

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center

S.B. 972  
By: Kolkhorst; West  
Education  
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Enrolled

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

There is an abundance of research available today that illuminates how children learn to read and how schools can enhance that process. This research can help guide professional development opportunities for teachers in grades K-3 to help students learn to read. Research-based professional development is equally as important for teachers in the fourth and fifth grades, as these later grades typically mark the time in a child's education when he or she is expected to start "reading to learn," as opposed to simply learning to read.

Written language imparts new vocabulary, language patterns, ideas, concepts, and ways of thinking. Reading to learn involves more than children's ability to quickly and easily recognize letters and words. The key to helping students master this important skill is building comprehension and inferential thinking. Children must be taught comprehension strategies they can apply while thinking critically about what they are reading. Comprehension strategies help children derive enjoyment and enrichment from reading and build on their knowledge of the world while improving language skills.

S.B. 972 directs the commissioner of education to create Reading-to-Learn Academies for professional educators in the fourth and fifth grades with a curriculum-focused teaching strategy to improve comprehension across all subjects.

S.B. 972 amends current law relating to training academies for public school teachers who provide reading comprehension instruction to students in grades four and five.

### **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 21.4554, as follows:

Sec. 21.4554. READING-TO-LEARN ACADEMIES. (a) Requires the commissioner of education (commissioner) to develop and make available reading-to-learn academies for teachers who provide reading comprehension instruction to students at the fourth or fifth grade level.

(b) Provides that a reading-to-learn academy developed under this section:

- (1) must include effective instructional practices that promote student development of reading comprehension and inferential and critical thinking;
- (2) must provide training in the use of empirically validated instructional methods that are appropriate for struggling readers;
- (3) may include material on writing instruction; and

(4) must provide participating teachers with access to the academy training materials through the Internet after the teachers attend the academy.

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

(1) require granting a priority to teachers employed by a school district at a campus at 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 reading-to-learn academy, from funds appropriated for that purpose, to receive a stipend in the amount determined by the commissioner. 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 reading-to-learn academies.

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

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