

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based only on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: CS/SB 698

SPONSOR: Education and Senator Forman

SUBJECT: Schools/Character Development Program

DATE: March 3, 1999 REVISED: 04/15/99 _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>deMarsh-Mathues</u>	<u>O'Farrell</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Favorable/CS</u>
2.	<u>Hadi</u>	<u>Hadi</u>	<u>FP</u>	<u>Fav/2 amendments</u>
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The bill requires that instruction in the public elementary schools include a secular character development program such as Character Counts or a similar curriculum. The program must stress qualities such as attentiveness, patience, and initiative. The bill eliminates the provision in s. 233.0612(1), F.S., that encourages school districts to install character development programs in elementary schools.

The bill amends s. 233.061, F.S., and s. 233.0612(1), F.S.

II. Present Situation:

Chapter 233, F.S., relating to courses of study and instructional materials, contains provisions for required instruction and authorized instruction. Under s. 233.061, F.S., each school district must provide instruction in reading and other language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign languages, health and physical education, and the arts.

Specific instruction in the following is mandatory: the Declaration of Independence; arguments in support of a republican form of government, as embodied in certain Federalist Papers; the essentials of the U.S. Constitution and its relation to government structure; flag education, including proper display and salute; the elements of civil government, including the functions and interrelationships between the Federal Government, the state, and its counties, municipalities, school districts, and special districts; the history of the Holocaust; the history of African Americans; elementary principles of agriculture; the effects of alcohol and narcotics upon the body and the mind; kindness to animals; state history; conservation of natural resources; comprehensive health education; Hispanic and women's contributions to the United States; and additional materials, subjects, courses, or fields as prescribed by law or rule.

The law (s. 233.0612, F.S.) allows each school district to provide students with programs and instruction at the appropriate grade levels in other areas, including character development and law

education. Chapter 98-211, L.O.F., created a provision in s. 233.0612(1), F.S., to encourage each school district to install secular character development programs in elementary schools within the district. The program must be the same or similar to the Character Counts or Character First! Education Series. The programs must emphasize qualities such as attentiveness, patience, and initiative.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Instruction in the public elementary schools must include a secular character development program such as Character Counts or a similar curriculum. The program must stress qualities such as attentiveness, patience, and initiative. The bill eliminates the provision in s. 233.0612(1), F.S., that encourages school districts to install character development programs in elementary schools.

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 bill requires the addition of secular character development programs to existing curricula in public elementary schools. The Department of Education noted that the potential statewide impact may be several millions of dollars, if additional teacher training and the purchase of additional instructional materials are required. There are, however, existing character development programs.

Character First! is a character education curriculum for which materials, including the basic classroom kit, would reportedly be made available to Florida schools for an average cost of

approximately \$2.60 per student or \$65 per classroom kit. Supplemental materials are available for an additional charge. Based on a cost per student of \$2.60, the total cost of implementing the Character First! curriculum is approximately \$2.6 million for FY 1999-2000. The cost in future fiscal years will change as it is based on the number of students and the cost per student for the materials.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

According to the Character Education Partnership, a nonpartisan coalition of organizations and individuals, ten schools from throughout the U.S. were selected to receive the 1998 Ninth Annual Business Week Award for instructional innovation. The schools were chosen to exemplify the goals of character education using a variety of character education programs that differ in approach, content and scope. The Partnership's resource guide lists over 30 organizations that promote character education programs. Many of these organizations sell character education materials on-line at a variety of prices for use in elementary schools.

According to CHARACTER COUNTS! coalition materials, formal membership in the coalition is restricted to nonprofit organizations and schools, which have exclusive right to the CHARACTER COUNTS! name and logo. CHARACTER COUNTS!, "Kids for Character," "Choices Count!," "American Youth Character Awards," "Character Carousel," "Character Development Seminars (CDS)" and "CHARACTER COUNTS! All Stars" are all service/trade marks of the coalition. These names and their respective logos or images cannot be used without written permission from the coalition's national office.

VIII. Amendments:

Amendment #1. Adds "Character First" to the types of character education curricula that may be offered by school districts.

Amendment #2. Provides that a character education curriculum should include character development and ethics, in addition to law-related education.