

SUBJECT: Establishing literacy achievement academies for pre-k to grade 3 teachers

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 9 ayes — Aycock, Bohac, Deshotel, Farney, Galindo, González, Huberty,
K. King, VanDeaver

0 nays

2 absent — Allen, Dutton

WITNESSES: For — Stephanie Stoebe, Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE); Ted Melina Raab, Texas American Federation of Teachers (AFT); Bruce Gearing, Texas Association of Community Schools (TACS); Buck Gilcrease, Texas Association of School Administrators, Texas Association of School Boards; Mark Terry, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; Courtney Boswell, Texas Institute for Education Reform; Rona Statman, The Arc of Texas; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Mike King, Bridge City ISD; Gina Mannino, Bridge City ISD; John Marez, Corpus Christi ISD; Jodi Duron, Elgin ISD; Randy Willis, Granger ISD; Alicia Lee, Greater Houston Partnership; Howell Wright, Huntsville ISD; Betsy Singleton, League of Women Voters; Berhl Robertson, Jr., Lubbock ISD; Jimmy Parker, Lubbock Roosevelt ISD; Keith Bryant, Lubbock-Cooper ISD; Bill Hammond, Texas Association of Business; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Justin Yancy, Texas Business Leadership Council; Paige Williams, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Janna Lilly, Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education; Cameron Petty, Texas Institute for Education Reform; Ellen Arnold, Texas PTA; Colby Nichols, Texas Rural Education Association; Portia Bosse, Texas State Teachers Association; Monty Exter, the Association of Texas Professional Educators; Grover Campbell, Texas Association of School Boards; Adrianna Cuellar Rojas, United Ways of Texas)

Against — Zenobia Joseph; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Trevor Dupuy)

On — Steven Aleman, Disability Rights Texas; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Monica Martinez, Texas Education Agency)

BACKGROUND: Education Code, sec. 21.455 requires the commissioner of education to develop and make available professional development institutes for teachers who provide instruction in mathematics to students in grades 5-8.

Sec. 21.4551 requires the commissioner to develop and make available reading academies for teachers of students in grades 6-8.

DIGEST: CSHB 1843 would amend Education Code, ch. 21 to require the commissioner of education to develop and make available literacy achievement academies for teachers of prekindergarten through grade 3. These academies would include training in effective and systematic instructional practices in reading, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and research-based practices to address the needs of students with reading disorders.

The commissioner would adopt criteria to select teachers who could attend a literacy achievement academy. In adopting the criteria, the commissioner would have to include teachers who instruct students with reading disorders, including special education teachers, and to give priority to teachers employed by school districts in which at least 50 percent of the students enrolled were educationally disadvantaged.

Teachers attending a literacy achievement academy would receive a stipend in an amount determined by the commissioner. This stipend would not be considered when determining whether a district was paying the teacher the minimum monthly salary, as provided by Education Code, sec. 21.402.

The commissioner could request that regional education service centers assist with training and activities related to the literacy achievement academies.

This 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, 2015.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 1843 would allow Texas teachers to benefit from the professional development opportunities offered by literacy academies, which could help improve outcomes for students, particularly those who are educationally disadvantaged.

Studies have shown that literacy academies can show positive gains for students in prekindergarten through third grade and on reading and writing assessments for fourth graders. Reading scores have remained stagnant for grades 3- 8 during the past few years on the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) exams. The state's English-language learner population continues to grow and now makes up almost 18 percent of the student population. These academies could help ensure consistent instruction for these students.

Teachers could be trained in new instructional materials and methods they could immediately apply to the classroom. The bill could help teachers who experience a disconnect between the pedagogy of teacher preparation programs and the real-life challenges of teaching educationally disadvantaged children, who make up a large portion of the Texas student population.

The stipend associated with the bill would provide an incentive and support for state educators to develop skills that would impact learning for the state's diverse population of students in prekindergarten to third grade. Costs associated with the bill would pay for the stipend and for updates to literacy content. Teachers attending the academies could become expert resources for their school districts and could provide them with instructional resources and insight.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

CSHB 1843 would be well intentioned but could amount to another expensive education initiative that would not necessarily produce measurable results for students. Similar efforts have not proven

successful, and this could be another example of the state spending money on programs that demonstrate little progress in improving student achievement and test scores.

OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:

CSHB 1843 should be expanded to include teachers from more grades. While the bill could have an impact on the reading levels of students up to third grade, it would not benefit students who have entered fourth grade, which is when STAAR testing begins, and who are already below expected reading levels. The literacy achievement academies program should be expanded to include fourth grade teachers.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board's fiscal note, CSHB 1843 would have a negative net impact to general revenue of about \$21 million in fiscal 2016-17. This would include the cost of providing the teacher stipends and developing content.

CSHB 1, the House-passed budget for fiscal 2016-17, contains a contingency rider in Art. 11 for CSHB 1843 that, if adopted, would provide \$30 million to the Texas Education Agency to develop literacy achievement academies.

The Senate companion bill, SB 925 by Kolkhorst, was approved by the Senate on April 23.