

HB 0821

2004

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to early childhood development and education; providing for establishment of the Universal Prekindergarten Education Program (UPK Program); providing for scholarships and the amount thereof; providing for the use of web-based or book-based curriculum in lieu of a scholarship; providing eligibility requirements for program providers; providing for administration by the Agency for Workforce Innovation; authorizing the agency to adopt rules; providing for the continued administration of the School Readiness Program by the Florida Partnership for School Readiness under certain conditions; providing findings regarding the School Readiness Program; providing requirements of the partnership and revising its membership; requiring the State Board of Education to develop standards for a developmentally appropriate education curriculum for children in the UPK Program and the School Readiness Program; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, the "School Readiness Act," enacted by the Legislature in 1999, consolidated the early childhood development and education programs formerly administered by the Department of Education and the Department of Children and Family Services for at-risk and economically disadvantaged children from birth to kindergarten in order to create a more cohesive, efficient, and integrated school readiness system and increase these children's chances of achieving future educational success, and

WHEREAS, Amendment 8 to the State Constitution, approved by

HB 0821

2004

30 the electors in the 2002 general election, requires the
 31 Legislature to create a voluntary, high-quality, universal
 32 prekindergarten education program for every 4-year-old child in
 33 the state, which must be fully implemented no later than the
 34 beginning of the 2005 school year and funded through "funds
 35 generated in addition to those used for existing education,
 36 health, and development programs. . .as of January 1, 2002," and

37 WHEREAS, in anticipation of implementation of Amendment 8,
 38 the 2003 Legislature enacted chapter 2003-93, Laws of Florida,
 39 which required the Auditor General and the Office of Program
 40 Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) to
 41 conduct program and financial audits of the 1999 School
 42 Readiness Program, to make recommendations to the 2004
 43 Legislature regarding the progress of that program, and to
 44 evaluate the ability of the school readiness system to
 45 effectively implement the new voluntary, universal
 46 prekindergarten education program for all 4-year-old children,
 47 and which also required the State Board of Education to make
 48 recommendations regarding the appropriate curriculum, design,
 49 and standards for the new voluntary program for all 4-year-old
 50 children, and

51 WHEREAS, the State Board of Education recommended in
 52 January 2004 that the state board adopt curriculum standards
 53 based on a scientifically research-based early reading
 54 foundation program to be offered by accredited providers using
 55 child development associate teachers for a period of 4 hours per
 56 day, 180 days per year, and

57 WHEREAS, the Auditor General and OPPAGA issued reports
 58 containing their findings and recommendations in January 2004,

HB 0821

2004

59 which, in summary, conclude that the School Readiness Program's
 60 potential is beginning to be realized and progress has been
 61 made, but identify needed improvements at both the state and
 62 local levels and find that, if these needed improvements are
 63 made, the "School Readiness Program could provide an effective
 64 structure for implementing the Universal Pre-K Program
 65 recommended by the State Board of Education," NOW, THEREFORE,
 66

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

68
 69 Section 1. Voluntary Universal Prekindergarten Education
 70 Program.--The Universal Prekindergarten Education Program (UPK
 71 Program) is established beginning with the 2005-2006 school year
 72 and shall be available on a voluntary basis to all children who
 73 will have attained the age of 4 years on or before September 1
 74 of the school year.

75 (1)(a) The parent of an age-eligible child may request and
 76 receive from the state a scholarship for the child to attend any
 77 eligible UPK public, private, or faith-based program of the
 78 parent's choice. The scholarship amount shall be \$2,500 in 2005
 79 dollars, annually adjusted for inflation in accordance with the
 80 Consumer Price Index, for a school year of 4 hours per day, 5
 81 days per week, 180 days per year. The parent shall be
 82 responsible for the child's transportation and for additional
 83 hours or services desired for the child unless the child is
 84 eligible for subsidized services under the School Readiness
 85 Program.

86 (b) Recognizing that research shows the parent is the
 87 child's best first teacher, any parent of an age-eligible child

HB 0821

2004

88 may request and receive from the state in lieu of a scholarship
89 the parent's choice of a web-based or book-based curriculum for
90 the parent to teach the child.

91 (c) If the parent requests a scholarship for the child,
92 the scholarship shall be issued by individual warrant in the
93 name of the parent to the eligible UPK Program provider of the
94 parent's choice upon verification of the child's enrollment in
95 and attendance at the program, and the parent shall personally
96 by signature restrictively endorse the warrant to the provider
97 for deposit in the provider's account.

98 (2)(a) To be an eligible provider in the UPK Program, the
99 provider must be a public, private, or faith-based provider that
100 is accredited under Gold Seal, the Southern Association of
101 Colleges and Schools, or the Florida Association of Academic
102 Nonpublic Schools and that offers a scientifically research-
103 based reading and numbers foundation curriculum based on
104 standards developed or approved by the State Board of Education
105 as scientifically research based and appropriate to prepare 4-
106 year-old children to succeed in school.

107 (b) The curriculum shall be taught for 4 hours per day, 5
108 days per week, 180 days per year.

109 (c) The provider shall maintain an accurate school profile
110 containing pertinent information regarding the school, its
111 curriculum, its staff, and the overall performance of its
112 students and keep this profile readily available and easy to
113 access and understand by parents of children attending the
114 school and parents interested in the school for their child.

115 (d) As a condition of participation in the UPK Program,
116 the provider shall guarantee that 90 percent of the students

HB 0821

2004

117 completing its program will be assessed as ready for
118 kindergarten when administered the school readiness uniform
119 screening upon entry into kindergarten or will be assessed as
120 having made a learning gain of at least 1 year toward school
121 readiness while in the program as demonstrated by other
122 objective measures.

