

SUBJECT: Best practices regarding the instruction of students with autism

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 5 ayes — Eissler, Branch, Hochberg, Olivo, Patrick
0 nays
4 absent — Zedler, Delisi, Dutton, Mowery

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 19 — 31-0, on Local and Uncontested Calendar

WITNESSES: No public hearing

BACKGROUND: In 2005, the 79th Legislature directed the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to establish the Best Practices Clearinghouse. The purpose of the online clearinghouse is to provide information to educators and the general public about best practices of high-performing and highly efficient campuses, school districts, and charter schools.

For the purpose of the clearinghouse, a best practice is defined as a technique, methodology, program, or other intervention that through research or other evidence has proven to lead to a positive result. Best practices currently are solicited in the following areas: instruction; public school finance; resource allocation; and business practices.

DIGEST: SB 1049 would direct TEA to expand the Best Practices Clearinghouse to include information on research-based programs and the best practices of campuses and school districts regarding the instruction of students with autism and autism-related disorders. TEA would facilitate any necessary technical assistance to a school district in its implementation of a research-based program.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2007.

SUPPORTERS SAY: SB 1049 would help ensure that school districts had access to the most current and accurate information concerning research-based programs and best practices used to assist students with autism. Autism is a complex

neurological disorder that affects brain functioning and usually appears during the first three years of life. People with autism may have difficulties in verbal or other communication, social interaction, and other activities, creating obstacles to the way they relate to the outside world. Nationally, one out of every 150 persons has autism, and more than 16,000 Texas public school students confront the challenges of autism everyday. SB 1049 would allow schools and parents to work together to implement teaching and assistance methods that best meet the needs of students with autism.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

No apparent opposition.