

- SUBJECT:** Requiring parenting and paternity awareness in high school courses
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Grusendorf, Oliveira, Delisi, Eissler, Hochberg, B. Keffer
1 nay — Branch
2 absent — Dutton, Mowery
- WITNESSES:** For — Laura Wolf, Texas Council on Family Violence
Against — None
On — Michael Hayes, Office of the Attorney General
- BACKGROUND:** The required curriculum in Texas public schools includes a foundation curriculum of English language arts, mathematics, science and social studies and an enrichment curriculum that includes foreign languages, health, physical education, fine arts, economics, career and technology education, and technology applications. A school district may offer courses for local credit in addition to those in the required curriculum.
- DIGEST:** HB 983 would require the State Board of Education (SBOE), in conjunction with the Office of the Attorney General (OAG), to develop a parenting and paternity awareness program that a school district would have to use in the district's high school health curriculum. The program would address parenting skills and responsibilities, including child support and other legal rights and responsibilities that come with parenthood; address relationship skills, including money management, communication skills, and marriage preparation; and, in districts that did not have a family violence prevention program, address skills related to the prevention of family violence.
- The bill would take effect September 1, 2005. The SBOE would have to develop the program by May 1, 2006, and school districts would use it beginning with the 2006-07 school year.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

In response to the increasing number of births to unmarried parents over the past decade, the OAG has created the Parenting and Paternity Awareness (PAPA) program, which includes discussion of topics such as marriage and committed relationships and emphasizes the importance of fathers to a child's well-being. More than 1,000 Texas teachers received training about the program, but because the topic is not required, it is not always included in the curriculum. Requiring that this topic be taught would help ensure that students were better informed about and prepared for the duties and responsibilities of parenting and could help decrease the number of teen pregnancies.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

Although this topic is important, it is not as high a priority as core curriculum subjects, given limited time and funding. The existing curriculum is already crowded, and health teachers should have the option of whether or not to cover this subject.