

**SUBJECT:** Authorizing a writing portfolio assessment for public school students

**COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 12 ayes — Dutton, Lozano, Allen, Allison, K. Bell, Bernal, Buckley, Huberty, K. King, Meza, Talarico, VanDeaver

0 nays

1 absent — M. González

**WITNESSES:** For — Rachel Seshan, DSISD Council of PTAs; Bruce Gearing, Leander ISD; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Andrea Chevalier, Association of Texas Professional Educators; Traci Berry, Goodwill Central Texas; Charles Gaines, Raise Your Hand Texas; Grover Campbell, TASB; Dena Donaldson, Texas AFT; Barry Haenisch, Texas Association of Community Schools; Amy Beneski, Texas Association of School Administrators; Paige Williams, Texas Classroom Teachers Association; Mark Terry, Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association; Suzi Kennon, Texas PTA; Starlee Coleman, Texas Public Charter Schools Association; Dee Carney, Texas School Alliance; Laura Atlas Kravitz, Texas State Teachers Association; Susana Carranza; Idona Griffith; Georgia Keysor; Vanessa MacDougal; Thomas Parkinson)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify:* Eric Marin and Monica Martinez, Texas Education Agency)

**BACKGROUND:** Interested observers note that the current system of assessing students' writing skills as part of STAAR reading exams encourages writing to be taught in a formulaic fashion. Some have called for a writing portfolio assessment as an alternative way of measuring students' writing skills.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 2344 would permit a school district to use a writing portfolio assessment to assess student writing performance as an alternative to

administering the portion of a state-required reading exam to students in grades 3 through 8 or the state-required English I or English II end-of-course exams that was not presented in a multiple choice format.

A district that elected to use a writing portfolio assessment under the bill would have to design it in consultation with a public or private institution of higher education and submit it to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for approval. TEA would have to approve the assessment if it was determined by the public or private institution of higher education that consulted on the design to be valid and reliable and designed to assess:

- a student's mastery of the essential knowledge and skills in writing through timed writing samples;
- improvement of a student's writing skills from the beginning to the end of a school year;
- a student's ability to follow the writing process from rough draft to final product; and
- a student's ability to produce more than one type of writing style.

A school district that elected to use a writing portfolio assessment would have to adopt a policy allowing it to be scored by a classroom teacher assigned to the student's campus. A district could coordinate with its regional education service center in grading the assessment.

A school district that elected to use a writing assessment would not be required to administer the portion of a reading exam or English I or English II exam that was not presented in a multiple choice format. TEA would be required, to the greatest extent practicable, to apply cost savings that resulted from the exemption to offset the costs accrued for the writing portfolio assessment.

The commissioner of education would have to adopt rules to implement the bill, which would apply beginning with the 2021-2022 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, 2021.

**NOTES:**

According to the Legislative Budget Board, the bill would have a negative impact of \$232.8 million to general revenue related funds through the biennium ending August 31, 2023.