

SUBJECT: Extending the technology immersion project and PBS online agreement

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 5 ayes — Eissler, Hochberg, Mowery, Olivo, Patrick

0 nays

4 absent — Zedler, Branch, Delisi, Dutton

WITNESSES: (*On original version:*)

For — Jennifer Bergland, Bryan ISD, Jennifer Fritsch, Thomson-Gale; Paul Taylor, Center for Digital Education; Jerry Vaughn, Floydada ISD; (*Registered, but did not testify:* James Banks, Barbers Hill Independent School District; Chrissy Borskey, Dell Computer, Inc., Tom Burnett, Apple; Jeffrey Clark, American Electronics Association; David Duty, Texas Association of School Boards; Bill Grusendorf, Texas Association of Rural Schools; Bill Hammond, Texas Association of Business; Lynn Moak, Texas School Alliance; Drew Scheberle, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce; Fred Shannon, Hewlett-Packard; Johnny Veselka, Texas Association of School Administrators; William L. Mansel; Gloria McClanahan; Judy Stevener; Kristyn Stevener

Against — MerryLynn Gerstenschlager, Texas Eagle Forum

BACKGROUND: The state provides a technology allotment of \$30 per student in average daily attendance, or another amount set by appropriation, for school districts to fund electronic textbooks or technological equipment that contributes to student learning and for teacher training in technology.

The 78th Legislature in 2003 established a technology immersion pilot project to provide a wireless mobile computing device to each student in participating schools and use software, on-line courses, and other appropriate learning technologies that have been shown to improve student learning. Statutory authorization for the project ends August 31, 2007.

DIGEST: CSHB 1632 would continue the technology immersion pilot project but would provide different technologies to different campuses rather than providing a wireless mobile computing device to each student. The final

evaluation of the product would include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the different technologies.

The bill would extend the project to the high school level by adding high schools attended by students who participated in the pilot project in eighth grade. The project also would include one middle or junior high school and one high school in each state senate district. The project would also include schools and districts that participated in the program before September 1, 2007.

TEA would select participating schools based on each school's need for the pilot project. Selection criteria would include whether the school had limited access to educational resources that could be improved through the use of electronic textbooks or technological equipment that contributed to student learning. Existing statutes requiring the program to select at least five school districts that had applied for the project would be repealed.

CSHB 1632 would allow TEA to enter into an agreement with a public broadcasting station, or a consortium of stations, to provide online content and educational materials. From funds appropriated to the agency, TEA could make instructional materials available through public broadcasting stations for online instruction and professional development and for use in providing adult education. To the extent practicable, access to instructional materials and online content would have to be made available throughout the state. TEA could use federal funds or unexpended balances of funds appropriated for adult education for this purpose.

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, 2007.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 1632 would build on a pilot project that has shown great promise in encouraging teachers to use technology in the classroom and making students, particularly those in high-need areas, highly engaged and proficient in technology.

An April 2006 study of the pilot project after its first year indicated that teachers at immersed schools perceive themselves as more technology proficient and use technology more to support professional practices. Students also use technology more often, and teachers report the use of

more innovative and learner-centered practices compared to teachers in a control group not participating in the project.

The project, which has been in effect for three years, should be continued to facilitate ongoing research into the use of technology in education. Students who started in sixth grade with the project will be going on to high school in the fall. By expanding the project into high school and following these students, CSHB 1632 would support the kind of longitudinal research needed to answer how students who have these tools perform in high school, as well as how the use of technology may affect dropout rates, enrollment in higher education, and workforce preparedness.

Texas students need to become technology proficient if they are to compete successfully for positions in the workforce. A workforce skilled in the use of technology is crucial to a dynamic and expanding Texas economy.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

According to the fiscal note, the start-up cost of expanding the technology immersion project would be more than \$100 million in fiscal 2008. The project is expected to include 71,500 students in 84 schools.

The state should not devote significant resources to a program that has yet to show an impact on student achievement. According to the April, 2006 of the first technology immersion project, there was no significant effect on student achievement in reading or mathematics. One of the reasons cited was that laptops were used infrequently for learning in core subject classes, especially mathematics, where laptops were used once or twice a month.

OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:

The rapid pace of change in technology could make the results of the expanded project obsolete before it is of use to Texas educators. Instead of investing in a study of the use of technology for certain schools, the state should raise the technology allotment for all students so that schools districts and teachers can select the appropriate technology for their programs.

NOTES:

The fiscal note for the committee substitute indicates a cost to the state of \$100,460,000 for fiscal 2008 to cover one-time costs of developing instructional materials for use as part of the agreement with PBS and \$100 million to expand in one-time expenses to expand the technology

immersion program into one high school in every state senate district. After fiscal 2008, the estimated cost of the bill would be \$160,000 per year for fiscal 2009-2011.

The original version of the bill would have increased the technology allotment to \$200 per student in average daily attendance beginning with the 2011-12 school year. The allotment would have increased incrementally with the following allotments per student in average daily attendance:

- \$75 for the 2007-08 school year;
- \$100 for the 2008-09 school year;
- \$140 for the 2009-10 school year; and
- \$175 for the 2010-11 school year.

This allotment would have had to be used in accordance with a long-range plan prepared by the district that would have demonstrated how the money would have addressed specific outcomes at the school, classroom, or teacher or student level.