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SFA**BILL ANALYSIS**

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Senate Bill 223 (as introduced 2-26-97)
Sponsor: Senator Ken DeBeaussaert
Committee: Education

Date Completed: 3-4-97

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Revised School Code to delete the requirement that a school district grant credit to high school students who are not enrolled in a course but who have achieved at least a C+ in a final exam or exhibited mastery of the subject through a basic assessment used in the course. The bill would require, instead, that a school board do the following:

- Adopt a policy allowing high school students to advance academically at an accelerated rate.
- Include in the policy a process for high school students to earn credit without enrolling in a course, but by demonstrating competence in the course subject in a manner determined by the board.
- Provide a written explanation of the reasons why credit for a particular course could not be earned under the bill; or, if credit could be earned, reasons why credit could be earned but not counted toward graduation.

The bill would delete the current provision that requires a school district to grant high school credit in any course to a pupil enrolled in high school, but who is not enrolled in the course who has exhibited a reasonable level of mastery of the course's subject matter by attaining at least a C+ grade in a final exam in the course; or, if there is no final exam, by exhibiting that mastery through the basic assessment used in the course which may consist of a portfolio, performance, paper, project, or presentation. The bill also would delete the current provision that permits, for the purpose of earning credit under the Code, any high school pupil to take the final examination in any course.

Under the bill, the board of a school district would be required to adopt a policy that allowed high school pupils to advance academically at an accelerated rate. The policy would have to include at least a process allowing high school pupils to earn credit in a course without enrolling in the course by demonstrating, in a manner determined by a school board, competence in the subject matter. The board would be required to determine the courses for which credit could be earned under the bill. If the board determined that credit could not be earned under this provision in a particular course, the board would have to develop a written explanation of the reasons for that determination and make that explanation available upon request.

Currently, credit earned may or may not be counted toward graduation, as determined by a school board, but the board's determination must apply equally to all pupils. The bill would add that if the board determined that credit earned would not be counted toward graduation, the board would have to develop a written explanation of the reasons for that determination and would have to make that explanation available upon request.

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State government. The impact on local school districts is unknown. Local school districts could incur costs in the development and adoption of the policies required by the bill. Alternatively, the flexibility that would be provided by the bill to establish locally-approved testing policies could permit local districts to structure their procedures to reduce costs.

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