

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Subject: Expanding and administering the scholars of distinction program

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Overview

The Minnesota Department of Education sponsors a program that recognizes the distinguished achievement of highly motivated students. Participating students are recognized as a "Scholar of Distinction" when they demonstrate high levels of academic performance in specialty areas such as geography. This bill directs the education commissioner to establish statewide coordinating boards to oversee the expansion of the program to include math, science, leadership, and theater arts.

Section

1 **Scholars of distinction program administration.** (a) Directs the education commissioner to expand the scholars of distinction program to include the subjects of math, science, leadership, and theater arts and to establish statewide coordinating boards to oversee this expansion. Requires the statewide coordinating boards to include representatives of K-12 schools, higher education institutions, business and others with relevant math, leadership, and theater arts knowledge and skills. Directs the statewide coordinating boards to: administer the program to give as many students as possible the opportunity to participate; establish a certification panel to determine whether students have met the requirements for a particular subject; assist interested schools and other organizations to establish the program; and seek permanent funding to continue the program.

(b) Directs participating students to demonstrate mastery of a subject and apply their knowledge and skills to projects. Awards small scholarships to students who earn a scholar of distinction honor. Notes in the record of a student who successfully completes the

Section

- 2 program that the student is a Minnesota scholar of distinction in a particular subject.
Appropriation. Appropriates an unspecified general fund amount to the education commissioner in fiscal year 2005 for statewide coordinating boards to implement math, science, leadership, and theater arts subjects as part of Minnesota's scholars of distinction program.