

HB 4
Huberty

High-Quality Pre-K Grant Program

Due to the dense content of HB 4, the bill is divided into sections by topic.

Establishment of a New Pre-K Grant Program

Introduces a new High Quality Pre-K Grant Program as an option for school districts.
Defines “program” as one provided free of tuition or fees.

Provides that from appropriated funds, the commissioner by rule must establish a grant program under which funds are awarded to school districts and open-enrollment charter schools to implement a pre-K program.

Mandates that a district may participate and receive funding only if it meets all required program standards. Provides that this grant program is subject to any other legal requirements that apply to pre-K, except that to the extent a conflict exists between this new subchapter and any other provision of law, this subchapter prevails.

Funding

Specifies that a district is eligible for half-day funding under the Foundation School Program for each student who satisfies eligibility requirements and who is enrolled in a program class.

Entitles a district to grant funding in an amount determined by the commissioner for each qualifying student in an ADA program class. Prevents the commissioner from establishing an amount of funding that exceeds \$1,500 per qualifying student for the entire instructional period on a school day.

Qualifying students for the additional funding must satisfy eligibility requirements and be 4 years old on September 1 of the year the student begins the program.

Mandates that a district use the funding only to improve the quality of its pre-K program. Prevents the total grant amount of additional funding distributed to school districts from exceeding \$130 million for the state fiscal biennium ending August 31, 2017. (Note: \$118 million for the grant program was appropriated for the biennium in Article III of the appropriations bill).

Curriculum Requirements

Requires participating districts to select and implement a curriculum that includes TEA’s pre-K guidelines, measures the progress of students in meeting the recommended learning outcomes, and does not use the Common Core State Standards.

Requirements for Grant Program Teachers

Mandates that each teacher for a program class be certified and have at least one additional qualification: (a) a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or another early childhood education credential approved by TEA; (b) certification offered through an accredited Montessori Internationale or Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education; (c) at least eight years' experience of teaching in a nationally accredited child care program; (d) be employed as a pre-K teacher in a district that has received approval from the commissioner for the district's pre-K-specific instructional training plan that the teacher uses in the teacher's classroom; or (e) an equivalent certification. This requirement applies beginning with the 2016-17 school year.

Allows a regional ESC to offer teachers the training for a CDA credential. Mandates that the training not include Common Core State Standards.

Requires a district to attempt to maintain an average ratio in any program class of not less than one certified teacher or aide for each 11 students.

TEA-Developed Teacher Training Course

Requires the commissioner to develop a training course to provide instruction to pre-K teachers employed by a district or open-enrollment charter school. Mandates that the course provide instruction in the development and operation of effective pre-K classes, including training in: the pre-K guidelines; effective and systematic instructional techniques for teaching students using the guidelines; and designing and implementing a comprehensive curriculum in the classroom.

Family Engagement Plan

Requires a district to develop and implement a family engagement plan to assist in achieving and maintaining high levels of family involvement and positive family attitudes toward education. Mandates the plan be based on family engagement strategies established by TEA in accordance with certain requirements.

Program Evaluation

Requires districts to select and implement appropriate methods for evaluating its program classes by measuring student progress, and to make data from the evaluation results available to parents.

Allows a district to administer appropriate pre-K diagnostic assessments selected from a commissioner's list. Prevents a district from administering a state standardized assessment instrument.

Program Funding Evaluation

Requires the commissioner to evaluate the use and effectiveness of funding provided in improving student learning, and to identify effective instruction strategies implemented by districts. Mandates that the commissioner by December 1, 2018, and each evennumbered

year thereafter, deliver a report of the evaluation results to the Legislature.

Eligible Private Providers

Allows a participating district to contract with an eligible private provider to provide services or equipment for the program. Outlines eligibility criteria for private providers.

PEIMS Reporting Requirements

Requires a school district offering pre-K classes, including this new grant program, to add new information to its PEIMS report regarding class size, student-to-teacher ratios, assessments administered, and curriculum utilized. Prevents PEIMS information from being used for purposes of determining a district's accreditation or a campus or district performance rating.

Reports and Studies

Adds new requirement for TEA to produce and make available on its website annual district and campus-level reports containing specific information from the previous school year on early education in school districts and open-enrollment charter schools. Requires TEA and the Department of Family and Protective Services to conduct a joint study to develop recommendations regarding optimal class sizes and student-to-teacher ratios for pre-K classes. Mandates the report be submitted to the Legislature by September 1, 2016.

Earliest effective date: Immediately

http://www.tasanet.org/cms/lib07/TX01923126/Centricity/Domain/329/Final_Bill_Report_2015.pdf