

By Representative Ritchie

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.

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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 that 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
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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 which 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.

1 (6) The Department of Education shall distribute funds
2 for the program twice during the fiscal year, by October 1 and
3 March 1. School districts and other eligible public schools
4 shall submit a request for funds on a form approved by the
5 department. Each school district and public school that
6 receives funds from this program shall establish a process
7 that documents an employee's eligibility to receive the
8 reimbursement.

9 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 1999.

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12 HOUSE SUMMARY

13 Creates the lottery-funded Project Teach Tuition
14 Reimbursement Program for instructional personnel,
15 instructional specialists, and educational support
16 personnel. Provides criteria for eligibility.