

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.)

Prepared By: Education Appropriations Committee

BILL: CS/SB 502

INTRODUCER: Education Appropriations Committee & Senator Wilson

SUBJECT: Discounted Computers for Students

DATE: April 24, 2006

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Carrouth</u>	<u>Matthews</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Favorable</u>
2.	<u>Gordon</u>	<u>Cooper</u>	<u>CM</u>	<u>Favorable</u>
3.	<u>Armstrong</u>	<u>Newman</u>	<u>EA</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

This bill establishes a program to provide discounted computers and internet access to public school students in grades 5-12.

The bill authorizes the Department of Education (DOE) to negotiate with computer companies and non-profit organizations for discounted computers and software that support word processing and broadband internet access. DOE must negotiate with broadband providers for discounted internet access and must adopt rules, in conjunction with the Digital Divide Council, to provide training to students; notification to parents; and information regarding eligibility, locations where the computers are available, and how students may obtain and pay for computers and internet access.

In addition, the bill establishes a pilot project to assist low-income students in purchasing discounted computers and internet access services. The pilot project is to be funded as provided in the General Appropriations Act and from any grants received from public and private sources.

The bill creates undesignated sections of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Current Initiatives

Florida

In 2005-2006, the Legislature appropriated \$13.5 million for the Florida Information Resource Network to provide broadband access for school districts, schools, and their students around the state at reduced costs by volume usage. This appropriation assists, in particular, small school districts in providing affordable internet access. Also, included in this appropriation are federal funds resulting from E-rate discounts which are to be used to provide services to schools with significant numbers of economically disadvantaged students. The 2006-2007 Senate budget proposes an additional \$3.7 million for increased bandwidth for school districts as a part of the FIRN network.

In addition, the Legislature appropriates \$50 million for the Public School Technology categorical for school districts to purchase hardware and software for their instructional programs. The Legislature in 2005-2006 also provided \$16.5 billion in funds for school district operations expenditures of which some amount may be used to provide technology, computer hardware and software for classroom instruction of students.

However, there is no statewide program that helps provide individual students and their parents in grades 5 through 12 with computers or internet access at a discounted price

USDOE (No Child Left Behind)

Enhancing Education Through Technology (ED-TECH) State Program

Under the Ed-Tech program, the U.S. Department of Education provides grants to state educational agencies (SEAs) on the basis of their proportionate share of funding under Part A of Title I. For the 2005 fiscal year, the Florida Department of Education received an Enhancing Education Through Technology (Ed-Tech) Grant in the amount of \$22,812,919.

The primary goal of the Ed-Tech program is to improve student academic achievement through the use of technology in schools. It is also designed to ensure that every student is technologically literate by the end of eighth grade, and to encourage the effective integration of technology with teacher training and curriculum development to establish successful research-based instructional methods.¹

A state uses its Ed Tech allocation for the following purposes:

- **State activities** -- A state may use up to five percent of its allotment to carry out state-level activities and to assist local efforts to carry out the purposes of the program.

¹ <http://www.ed.gov/programs/edtech/index.html>

- **Formula grants** -- A state must distribute 50 percent of the remainder *on a formula basis* to eligible local educational agencies (LEAs)² that have submitted applications to the state.
- **Competitive grants** -- A state must distribute 50 percent of the remainder *on a competitive basis* to eligible local entities that have submitted applications to the state.

A state may use up to five percent of its Ed Tech allocation that it retains for any activities to meet the purposes of the Ed Tech program and to assist local efforts to meet these purposes. The activities supported with Ed Tech funds should be designed to enhance student academic achievement. These activities may include, among others, the following:

- Supporting innovative strategies for the delivery of specialized or rigorous academic courses and curricula through the use of technology, and providing other technical assistance to grant applicants and recipients, with priority given to high-need LEAs; and
- Supporting public-private initiatives for acquiring technology for high-need LEAs and students served by these LEAs.³

The Florida Digital Divide Council

The Digital Divide Council (Council) was established by the 2001 Legislature. The Council was created to ensure that citizens had reasonable opportunities to have frequent access to the use of information technology and to obtain the education and training necessary to acquire knowledge and skills that are:

