



In 1999-2000, the program will be implemented in 10 schools as pilot projects designed to assist the program to be disseminated statewide.

The Senate proposed budget contains \$2 million for the 10 pilot projects.

The bill amends sections 228.041, 229.601, 231.121, 231.1725, 236.081, 239.121, and 239.229 of the Florida Statutes. It repeals s. 233.068, F.S., and creates seven undesignated new sections.

## II. Present Situation:

In the 1998-1999 school year, Florida high schools reported almost 75,000 full-time-equivalent students for funding in the job preparatory vocational education category, or 11.5 percent of all high school FTE. This is among the highest participation rates in the nation.

At least since 1988, the Department of Education and the Legislature have taken an active role in the attempt to improve the outcomes of high school vocational education and to remove from it the stigma of the “vocational track.” Based on studies initiated by the Rand Corporation and the Southern Regional Education Board, the goal of all the reform efforts is the same: Prepare all students for postsecondary education **and** work. The student should have a choice of “two parallel, more equal pathways through high school -- a Tech Prep pathway for career and community college-bound students and a parallel pathway for four-year college and university preparatory students. Both pathways should contain the same basic curriculum of demanding college preparatory level courses and should be flexible enough for students to move from one pathway to another.”<sup>1</sup>

All of the reforms have as their main effort the integration of vocational and academic education, with the following common components:

- Revise and develop *vocational courses* to teach communication, mathematics, and science.
- Revise and develop *academic courses* to teach concepts from the college preparatory curriculum through functional and applied strategies.
- Recognize that high school vocational education alone does not result in self-sufficiency, and develop *two-plus-two programs* that guarantee a smooth transition to postsecondary education or include part of a postsecondary education during the high school years.

Florida’s major efforts can be divided into four categories, each of which may emphasize one of these components more than others. But each type of school includes all three components. Following is a brief description of the four categories.

### **Blueprint for Career Education -- “Blueprint Schools”**

These schools were originally funded by the 1988 Legislature and were designed around the Southern Regional Education Board’s original “Ten Steps to Improve High School Vocational Education Programs.” All Florida school districts now operate their vocational education programs around those concepts. However, when the board evaluated several states, it found that

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<sup>1</sup>Southern Regional Education Board, 1992. *Making High Schools Work*, p.7.

Florida’s programs still lacked the academic rigor that was associated with success. The board’s report recommended stronger efforts to increase academic proficiency among vocational students, especially to get them to take higher-level courses.

**Tech Prep**

This program, also called two-plus-two, requires an articulation agreement with postsecondary education institutions. Almost all of Florida’s high schools (296 of 298) have at least one tech prep program, and all 28 community colleges and five 4-year universities participate. However, students who complete the secondary portion of a program frequently terminate at graduation and pursue a different type of postsecondary education. The popular Gold Seal Vocational Scholarship requires completion of the high school component, and many students enroll in these programs as a way to earn a scholarship for a university education.

**Career Academies**

These schools, created in 1992 by s. 233.068, F.S., are open-enrollment schools-within-schools that prepare students for a common occupational “cluster” -- a group of related occupations that require varying levels of postsecondary education. The 30 academies originally funded by the Legislature have been increased to 46, with the additional 16 funded by the federal School-to-Work program.

**High Schools That Work**

These schools are the “second generation” of the Blueprint Schools, designed around the findings of the Rand Corporation and the Southern Regional Education Board. The program must agree to an evaluation based on testing by the National Education Assessment Program (NAEP). Their main focus is integration of academic and career education, a 4-year career plan, and continuation in postsecondary education. Currently 41 high schools are designated High Schools That Work; they serve over 93,000 students.

**Outcome Information**

According to data from the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP), not many high school students who complete vocational programs are going directly into work related to their program -- only 22 percent are found in training-related placements. Rather, they are continuing their education. Of graduates who completed a vocational program, 57 percent are found in postsecondary education and 36 percent are found both employed and continuing their education. This is a higher rate than non-vocational high school students, a category that mixes college-preparatory students and so-called “general track” students. Apparently the general track is the least productive, not the vocational track. Only 49 percent of non-vocational graduates were found in postsecondary education, and only 29 percent were found both working and continuing their education (see table).

