

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
77R10173 BDH-D

H.B. 1475
By: Kitchen (Ellis, Rodney)
Education
5/3/2001
Engrossed

DIGEST AND PURPOSE

While Texas has brought many computers into its primary and secondary schools, classroom teachers have varying knowledge of how to use technology in their classrooms. Classroom use of computers remains relatively low nationwide and only about one-third of all United States public school teachers feel "well" or "very well" prepared to use computers or the Internet in their teaching. The 76th Legislature created the Master Reading Teacher Grant Program to provide training and incentives for teachers to improve student reading performance. H.B. 1475 creates the Master Technology Teacher Grant Program to provide similar training and incentives for Texas educators to learn about integrating computers into their classroom instruction.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 1 (Section 21.411, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 21I, Education Code, by adding Section 21.411, as follows:

Sec. 21.411. MASTER TECHNOLOGY TEACHER GRANT PROGRAM. (a) Requires the commissioner of education (commission) to establish a master technology teacher grant program (program) to encourage teachers to take certain actions.

(b) Requires the commissioner, from funds appropriated for that purpose, to make grants to school districts as provided by this section to pay stipends to selected certified master technology teachers. Requires the commissioner to give preference to teachers who teach at high-need campuses.

(c) Requires the commissioner to annually identify each high-need campus in a school district (district) using criteria established by the commissioner by rule. Requires the commissioner to also use the criteria to rank campuses in order of greatest need.

(d) Authorizes a district to apply to the commissioner for grants to be used to pay stipends to certified master technology teachers in accordance with this section. Provides the amount of each grant. Sets forth the requirements for an application to be approved by the commissioner.

(e) Provides the amount of a stipend under Subsection (d)(2).

(f) Requires the commissioner to adopt rules for the distribution of grants to districts in years following the year of the initial grant. Provides that a district that has been approved for a grant to pay a stipend to a certified master technology teacher is not required to reapply for a grant for two consecutive school years following the year of the initial grant under certain conditions.

(g) Requires the commissioner to reduce payments to a district proportionately to the extent a teacher does not meet certain requirements. Sets forth certain requirements of a district if the district employs more certified master technology teachers than the number of grants available under this section. Provides that a decision of the district under this section is final and not appealable. Prohibits the district from apportioning among teachers a stipend paid for with a grant the district receives under this section. Authorizes the district to use local money to pay additional stipends in amounts determined by the district.

(h) Provides that a grant a district receives under this section is in addition to any funding the district receives under Chapter 42. Requires the commissioner to distribute funds under this section with the Foundation School Program (program) payment to which the district is entitled as soon as practicable after the end of the school year as determined by the commissioner. Provides that a district to which Chapter 41 applies is entitled to the grants paid under this section. Requires the commissioner to determine the timing of the distribution of grants to a district that does not receive program payments.

(i) Provides that this section does not create a property right to a grant or stipend. Provides that a district is entitled to a grant to carry out the purposes of this section only to the extent the commissioner makes the grant in accordance with this section and only to the extent sufficient state funds are appropriated for those purposes. Requires the commissioner, if state funds are appropriated but are insufficient to fully fund a grant, to determine the method of distributing the funds.

(j) Provides that a decision of the commissioner concerning the amount of money to which a district is entitled under this section is final and not appealable. Requires each district, in the manner and at the time prescribed by the commissioner, to provide to the commissioner proof acceptable to the commissioner of certain information.

(k) Authorizes the commissioner to audit the expenditure of money appropriated for purposes of this section. Requires a district's use of the money appropriated for purposes of this section to be verified as part of the district audit under Section 44.008.

(l) Provides that a stipend a teacher receives under this section is not considered in determining whether the district is paying the teacher the minimum monthly salary required under Section 21.402.

(m) Authorizes the commissioner to adopt other rules as necessary to implement this section.

SECTION 2. Amends Chapter 21B, Education Code, by adding Section 21.0482, as follows:

Sec. 21.0482. MASTER TECHNOLOGY TEACHER CERTIFICATION. Requires the State Board for Educator Certification (board), to ensure that there are teachers with special training to work with other teachers and with students in order to increase the use of technology in each classroom, to establish a master of technology teacher certificate (certificate). Requires the board to issue a certificate to each eligible person. Sets forth the eligibility requirements for the certificate. Authorizes the board to provide technology applications training courses under this section with certain entities.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 822.201(b), Government Code, to redefine "salary and wages."

SECTION 4. Requires the board to propose rules establishing requirements and prescribing an examination for master technology teacher certification not later than September 1, 2003.

SECTION 5. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2001.