- Critical to becoming competitively qualified for high-skill, high-wage employment;
- Required to be a productive member of a growing information technology (IT) society;
- Necessary for the state's economy by citizens reaching their full employment and income earning potential; and
- Essential to bridging the digital divide between members of society that have the economic resources and access to technology and those that lack the necessary technological resources, access, and training.⁴

The Council was established to provide opportunities for computer training and usage, Internet access, and future computer ownership for at risk families and underserved communities.⁵ The Council encouraged and established partnerships to extend existing programs and to provide reasonable opportunities for computer training, education, and internet access, to at risk families in underserved communities. The Council has partnered with the 24 regional workforce boards, which have significant representation from the business community, to implement its programs in local communities.

² Refers to school districts. See 20 USC 7801 (26).

³ <http://www.ed.gov/programs/edtech/guidance.html>

⁴ Digital Divide Council, About the Council, *Legislation Creating the Council*, http://www.digitaldividecouncil.com/digitaldivide/creating_legislation.html, 17 Feb. 2006.

⁵ Digital Divide Council, *DDC Mission and Objectives*, http://www.digitaldividecouncil.com/digitaldivide/mission_objectives.html, 17 Feb. 2006.

The Council was created within the State Technology Office (STO); however, the STO was abolished during the 2005 Legislative session. The Council is presently reorganizing under new council membership and will focus much of its future work on the coordination of multiple initiatives and funding streams from local and state organizations to impact technology literacy, accessibility, and learning for struggling and low income students and their families.⁶

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill establishes a program to offer computers at discounted prices to students in grade 5 through grade 12 who are enrolled in a Florida public school.

DOE may negotiate with computer manufacturers or nonprofit corporations to obtain reconditioned computer hardware. DOE is authorized to negotiate the following terms:

- The price of a discounted computer and whether computer accessories, such as a printer or scanner, will also be offered to students at a reduced price;
- Specialized software and hardware packages, including but not limited to:
 - A word processor,
 - Software and hardware necessary to enable broadband internet access, and
 - An operating system; and
- The type of warranty to be provided to the students and whether an extended warranty will also be available and the terms of that warranty.

DOE is required to negotiate with broadband internet access providers the prices of discounted broadband internet access packages and to negotiate with non-broadband internet access providers in areas where broadband internet access is not currently available.

The bill also requires the State Board of Education to adopt rules for the program concerning:

- How to integrate computer or technical training to students in their school districts;
- How parents and students may be notified about discounted computer and internet access choices; and
- The distribution of eligibility certificates to the students, the locations at which discounted computers and internet access services are available for purchase, and how students may obtain and pay for the equipment and services.

The bill also creates a pilot project to be implemented by the Council in consultation with the DOE, to assist low-income students in purchasing the discounted computers and internet access services as negotiated by the DOE. The Council must identify counties, grade levels, and low-income eligibility criteria for participation in the pilot project. The pilot project will be funded in an amount determined in the General Appropriations Act. In addition, the Council is authorized to accept grants from additional public and private sources to implement the pilot project.

⁶ Kate Kempker, Vice Chair, Florida's Digital Divide Council

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:

Students may be provided with a reduced-price computer, which they would otherwise optionally purchase completely at their own expense.

In addition, private providers of discounted computers and related equipment and broadband internet access would benefit from this initiative.

C. Government Sector Impact:

According to the Department of Education, there would be an administrative cost for them to negotiate with computer manufacturers and internet access providers, develop and manage contracts, and to develop rules for the program. In addition, there may be some cost related to monitoring of the program and ensuring that rules are followed. There may also be some administrative costs to the Department of Management Services especially with regard to bidding processes, negotiating contracts and related efforts.⁷

The pilot project funding is subject to an appropriation in the General Appropriations Act. However, the Digital Divide Council may accept grants from public and private sources for this purpose.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

⁷ Florida Department of Education Legislative Bill Analysis, November 18, 2005

VII. Related Issues:

None.

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

VIII. Summary of Amendments:

None.

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