

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 503
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Today in Texas, 1.1 million kindergarten through twelfth grade students are responsible for taking care of themselves after school for an average of seven hours per week. All Texans—students, parents, employers, and community members—need safe, productive activities for kids during out-of-school hours.

Research shows that the hours between 3:00 and 6:00 p.m. are the peak hours for juvenile crime and experimentation with risky behaviors. Expanded learning opportunities ensure that Texas youth are engaged in safe, healthy activities during out-of-school hours.

Expanded learning opportunities help parents get and keep employment. Fifty-one percent of all Texas children not in afterschool would be likely to participate if an afterschool program were available in the community, regardless of their current care arrangement. Expanded learning opportunities support the development of a strong Texas workforce of tomorrow.

S.B. 503 creates an interdisciplinary council to study ways to offer high-quality out-of-school time programs and extended school days and years to more students. The council will make recommendations to assist local communities to develop expanded learning systems through analysis of current research on best practices, program availability and unmet needs, opportunities and incentives for expanding business and charitable support, and opportunities to promote experiential STEM learning.

S.B. 503 will maximize this lost time and create an expanded learning opportunities council to engage the business community, law enforcement, educators, and others to promote engaged learning, safe communities, and a strong Texas workforce.

As proposed, S.B. 503 amends current law relating to the establishment of the Expanded Learning Opportunities Council to study and make recommendations concerning expanded learning opportunities for public school students.

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 Chapter 33, Education Code, by adding Subchapter G, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER G. EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES COUNCIL

Sec. 33.251. DEFINITION. Defines "council" in this chapter.

Sec. 33.252. EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES. (a) Authorizes expanded learning opportunities to be provided during an extended school day, an extended school year, or structured learning programs outside of the regular school day, including before- and after-school programs and summer programs.

(b) Authorizes expanded learning opportunities to be provided by offering rigorous coursework, mentoring, tutoring, physical activity, academic support, or educational enrichment in one or more certain subjects as set forth.

Sec. 33.253. ESTABLISHMENT; PURPOSES. (a) Provides that the Expanded Learning Opportunities Council (council) is established to:

(1) study issues concerning expanded learning opportunities for this state's public school students, including:

(A) issues related to creating safe places for children outside of the regular school day, improving the academic success of students who participate in expanded learning opportunities programs, and assisting working families; and

(B) other issues prescribed under Section 33.259; and

(2) make recommendations as provided by Section 33.260 to address issues studied under this subchapter.

(b) Requires the council, in conducting studies under this subchapter, to focus on innovative, hands-on learning approaches that complement rather than replicate the regular school curriculum.

Sec. 33.254. SUNSET PROVISION. Provides that the council is subject to Chapter 325 (Sunset Law), Government Code (Texas Sunset Act). Provides that the council, unless continued in existence as provided by that chapter, is abolished and this subchapter expires September 1, 2025.

Sec. 33.255. COMPOSITION. Provides that the council is composed of 10 members. Sets forth the composition of the council and the appointment of its members.

Sec. 33.256. TERMS; VACANCY. Sets forth the terms of council members and an appointment to fill a vacancy. Provides for the appointment of a presiding officer and the term of the presiding officer.

Sec. 33.257. MEETINGS. (a) Requires the council to meet in person at least three times each year and authorizes the council to hold additional meetings by conference call if necessary.

(b) Provides that Section 551.125 (Other Governmental Body), Government Code, applies to a meeting held by conference call under this section, except that Section 551.125(b) (relating to certain requirements for a meeting held by telephone conference call), Government Code, does not apply.

Sec. 33.258. COMPENSATION. Prohibits a member of the council from receiving compensation for service on the council.

Sec. 33.259. POWERS AND DUTIES. (a) Requires the council to:

(1) study issues related to expanded learning opportunities for public school students;

(2) study current research and best practices related to meaningful expanded learning opportunities;

(3) analyze the availability of and unmet needs for state and local programs for expanded learning opportunities for public school students;

(4) analyze opportunities to create incentives for businesses to support expanded learning opportunities programs for public school students;

(5) analyze opportunities to maximize charitable support for public and private partnerships for expanded learning opportunities programs for public school students;

(6) analyze opportunities to promote science, technology, engineering, and mathematics in expanded learning opportunities programs for public school students; and

(7) perform other duties consistent with this subchapter.

(b) Authorizes the council, in carrying out its powers and duties under this section, to request reports and other information relating to expanded learning opportunities and students in expanded learning opportunities programs from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and any other state agency.

Sec. 33.260. STATEWIDE EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES PLAN; REPORT. (a) Requires the council to develop a comprehensive statewide action plan for the improvement of expanded learning opportunities for public school students in this state, including a timeline for implementation of the plan.

(b) Requires the council to submit to both houses of the legislature, the governor, and TEA on or before November 1 of each even-numbered year a written report concerning certain information.

Sec. 33.261. GIFTS, GRANTS, AND DONATIONS. Authorizes TEA to accept on behalf of the council a gift, grant, or donation from any source to carry out the purposes of this subchapter.

SECTION 2. (a) Requires the council to submit the initial report required under Subchapter G, Chapter 33, Education Code, as added by this Act, not later than November 1, 2016.

(b) Requires the designated officials, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, to appoint members of the council under Subchapter G, Chapter 33, Education Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2013.