

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

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

BILL: CS/SB 370

SPONSOR: Education Committee and Senator Miller

SUBJECT: Schools/African American History

DATE: April 13, 2001

REVISED: 04/17/01

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	deMarsh-Mathues	O'Farrell	ED	Favorable/CS
2.	Wilson	Wilson	GO	Fav/1 amendment
3.			AED	
4.			AP	
5.				
6.				

I. Summary:

The bill revises the high school graduation requirements to require the completion of a course on the history of African Americans, as provided for in s. 233.061, F.S., for 0.5 credit. This provision is effective for students entering the 9th grade in the 2001-2002 school year and thereafter. The number of electives is reduced from 8 and one-half credits to 8 credits, effective for students entering the 9th grade in the 2001-2002 school year and thereafter.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2001.

This bill amends s. 232.246, 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 is mandatory in 17 areas, including the history of African Americans (e.g., the history of African people before the political conflicts that led to the development of slavery, the passage to America, the enslavement experience, abolition, and the contributions of African Americans to society).

The Sunshine State Standards State Board of Education rule 6A-1.09401 requires each district school board to incorporate the standards into the district pupil progression plan. The benchmark standards describe what students should know and be able to do at four progression levels in specific subjects. Public schools must provide appropriate instruction to assist students in

achieving these standards. The social studies standards provide for instruction in history and include grades 9 through 12.

A course description directs district personnel by providing the essential content and course requirements for each course in grades 6-12 contained in the Course Code Directory. The current Department of Education Course Code Directory (2000-2001) and course descriptions for social studies basic education in senior high (grades 9-12) include African American history.

Administrative rules provide for district school board variances. District school boards, through local rules, may currently approve a variance of up to 10% of the course requirements of each course description. In addition, districts may elect to offer special topics courses in various subject areas. The Commissioner of Education has the authority to approve a school's waiver request to allow the school to substitute locally approved requirements, provided that certain conditions are met.

Section 232.246, F.S., establishes the general requirements for high school graduation but encourages school districts to make them more rigorous. To earn a regular high school diploma a student must:

- Pass both sections of the High School Competency Test or the 10th grade Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).
- Earn the required grade point average.
- Successfully complete any other requirements prescribed by the local school board.
- Successfully complete the 24 credits shown on the following table:

REQUIRED SUBJECT	NUMBER OF CREDITS
English	4.0
Math (includes algebra for those entering in 1997-1998 and thereafter)	3.0
Science	3.0
American History	1.0
World History	1.0
Economics	0.5
American Government (includes Florida government for those entering in 1997-1998 and thereafter)	0.5
Practical Arts or Exploratory Career Education/Performing Fine Arts	1.0
Physical Education or two full seasons of sports participation at specific levels	1.0
Life Management Skills	0.5
TOTAL ELECTIVE CREDITS	8.5
TOTAL CREDITS	24

Section 232.2462, F.S., defines the term "credit" for purposes of high school graduation. Each school district must maintain a one-half credit earned system and include courses provided on a full-year basis. One-half credit means 67.5 hours of bona fide instruction in a designated course of study that contains the required student performance standards. According to the Department of Education, African American history is a component of the required American history course. The department also notes that African American history is currently available as an elective course. A student may receive 0.5 credit for the course. The course is not a requirement for high school graduation.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Section 1. The bill revises the high school graduation requirements to require the completion of a course on the history of African Americans, as provided for in s. 233.061, F.S., for 0.5 credit. This provision is effective for students entering the 9th grade in the 2001-2002 school year and thereafter. The number of electives is reduced from 8 and one-half credits to 8 credits, effective for students entering the 9th grade in the 2001-2002 school year and thereafter.

Section 2. The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2001.

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:

According to the Department of Education, school districts and schools determine where, when, to whom, and which materials are appropriate to teach this topic. To implement the bill, the department notes that districts and schools will need to acquire or assign staff, provide training, and provide instructional materials.

The Florida School Book Depository is a private organization that distributes a variety of K-12 instructional materials in Florida. The depository offers the titles adopted by the Florida Department of Education as well as non-adopted programs and titles. The depository's current database contains African American history instructional materials. According to depository staff, some schools in Broward, Clay, and Miami-Dade County School Districts have made recent purchases.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

1 by Governmental Oversight and Productivity Committee:

Delays the effective date of the revised curriculum changes by one academic year.

This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's sponsor or the Florida Senate.
