

- SUBJECT:** Allowing districts to grant paid sabbaticals to experienced teachers
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 8 ayes — Grusendorf, Branch, Dawson, Eissler, Griggs, Hochberg, Madden  
0 nays  
1 absent — Oliveira
- WITNESSES:** For — Lindsay Gustafson, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Jo-Hannah Whitsett, Association of Texas Professional Educators  
  
Against — Cathy Douglass, Texas Association of School Boards; Harley Eckhart, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; Karen Soehnge, Texas Association of School Administrators  
  
On — David Anderson, Texas Education Agency
- BACKGROUND:** Education Code, sec. 21.452 allows a school board to grant a developmental leave of absence to a certified teacher with at least five years of experience for study, research, travel, or another suitable purpose. The board may grant a teacher up to one year of developmental leave at one-half salary or one-half year of leave at full salary.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 2102 would allow a school board to grant a paid sabbatical to experienced teachers. The sabbatical could last no longer than two regularly scheduled semesters or an equivalent period in a school operating on a year-round system. The teacher would have to have at least 10 years of experience and meet other eligibility requirements set by the district. While a teacher was on sabbatical, a district would have to fill his or her position with a certified teacher. A district would have to pay the cost of the sabbatical from federal funds or from grants or other funds awarded to the district for that purpose.
- The bill would take effect September 1, 2003.

- SUPPORTERS SAY:** CSHB 2102 would create a reward for excellent teachers who worked hard and showed loyalty to the teaching profession. The bill would help motivate qualified people to join the teaching profession and would motivate good teachers to continue teaching longer. Paid sabbaticals are granted to tenured college professors. The same benefit should be granted to committed public school teachers.
- OPPONENTS SAY:** At a time when schools are experiencing the biggest increase in standards and expectations in history, CSHB 2102 could take experienced teachers out of the classroom. The bill would require the replacement of a teacher on sabbatical with a certified teacher, which could put an extra burden on schools struggling to fill vacancies with qualified teachers. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires that a highly qualified teacher be in every classroom by the 2005-06 school year. Finally, this could create a backdoor mandate to use flexible federal grant funds on teacher sabbaticals, when these funds might be better spent at the local level in other ways.
- OTHER OPPONENTS SAY:** CSHB 2102 is unnecessary, since school districts already can grant an experienced teacher a developmental leave of absence under current law.
- NOTES:** The bill as introduced differs from the committee substitute in that it would have granted paid sabbaticals for up to six months to teachers with 20 years of experience. It also would have required the district to fill the teacher's classroom with an administrator.