



Summary

Together, the State Board of Education, Commissioner of Education, Texas Education Agency (TEA), and 20 regional education service centers (ESCs) support and oversee the public education system in Texas. In the 2004 – 2005 school year, this system served more than four million students at about 1,037 school districts and 204 charter schools.

With an annual budget of \$15 billion and about 630 staff, TEA develops educational standards; administers student testing; monitors school districts and charter schools; distributes and ensures proper use of public education funding; and coordinates the adoption and purchase of textbooks. The 20 ESCs provide training, technical assistance, administrative support, and other services to meet the needs of local school districts, charter schools, teachers, and administrators in the public education system.

Senate Bill 422 as introduced contained all of the Sunset Commission's recommendations on TEA and ESCs. The recommendations included continuing both TEA and ESCs, and giving TEA clear statutory authority and direction to ensure school districts and charter schools are fiscally responsible. TEA would also have been directed to improve monitoring and grant management, and to better disseminate best practices. The Sunset Commission also recommended improving and transferring TEA's private Driver Training program to the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation.

The bill adopted by the Senate reflected all of the Sunset Commission's recommendations, as well as several new provisions, including the development of a comprehensive school accreditation system, and requiring annual safety training in schools. When the bill reached the House, the House committee removed several of the Sunset provisions and added a provision to establish an urban school choice pilot program. During debate by the full House, a point of order against further consideration of S.B. 422 was raised and sustained. As a result, S.B. 422 was not passed by the Legislature.

However, separate legislation continued both TEA and ESCs. House Bill 1116 continues the education service centers indefinitely by removing them from separate Sunset review, and continues TEA until 2007. The bill also requires the Sunset Commission to focus its next review of TEA on the appropriateness of its previous recommendations to the 79th Legislature.

The Legislature is currently meeting in special session to consider education reform and public school finance. At this time, most of the Commission's recommendations regarding TEA and ESCs are contained in Senate Bill 2 and House Bill 2, the education reform bills. As these bills proceed through the legislative process, Sunset staff will continue to track the progress of the Sunset Commission's education recommendations.

