

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; defining the term "emergent literacy"; providing eligibility requirements for participation; requiring background screening for instructors, noninstructional personnel who have direct contact with children, and volunteers; 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

27 developing emergent literacy skills.

28 (a) The Office of Early Learning shall consult with local  
29 organizations within St. Lucie County and identify an  
30 organization to implement the pilot project. The office shall  
31 also consult with the Early Learning Coalition of St. Lucie  
32 County to select municipalities within St. Lucie County eligible  
33 for participation in the pilot project. A municipality is  
34 eligible for participation if locally or federally subsidized  
35 housing is located within the municipality. The office shall  
36 oversee the implementation of the pilot project.

37 (b) The Office of Early Learning shall select a local  
38 organization that is a not-for-profit corporation, qualified as  
39 charitable under s. 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, that  
40 provides training to parents to assist their children with  
41 success in school, such as the Parent Academy of St. Lucie  
42 County or another similarly qualified local organization, to  
43 implement the pilot project. The office may select a faith-based  
44 organization; however, funds provided for the purpose of  
45 implementing the pilot project may be used for only those  
46 purposes expressly provided in this section and may not be used  
47 for the purpose of 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, the term "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 must require applicants for employment as instructors  
70 or noninstructional personnel who have direct contact with  
71 children participating in the pilot project and volunteers to  
72 have undergone level 2 background screening pursuant to s.  
73 435.04, Florida Statutes, within 5 years before participating in  
74 the pilot project. The organization may not use state funds to  
75 implement the pilot project to pay for background screening. The  
76 organization may not receive any funds from the state for  
77 purposes of implementing the pilot project until the office

78 receives written certification from the organization that all of  
79 the organization's instructors, noninstructional personnel who  
80 have direct contact with children, and volunteers have cleared  
81 level 2 background screening pursuant to s. 435.04, Florida  
82 Statutes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

120        Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2015.