

By the Committee on General Education and Representatives  
Harrell and Fiorentino

1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to learning disabilities in  
3           young children; creating s. 240.5311, F.S.;  
4           creating the Learning Gateway Project to  
5           provide grants to universities to establish a  
6           statewide consortium to address learning  
7           disabilities; providing for administration of  
8           the project; providing project functions;  
9           providing for regional Learning Gateway Centers  
10          and specifying services of the centers;  
11          requiring a report; requiring an appropriation;  
12          requiring the Department of Education to  
13          finalize all rules by a date certain to  
14          implement the Individuals with Disabilities  
15          Education Act; requiring the Department of  
16          Education to report by a specific date on  
17          needed rule authority to implement the  
18          Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;  
19          providing an effective date.

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21           WHEREAS, disabilities place children at risk for  
22          significant learning and adaptation problems in school, and,  
23          over time, adversely affect students' school performance as  
24          well as their social, physical, and emotional functioning and  
25          quality of life, and

26           WHEREAS, while the impact of disabilities on a child's  
27          performance may not be evident until the elementary school  
28          years, warning signs or precursors of learning disabilities  
29          may be exhibited much earlier, and

30           WHEREAS, while no single risk factor can accurately  
31          predict the occurrence of a learning disability, the presence

1 of multiple risks assists in identifying those children who  
2 are most vulnerable, and

3 WHEREAS, labeling of a young child can create  
4 inaccurate, stigmatizing long-term misconceptions about the  
5 child's potential as a competent learner and citizen, and

6 WHEREAS, specific programs that qualify under Part B  
7 and Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act  
8 exist to provide services to children with established  
9 disabling conditions and moderate-to-severe developmental  
10 delays and to their families, and

11 WHEREAS, parents are usually the best and most  
12 important source of support for their children, but access to  
13 information and services is often inconsistent, fragmented,  
14 and difficult to locate, and

15 WHEREAS, the benefits to be generated by early  
16 identification and intervention with respect to learning  
17 problems, learning disabilities, and mild developmental delays  
18 are significant in the lives of children and their families,  
19 NOW, THEREFORE,

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21 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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23 Section 1. Section 240.5311, Florida Statutes, is  
24 created to read:

25 240.5311 Learning Gateway Project.--

26 (1) There is created the Learning Gateway Project to  
27 provide grants to eligible universities to establish an  
28 integrated approach for health care providers and parents to  
29 lessen the effects of learning disabilities for children  
30 through prevention, early identification, early education, and  
31 appropriate intervention. Parental consent shall be required

1 for all services provided pursuant to the Learning Gateway  
2 Project, including initial contact and further referral for  
3 evaluation and services. The selected universities shall form  
4 a statewide consortium and shall select a university with a  
5 medical program to serve as lead university for the  
6 consortium.

7 (2) The Learning Gateway Project shall:

8 (a) Be administered by the Department of Education to  
9 provide grants to eligible state universities for the purpose  
10 of developing a statewide catalog of programs, resources, and  
11 funds that assist children with learning disabilities. The  
12 state universities identified in the Learning Gateway Project  
13 shall work collaboratively to develop this project and use the  
14 expertise, resources, faculty, and students within the  
15 universities to develop the project. Under the direction of  
16 the Learning Gateway Project, the participating universities  
17 may use their students to design brochures, perform research,  
18 collect data on community resources and programs, and develop  
19 and maintain a website, through coordination with the State  
20 Technology Office, to give parents, teachers, and  
21 practitioners information about early warning signs of  
22 learning disabilities, Learning Gateway Centers, and  
23 community-based programs.

24 (b) Work collaboratively with representatives of state  
25 and local agencies and private programs to develop a  
26 comprehensive list of regional providers.

27 (c) Identify the factors that interfere with or  
28 inhibit normal development and learning. The Learning Gateway  
29 Project shall bring together research that integrates the  
30 disciplines relevant to the diagnosis, causes, treatment, and  
31 intervention of early learning disabilities.

1       (d) Establish guidelines for screening children. The  
2 guidelines should incorporate relevant research on the  
3 indicators most likely to predict early learning problems,  
4 mild developmental delays, child-specific precursors of school  
5 failure, and other related developmental indicators in the  
6 domains of cognition, communication, attention, perception,  
7 behavior, and social, emotional, sensory, and motor  
8 functioning.

9       (e) Adopt a checklist for physicians, health care  
10 personnel, and school personnel in implementing more effective  
11 screening for precursors of learning disabilities and mild  
12 developmental delays. Such information shall be prepared so  
13 that it can be appropriately presented as part of routine  
14 clinic sessions for immunization visits and visits under the  
15 "Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants,  
16 and Children" (WIC) under s. 383.011 and other well-child  
17 appointments.

18       (f) Identify the elements of an effective  
19 research-based curriculum for each learning disability.

20       (g) Develop a model system of care, through the  
21 establishment of regional Learning Gateway Centers, that  
22 builds upon, integrates, and identifies the gaps in existing  
23 services.

24       (h) Develop two brochures and a website, in  
25 coordination with the State Technology Office, to distribute  
26 information.

27       1. One brochure shall be designed to educate parents  
28 and caretakers about the importance of prenatal care and  
29 nutrition and shall identify the early warning signs of  
30 disabilities that may lead to learning disabilities and  
31 developmental delays. This brochure shall be distributed to

1 parents through early childhood programs administered by the  
2 Department of Education, the Department of Health, the Florida  
3 Partnership for School Readiness, the Agency for Workforce  
4 Innovation, the Department of Children and Family Services,  
5 the Agency for Health Care Administration, the Department of  
6 Juvenile Justice, the Department of Corrections, and the  
7 Learning Development and Evaluation Center of Florida  
8 Agricultural and Mechanical University.

