

SUBJECT: Funding for school district teacher mentoring programs

COMMITTEE: Public Education — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 11 ayes — Huberty, Bernal, Allen, Ashby, K. Bell, M. González, K. King, Meyer, Sanford, Talarico, VanDeaver

0 nays

2 absent — Allison, Dutton

WITNESSES: For — Andrea Chevalier, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Carrie Culpepper, San Antonio ISD; Thomas Hoffman, Sibme; Michael Lee, Texas Association of Rural Schools; JoLisa Hoover; Estevan Romero; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Chandra Villanueva, CPPP; Steven Aleman, Disability Rights Texas; Karen Kelley, League of Women Voters of Texas; Fatima Menendez, MALDEF; Will Francis, National Association of Social Workers-Texas; Deborah Caldwell, North East Independent School District; Bob Popinski, Raise Your Hand Texas; Lindsay Sobel, Teach Plus Texas; Ted Raab, Texas AFT (Texas American Federation of Teachers); Molly Weiner, Texas Aspires Foundation; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Casey McCreary, Texas Association of School Administrators; Grover Campbell, Texas Association of School Boards; Lonnie Hollingsworth, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Kyle Ward, Texas PTA; Dee Carney, Texas School Alliance)

Against — None

On — Priscilla Aquino Garza, Educate Texas; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Eric Marin and Tim Regal, Texas Education Agency; Lisa Dawn-Fisher, Texas State Teachers Association)

BACKGROUND: Education Code sec. 21.458 allows school districts to assign a mentor teacher to each classroom teacher who has less than two years of teaching experience in the subject or grade level to which the teacher is assigned.

The section contains requirements for the commissioner of education to adopt rules concerning the duties and qualifications of a teacher who serves as a mentor.

DIGEST:

HB 102 would establish an allotment to fund a school district mentoring program for classroom teachers who had less than two years of teaching experience. Districts and mentor teachers would be required to meet certain requirements.

To be assigned as a mentor, a teacher would have to agree to serve as a mentor teacher for at least two school years and begin the assignment on the first day of employment of the classroom teacher to whom the mentor teacher was assigned. A mentor teacher would have to meet with each classroom teacher assigned to the mentor at least once a week for an individual mentoring session lasting at least 45 minutes, with not less than 12 hours of meeting time each semester. The bill would include certain requirements for the mentoring sessions and require the education commissioner to adopt rules concerning the number of classroom teachers that could be assigned to a mentor.

A school district would be required to designate a specific time during the regularly contracted school day for the mentoring meetings and schedule release time or a reduced teaching load for mentor teachers and classroom teachers to facilitate classroom observations and other mentoring activities. School districts also would be required to provide training to mentor teachers and other employees who worked with a classroom teacher in the mentorship program, including training on best mentorship practices. This training would have to be completed before the beginning of the school year.

The commissioner would be required to adopt a formula to determine the allotment amount to which each district was entitled. Funding could be used only for mentor teacher stipends, scheduled release time for mentoring meetings, and mentoring support through providers of mentor training.

The bill would apply beginning with the 2019-2020 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, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 102 would strengthen the Texas teaching workforce by providing funding for districts that implemented a structured mentoring program for new classroom teachers. Robust mentoring programs have been shown to have a positive effect on student test scores of classroom teachers who receive the mentoring. The bill also would allow funding provided for mentoring programs to be used for stipends for mentor teachers, who should be compensated for agreeing to use their expertise to help beginning teachers improve their skills and techniques.

A 2015 report by the legislatively created Texas Teacher Mentoring Advisory Committee said that many districts and schools across Texas provide some form of mentoring for beginning teachers but that funding for these programs varies widely. The committee recommended the Legislature develop a formula-based allotment to fund mentoring programs.

Although the bill would have a cost, it could save districts expenses associated with teacher turnover. The formula funding contained in the bill would allow districts to sustain and expand evidence-based mentor teacher programs, rather than leave these programs dependent on sporadic funding as provided by previous grant programs. Mentoring programs would be optional, and districts would have the flexibility to design their own programs within the broad framework of the bill.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 102 would take a top-down approach to teacher mentoring initiatives that would best be crafted at the local level. The bill would create a new entitlement to a formula funding allotment for school districts for mentor teaching programs that could grow annually as more mentor teachers participated. Although mentoring programs are laudable, they should be funded by school districts using existing resources.

OTHER
OPPONENTS
SAY:

Instead of paying a stipend to mentor teachers, the state should create a salaried position of mentor teacher that would allow those individuals to spend half their time teaching and the other half mentoring.

NOTES:

According to the Legislative Budget Board fiscal note, HB 102 would have an estimated negative impact of \$4.7 million to general revenue related funds through the biennium ending August 31, 2021. This estimate is based on an assumption by the Texas Education Agency that the education commissioner would adopt an allotment entitlement of \$500 per mentored teacher.