

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to the Literacy Jump Start Pilot Project; requiring the Office of Early Learning to establish the pilot project in St. Lucie County to assist low-income, at-risk children in developing emergent literacy skills; requiring the office to select an organization to implement the pilot project; requiring the office to oversee implementation of the pilot project; providing eligibility requirements for participation; requiring background screening for instructors, volunteers, and noninstructional personnel who make direct contact with children; requiring emergent literacy training for instructors; encouraging the coordination of basic health screening and immunization services in conjunction with emergent literacy instruction; requiring annual submission of an accountability report; requiring the office to allocate funds for the pilot project; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. (1) The Office of Early Learning shall establish the 5-year Literacy Jump Start Pilot Project in St. Lucie County to assist low-income, at-risk children in developing emergent literacy skills.

27 (a) The Office of Early Learning shall consult with local  
28 organizations within St. Lucie County and identify an  
29 organization to implement the pilot project. The office shall  
30 also consult with the Early Learning Coalition of St. Lucie  
31 County to select municipalities within St. Lucie County eligible  
32 for participation in the pilot project. The office shall oversee  
33 the implementation of the pilot project.

34 (b) A municipality is eligible for participation in the  
35 pilot project if locally or federally subsidized housing is  
36 located within the municipality.

37 (c) The Office of Early Learning shall select to implement  
38 the pilot project a local organization that is a not-for-profit  
39 corporation, qualified as charitable under s. 501(c)(3) of the  
40 Internal Revenue Code, that provides training to parents to  
41 assist their children with success in school, such as the Parent  
42 Academy of St. Lucie County or another similarly qualified local  
43 organization. The office may select a faith-based organization;  
44 however, funds provided for the purpose of implementing the  
45 pilot project may be used for only those purposes expressly  
46 provided in this section and may not be used for the purpose of  
47 religious indoctrination.

48 (2) The organization selected by the Office of Early  
49 Learning must use funds provided for the pilot project only to  
50 provide emergent literacy instruction to children. In order to  
51 provide easy access for participating children and families, the

52 instruction must be provided in a subsidized housing unit  
53 located within an eligible municipality selected by the office.

54 (3) As used in this section, the term "emergent literacy"  
55 means a variety of early behaviors and skills associated with  
56 successful reading and writing development.

57 (4) A child is eligible to receive emergent literacy  
58 instruction provided through the pilot project only if the child  
59 is:

60 (a) Two or 3 years of age;

61 (b) Eligible for a federally subsidized child care  
62 program; and

63 (c) A member of a family that is economically  
64 disadvantaged and resides in locally or federally subsidized  
65 housing. For purposes of this paragraph, "economically  
66 disadvantaged" means having a family income that does not exceed  
67 150 percent of the federal poverty level.

68 (5) The organization selected by the Office of Early  
69 Learning may not receive any funds from the state for purposes  
70 of implementing the pilot project until the office receives  
71 written certification from the organization and confirms that  
72 all of the organization's volunteers, instructors, and  
73 noninstructional personnel who make direct contact with children  
74 have cleared level 2 background screening pursuant to s. 435.04,  
75 Florida Statutes, within 5 years before implementation of the  
76 pilot project. The organization shall require volunteers and  
77 applicants for employment as instructors or noninstructional

78 personnel who make direct contact with children participating in  
79 the pilot project to undergo level 2 background screening  
80 pursuant to s. 435.04, Florida Statutes, before hiring the  
81 applicant or allowing the volunteer to participate in the pilot  
82 project. The organization may not use state funds provided to  
83 implement the pilot project to pay for background screening.

84 (6) An instructor in the pilot project must successfully  
85 complete an emergent literacy training course, approved by the  
86 Office of Early Learning, before providing emergent literacy  
87 instruction under this section.

88 (7) The organization is encouraged to coordinate with the  
89 St. Lucie County Health Department for the provision of basic  
90 health screening and immunization services for children  
91 participating in the pilot project in conjunction with emergent  
92 literacy instruction. The organization is further encouraged to  
93 engage in community outreach efforts to local community service  
94 organizations for the purpose of improving the availability and  
95 effective delivery of emergent literacy instruction.

96 (8) By December 31 of each year that the organization  
97 provides emergent literacy instruction, the organization shall  
98 submit an accountability report to the Office of Early Learning,  
99 the Early Learning Coalition of St. Lucie County, the Governor,  
100 the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of  
101 Representatives. The accountability report must include, at a  
102 minimum, the following information:

103        (a) The manner in which all state funds received by the  
 104        organization are used to implement the pilot project, separated  
 105        by type of expenditure and measured in exact dollar amounts.

106        (b) Other sources of funding received by the organization  
 107        for purposes of providing emergent literacy instruction.

108        (c) The municipalities selected by the Office of Early  
 109        Learning for participation in the pilot project.

110        (d) The identities of the organization's officers.

111        (e) The number of children receiving emergent literacy  
 112        instruction in each municipality.

113        (f) Information and data relating to coordinated health  
 114        screening and immunization services provided in conjunction with  
 115        the emergent literacy instruction, if any.

116        (9) The Office of Early Learning shall allocate funds for  
 117        implementation of the pilot project pursuant to this section.  
 118        Expenditures of state funds pursuant to this section must be  
 119        verified by affidavit submitted to the office in a procedure and  
 120        format determined by the office.

121        Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2014.