

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
84R21308 JSL-F

C.S.S.B. 935
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Education
4/16/2015
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Reading is a critically important skill and serves as the foundation on which all other learning is built. Many students in Texas are not reading at a satisfactory level, which limits their ability to excel in other subjects. According to the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), nationally, only 35 percent of fourth graders were at or above proficiency level in reading.

Under current law, each school district is required to administer a reading instrument at the kindergarten, first, and second grade levels. Chronically low performing schools are required to take actions to improve academic outcomes, or else risk closure or reconstitution.

S.B. 935 provides schools with unsatisfactory scores on early reading assessments the option of inviting highly trained reading instruction specialists into K-3 classrooms to teach alongside existing staff. This model of professional development provides teachers with training they can immediately apply in their own classes. (Original Author's / Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

C.S.S.B. 935 amends current law relating to the establishment of a reading excellence team pilot program.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the commissioner of education in SECTION 1 (Section 28.0061, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter A, Chapter 28, Education Code, by adding Section 28.0061, as follows:

Sec. 28.0061. READING EXCELLENCE TEAM PILOT PROGRAM. (a) Requires the commissioner of education (commissioner) to establish a reading excellence team pilot program in accordance with this section, using funds appropriated for that purpose.

(b) Provides that a school district is eligible to participate in the pilot program if, as determined by the commissioner, the district has low student performance on:

(1) a reading instrument administered in accordance with Section 28.006 (c) (requiring each school district to administer the kindergarten and first and second grade levels); or

(2) a third grade reading assessment instrument administered under Section 39.023(a) (requiring the Texas Education Agency to adopt or develop appropriate criterion-referenced assessment instruments designed to assess essential knowledge and skills in reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and science).

(c) Requires that the pilot program:

(1) establish reading excellence teams composed of reading instruction specialists;

(2) allow an eligible school district to request the assistance of a reading excellence team; and

(3) provide a reading excellence team to a requesting eligible school district to:

(A) review with the district the results of the assessments described under Subsection (b) to determine campuses and classrooms for kindergarten through third grade with the greatest need of assistance; and

(B) work with teachers on campuses and in classrooms identified under Paragraph (A) to provide training necessary to improve student reading outcomes.

(d) Requires the commissioner to adopt rules to administer this section, including rules establishing qualifications and criteria for selecting reading instruction specialists for a reading excellence team.

(e) Provides that this section expires September 1, 2021.

SECTION 2. Requires the commissioner to establish the pilot program under Section 28.0061, Education Code, as added by this Act, not later than September 1, 2016.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.