

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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H.B. 1026
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Education
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Section 29.906, Education Code, allows school districts to provide on a voluntary basis a character education program that teaches positive character traits such as courage, trustworthiness, integrity, respect and courtesy, responsibility, fairness, caring, good citizenship, and school pride. This well-conceived voluntary course is worthy of general application in public schools, and H.B. 1026 directs the State Board of Education (SBOE) to integrate this character curriculum into the essential knowledge and skills for public school students.

Under the bill, SBOE would prepare and make available online a report identifying the ways in which positive character traits have been integrated into the essential knowledge and skills. Each public school would adopt a character education program and submit the program annually to the Texas Education Agency. Schools would be recognized as "Character Plus Schools" if they have a character education program that meets the requirements of the bill and demonstrates a correlation between the character program, increased attendance, and decreased disciplinary incidents.

H.B. 1026 amends current law relating to instruction in positive character traits in public schools.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the State Board of Education in SECTION 1 (Section 29.906, Education Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 29.906, Education Code, as follows:

Sec. 29.906. New heading: CHARACTER TRAIT INSTRUCTION. (a) Requires the State Board of Education (SBOE) to integrate positive character traits into the essential knowledge and skills adopted for kindergarten through grade 12, as appropriate. Deletes text authorizing a school district to provide a character education program.

(b) Requires SBOE to include the following, rather than requiring a character education program under this section to stress positive character tracts, such as:

- (1) redesignates Paragraphs (A)-(I) as Subdivisions (1)-(9);
- (2)-(7) makes no changes to these subdivisions;
- (8)-(9) makes nonsubstantive changes to these subdivisions; and
- (10) gratitude.

Deletes text requiring a character education program to use integrated teaching strategies and be age appropriate.

(c) Requires SBOE to create a report that identifies the manner in which the character traits listed under Subsection (b) have been integrated into the

curriculum. Requires SBOE to make the report publicly available on SBOE's Internet website.

(d) Requires each school district and open-enrollment charter school to adopt a character education program that includes the positive character traits listed in Subsection (b). Requires the district or open-enrollment charter school to submit the adopted program to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) annually, in a manner determined by the commissioner of education.

(e) Creates this subsection from existing text.

(f) Redesignates Subsection (d) as this subsection.

(g) Redesignates Subsection (e) as this subsection. Requires TEA to:

(1) makes a nonsubstantive change; and

(2) using the services of a center for education research established under Section 1.005 (Education Research Centers), and based on data reported by districts, annually designate as a Character Plus School each school that provides a character education program that:

(A) makes a nonsubstantive change;

(B) replaces a reference to Subsection (c) with a reference to Subsection (e); and

(C) demonstrates a correlation between the character education program adopted by the school, an increase in student attendance levels, and a decrease in student disciplinary problems.

(3) Deletes Subdivision (3) and existing text that requires TEA to include in the report required under Section 39.332 (Comprehensive Biennial Report) based on data reported by districts, the impact of character education programs on student discipline and academic achievement and other reported data relating to character education programs TEA considers appropriate for inclusion.

(h) Redesignates Subsection (f) as this subsection. Authorizes TEA to accept money from private sources, rather than from federal government and private sources, to use in assisting school districts in implementing character education programs that meet the criteria prescribed by Subsection (b).

(i) Authorizes SBOE to adopt rules as necessary to implement this section.

SECTION 2. Provides that this Act applies beginning with the 2019–2020 school year.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2019.