

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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C.S.H.B. 1164
By: VanDeaver et al. (Garcia)
Education
5/21/2015
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Many parents, students, and teachers across the state of Texas have expressed concerns with the writing components of our state assessments. The current writing assessments for grades four, seven, and English I and II end-of-course exams (EOC) call for a formulaic writing style that can be difficult to grade objectively and often do not demonstrate a student's mastery of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

C.S.H.B. 1164 tasks the Texas Education Agency with developing a study and a pilot program in order to test the feasibility of changing the writing assessments to one that would grade students in a more comprehensive manner.

C.S.H.B. 1164 amends current law relating to requiring the Texas Education Agency to conduct a study to develop a writing assessment method for public school students and establish a pilot program to administer the assessment method developed.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Education Agency in SECTION 1 (Section 39.02301, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 39, Education Code, by adding Section 39.02301, as follows:

Sec. 39.02301. WRITING ASSESSMENT STUDY; PILOT PROGRAM. (a) Requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA), during the 2015-2016 school year, in coordination with the entity that has been contracted to develop or implement assessment instruments under Section 39.023 (Adoption and Administration of Instruments), to conduct a study to develop a writing assessment method as an alternative to the writing assessment instruments required under Sections 39.023(a) (requiring TEA to adopt or develop appropriate criterion-referenced assessment instruments designed to assess essential knowledge and skills in certain subjects) and (c) (requiring TEA to also adopt end-of-course assessment instruments for secondary-level courses in certain subjects). Requires that the writing assessment method be designed to assess:

- (1) a student's mastery of the essential knowledge and skills in writing through timed writing samples;
- (2) improvement of a student's writing skills from the beginning of the school year to the end of the school year;
- (3) a student's ability to follow the writing process from rough draft to final product; and
- (4) a student's ability to produce more than one type of writing style.

(b) Requires TEA, during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 school years, to establish a pilot program as provided by this section to implement in designated school districts the writing assessment method developed under Subsection (a).

(c) Requires TEA to designate school districts to participate in the pilot program as provided by this subsection. Requires that the pilot program include at least one large urban district, one medium-sized district, and one rural district. Requires that each district included have a student enrollment that is representative of diverse demographics and socioeconomic backgrounds. Requires TEA, to the extent practicable, to designate the number of districts TEA determines appropriate to achieve the cost savings described by Subsection (d).

(d) Provides that a school district designated to participate in the pilot program under this section is not required to comply with the writing assessment requirements under Sections 39.023(a) and (c) during the period the district is participating in the pilot program. Requires TEA to, to the greatest extent practicable, apply cost savings that result from the exemption under this subsection to offset the costs accrued under this section.

(e) Requires TEA to establish the process for consolidating student writing assessments under the method developed under Subsection (a) to be submitted for scoring. Authorizes this process to include the submission of a student portfolio for scoring.

(f) Requires the individuals responsible for scoring student writing assessments under the pilot program to be coordinated jointly by:

(1) the school district in which the student is enrolled and that is participating in the pilot program;

(2) a public junior college or institution of higher education that enters into an agreement with the participating school district; and

(3) the regional education service center that serves the participating district.

(g) Requires that a random sampling of scored student writing assessments, the size of which TEA shall determine, be delivered to TEA.

(h) Requires TEA, not later than September 1, 2016, to prepare and deliver to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the presiding officer of each legislative standing committee with primary jurisdiction over primary and secondary education a report covering the study of the development of the writing assessment method under Subsection (a). Requires TEA, not later than September 1 of each year in 2017 and 2018, to prepare and deliver to the governor, the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the presiding officer of each legislative standing committee with primary jurisdiction over primary and secondary education a report that:

(1) evaluates the implementation and progress of the pilot program under this section; and

(2) makes recommendations regarding the continuation or expansion of the pilot program.

(i) Requires TEA to adopt rules as necessary to administer this section.

(j) Provides that this section expires September 1, 2019.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.