

Summaries of HB 12, HB 1263, and HB 3042

Source: Moak, Casey & Associates, LLP

HB 12 by **Corte** would offer vouchers to educationally disadvantaged students who either failed one of the state's assessments or is eligible under the PEG program to attend another public school but had their application rejected. The program is effective only for students in Texas' six largest school districts. Once eligible, the child can continue using the voucher until graduation or his/her 21st birthday unless the child either enrolls in another public school district or changes residence moving out of the effected school district.

Funding for the voucher would be equal to the total average per student M&O funding for the prior school year in the school district the child would otherwise attend, excluding money from the ASF. If the private school tuition was less than that amount, then the school district would retain the difference. The sending district would continue counting the student receiving the voucher in average daily attendance and would be responsible for paying the amount of the voucher to the private school on behalf of the child.

A participating private school must be accredited.

An evaluation report would be due in 2008, and the program would expire in 2009.

HB 1263 by **Harper-Brown** (also Ken Paxton and Charlie Howard with co-authors Leo Berman, Carl Isett, Jim Jackson, Jodie Laubenberg, Jerry Madden, Larry Taylor, Corbin Van Arsdale, and William Zedler). The bill applies to districts in counties with populations of more than 800,000. The district would have to be the largest district in the county that has a population of students that is more than 50 percent educationally disadvantaged or have at least 90 percent of its students qualifying as economically disadvantaged in the proceeding school year. To qualify, a student would have had to:

- have dropped out of school or be at risk;
- be the victim or the sibling of a victim of certain offenses committed by a student assigned to the same campus;
- be eligible for special education;
- be of limited English proficiency; or
- reside in a household whose qualifying income does not exceed 200 percent of the income that would qualify a student for the reduced-price lunch program.

Participating students would be eligible to receive the lesser of 90 percent of the statewide average cost per student for the preceding school year or the private school's actual annual cost per student. For qualifying students, special education and bilingual education funding would be in addition to these amounts. The agency would be responsible for distributing funds to the private school.

Qualifying schools would be required to accept students based on a lottery system except that they could give preference to special education students, student from low performing campuses, and students whose sibling attends the school.

The school would be required to administer the state assessment system or a nationally norm-referenced assessment instrument. Results would be provided to the parent and the public.

The bill limits the number of participants in 2005-06, 2006-07, and 2007-08 to 5 percent of the district's total enrollment for the preceding school year (not including students who are participating under the provisions related to being the victims of certain offences).

Beginning in 2008-09, no such provision would exist.

The agency would contract for an evaluation study to be completed with funds other than state funds.

Beginning in 2010 any school board could adopt a resolution to participate in the voucher program. In addition, any student in a participating district could participate if they resided in the eligible district, attended a public school for the majority of a preceding semester, had dropped out of school, or was starting school for the first time.

HB 3042 by **Riddle** applies to all districts and to all students who reside in the state, are eligible to attend public school, and attended a public school full time during the final semester of the preceding year or received a voucher during the preceding year. Private schools could reject students on the basis of poor academic qualifications. Private schools with more applications from "academically qualified" students that available positions must fill slots on a first come first serve basis. The amount of the voucher would be \$5500 to be adjusted annually by the consumer price index. Parents could supplement the voucher to pay for the remaining cost of attendance if any. If the parent chooses to use less than the full amount of the voucher, the remaining portion would be placed in an account that could be used for private school tuition that is greater than the voucher or university tuition and fees. The student would be required to take a norm referenced assessment annually.