

- SUBJECT:** Establishing a technology literacy testing pilot project
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — Eissler, Branch, Delisi, Dutton, Hochberg, Mowery, Olivo, Patrick
0 nays
1 absent — Zedler
- WITNESSES:** For — Paula Murray (*Registered, but did not testify*: Amy Beneski, Texas Association of School Administrators; Robby Collins, Dallas Independent School District; Bill Hammond, Texas Association of Business; Bill Lewis)
Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code, sec. 28.002, requires school districts to offer courses in technology applications as part of an enrichment curriculum. The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for students in grades 6-8 specifies what students must learn in order to become “technology literate.”
- DIGEST:** CSHB 2503 would direct the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to establish a Technology Literacy Assessment Pilot Program to assess student proficiency in technology applications. School districts could apply to participate and would have to represent both rural and urban areas of the state.

TEA would have to adopt an assessment instrument designed to measure student mastery of essential knowledge and skills in technology. Participating districts would administer this assessment to every student in either the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth or ninth grade, and report test results to TEA.

The assessment would have to be administered online and aligned with the essential knowledge and skills for technology applications. It also would need to incorporate performance-based measures, including a requirement

that students perform certain technological tasks and respond to questions based on the completion of those tasks. It would have to be designed in such a way that a student's proficiency level automatically could be reported to the district in a format compatible with district and state data systems.

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, and apply beginning with the 2007-08 school year.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 2503 would establish a voluntary statewide pilot project to help measure and assess student performance in technology applications courses, which usually are taken by students in fifth through ninth grade. If this pilot project was successful, it could be expanded to give all school districts the tools they need to measure where Texas students stand on technology literacy.

Federal law requires states to teach technology literacy, but Texas currently has no standardized system for assessing and reporting student performance in these courses. The absence of a data-gathering tool and an accountability measure for school districts creates reporting problems and makes it difficult to determine the overall level of student proficiency in technology applications. While the federal government currently does not require states to provide student performance data, the U.S. Department of Education is considering rules that would impose such a requirement. Texas needs to begin preparing to collect and report this information.

Some school districts already are developing their own technology assessments, which usually take only one class period and help teachers identify areas in which students may need additional instruction. The online assessments are conducted using existing equipment and do not impose significant additional burdens for teachers or school districts. It is likely that school districts participating in the pilot project already would have the capacity to administer online assessments.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

The federal government currently does not require states to report on student performance in technology applications, only to teach technology literacy. CSHB 2503 would pave the way for the statewide adoption of another accountability measure in a system that already is overburdened with testing requirements.

According to the fiscal note, it would cost TEA \$5 million to develop the technology assessment instruments for grades 5 to 9. Although the House-passed version of HB 1 by Chisum includes in Art. 11 a contingency appropriation of \$250,000 if CSHB 2503 is enacted, this would provide only 5 percent of the funding necessary to develop the assessments for this pilot project.

NOTES:

The original version of the bill would have required school districts to annually test each student in grades five through nine.

According to the Legislative Budget Board, CSHB 2503 would require TEA to develop new assessment instruments at an estimated cost of \$5 million in general revenue-related funds in fiscal 2008. The House-passed version of HB 1 by Chisum, the general appropriations bill for fiscal 2008-09, would appropriate \$250,000 in Art. 11 to fund the provisions of CSHB 2503.