**1996-1997 Florida Public High School Graduates\***

	Total #	Continuing Education	Found in Employment	Found in Both Employment + Continuing Ed
<b>Non-vocational Completers</b>	71,204	49 percent	56 percent	29 percent
<b>Vocational Completers</b>	18,646	57 percent	62 percent	36 percent

\*Source: Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program

These data provide evidence that Florida's decade-long effort may be paying off. Additional information, however, indicates a need to continue the reform effort. Data provided by the Florida Chamber of Commerce show that the members of the business community are not satisfied with the quality of Florida's workforce. Workforce development is the top issue facing these businesses, and many executives say high school graduates do not possess the basic skills needed to function at work. When surveyed about specific employees who have completed vocational programs, employers are generally satisfied with their technical skills but less satisfied with their academic skills.

### **Millennium Project Task Force**

In the 1998 General Appropriations Act, Specific Appropriation 143 provided funding for a task force to design a comprehensive vocational program that would guarantee academic competency and workforce readiness of all vocational high school graduates. The Commissioner of Education appointed the task force, called the Millennium Project. Senate Bill 1504 is designed to implement the task force recommendations.

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

The legislation under consideration creates a high school vocational education program that requires:

- Certification of the technical components by business and industry,
- A career plan for each student,
- A strong academic component with a foreign language and all required academic courses above level 2,
- Substantial experience in the workplace,
- A special certificate in addition to a high school diploma, and
- Articulation with postsecondary education.

The bill gives special names to the program, the certificate, and the high schools with these programs:

- Florida Tech Prep Pathway
- Sunshine Technical Skills Certificate
- New Millennium High Schools

By 2004, all high school vocational programs must meet these requirements or cease to be funded by the state. Funding for the full-time-equivalent students in programs that fulfill the requirements in the bill will be double the base student allocation for grades 9 - 12.

The following section-by-section analysis briefly discusses the requirements.

#### **Section 1: Legislative Intent** (Creates new section)

The intent language cites the progress made during the past 10 years to improve vocational education and describes the essential qualities of New Millennium High School. The three principles of education at the high schools are the academic curriculum, the technical curriculum, and the involvement of the local business sector.

#### **Section 2: Components of the Florida Tech Prep Pathway** (Creates new section)

The five required components are:

1. A career plan for each student. The plan is to relate education to career interests and must be directed by a career specialist or guidance counselor.
2. A core course of one credit that meets the graduation requirement for practical or performing arts. The course competencies are listed in the bill and closely track skills recommended by the Secretary's Commission on Necessary Skills (SCANS).
3. A work based learning experience that continues through high school and advances progressively. The bill gives examples of progressive levels and requires schools to identify staff to work with local firms to find relevant experience for the students.
4. A capstone activity that includes a final project and a demonstration before a business panel composed of people who work in the student's chosen field.
5. An articulation agreement for continuing the program into postsecondary education.

**Section 3: Requirements for Students** (Creates new section)

This section describes the requirements for students who receive the special certificate. It stipulates that the additional funding authorized later in the bill is generated only by participants, although nonparticipants may enroll in one or more of the required courses. The student and parent must agree to the following requirements:

- Take the academic courses required for graduation at level 2 or above (no basic courses).
- Demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language or earn two credits in a foreign language. This requirement may be met by demonstrating proficiency at the conversational or occupational level, earning two credits in conversational or occupational foreign language, or earning two regular high school credits in a foreign language. The department is authorized to develop the courses in a foreign language that is occupational or conversational, rather than academic.
- Enroll in the technical core course in the ninth or tenth grade and also enroll in at least two sequential tech prep pathway courses that are certified and articulated as required by the bill.
- Plan and progress through a career education plan including guided work experiences and a demonstration.

**Section 4: Certification of Programs** (Creates new section)

The tech prep pathway programs must be certified by business and industry to assure the relevance of their technical curriculum, equipment, related work-based experiences, and application of technology. The Department of Education is responsible for assuring compliance with the certification requirements and must review the certification at least every 5 years.

This section stipulates that a full-time-equivalent student enrolled in a technical course within a certified program generates state funding at double the cost factor for students enrolled in the basic program for grades 9-12. The school district may earn its pro-rata share of any performance-based funding generated by its student outcomes, and it must spend all the funds generated by formula or performance on the tech prep pathway.

This section of the bill also says that, effective July 1, 2004, no vocational education course may generate state funds unless it is in a tech prep pathway.

