

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 0193

School Readiness Programs

SPONSOR(S): Barreiro

TIED BILLS:

IDEN./SIM. BILLS: SB 1334

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR
1) Pre-K through 12 (Sub)		Carlson	Bohannon
2) Education K-20			
3) Education Apps. (Sub)			
4) Appropriations			
5)			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The Committee has offered a Proposed Committee Substitute to HB 193. This analysis is drawn to the PCS (hereinafter the "Bill").

The bill requires the State Board of Education, Office of Auditor General and Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability to perform a joint interim study of the school readiness program established by Section 411.01, F.S.

The bill does not change existing law.

The purposes of the joint interim study are:

- To determine how best to restructure the existing school readiness program;
- To determine how to create the new constitutionally-required voluntary universal prekindergarten program for 4-year-olds; and
- To determine how to efficiently operate and fund both programs.

The bill requires the study to be completed by December 31, 2003 and reported to the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The bill appears not to have any fiscal impact, as it will use existing resources and personnel.

This document does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill sponsor or House of Representatives.

STORAGE NAME: h0193.edk.doc

DATE: March 5, 2003

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. DOES THE BILL:

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. Reduce government? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Lower taxes? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Expand individual freedom? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Increase personal responsibility? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Empower families? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

THE FLORIDA SCHOOL READINESS ACT

The Legislature created the Florida School Readiness Act ("Act") by enacting section 411.01, Florida Statutes (1999). The purpose of the Act was to create a more cohesive, efficient and integrated school readiness system and increase children's chances of achieving future educational success and becoming productive members of society. The system was supposed to provide developmentally appropriate educational services from birth to kindergarten to improve readiness for school and reduce academic failure.

The Act created the Florida Partnership for School Readiness as the statewide entity responsible for overall leadership and for coordinating programmatic, administrative and fiscal policies and standards relating to school readiness programs. The law also created local school readiness coalitions to oversee local services, separate from but coordinated with local school districts. Initially there were 57 coalitions, and there are currently [NUM] in existence. The Act also created a School Readiness Program Estimating Conference to annually forecast the number of children eligible for services. The emphasis of the Act is on providing readiness services to Florida's at-risk and economically disadvantaged children. In general, the program provides services to economically disadvantaged children from birth to kindergarten who are at risk of future academic failure, with priority being given to children at risk of abuse or neglect. The Partnership is housed under the Agency for Workforce Innovation for administrative purposes.

Since its creation in 1999, the Partnership has failed to implement a number of key milestones, according to a study prepared by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability ("OPPAGA") in 2002. OPPAGA found that the Partnership had failed in the following areas:

- To develop and approve coalition plans for all 57 coalitions;
- To establish centralized program funding and services under the authority of the coalitions;
- To establish a single point of entry and unified waiting list for readiness programs;
- To implement an assessment system, including the uniform screening for kindergarten students (a kindergarten screening has been done for the 2002-2003 school year, but the data has not been made available); and
- To adopt rules necessary to administer and implement the program.

Because of these failures, the school readiness system cannot be effectively evaluated, even though four years have passed since the Partnership was created. Moreover, the cohesion-building pieces of the program – the centralized funding and single-point-of-entry components – have not been implemented. In addition, there have been anecdotal reports of waste of taxpayer dollars, excessive bureaucracy and ineligible children being provided services while eligible children were placed on waiting lists. In the meantime, the Partnership continues to conduct meetings and expend taxpayer

dollars for administrative costs. In short, Florida does not have the cohesive, efficient and integrated school readiness system that the Legislature intended to create.

THE UNIVERSAL PRE-K AMENDMENT

In November 2002 the voters passed the Voluntary Universal Pre-Kindergarten Education amendment to the State Constitution. That amendment adds the following language to Article IX, Section 1:

(b) Every four-year old child in Florida shall be provided by the State a high quality pre-kindergarten learning opportunity in the form of an early childhood development and education program which shall be voluntary, high quality, free and delivered according to professionally accepted standards. An early childhood development and education program means an organized program designed to address and enhance each child's ability to make age appropriate progress in an appropriate range of settings in the development of language and cognitive capabilities and emotional, social regulatory and moral capacities through education in basic skills and such other skills as the Legislature may determine to be appropriate.

(c) The early childhood education and development programs provided by reason of subparagraph (b) shall be implemented no later than the beginning of the 2005 school year through funds generated in addition to those used for existing education, health and development programs. Existing education, health and development programs are those funded by the State as of January 1, 2002 that provided for child or adult education, health care or development.

THE PROPOSED COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE

The bill does not change existing law.

