

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1557
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Veteran Affairs & Border Security
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Children of members of the military are a student population that require special services due to being highly mobile and often having emotional or behavioral needs related to the deployment of a parent. Understandably, when military families come to Texas, they look for schools that can understand these needs and provide relevant programming to address them. To facilitate the provision of these services, Texas currently collects data on the military-connected status of students enrolled in public school; however, this data is minimal, and schools are not required to use this information to identify students in need of services. While many schools admirably offer robust programs of military family assistance, there is no easy way for these families or other military personnel to identify schools engaged in best practices surrounding this important student population.

S.B. 1557 helps schools highlight the programs they provide for military-connected students by establishing the Purple Star Campus program, which recognizes campuses that develop practices and programs that cater to this student group. To receive a Purple Star designation, a campus must appoint a military student liaison to identify and assist military-connected students, provide easily-accessible online resources to military families, institute a program to help military students transition into their new campus, and offer professional development to educators on related issues. The bill also expands the current definition of "military-connected students" to include students whose parents are veterans or were killed in action. The program created by S.B. 1557 will aid military families in finding a school that is attuned to their special needs, and help such schools be recognized for the work they do to help engage the families who selflessly serve in our armed forces.

As proposed, S.B. 1557 amends current law relating to military-connected students, including providing a designation for certain school district campuses that take actions to assist those students.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the Texas Education Agency in SECTION 2 (Section 33.909, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 25.006(d), Education Code, to redefine "military-connected student" to include a current or former member of certain military or reserve forces or member of a military or reserve force described by Subdivision (1), (2), or (3) who was killed in the line of duty.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter Z, Chapter 33, Education Code, by adding Section 33.909, as follows:

Sec. 33.909. PURPLE STAR CAMPUS. (a) Defines "military-connected student."

(b) Requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to designate a school district campus as a Purple Star Campus if the campus applies and qualifies for the designation under this section.

(c) Requires a campus, to qualify as a Purple Star Campus, to:

(1) designate a staff member as a military liaison, whose duties include:

(A) identifying military-connected students enrolled at the campus through the Public Education Information Management System;

(B) serving as the point of contact between the campus and military-connected students and their families;

(C) determining appropriate campus services available to military-connected students; and

(D) assisting in coordinating campus programs relevant to military-connected students;

(2) maintain on the campus Internet website an easily accessible web page that includes resources for military-connected students and their families, including information regarding:

(A) relocation to, enrollment at, registration at, and transferring records to the campus;

(B) academic planning, course sequences, and advanced classes available at the campus; and

(C) counseling and other support services available for military-connected students enrolled at the campus;

(3) maintain a transition program led by students, where appropriate, that assists military-connected students in transitioning into the campus;

(4) offer professional development for staff members on issues related to military-connected students; and

(5) offer at least one of the following initiatives:

(A) a resolution showing support for military-connected students and their families;

(B) recognition of the Month of the Military Child or Military Family Month with relevant events hosted by the campus; or

(C) a partnership with a local military installation that provides opportunities for active duty military members to volunteer at the campus, speak at an assembly, or host a field trip.

(d) Authorizes a school district campus, to comply with a requirement under Subsection (c)(2), (4), or (5), to partner with the district to provide:

(1) an Internet website web page required under Subsection (c)(2) if the campus does not have an Internet website;

(2) professional development required under Subsection (c)(4); or

(3) an initiative required under Subsection (c)(5).

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

SECTION 3. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2019–2020 school year.

SECTION 4. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2019.