**Section 5: Sunshine Technical Skills Certificate** (Creates new section)

Requires each New Millennium High School to award a certificate to students who complete the tech prep pathway. To earn a Sunshine Technical Skills Certificate, the student must complete all

the requirements listed in section 3 of the bill and must pass the college entry level placement test. Thus the certificate assures employers of the graduate's proficiency in mathematics, science, and communication skills, plus substantial work experience.

**Section 6: Pilot Projects and Implementation** (Creates new section)

The program is to be implemented in at least 10 pilot projects, selected by the Department of Education based on the school's readiness for industry certification and the ability to obtain the necessary collaboration with local firms for the required work experience. The department must also consider the ability of the school to provide enough career counseling for students to prepare their career plans. The pilot projects may be funded as New Millennium High Schools (that is, double the basic cost factor for their FTE students in the program) or otherwise as provided in the Appropriations Act, if they are unable to have their programs industry-certified by the 1999-2000 school year. The Senate Budget (SB 2500) on this date contains an appropriation of \$2 million for the implementation process.

The pilot project high schools are to work with the other high schools to assure that, by 2004, all remaining job preparatory vocational education programs are certified as tech prep pathway programs.

**Section 7. Counselors** (Creates new section)

This section addresses the need for guidance counselors to assist implementation of the tech prep pathway. It requires guidance counselors in New Millennium High Schools to complete 6 credit hours or 60 in-service points in career development. The instruction must emphasize labor-market trends and projections and include a practicum on career awareness. The State Board of Education must revise its rules for certification and recertification of guidance counselors so that they may substitute personal work-based experience for the required classroom instruction. The bill encourages colleges of education not to increase the total number of credit hours required for guidance counselors to complete a program, but to infuse the content of required ethics courses into that of other courses.

**Sections 8, 9, 10, 11: Career Specialists** (Amend ss. 228.041, 229.601, 229.602, 231.1725, F.S.)

Changes the title of *occupational specialist* to *career specialist*, to emphasize the additional responsibilities of personnel holding this position in New Millennium High Schools.

Section 11 also adds to the requirements for initial certification of career specialists. Beginning in 2000-2001, a specialist must have:

- At least 6 years of documented recent work experience outside the school system that included leadership or management responsibilities.
- At least an associate-level college degree or at least 60 transferable credits.
- At least one course in career development, labor-market information, assessment instruments, goal setting, and job-search training.
- Up to three courses in communications, vocational and technical education, public relations and marketing, career development, counseling, or computer technology.

**Section 12: Florida Education Finance Program** (Amends s. 236.081, F.S.)

Provides that a full-time equivalent student in a tech prep pathway course generates funding at double the basic cost factor for grades 9-12 and that, effective July 1, 2004, students in any other job preparatory course generate no state funding. Course substitutions are allowed only for tech prep pathway courses. The Sunshine Technical Skills Certificate is added to the list of programs that may receive categorical funding.

**Section 13: Career Specialists** (Amends s. 239.121, F.S.)

Provides a cross reference to the certification requirements added to s. 231.1725, F.S., and requires the department and each school district to assist career specialists attain the new requirements through professional development.

**Section 14: Responsibilities of school boards and superintendents** (Amends s. 239.229, F.S.)

Requires each school board and superintendent to direct the smooth transition of high school vocational programs to Florida Tech Prep Pathways.

**Section 15: Repeals s. 233.068, F.S.**

This section of the Florida Statutes creates the Academies for Career Development. Such academies may be continued within New Millennium High Schools without statutory governance.

**Section 16. Provides an effective date of July 1, 1999**

Except for the elimination of funding for job preparatory vocational education programs, which takes effect July 1, 2004.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:****A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

**B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

**C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

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

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

The Department of Education calculated that, to develop the procedures and implement the program in the 10 pilot sites, the cost would be \$2 million. That amount is currently included in the Senate budget.

For the 2000-2001 school year, the department estimated that 2,750 full-time-equivalent students could be participants in tech-prep pathway programs. Funding for them at double the base student allocation will represent an increase of \$7 million (2,750 multiplied by the current BSA, then doubled and multiplied by .02 -- the estimated increase over the current BSA -- minus what those students would have earned if funded at the vocational cost factor = \$7 million).

Department staff caution against assuming that all FTE students currently reported for funding in the vocational cost factor will eventually generate funding as tech prep students. Many vocational programs will not be able to achieve the required industry certification. Some of them may be classified incorrectly as job preparatory programs and will be reclassified as practical arts. Some may be terminated.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Amendments:**

None.