

- SUBJECT:** Intensive reading and language intervention pilot program
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 7 ayes — Grusendorf, Oliveira, Branch, Eissler, Hochberg, B. Keffer, Mowery
- 0 nays
- 2 absent — Delisi, Dutton
- WITNESSES:** For — William M. Jenkins, Scientific Learning Corporation; Gary Patterson, East Central ISD
- Against — Rita Haecher, Texas Association for Bilingual Education; Rene Lara, Texas Federation of Teachers; Ana Yanez-Correa, LULAC
- On — Jesse Romero, Bilingual Educators of the Area Metroplex/Effective Networking for the Advancement of Bilingual Education
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code, sec. 28.0211 prohibits students from being promoted to the next grade if they do not pass the reading portion of the TAKS test in the 3rd, 5th, and 8th grades. School districts are required to provide students who do not pass the TAKS with at least two additional opportunities to retake the test. Each time a student fails the test, the district must provide accelerated instruction in the portion of the test that the student failed.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 3468 would authorize TEA to establish an intensive reading and language intervention program. Individual campuses that had failed to improve student performance on the reading portion of the TAKS test could apply to participate.
- If TEA established a pilot program, the agency would have to adopt minimum criteria for participation, which would include neuroscience-based, scientifically validated methods, interventions, or instructional tools that were proven to accelerate learning, cognitive ability, and language proficiency.

The principal of a participating campus, in consultation with teachers at that campus, would have to select students to participate in the pilot program. A participating campus would have to assess each selected student before and after entering the pilot program to measure the student's progress.

Not later than December 31, 2006, a vendor of an intensive language intervention program approved by TEA and selected to operate a pilot program would have to provide the Legislature with a report describing student progress. The commissioner could provide up to \$6 million in funding appropriated to provide accelerated instruction to improve student performance on the reading section of the TAKS test.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2005. The pilot program would have to be made available during the 2005-06 and 2006-07 school years. The program would expire on July 1, 2007.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 3468 would give TEA the opportunity to test, on a pilot program basis, an intensive reading and language instruction for students who did not pass the TAKS test. Many private vendors have experienced great success in providing this instruction, and the bill would give these companies the opportunity to prove their programs with Texas students. Some of these vendors already have shown successful results. For example, 92 percent of at-risk students at a Texas elementary school passed the TAKS test after using software produced by the Scientific Learning Corporation, which produces products based on more than 25 years of scientific research.

The bill would not require TEA to establish the pilot program, but would allow the agency to pursue such an option if it determined that a pilot program would benefit Texas students. The bill would not affect bilingual programs or funding for these programs, but simply would authorize the commissioner to use funds already earmarked for intensive instruction to help students pass the reading portion of the TAKS.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

CSHB 3468 would authorize TEA to use \$6 million in funds dedicated to intensive instruction to pay a private vendor to operate a pilot program in intensive reading and language instruction. It is not clear whether this would affect bilingual education by providing intensive English language instruction, which was the original intent of the bill. Rather than investing in these "silver bullet" solutions offered by for-profit vendors, TEA should

apply the \$6 million toward funding smaller classes, summer school, early childhood intervention, and other concrete approaches which, if sufficiently funded, have been proven to help students improve performance on the reading portion of the TAKS test.

NOTES:

The original version of the bill would have required TEA to adopt a pilot program in intensive reading and English language instruction. The committee substitute would require, for any pilot program conducted, that TEA adopt standards based on student performance on the reading portion of the TAKS test.