

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 925
By: Kolkhorst; West
Education
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Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Without proficient reading and comprehension skills, every other school subject is nearly incomprehensible. Problematically, many students are not reading at a satisfactory level. Teacher quality is widely considered the most important school-related variable in improving student performance; accordingly, teachers must be afforded the resources, training, and tools needed to make a difference in their young students' lives.

The state should provide funding to establish Literacy Achievement Academies, based on similar professional development created as a part of former Governor Bush's Texas Reading Initiative. The academies would support teacher training and the implementation of scientific, research-based programs that support students in their reading development in the primary grades.

S.B. 925 amends current law relating to providing training academies for public school teachers who provide reading instruction to students in kindergarten through grade three.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter J, Chapter 21, Education Code, by adding Section 21.4552, as follows:

Sec. 21.4552. TEACHER LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT ACADEMIES. (a) Requires the commissioner of education (commissioner) to develop and make available literacy achievement academies for teachers who provide reading instruction to students at the kindergarten or first, second, or third grade level.

(b) Provides that a literacy achievement academy developed under this section:

(1) is required to include training in:

(A) effective and systematic instructional practices in reading, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; and

(B) the use of empirically validated instructional methods that are appropriate for struggling readers; and

(2) is authorized to include training in effective instructional practices in writing.

(c) Requires the commissioner to adopt criteria for selecting teachers who may attend a literacy achievement academy. Requires the commissioner, in adopting selection criteria under this subsection, to:

(1) require granting a priority to teachers employed by school districts in which 50 percent or more of the students enrolled are educationally disadvantaged; and

(2) provide a process through which a teacher not employed at a campus described by Subdivision (1) may attend the academy if the academy has available space and the school district employing the teacher pays the costs of the teacher's attendance.

(d) Entitles a teacher who attends a literacy achievement academy to receive a stipend in the amount determined by the commissioner from funds appropriated for that purpose. Provides that a stipend received under this subsection is not considered in determining whether a district is paying the teacher the minimum monthly salary under Section 21.402 (Minimum Salary Schedule For Certain Professional Staff).

(e) Requires regional education service centers, on request of the commissioner, to assist the commissioner and the Texas Education Agency with training and other activities relating to the development and operation of literacy achievement academies.

(f) Provides that this section expires September 1, 2027.

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