

- SUBJECT:** Establishing high school completion and success initiative board
- COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Eissler, Dutton, Hochberg, Mowery, Olivo, Patrick
0 nays
3 absent — Zedler, Branch, Delisi
- WITNESSES:** For — Amy Beneski, Texas Association of School Administrators; Elena Lincoln, Association of Texas Professional Educators; (*Registered, but did not testify*: David Anthony, Texas School Alliance; Rebecca Flores, Houston ISD; Lindsay Gustafson, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Bill Hammond, Texas Association of Business; Jackie Lain, Texas Association of School Boards; Ken McCraw, Texas Association of Community Schools; Drew Scheberle, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce; Amy Tripp, Texans Care for Children)

Against — None

On — John Fitzpatrick, Texas High School Project/Communities Foundation of Texas; Ted Melina Raab, Texas Federation of Teachers; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Barbara Knaggs, Texas Education Agency)
- BACKGROUND:** The 78th and 79th Legislatures in 2003 and 2005 designated funds for high school completion and success through appropriation riders. In both 2003 and 2005, \$58 million in general revenue for each biennium was designated. The Texas Education Agency currently spends \$28.7 million each year on the High School Initiative.
- DIGEST:** CSHB 2237 would establish the High School Completion and Success Initiative and an appointed High School Completion and Success Initiative Board, in addition to creating a number of new programs. The board would include the commissioner of education, the commissioner of higher education, five appointed voting members, and three appointed non-voting members, who would serve staggered terms. The board would be staffed by the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The governor would appoint one voting member and

the three non-voting members; the lieutenant governor would appoint two voting members; and the speaker of the House would appoint two of the voting members.

The board would have the authority to develop and award grants, administer programs, and establish eligibility and application criteria for grants. The board would be required to adopt a strategic plan to address high school reform, dropout prevention, and the preparation of students for postsecondary coursework or employment. The board would have rulemaking authority and be able to use funds appropriated for the implementation of the bill.

The board could provide grants in support of innovative research-based high school improvement programs to enhance education practices. It could develop professional development activities for teachers and administrators for training related to implementing curriculum and instruction and standards and expectations for college readiness. The board would coordinate with private foundations that have made investments for the improvement of high schools in Texas.

The bill would establish a number of new pilot programs, including a pilot program to provide grants to school districts to fund student club activities for students at risk of dropping out of school; a pilot program to implement a local collaborative dropout reduction grant program; an intensive technology-based academic intervention pilot program; and a pilot program to award grants to participating campuses to provide intensive academic summer programs to promote college and workforce readiness to at-risk students.

The bill would require the THECB to establish and fund mathematics, science, and technology teacher preparation academies for master's degree programs at higher education institutions.

The commissioner of education would have to contract with centers for education research to evaluate programs supported by grants approved by the board, as well as establish a mathematics instructional coaches pilot program for schools to receive help developing the instructional expertise of teachers who instruct math at the middle school, junior high school, or high school level.

The bill would establish reporting requirements for the commissioner of education on an assessment of the programs established in the bill, requiring a preliminary report by December 1, 2008, and a final report by December 1, 2010.

The requirements of CSHB 2237 would begin with the 2007-08 school year.

The 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, 2007.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

CSHB 2237 would help students complete high school ready for postsecondary success. The bill would support the establishment and implementation of sustainable and comprehensive high school completion and success initiatives. It would provide support for restructuring and reform of academically unacceptable high school campuses that were participating in an innovative redesign to improve campus performance.

The bill would provide help to teachers at all school levels to strengthen their content knowledge and instructional expertise in math as well as fund teacher preparation academies that would focus on math, science and technology, areas that are critical to the economic success of Texas.

The bill would require best practices in dropout prevention to be identified and would make these practices available online for the dissemination of the information for everyone to use. The small grants to schools to support academic or co-curricular clubs would strengthen connections between students and educators.

The collaborative dropout reduction pilot program would provide at-risk students with job skills and continuing education opportunities. There would be partnerships among schools, businesses, higher education and faith-based organizations to assist in these efforts.

Grants awarded by the board would help develop and expand innovative programs with demonstrated effectiveness to improve Texas high schools.

The pilot program to implement research-based instructional support in schools would provide standardized instructional support and curriculum to reduce inequities in academic content and rigor.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

CSHB 2237 would create an additional governmental layer to oversee a very small portion of high school programs in Texas. The bill would create a board that would have many of the powers and duties that traditionally have been the responsibility of the Texas Education Agency and would create new programs that may, under current law, be administered by the commissioner of education.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the bill would cost \$66,907,083 during fiscal 2008-09 and \$33 million each year thereafter.

The companion bill, SB 1065 by Shapiro, is in the Senate Education Committee.

The House engrossed version of HB 1 by Chisum, the proposed budget for fiscal 2008-09, contains under the Texas Education Agency budget, Rider 53, which would allocate \$28,710,000 to the Texas High School Project in each year of the biennium contingent on the passage of legislation that supports the improvement of high school graduation rates and post-secondary readiness.