

HB 1611 -- GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAMS (Swan)

COMMITTEE OF ORIGIN: Standing Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education

SCHOOL DAYS AND HOURS (Section 160.011, RSMo.)

This bill eliminates a set amount of required school days and establishes the requirement of 1,044 hours of pupil attendance.

MAGNET SCHOOLS (Section 160.440)

This bill defines a magnet school as a school with specialized curricula with a student body from different geographic areas within the school district. The bill specifies the guidelines for a school district to establish a magnet school and admit students. These provisions do not apply to a student that is admitted into a magnet school before July 1, 2017.

BULLYING (Section 160.775)

This bill modifies the requirements for school anti-bullying policies. The definition of "bullying" is modified to include intimidation, unwanted aggressive behavior, or harassment that substantially interferes with the educational performance, opportunities, or benefits of any student without exception, or that substantially disrupts the orderly operation of the school. Bullying by students is prohibited on school property, at school functions, or on school buses. Cyber-bullying is defined in the bill.

The bill requires that anti-bullying policies treat all students equally. Each school district's anti-bullying policy must be included in the student handbook, as specified in the bill. Any school district may subject a student to discipline for cyberbullying.

The district will have jurisdiction to prohibit cyberbullying that originates off the school's campus if it was reasonably foreseeable that the electronic communication would reach the school's campus or there is a sufficient nexus between the electronic communication and the school, as specified in the bill. A district may contact law enforcement and take other appropriate actions to protect students and clarify district expectations. If a school district has an anti-bullying policy in effect before August 28, 2016 the school district will not be required to adhere to specified provisions of the bill. To make changes to a district's anti-bullying policy the local school board of a district must approve the changes by a majority vote of the board.

Each district must annually review its anti-bullying policy and revise as necessary. Each district must report the number of confirmed reported bullying incidents in the district and each school to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The department must post this information on its website but must not release any confidential information.

These provisions are similar to HB 1583 (2016)

DYSLEXIA (Section 161.1005)

This bill requires DESE to employ a dyslexia therapist, licensed psychometrist, license speech-language pathologist, certified academic language therapist, or certified training specialist, by July 1, 2017, to serve as the department's dyslexia specialist. The specialist must meet certain requirements and perform certain duties, as described within the bill.

SCHOOL INSTRUCTION IN BRAILLE (Section 167.225)

Currently, state law permits students to receive instruction in Braille as part of their individualized education plans (IEPs). This bill requires a student to receive instruction in Braille reading and writing as part of his or her IEP unless, as a result of an assessment, instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is determined not appropriate for the child.

The bill defines "assessment" as the National Reading Media Assessment or another research-based assessment or series of research-based assessments under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that determines a child's learning media skills.

This bill also reiterates several rights of parents established by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and/or Sections 162.959 to 162.963, as described within the bill.

SCHOOL COUNSELORS (Section 167.225)

This bill changes the name of "guidance counselors" to "school counselors."

These provisions are similar to HB 2428 (2016).

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING PROGRAMS (Section 167.266)

Beginning with the 2016-17 school year, this bill permits a school board or local education agency of a charter school to establish an academic and career counseling program in cooperation with parents

and the local community that is in the best interest of and meets the needs of the students in the community. School districts and local education agencies may use the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Program as a resource for the development of a district or Local Educational Agency (LEA) program.

The bill requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop a process for recognition of a school district's academic and career counseling program established with parents and the local community, no later than January 1, 2017.

This provision of the bill is similar to HB 382 (2015).

YOUTH SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION (Sections 170.047 and 170.048)

This bill allows, beginning in the 2017-18 school year, any licensed educator to annually complete up to two hours of training or professional development in youth suicide awareness and prevention as part of the professional development hours required for State Board of Education certification.

The bill requires DESE to develop guidelines suitable for this training. By July 1, 2018, each district must adopt a policy, which must address strategies that can help identify students who are at possible risk of suicide.

By July 1, 2017, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education must develop a model policy that districts may adopt. By July 1, 2021, and at least every three years after, DESE must request information and seek feedback from districts on their experience with the policy for youth suicide awareness and prevention and review this information.

These provisions are similar to HBs 1583 and 1546 (2016).

INCLEMENT WEATHER (Sections 171.031 and 171.033)

Beginning in the 2017-18 school year, the school calendar will include 36 make up hours for possible loss of attendance due to inclement weather. A district is required to make up the first 36 hours of school missed due to inclement weather and half the number of hours missed in excess of 36 hours if the makeup of the hours is needed to ensure the district's students attend 1,044 hours of school.

These provisions are similar to HB 1943 (2016).

DYSLEXIA TASK FORCE (Section 633.420)

This bill establishes the Legislative Task Force on Dyslexia. The task force consists of 20 specified members including two members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and two members appointed by the President Pro Tem of the Senate.

The task force must meet quarterly and make recommendations to the Governor, the Joint Committee on Education, and specified state agencies. The task force will make recommendations for a statewide system for identification, intervention, and delivery of supports for students with dyslexia including the development of resource materials, professional development activities, and proposed legislation. The task force must hold its first meeting before October 1, 2016 and submit their report within 12 months of the meeting. The task force authorized under these provisions will expire on August 31, 2018.

These provisions are similar to HB 1928 and HB 2379 (2016).