

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

C.S.S.B. 161
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Education
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Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The State of Texas enrolls the second largest population of K-12 English language learners (ELLs) nationally with over 800,000 students. This is approximately 17 percent of the state's K-12 population. ELLs comprise a diverse group of students who know English to varying degrees when they enter U.S. schools and may have widely differing educational and sociocultural backgrounds. For the majority of these students, Spanish is their native language, but many school districts have a multitude of students who use languages other than Spanish and English.

Texas currently provides a 10 percent add-on funding for its bilingual and ESL programs. Notably, this add-on weight has not been updated since 1984. In addition, there are two ongoing lawsuits in Texas related to ELL funding. In both cases, substantial evidence demonstrated significant achievement gaps between ELLs and non-ELLs. For example, according to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), the percentage of ELLs who met college readiness standards for both mathematics and English in 2013 was less than 10 percent, as compared to 56 percent of all students. Furthermore, ELL students are among the most likely to drop out.

As the data shows, school districts all across the state are struggling to meet the needs of ELLs. Properly funding bilingual and ESL programs will ensure that school districts can educate this particular student population to meet the high academic benchmarks set by the state.

C.S.S.B. 161 requires TEA to conduct a study regarding the costs of educating students of limited English proficiency in public schools.

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 Subchapter B, Chapter 29, Education Code, by adding Section 29.068, as follows:

Sec. 29.068. STUDY REGARDING COSTS OF EDUCATING STUDENTS OF LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY; REPORT. (a) Requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to conduct a study to examine the costs of educating a student of limited English proficiency in public schools. Requires the study to:

- (1) determine whether the bilingual education allotment under Section 42.153 (Bilingual Education Allotment) provides adequate funding to schools for meeting the educational needs of students of limited English proficiency;
- (2) if it is determined under Subdivision (1) that the bilingual education allotment is inadequate, determine the amount of adjustment for the bilingual education allotment that would provide adequate funding to schools for meeting the educational needs of students of limited English proficiency; and

(3) determine whether the educational needs of students of limited English proficiency and the costs of meeting those needs vary by grade level from kindergarten through the 12th grade.

(b) Requires TEA, not later than January 1, 2016, to prepare a report detailing the results of the study under this section and submit the report to each standing legislative committee with primary jurisdiction over primary and secondary education.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.