

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: Education Appropriations Committee

BILL: PCS/ SB 0806

INTRODUCER: Senator Alexander

SUBJECT: Public School Funding

DATE: April 18, 2006

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Armstrong</u>	<u>Newman</u>	<u>EA</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>ED</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The bill authorizes school districts operating a virtual school that is an approved franchise of the Florida Virtual School and was in operation during the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 fiscal years to receive FTE funding for the Students Earning Additional Recovery Credits and Honors Program (SEARCH). SEARCH program students may generate additional funding for credits completed through the district's virtual school franchise that are in addition to the FTE funding received from the FEFP for such students. The bill limits the excess credits to be funded to not more than two per student.

The bill provides that funding shall be available for SEARCH, only to the extent provided in the General Appropriations Act.

This bill substantially amends section 1002.37, Florida Statutes:

II. Present Situation:

The Florida Virtual School was initiated as a pilot project in 1997 to develop online distance learning courses for high school students. In Chapter 2000-224, Laws of Florida, the Legislature established the Florida Virtual High School for the development and delivery of online and distance learning education to serve any student in the state who meets the profile for success in this educational delivery context, with priority given to:

- Students who need expanded access to courses to meet their educational goals, such as home education students and students in inner city and rural high schools that do not have access to higher level courses.
- Students seeking accelerated access in order to obtain a high school diploma at least one semester early.

Chapter 2003-391, Laws of Florida, amended s. 1002.37, Florida Statutes to change funding for the Florida Virtual School from a pilot project grant appropriation to “full-time equivalent student” (FTE) funding through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). An FTE student for the Florida Virtual School is six successfully completed credits that shall count toward the minimum number of credits required for high school graduation. Credit completed by a student in excess of the minimum required for that student for high school graduation is not eligible for funding.

Section 1002.37 (4), F.S., was enacted in 2003 to provide that school districts operating a virtual school that is an approved franchise of the Florida Virtual School may report such virtual school credits as part of the district’s FTE funded through the FEFP. Section 1011.61 (4), F.S., provides that the maximum value for funding one student in kindergarten through grade 12 in the FEFP is one FTE in a school year.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill authorizes school districts operating a virtual school that is an approved franchise of the Florida Virtual School and was in operation during the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 fiscal years to participate in the SEARCH program and receive funding for student credits completed in the district virtual school franchise that are in addition to the FTE funding received through the FEFP for such students.

Students would earn funds for excess credits for the following:

- to replace credits needed for graduation;
- to take an honors level course or other course that would not otherwise be available to the student;
- to take courses for students scoring at Level 1 or Level 2 on any subject tested on the FCAT;
- to serve homebound students; or
- to serve students currently assigned to a facility of the Department of Juvenile Justice.

The bill provides that a student may not earn more than two SEARCH program credits.

The bill provides that a school district’s portion of the appropriation for this purpose may not exceed the district’s portion of the total unweighted full-time equivalent students enrolled in grades 9 through 12 in the participating school districts. The following school districts currently operate virtual schools that are approved franchises of the Florida Virtual School: Brevard, Broward, Dade, Hillsborough, Okaloosa, Pasco, and Polk.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. Other Constitutional Issues:**V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill authorizes additional funding for SEARCH program students for credit that is in excess of the full-time equivalent student funding provided for the student through the FEFP. The additional funding is limited to credits earned in an approved school district franchise virtual school, not to exceed two additional credits for any student.

The number of excess FTE eligible to be funded under this bill is unknown. The base student allocation in the FEFP for 2005-2006 is \$3,742.42. If it is assumed that one credit is equal to .167 FTE (150 hours), then the value of one credit per student would be equal to roughly \$625.

The bill provides that funding shall be available for SEARCH only to the extent provided in the General Appropriations Act.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Summary of Amendments:

None.

This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
