

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
82R14825 EAH-D

C.S.S.B. 291
By: Watson
Education
4/6/2011
Committee Report (Substituted)

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 consumed during binge drinking.

While some aspects of drug and alcohol abuse are taught in 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 adds to the required science curriculum an alcohol awareness component to ensure that all students receive this critical and potentially life-saving information.

C.S.S.B. 291 amends current law relating to an alcohol awareness component of the science curriculum used in public schools.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to State Board of Education in SECTION 1 (Section 28.002, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 28.002(r), Education Code, as follows:

(r) Requires the State Board of Education, by rule to require a school district or open-enrollment charter school to provide instruction that addresses the dangers, causes, consequences, signs, symptoms, and treatment of binge drinking and alcohol poisoning to students in middle school, junior high school, and high school. Requires the Texas Education Agency to compile a list of evidence-based alcohol awareness programs from which a school district or open-enrollment charter school is required to choose a program to use in the district's or school's middle school, junior high school, and high school science curriculum, rather than health curriculum. Requires a high school to use a program chosen under this subsection in a course that satisfies the science curriculum requirement for graduation under Section 28.025(b-1)(1)(A) (relating to four credits in each subject of the foundation curriculum). 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.