Legislative Findings

- The School Readiness Act created by section 411.01, F.S. (1999), was intended to be an integrated and seamless system of school readiness for Florida's at-risk and economically disadvantaged birth-to-kindergarten children; a system coordinated with but separate from the public school system.
- The readiness system was intended to provide appropriate early education, not child care. This system is managed by the statewide Partnership for School Readiness and by local readiness coalitions.
- The School Readiness Act has failed in its four years of existence to be fully implemented, as confirmed by OPPAGA Report 02-07, titled "School Readiness Program's Potential Not Realized With Critical Issues Unresolved."
- There have been indications of inefficiencies, waste of taxpayer dollars at the state and local levels, and instances where ineligible children were served while eligible children were turned away.
- In November 2002, the voters amended the State Constitution to require, no later than the beginning of the 2005 school year, voluntary universal prekindergarten education for Florida's 4-year-old children.
- The constitutional amendment requires that the new universal program not be funded with funds from any existing program.

Legislative Purpose

The purpose of the bill is to require a joint interim study of the school readiness program by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability, the Auditor General and the State Board of Education to assist the Legislature in determining how best to restructure the existing school readiness

program, create the constitutionally-required new universal prekindergarten program and efficiently operate and fund both programs.

Joint Interim Study of:

- Governance Structure

The study is to reexamine the state and local governance structure of the school readiness program and to recommend a governance structure that will reduce system bureaucracy, eliminate waste, inefficiency and duplication and identify and eliminate obstacles to effective and efficient governance, service delivery and funding, while recognizing that there are compelling reasons to keep the program under the auspices of the Agency for Workforce Innovation.

- Program Curriculum

The study is to examine best practices for accomplishing the original intent of the school readiness program and for establishing the new universal prekindergarten program in a manner that emphasizes instruction in the areas of language, cognitive, and early reading development, based on scientific research and proven instructional and outcome-based assessment practices so that all participants enter school ready to succeed. This should include a recommendation as to the optimal number of hours per day and days per year for voluntary universal prekindergarten.

- Funding Mechanism

The study is to examine best practices for funding the new voluntary universal prekindergarten program in a manner that maximizes the benefit of taxpayer dollars expended on the education of children rather than on the system bureaucracy. Because some of the children who will participate in the voluntary universal prekindergarten program will be at-risk or economically disadvantaged children who have participated and continue to participate in the existing school readiness program, it may be most efficient to place the new program under the Agency for Workforce Innovation with the existing program for purposes of funding and monitoring efficiencies.

- Audit

The study is to assess the accountability of the school readiness funding based on an audit of funds that have been appropriated by the Legislature for the Florida Partnership for School Readiness for the 2000-2001, 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 fiscal years and the existing school readiness program at the local level for the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 fiscal years. The audit objectives will include a determination of the extent that management controls promoted the achievement of management objectives relating to compliance with controlling laws, rules and other guidelines; efficient and effective operations; reliability of financial records and reports; and safeguarding of assets. The audit is to include, without limitation, an identification of waste, inefficiency, and instances of ineligible children being served while eligible children remained on waiting lists. The audit will also include a review of expenditures by the Agency for Workforce Innovation on behalf of the school readiness program.

- New Funding Formula

The study is to prescribe a new funding formula for the existing school readiness program that is based on equity for all children eligible for the program and that rewards outcome-based performance.

THE JOINT INTERIM SCHOOL READINESS STUDY

The bill requires the State Board of Education to identify best practices as described in the statement of Legislative intent and purpose and to report its findings to the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives no later than December 31, 2003. It requires that best practices recognize flexibility but be based on the framework of appropriate scientific research in language and vocabulary skills, phonological awareness, and alphabetic knowledge. It also requires best practices to include a full spectrum of parental choice options among public, private and faith-based providers, but excludes the option of offering any existing school readiness program or new voluntary universal prekindergarten program in a school graded "D" or "F."

The bill requires the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability to reexamine the existing school readiness program and governance structure in accordance with the statement of Legislative intent and purpose; to identify best practices for funding the new voluntary universal prekindergarten program; to recommend a new funding formula for the existing school readiness program; and to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives no later than December 31, 2003.

The bill requires the Office of Auditor General to conduct an audit in accordance with the statement of Legislative intent and purpose and to collaborate with OPPAGA to identify best practices for funding the new voluntary universal prekindergarten program and to recommend a new funding formula for the existing school readiness program. The Office of Auditor General shall report its findings and recommendations to the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives no later than December 31, 2003.

EFFECTIVE DATE

The bill takes effect on becoming law.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Contains Legislative findings and statements of purpose.

Section 2. Defines the Joint Interim School Readiness Study.

Section 3. Provides that the bill will take effect on becoming law.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues: None.

2. Expenditures: None.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues: None.

2. Expenditures: None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR: None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS: None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision: The bill does not affect any city or county.

2. Other: None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY: None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS: None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

None.