

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
82R1724 EAH-D

S.B. 291
By: Watson
Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

S.B. 1344, 81st Legislature, Regular Session, 2009, requires the State Board of Education to adopt essential knowledge and skills that address the dangers, causes, consequences, signs, symptoms, and treatment of binge drinking and alcohol poisoning. At the time of passage, health class was required for graduation. In July of 2009, the commissioner of education sent a letter to school districts regarding a change in graduation requirements in compliance with H.B. 3, 81st Legislature, Regular Session, 2009, which included removal of health as a required class.

Since 2007, Texas has seen several cases of accidental deaths on college campuses due to alcohol poisoning. Some of these students have little or no experience with alcohol and have little understanding of its effects and dangers. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 39 percent of 8th graders and 72 percent of 12th graders have tried alcohol, and nearly 90 percent of the alcohol consumed by underage drinkers is during binge drinking.

While some aspects of drug and alcohol abuse are taught in our schools, there is a clear lack of evidence-based education dealing specifically with binge drinking and alcohol poisoning in middle school and high school when students are first exposed to alcohol and begin forming their drinking habits.

It is imperative to teach all students, not just those in elective health classes, about the dangers of binge drinking and alcohol poisoning. This bill strikes health from the current statute and replaces it with science, which is a required course for graduation. In addition to providing critical and potentially life-saving information to all students, this addition also makes the science curriculum more relevant and interesting.

As proposed, S.B. 291 amends current law relating to an alcohol awareness component of the science curriculum used 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 Section 28.002(r), Education Code, to require the State Board of Education, in adopting the essential knowledge and skills for the science, rather than health, curriculum under Subsection (a)(1)(C) (relating to science), rather than under Subsection (a)(2)(B) (relating to health), to adopt the essential knowledge and skills that address the dangers, causes, consequences, signs, symptoms, and treatment of binge drinking and alcohol poisoning. Makes a conforming change.

SECTION 2. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2011-2012 school year.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2011.