

- SUBJECT:** Establishing reading academies for certain public school teachers
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 5 ayes — Eissler, Zedler, Hochberg, Olivo, Patrick
0 nays
4 absent — Branch, Delisi, Dutton, Mowery
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 18— 31-0
- WITNESSES:** For — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Portia Bosse, Texas State Teachers Assoc.; Ramiro Canales, Texas Association of School Administrators; David Duty, Texas Association of School Boards; Harley Eckhart, Texas Elementary Principals & Supervisors Assn.; Lindsay Gustafson, TCTA; Elena Lincoln, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Patty Quinzi, Texas Federation of Teachers)

Against — None
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code, sec. 28.0211 requires that third and fifth grade students pass the reading and mathematics sections of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) exam before being promoted to the next grade level. Eighth graders will be subject to the same requirements in the 2007-08 academic year. School districts are charged with providing intense, comprehensive instruction through Accelerated Reading Instruction (ARI) and Accelerated Math Instruction (AMI) programs to those students who did not successfully pass the TAKS exam. Students receive up to three opportunities to pass the exam. Each year, TEA must certify that sufficient state funds have been appropriated to provide the necessary ARI and AMI instruction for students. This funding is provided to school districts separately from the Foundation School Program as part of the Student Success Initiative under TEA.
- Teacher training academies train teachers to use scientifically valid instructional practices in core academic test areas. They provide intensive instruction for teachers so they can meet the growing demand as more

students become subject to mandatory passing requirements. These academies were eliminated as part of the budget cuts in 2003.

DIGEST:

SB 1697 would direct the commissioner of education to establish reading academies for teachers providing reading instruction for students in grades six through eight and require teachers to begin attending by the 2007-08 school year. Attendance in a reading academy would be required for teachers of reading, mathematics, science, or social studies in grades six, seven, or eight on campuses rated academically unacceptable based on student performance on reading assessments. The commissioner would develop criteria for the selection of other teachers to attend reading academies. The bill would authorize teachers who attend the reading academies to receive a stipend in an amount to be determined by the commissioner.

The bill would set forth specific training requirements for teachers who provide reading instruction to seventh or eighth grade students, teachers who provide reading instruction to sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students, teachers who provide instruction in mathematics, science, or social studies to sixth, seventh, or eighth grade students, and any other areas identified by the commissioner.

School districts would have to administer a reading instrument adopted by the commissioner under the requirements of the bill to each seventh grade student whose performance on the sixth grade reading assessment indicated a lack of reading proficiency. School districts would have to provide additional reading instruction and intervention to seventh grade students to improve their reading skills in the relevant areas of need identified by the reading instrument. Training and support for these activities would be provided by regional education service centers and the reading academies established by the bill.

CSSB 1697 would require the commissioner to conduct or contract for a comprehensive performance evaluation of the reading academies and deliver a report to the Legislature by December 1, 2010. The bill sets forth what the evaluation would have to contain, including qualitative, quantitative, and expert review methodologies and financial data analysis to assess the cost-effectiveness of the reading academies. Upon a request from the commissioner, regional education service centers would have to assist the commissioner and TEA with training and other activities related to the development and operation of the reading academies.

The commissioner would be authorized to adopt rules requiring school districts receiving federal funding under Title I of the Elementary and Second Education Act of 1964 (20 U.S.C. sec. 6301 et seq.) to use those funds to provide supplemental educational services in conjunction with accelerated instruction. The commissioner would have to certify by July 1 every year, or as soon as practicable, whether there were sufficient funds appropriated for the bill.

The bill would repeal sec. 28.0211(1) of the Education Code, which prohibits promotion of a third grader to the fourth grade if the student did not perform satisfactorily on the third grade reading assessment instrument.

The bill would apply beginning with the 2007-2008 school year and 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.

NOTES:

According to the fiscal note, SB 1697 would cost \$32.7 million in general revenue-related funds in fiscal 2008-09 and \$6.7 million each year thereafter.