

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 866
By: Deuell
Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

There are concerns that educators are not adequately instructed on how to detect or educate students with dyslexia and that, without being tested for dyslexia, students enrolling in public school will not have access to the treatment and learning tools that might facilitate their education. S.B. 866 seeks to address these concerns as they relate to the education of public school students with dyslexia, the education and training of educators who teach students with dyslexia, and the assessment of students with dyslexia attending an institution of higher education.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

S.B. 866 amends the Education Code to require that any minimum academic qualifications for a certificate issued by the State Board for Educator Certification requiring a person to possess a bachelor's degree also require that the person receive, as part of the curriculum for that degree, instruction in detection and education of students with dyslexia. The bill makes this requirement inapplicable to a person who obtains a certificate through an alternative certification program. The bill requires such instruction to be developed by a panel of experts in the diagnosis and treatment of dyslexia who are employed by institutions of higher education and approved by the board and to include information on characteristics and identification of dyslexia and effective, multisensory strategies for teaching students with dyslexia. The bill makes these provisions applicable beginning with persons who commence enrollment in an institution of higher education during the 2011-2012 academic year.

S.B. 866 requires that the continuing education requirements for an educator who teaches students with dyslexia include training regarding new research and practices in educating students with dyslexia and authorizes such training to be offered in an online course. The bill prohibits a student determined to have dyslexia or accommodated because of dyslexia from being retested for dyslexia for the purpose of reassessing the student's need for accommodations until the district reevaluates the information obtained from previous testing of the student.

S.B. 866 requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to establish a committee to develop a plan for integrating technology into the classroom to help accommodate students with dyslexia. The bill requires the plan to determine the classroom technologies that are useful and practical in assisting public schools in accommodating students with dyslexia, considering budget constraints of school districts, and to develop a strategy for providing those effective technologies to students. The bill requires the TEA to provide the plan and information about the availability and benefits of the effective technologies to school districts. The bill specifies that a member of the committee is not entitled to reimbursement for travel expenses incurred by the member unless TEA funds are available for that purpose.

S.B. 866 prohibits an institution of higher education from reassessing a student determined to have dyslexia for the purpose of assessing the student's need for accommodations until the institution reevaluates the information obtained from previous assessments of the student and makes this provision applicable beginning with the 2011-2012 academic year.

S.B. 866, except as otherwise provided, makes its provisions applicable beginning with the 2011-2012 school year.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2011.