

SUBJECT: Transitioning unacceptable public schools to Texas community schools

COMMITTEE: Public Education — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 10 ayes — Aycock, Allen, Deshotel, Dutton, Farney, Galindo, González, Huberty, K. King, VanDeaver

0 nays

1 absent — Bohac

WITNESSES: For — Raul Sanchez, Austin Independent School District; Julie Weeks, Austin Voices for Education and Youth; Allen Weeks, Austin Voices for Education and Youth, Save Texas Schools; Carolina Jaramillo and Mia Watson, Reagan High School; Paige Williams, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Joe Cardenas III, Texas Hispanics Organized for Political Education; Ed Martin, Texas State Teachers Association; Brock Gregg, the Association of Texas Professional Educators; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Ann Teich, Austin Independent School District; Chandra Villanueva, Center for Public Policy Priorities; Drew Scheberle, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce; Barbara Frandsen, League of Women Voters of Texas; Celina Moreno, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund; Annie Spilman, National Federation of Independent Business/TX; Charles Luke, Pastors for Texas Children; Ted Melina Raab, Texas American Federation of Teachers; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Kelli Moulton, Texas Association of Community Schools, Hereford Independent School District; Nelson Salinas, Texas Association of Business; Jesse Romero, Texas Association for Bilingual Education; Casey McCreary, Texas Association of School Administrators; Janna Lilly, Texas Council of Administrators of Special Education; Mark Terry, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; Joshua Houston and Bee Moorhead, Texas Impact; Courtney Boswell and Cameron Petty, Texas Institute for Education Reform; Yannis Banks, Texas NAACP; Kyle Ward, Texas PTA; Colby Nichols, Texas Rural Education Association; Maria Whitsett, Texas School Alliance; Portia Bosse, Texas State Teachers Association; Monty Exter,

the Association of Texas Professional Educators; Grover Campbell, Texas Association of School Boards; Casey Smith, United Ways of Texas; Susan Moffat; Kristi Morrison)

Against — None

On — Steve Swanson; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Mark Baxter and Von Byer, Texas Education Agency)

BACKGROUND: Under Education Code, sec. 39.107, after a campus has been identified as academically unacceptable under the public school accountability system for two consecutive school years, the commissioner of education is required to order the reconstitution of the campus. In reconstituting a campus, a campus intervention team assists the campus in developing and executing an updated targeted improvement plan.

If the commissioner determines that the campus is not fully implementing the updated targeted improvement plan, if the students enrolled at the campus fail to demonstrate substantial improvement, or if a campus continues to have an unacceptable performance rating for three consecutive school years after the campus is reconstituted, the commissioner may order repurposing, alternative management, or closure of the campus.

Community schools are public schools open throughout the year to students, families, and community members. Some have called for adopting a community school reform as an alternative to reconstitution for underperforming campuses.

DIGEST: CSHB 1891 would amend Education Code, sec. 39.107, by allowing a campus to transition to a Texas community school, instead of undergoing reconstitution. The campus would have to notify the commissioner of education of the campus's election to transition to a community school within two weeks of the commissioner's reconstitution order and must satisfy the requirements of transitioning to a Texas community school within six months.

Under CSHB 1891, the commissioner could not order the closure of a campus without giving the campus the opportunity to transition to a community school and at least two years to implement the campus's community school plan. The commission could adopt rules as necessary.

Texas community schools. Under CSHB 1891, a Texas community school would be a public school partnering with community-based organizations to coordinate academic, social, and health services to reduce barriers to learning and to improve the quality of education for students in the community.

A Texas community school would offer a variety of programs and services, including:

- early childhood education;
- after-school and summer school academic and enrichment programs;
- college and career preparation;
- service learning opportunities, such as internships and community service programs;
- leadership and mentoring programs;
- activities to encourage community and parent engagement in students' education;
- health and social services for students and their families; and
- parenting classes.

Transition requirements. A public school could transition to a Texas community school if the school:

- established a school community partnership team to function as the campus-level planning and decision-making committee;
- conducted a comprehensive on-site needs assessment;
- established a partnership with a lead community-based organization with experience developing and implementing a community school plan;

- developed a community school plan that satisfied the requirements for a campus improvement plan; and
- gained approval for the community school plan from at least 75 percent of campus faculty and staff, 75 percent of parents of students enrolled at the school, and the board of trustees of the school district.

Community school coordinator. A school that transitioned to a Texas community school would be required to hire a community school coordinator to recruit community partners and build community support for the school. The community school coordinator would have various responsibilities, including the coordination of planning and training activities and of various academic, support, and enrichment programs for students and their families, such as after-school programs. The community school coordinator also would conduct an annual needs assessment of the school in coordination with the school community partnership team, develop a plan for sustaining the community school plan, and act as a liaison between the school, other community schools, the school district, and community partners.

In developing or implementing a community school plan, the school could seek assistance from other community schools, regional education service centers, or technical assistance providers experienced in developing and implementing a community school plan.

Community and district oversight. A school would be required to hold a community meeting at least twice a year informing community stakeholders about the school's progress in implementing the community school plan and seeking input on any improvements or changes that could be made to the plan.

A school also would have to report annually to the board of trustees of the school district regarding the school's progress in implementing the plan.

Low-performing schools. A school community partnership team formed by a school with low performance would function as the campus

intervention team.

A low-performing school transitioning to a Texas community school would receive district-level support in developing and implementing the community school plan. The support would have to continue for at least two school years after the school successfully met the required standards.

Funding. A Texas community school or a school transitioning to a Texas community school could seek and accept gifts, grants, donations, and funds from federal and state agencies and private sources for purposes related to the school's function as a Texas community school.

Recognition. A school that transitioned to a Texas community school would be recognized by the state as a Texas community school.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2015.