

Committee on Education Pre-K - 12

CS/CS/CS/HB 1537 — Education

by Education and Employment Committee; Appropriations Committee; Education Quality Subcommittee; and Reps. Rizo, Daniels, and others (CS/CS/SB 1430 by Fiscal Policy Committee; Appropriations Committee on Education; and Senator Avila)

The bill (Chapter 2023-39, L.O.F.) improves the overall quality of Florida’s teacher preparation programs by streamlining programs, program requirements, and expanding upon the uniform core curricula, and modifies educator certification requirements. Specifically, the bill:

- Requires a system-wide shift from professional development to professional learning by defining the requirements for professional learning and requires the Department of Education (DOE) to create a web-based marketplace of high-quality programs.
- Expands eligibility for temporary certification to candidates who are currently enrolled in state-approved teacher preparation programs and who meet certain requirements.
- Re-establishes the general knowledge test requirement for all applicants for a professional certificate, but narrows the individuals who must demonstrate mastery of professional preparation and education competence.
- Authorizes a charter school governing board to adopt rules to allow for the issuance of an adjunct teaching certificate.

The bill modifies instruction and student progression by:

- Requiring instruction on Asian American and Pacific Islander history with specified topics.
- Expanding the practical arts credit option for high school graduation to any career and technical education course.
- Requiring each school district to annually review and confirm that all reproductive health and disease information and associated links available on the district school board website are accurate and up-to-date.
- Requiring the Governor to annually proclaim September 11 as “9/11 Heroes Day.” On this day, public schools are required to receive at least 45 minutes of instruction on associated topics.

The bill modifies assessment, acceleration, and accountability provisions, which:

- Authorize school districts to select the Classic Learning Test (CLT) for an annual districtwide administration for certain students, and allows students to earn a concordant score on the CLT to meet initial eligibility requirements for the Bright Futures Scholarship Program (Bright Futures).
- Adds a measure to the school grades formula specific to performance on the grade 3 English Language Arts assessment.
- Maintains current concordant and comparative scores to meet statewide assessment graduation requirements for the class of 2023.
- Establishes advanced courses developed by public postsecondary institutions as an additional acceleration option, and requires the DOE and Board of Governors issue a report on the effectiveness of acceleration courses.

The bill modifies provisions related to students to:

- Authorize a student to have and use standard headache medication at school.
- Establish guidelines for searches of students' personal belongings.
- Add a rebuttal provision within school district zero tolerance policies that a student's specified actions were necessary for student safety.

The bill also:

- Allows Bright Futures students to combine volunteer and paid work hours to meet initial eligibility requirements.
- Authorizes additional enforcement mechanisms for the Commission for Independent Education (commission) at the DOE, and expands fair consumer practices and minimum standards for licensure of private, postsecondary institutions under the jurisdiction of the commission. The bill also requires each licensed institution to be accredited prior to approval to offer a nursing program.
- Modifies charter capital outlay funding eligibility requirements relating to school grades.
- Creates the Year-round School Pilot Program, established for a period of four years.

The bill provides a nonrecurring appropriation from the General Revenue Fund to the DOE of:

- \$5.8 million to be used for the procurement of a statewide transparency tool to support the implementation of specified instructional and library materials requirements.
- \$1 million to be used for the procurement of bleeding control kits for placement in Florida public schools.

These provisions were approved by the Governor and take effect July 1, 2023, except as otherwise expressly provided.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 112-3