes — Grusendorf, Branch, Delisi, Dutton, Eissler, Hochberg, B. Keffer, Mowery

0 nays

1 absent — Oliveira

**WITNESSES:** None

**BACKGROUND:** Education Code, ch. 39, requires the State Board of Education to adopt rules to evaluate the performance of school districts and to assign each district a performance rating of:

- exemplary (meets or exceeds state exemplary standards);
- recognized (meets or exceeds required improvement and within 10 percent of state exemplary standards);
- academically acceptable (below the exemplary and recognized standards but exceeds the academically unacceptable standard); or
- academically unacceptable (below the clearly unacceptable performance standard and does not meet required improvement).

Criteria for these ratings include the following performance indicators:

- student performance and participation on statewide assessment tests, such as the TAKS;
- dropout rates and district completion rates for grades 9-12;
- student attendance rates;
- students who take the recommended course curriculum;
- student performance on the SAT and ACT exams; and
- percentage of students with limited English proficiency.

Each school year, the Texas Education Agency is required to prepare and distribute campus ratings for each campus in a school district.

School boards are required to publish an annual performance report describing the educational performance of the district as well as each campus in the district. The report must include uniform student performance information and descriptive information as determined by the commissioner of education. It also must include:

- campus performance objectives and district and campus performance ratings;
- the district's special education compliance status;
- a statement of the number, rate, and type of criminal incidents that occurred on each campus and information concerning school violence prevention and violence intervention policies;
- findings from evaluations conducted under the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Act; and
- information about the performance of graduates in higher education.

**DIGEST:**

HB 3297 would amend Education Code, ch. 39, to require schools to include in the first written notice of a student's performance the most recent performance rating of the student's school and a definition and explanation of each performance rating.

Not later than the 10th day after the first day of instruction of each school year, school districts that maintain district Web sites would have to make available online the most recent campus report card for each campus in the district, the information contained in the most recent performance report for the district, the district's most recent performance rating, and a definition and explanation of each performance rating.

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, 2005, and would apply beginning with the 2005-06 school year.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

HB 3297 would provide another means for parents and other interested parties to find out about a campus or school district's ratings under the state accountability system. Although these ratings are meant to provide information about the quality and performance of Texas schools, many people are unaware they exist. This information is important to Texas families seeking a superior education for their children.

Information about a school's performance rating goes hand-in-hand with grades and other information regarding an individual student's performance, and should be included in the student's report card.

OPPONENTS  
SAY:

The state should be extremely cautious about requiring information to be included in a student's report card. Report cards should contain very limited information related to a student's performance and should not be used to communicate with parents about other matters. Information about school and district ratings is already available from a variety of sources, including most school district Web pages. Parents who are not familiar with a school district's ratings are unlikely to learn more about it by reading about these ratings on their child's first report card or on the school district's Web page.

The bill borders on an unfunded mandate because it could create additional administrative expenses in large districts that would have to add current information to the report cards of thousands of students attending hundreds of schools. If a community decides that it wants to communicate this information in this way, the decision to do so should be made at the local level, not as a mandate imposed by the state.