

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 972
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Education
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As Filed

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.

As proposed, 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) Requires that a reading-to-learn academy developed under this section:

(1) include effective instructional practices that promote student development of reading comprehension and inferential and critical thinking; and

(2) 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.

(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 to cover expenses of attending the academy. 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).

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