

By Senator Clary

7-784-99

See HB 501

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
 2           An act relating to personnel of the school  
 3           system; amending s. 24.121, F.S.; providing for  
 4           funding of the Project Teach Tuition  
 5           Reimbursement Program from the Educational  
 6           Enhancement Trust Fund; creating s. 231.64,  
 7           F.S.; creating the Project Teach Tuition  
 8           Reimbursement Program; providing eligibility  
 9           requirements; providing for funding and  
 10          distribution of funds; providing an effective  
 11          date.

12  
 13 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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 15           Section 1. Paragraph (e) of subsection (5) of section  
 16   24.121, Florida Statutes, 1998 Supplement, is amended to read:  
 17           24.121 Allocation of revenues and expenditure of funds  
 18   for public education.--

19           (5)

20           (b) Except as provided in paragraphs (c), (d), and  
 21   (e), the Legislature shall equitably apportion moneys in the  
 22   trust fund among public schools, community colleges, and  
 23   universities.

24           (e) All components of the Florida Bright Futures  
 25   Scholarship Program and the Project Teach Tuition  
 26   Reimbursement Program shall be funded annually from the  
 27   Educational Enhancement Trust Fund. Funds shall be allocated  
 28   to these programs ~~this program~~ prior to application of the  
 29   formula for equitable distribution to public schools,  
 30   community colleges, and state universities. If shortages  
 31   require reductions in estimated distributions from the

1 Educational Enhancement Trust Fund, funds for the Florida  
2 Bright Futures Scholarship Program and the Project Teach  
3 Tuition Reimbursement Program shall be reduced only after  
4 reductions in all other distributions are made.

5 Section 2. Section 231.64, Florida Statutes, is  
6 created to read:

7 231.64 Project Teach Tuition Reimbursement Program.--

8 (1) The Project Teach Tuition Reimbursement Program is  
9 created to establish a lottery-funded tuition reimbursement  
10 program for instructional personnel, instructional  
11 specialists, and educational support personnel who enroll in a  
12 qualified education program and who meet the standards of  
13 performance as defined in subsection (4).

14 (2) The program shall be administered by the school  
15 district or other public school where the instructional  
16 employee, instructional specialist, or educational support  
17 employee is employed. The school district or other public  
18 school must advertise the program and its requirements to the  
19 eligible school personnel.

20 (3) To be eligible for the program, an employee must  
21 be a full-time instructional employee, instructional  
22 specialist, or educational support employee.

23 (4)(a) Instructional personnel and instructional  
24 specialists eligible to receive funds from the program must be  
25 enrolled in a qualified program of study which will result in  
26 the awarding of an advanced degree in the employee's  
27 specialization area or in a program of study which qualifies  
28 the employee to teach in a critical teacher shortage area, as  
29 defined in s. 231.62. Reimbursement for tuition and books  
30 shall be made for each course included in the qualified  
31

1 program of study in which the student has earned at least a  
2 3.0 average on a 4.0 grading scale.

3 (b) Educational support personnel eligible to receive  
4 funds from the program must be enrolled in a qualified program  
5 of study that will result in the awarding of the required  
6 degree and certification to teach in Florida. Reimbursement  
7 for tuition and books shall be made for each course included  
8 in the qualified program of study in which the student has  
9 earned at least a 3.0 average on a 4.0 grading scale.

10 (c) An employee receiving reimbursement from this  
11 program must agree to teach in a Florida public school for at  
12 least 1 year after completing the qualified program of study.  
13 This provision is deemed satisfied if, after 2 years from  
14 completion of the qualified program, an employee has applied  
15 for teaching positions within the employee's school district  
16 or school, but has been unsuccessful in securing a position.

17 (d) An employee who does not complete the qualified  
18 program of study within 5 years after receiving the first  
19 tuition reimbursement award or who does not teach in Florida  
20 pursuant to paragraph (c) shall repay to the school district  
21 or public school that issued the reimbursement awards an  
22 amount equal to the total reimbursements the employee  
23 received. Any repayment of tuition reimbursements shall be  
24 used to reduce the school district's or school's future  
25 distribution of Project Teach Tuition Reimbursement Program  
26 funds from the Department of Education.

27 (5) Funding for the program must be allocated from the  
28 Educational Enhancement Trust Fund in accordance with s.  
29 24.121. If allocated funds are not adequate to provide the  
30 maximum allowable reimbursement, reimbursements must be  
31 prorated using the same percentage reduction.

