

SUBJECT: Improving training to help educators serve students with disabilities

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 13 ayes — Dutton, Lozano, Allen, Allison, K. Bell, Bernal, Buckley,
M. González, Huberty, K. King, Meza, Talarico, VanDeaver

0 nays

WITNESSES: For — Kristin Mcguire, TCASE; Christine Broughal, Texans for Special Education Reform; Amy Litzinger, Texas Parent to Parent; Jennifer Bacak; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Mike Meroney, Academic Language Therapy Association (ALTA); Andrea Chevalier, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Heather Sheffield, Decoding Dyslexia and Texans Advocating for Meaningful Student Assessment (TAMSA).; Steven Aleman, Disability Rights Texas; Lisa Flores, Easterseals Texas; Chloe Latham Sikes, IDRA (Intercultural Development Research Association); Matthew Lovitt, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Texas; Taylor Sims, Project Lead the Way; Nancy Walker, Texans Care for Children; Courtney Hoffman, Texas Association for Behavior Analysis Public Policy Group; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Linda Litzinger, Texas Parent to Parent; Ashley Ford, The Arc of Texas; Jennifer Gonzalez; Thomas Parkinson)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Eric Marin and Justin Porter, Texas Education Agency)

DIGEST: HB 159 would add to requirements for educator preparation programs and staff development related to serving students with disabilities. A student with a disability would mean a student who:

- was eligible to participate in a school district's special education program;

- was covered by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; or
- was covered by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Educator certification. The State Board for Educator Certification would have to propose rules specifying what each educator was expected to know and be able to do, particularly with regard to students with disabilities. Training requirements for an educator certificate would include demonstration of the following:

- basic knowledge of disability categories under federal law and how they can affect student learning and development and conditions that could be considered a disability under Section 504 and how a condition can affect student learning and development;
- competence in the use of specified proactive instructional planning techniques; and
- competence in the use of evidence-based instructional practices.

Minimum academic qualifications for certification related to instruction in detection and education of students with dyslexia and instruction regarding mental health, substance abuse, and youth suicide would apply to all certifications regardless of whether the certification required a person to possess a bachelor's degree.

Principals. The qualifications for principal certification would have to emphasize, as part of instructional leadership, the principal's ability to create an inclusive school environment and to foster parent involvement, as well as curriculum and instruction management for students with disabilities.

Educator preparation programs. HB 159 would expand the requirements for an educator preparation program's eligibility for approval or renewal to include:

- incorporation of proactive instructional planning techniques throughout coursework and across content areas using a specified framework; and

- integration of inclusive practices for all students and evidence-based instruction and intervention strategies throughout coursework, clinical experience, and student teaching.

The bill would specify that certain educator preparation program standards had to include information about students with disabilities.

Field experience. HB 159 would add requirements for a comprehensive field-based teacher program to be applicable to all students, including students with disabilities, and include curriculum theory and application within diverse student populations. The current requirement that a candidate for certification as a teacher of record complete at least 15 hours of field-based experience would have to involve a diverse student population that, to the greatest extent practicable, included students with disabilities.

Staff development. The bill would require a school district, in designing staff development for an educator other than a principal, to use procedures that ensured the training incorporated proactive instructional planning techniques using a specified framework and integrated inclusive and evidence-based instructional practices for all students, including students with disabilities.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

HB 159 would prepare educators to provide a more inclusive, supportive, and barrier-free educational environment for students with developmental, physical, and intellectual disabilities. It is crucial that all teachers be equipped for diverse learning needs of their students, and the bill would prepare teachers with multiple ways to present information and engage students.

The bill would change requirements for teaching certificates and staff development to integrate evidence-based, inclusive teaching practices. Teachers also are seeking these techniques to improve their ability to help all students, including those in gifted and talented programs, English

learners, and students experiencing learning loss due to the pandemic.

CRITICS
SAY:

No concerns identified.