

Committee on Education

CS/HB 7029 — Education regarding Digital Learning

by Education Committee; and Rep. Diaz and others (CS/CS/SB 904 by Rules Committee; Education Committee; and Senator Brandes)

The bill creates the Florida Approved Courses and Tests (FACT) Initiative, expands student choice regarding online education, and includes accountability provisions for the Florida Virtual School.

Florida Approved Courses and Tests (FACT) Initiative

The bill requires that the FACT Initiative be implemented beginning in the 2015-2016 school year to expand student choice in selecting high-quality online courses, including, but not limited to, massive open online courses (MOOCs) in Algebra I, biology, geometry, and civics, and remedial education associated with courses that are measured by statewide standardized assessments. Providers of Florida approved courses must meet certain requirements that are similar to virtual instruction program provider requirements.

The bill requires the Department of Education to contract with a qualified contractor to conduct a comprehensive study on online courses including MOOCs and competency-based online courses. The findings of the study must be provided by the Department of Education to the Executive Office of the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by February 1, 2014.

K-12 Online Education

The bill also requires the Department of Education to develop an online catalog of digital learning courses and provide specific information for such courses. The Department of Education must also provide identifiers for courses that are used for blended learning.

The bill removes blended learning courses provided by traditional public schools and charter schools and Florida approved courses from the definition of core curricular courses for purposes of class size requirements. In addition, the bill authorizes students to take online courses across district lines and requires that access to courses be provided to students during the normal school day.

The bill authorizes school districts to contract with qualified contractors to administer and proctor statewide standardized assessments.

Florida Virtual School

The bill requires the Florida Virtual School to annually submit detailed reports to the Governor, the Legislature, the Commissioner of Education, and the State Board of Education regarding the operations, accomplishments, marketing, assets and liabilities, financial audits, and

accountability mechanism for the Florida Virtual School Global. In addition, the Florida Virtual School must annually report the cost of providing services to students through the Florida Virtual School and the Florida Virtual School Global.

The bill requires the Auditor General to conduct an operational audit of the Florida Virtual School and the Florida Virtual School Global and submit findings to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by January 31, 2014.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2013.

Vote: Senate 27-12; House 90-25