

HB 1360 -- "BRITE ACT" RELATING TO BLIND EDUCATION

SPONSOR: Basye

This bill will establish the "Blind Students' Rights to Independence, Training, and Education Act" or the "BRITE Act".

The bill provides definitions for "accessible assistive technology device", "adequate instruction", and "nonvisual access and skills" among other definitions.

The bill requires blind children to have an individualized education plan, (IEP) that shall specify results obtained from evaluations on reading and writing skills, and should include the need for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille. All instruction in Braille reading and writing shall be sufficient to allow a student to effectively and efficiently communicate at an appropriate age level.

The bill includes additional guidance for the instruction of Braille and the use of nonvisual accessible assistive technology. The bill provides direction to school districts regarding accessible assistive technology and requires a school district to provide duplicative accessible assistive technology to be used in a blind student's home without requiring payment or family assumption of liability for loss or damage.

The bill requires districts to perform an orientation and mobility evaluation to be conducted by certified individuals and provides guidance on the instruction for orientation and mobility, and districts may not limit a student's instruction in the home, school, or community and provide transportation in the preferred mode of the instructor.

The bill requires educators hired to teach Braille, accessible assistive technology, and orientation and mobility, to hold a valid certificate as outlined in the bill. The bill requires school districts to comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) even during declared emergencies, to bear the cost of any required eye report, and to develop nonvisual accessibility policies to reduce or eliminate common barriers for the blind.