9       2. One brochure shall be developed to provide  
10 physicians, parents, and teachers information on the Learning  
11 Gateway Project and the Learning Gateway Centers, as well as  
12 all the programs, facilities, resources, and services  
13 available within each identified service area.

14       3. The website shall provide ready access for parents,  
15 physicians, teachers, and caretakers to information regarding  
16 the Learning Gateway Project and the Learning Gateway Centers  
17 for the purpose of referral and information on the learning  
18 disabilities addressed by the project. It shall itemize the  
19 resources available for intervention, diagnosis, and  
20 treatment, as well as regional listings of available related  
21 services and providers, indexed by learning disability.

22       (3)(a) The Learning Gateway Centers shall develop a  
23 network of all available services within each identified  
24 service area and submit the list and description to the  
25 Learning Gateway Project for inclusion in the website for the  
26 programs available to parents, physicians, and other health  
27 care providers. The Learning Gateway Centers shall use the  
28 list to refer parents to programs or facilities appropriate to  
29 meet their child's needs. For the purpose of serving areas of  
30 the state where no services currently exist or where the  
31 private providers lack the expertise to diagnose and provide

1 strategies for improved learning, each participating  
2 university may use Learning Gateway Project funds to expand  
3 the current services provided through the university to set up  
4 clinics on site or at other locations to diagnose learning  
5 disabilities while providing students an opportunity to  
6 intern. Participating universities with comprehensive schools  
7 that can diagnose difficult problems may expand existing  
8 clinics to serve as a resource for children with specialized  
9 problems and their parents when services are not available  
10 from public or private local providers within the regional  
11 Learning Gateway Center. The regional Learning Gateway  
12 Centers may provide services to parents, physicians, and other  
13 health care providers where there is a gap in the service  
14 available from public and private providers. The Learning  
15 Gateway Centers may provide direct service to children who do  
16 not receive coverage under state, federal, or private  
17 insurance or may contract for specialty services. Centers may  
18 also provide for services to children whose parents are  
19 dissatisfied with their present services.

20 (b) Learning Gateway Centers shall be the single point  
21 of access for screening, assessment, integration of services,  
22 linkages of providers, referrals, and services required to  
23 address the needs of the children and families, using faculty,  
24 graduate students, and other professionals as needed. The  
25 Learning Gateway Centers shall provide to parents and  
26 physicians a one-stop referral center to provide accurate  
27 information on public and private professionals who can assist  
28 in determining the physical, emotional, nutritional,  
29 environmental, and mental factors that may be interfering with  
30 learning and normal development.

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1       (c) Staff of the Learning Gateway Centers must be  
2 knowledgeable about child development, early identification of  
3 learning disabilities, access to needed health care services  
4 and health insurance coverage for such services, and state and  
5 federal funds available for services in the local area. If  
6 the following services are not provided by existing service  
7 systems, with the permission of the parent, the Learning  
8 Gateway Centers shall:

9           1. Conduct appropriate screening or refer for such  
10 services.

11           2. Develop family resource plans.

12           3. Make referrals for needed services and assist  
13 families in the application process.

14           4. Provide educational and training classes for  
15 parents, teachers, and caretakers.

16       (d) The specific services and supports provided by the  
17 Learning Gateway Centers may include:

18           1. Speech and language therapy that is appropriate.

19           2. Comprehensive medical screening and referral.

20           3. Referral as needed for family therapy, other mental  
21 health services, and treatment programs.

22           4. Therapy for learning differences in reading and  
23 math, and attention to subject material for children in grades  
24 K-3.

25           5. Referral for services pursuant to Part B or Part C  
26 of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as  
27 required.

28       (e) The Learning Gateway Centers shall designate a  
29 central information and referral access phone number for each  
30 center, to be used to improve access to local supports and  
31 services for children and their families.

1       (f) When results of screening suggest developmental  
2 problems, potential learning problems, or learning  
3 disabilities, the intervention program, with permission of the  
4 parent, shall refer the child to the regional Learning Gateway  
5 Center for coordination of further assessment. The Learning  
6 Gateway Center shall make referrals to the appropriate  
7 entities within the service system.

8       (g) The Learning Gateway Centers shall provide  
9 regional training and updates concerning effective  
10 instructional and behavioral practices and interventions based  
11 on advances in the field and for encouraging researchers to  
12 regularly guide practitioners in designing and implementing  
13 research-based practices.

14       (4) By January 2003, the Learning Gateway Project  
15 shall report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the  
16 Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Commissioner  
17 of Education on the progress, success, and integration of  
18 services; the number, types, and outcomes of children served  
19 by the Learning Gateway Centers; and the number and types of  
20 referrals made through the project.

21       (5) The Learning Gateway Project must develop a  
22 comprehensive list of services and funding sources available  
23 to provide services for children. Relevant state agencies  
24 shall assist the Learning Gateway Project in securing state  
25 and federal waivers as appropriate.

26       (6) This project shall be implemented subject to the  
27 General Appropriations Act.

28       Section 2. By October 15, 2001, the Florida Department  
29 of Education shall finalize all administrative rule revisions  
30 necessary to properly implement the 1997 amendments to the  
31 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.



1           Section 3. By October 15, 2001, the Florida Department  
2 of Education shall report to the Governor, the Speaker of the  
3 House of Representatives, and the President of the Senate the  
4 additional rule authority it needs, if any, to implement the  
5 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

6           Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2001.  
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