123 (3) Scholarships for the UPK Program shall be administered
124 by the Agency for Workforce Innovation. In administering the UPK
125 Program, the Agency for Workforce Innovation shall be
126 responsible for determining that the child is age eligible and
127 that the UPK Program provider chosen by the parent is an
128 eligible provider. The Agency for Workforce Innovation shall
129 maintain a clearinghouse of information that includes the UPK
130 Program provider school profiles required under paragraph (2)(c)
131 to help parents make informed choices about their child's
132 program.

133 (4) The Agency for Workforce Innovation may adopt rules
134 pursuant to ss. 120.536(1) and 120.54, Florida Statutes, to
135 administer this section. However, the inclusion of eligible
136 private and faith-based options for the UPK Program available to
137 the state's 4-year-old children does not expand any regulatory
138 authority to impose any additional regulation of private and
139 faith-based prekindergarten education programs beyond those
140 reasonably necessary to enforce requirements expressly set forth
141 in this section.

142 Section 2. School Readiness Program.--The existing School
143 Readiness Program shall continue to be administered by the
144 Florida Partnership for School Readiness if it meets the
145 requirements of this section and section 3 to the satisfaction

HB 0821

2004

146 of the 2005 Legislature.

147 (1) The Legislature recognizes the findings of the Auditor
148 General and OPPAGA regarding the School Readiness Program
149 established by the Legislature in 1999, including:

150 (a) The School Readiness Program has made progress and is
151 beginning to transform what used to be a child care system into
152 a coordinated School Readiness Program, but substantial issues
153 remain and more progress is needed.

154 (b) The Florida Partnership for School Readiness has taken
155 steps to address key program issues and many local school
156 readiness coalitions are beginning to make meaningful progress
157 implementing key program elements.

158 (c) Improvement is needed in guidance of the program and
159 in the program's operational and financial management.

160 (d) A new funding formula for the program that is equity
161 based and performance based has been developed as required by
162 law but needs to be improved and implemented.

163 (e) Some rules for the program have been adopted but
164 additional rules are needed.

165 (f) The quality of some coalition plans and the single
166 statewide database must be addressed.

167 (g) The school readiness uniform screening system must be
168 implemented uniformly across the state and must provide a single
169 score that assesses a child's readiness for school.

170 (h) Some program providers are not being required to use a
171 developmentally appropriate curriculum.

172 (i) The partnership and school readiness coalitions have
173 exhibited weaknesses in financial management that have led to
174 inefficient use of resources.

HB 0821

2004

175 (2) No later than March 1, 2005, the Florida Partnership
 176 for School Readiness shall provide to the Legislature:

177 (a) Evidence that all state-level policy and fiscal
 178 guidance issues identified by the Auditor General in AG Report
 179 2004-085 and by OPPAGA in OPPAGA Report 03-75 have been
 180 addressed and resolved.

181 (b) A plan for consolidating the current 50 local school
 182 readiness coalitions into 28 school readiness coalitions
 183 coinciding with the state's 28 community college districts.

184 (c) A commitment that the partnership's focus is on the
 185 children and families served in the School Readiness Program.

186 (d) The selection of an 11-member Early Learning Advisory
 187 Council to the Florida Partnership for School Readiness
 188 comprised of a representative of:

- 189 1. State university presidents.
- 190 2. Community college presidents.
- 191 3. Private university presidents.
- 192 4. Private postsecondary educational institution
 193 presidents.
- 194 5. District school superintendents.
- 195 6. School readiness coalition chairs.
- 196 7. Regional workforce board chairs.
- 197 8. Faith-based child care providers.
- 198 9. Private for-profit child care providers.
- 199 10. The Child Care Executive Partnership Board.
- 200 11. Chambers of commerce.

201 (e) Recommended statutory changes necessary to accomplish
 202 the requirements of this section.

203 (3) Notwithstanding the provisions of s. 411.01, Florida

HB 0821

2004

204 Statutes, effective July 1, 2005, the Florida Partnership for
 205 School Readiness shall be a nine-member board, comprised of the
 206 following members or their permanent designees, housed for
 207 administrative purposes under the Agency for Workforce
 208 Innovation, which shall also provide the needed staff for the
 209 board:

- 210 (a) Chair of the State Board of Education.
- 211 (b) Chair of the Board of Governors.
- 212 (c) Commissioner of Education.
- 213 (d) Director of the Agency for Workforce Innovation.
- 214 (e) Secretary of Children and Family Services.
- 215 (f) Secretary of Health.
- 216 (g) Chair of the Board of Directors of Workforce Florida,
 217 Inc.
- 218 (h) Chancellor for K-12 Education.
- 219 (i) Director of the Florida Center for Reading Research at
 220 Florida State University.

221 Section 3. Developmentally appropriate education
 222 curriculum for children birth to age 5.--No later than December
 223 31, 2004, the State Board of Education shall develop and provide
 224 to the Agency for Workforce Innovation, for purposes of the UPK
 225 Program, and to the Florida Partnership for School Readiness,
 226 for purposes of the School Readiness Program, standards for a
 227 developmentally appropriate education curriculum that will
 228 provide an appropriate education foundation for each age
 229 grouping of children in each program. The standards shall be
 230 designed to provide continuity of learning from birth to
 231 kindergarten as the foundation for the child's success in
 232 school. The Agency for Workforce Innovation shall require the

HB 0821

2004

233 curriculum standards as a condition of provider eligibility for
234 the UPK Program, and the Florida Partnership for School
235 Readiness shall require that the curriculum standards be
236 incorporated into each local coalition's school readiness plan
237 and used by each provider.

238 Section 4. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.