

**The Florida Senate**  
**PROFESSIONAL STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT**

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

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Prepared By: Education Pre-K - 12 Committee

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BILL: CS/SB's 336 and SB 416

INTRODUCER: Committee on Education Pre-K -- 12 and Senator Wilson

SUBJECT: School Attendance and Instruction

DATE: March 27, 2007

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Carrouth	Matthews	ED	<b>Fav/CS</b>
2.			EA	
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4.				
5.				
6.				

## I. Summary:

This bill requires that 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, prior to the second semester, and students who withdraw from public school without graduating or transferring to another school must be provided instruction with information concerning the financial and cultural value of a high school education, alternative assessments through which the student might obtain a high school diploma, available opportunities to participate in career academies, and workforce training and postsecondary education options that are available to the student. The bill requires the instruction to include the relative advantages and disadvantages of each option.

The bill also requires the school to assign a counselor or other school personnel to serve as a resource for educational information for any student who withdraws without graduating or transferring to another school, until the student reaches 18 years of age.

This bill amends sections 1003.21 and 1003.428 of the Florida Statutes.

## II. Present Situation:

The Florida Secondary Schools Redesign Act<sup>1</sup> was enacted by the 2006 Legislature to require that every middle school student complete a full course in career and educational planning, which results in an electronic personalized academic and career plan (ePEP)<sup>2</sup> prior to high school enrollment. Each ePEP must be signed by the student, the student's parent, and the guidance counselor or academic advisor. The act also included provisions to require high school students

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<sup>1</sup> s. 19, ch. 2006-74, L.O.F., as codified in s. 1003.4156(1)(a), F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Students complete an ePEP (Electronic Personal Education Planner) through [www.facts.org](http://www.facts.org).

to prepare an ePEP plan, if such plan was not completed during middle school.<sup>3</sup> The statute requires middle schools to use Florida CHOICES or an equally cost-effective program.<sup>4</sup> The Florida CHOICES program is a comprehensive electronic portfolio-based program that includes assessments for interests, skills, and values, and provides a database with information on careers, public and private postsecondary institutions, career options and workforce trends, and financial aid. It also allows users to develop career plans and resumes and to complete job search activities. The required career planning course must also include instruction in accessing and using the Florida Academic Counseling and Tracking for Students system (FACTS.org).<sup>5</sup>

Section 1003.21, F.S., requires that students below the age of 18 who intend to terminate enrollment prior to graduating must submit a formal declaration of intent to be filed with the local school board. The declaration must inform the student of the financial implications associated with the decision to terminate enrollment and must be signed both by the student and the parent.

Additionally, the student's guidance counselor must conduct an exit interview to:

- Determine the student's reason for terminating enrollment;
- Actions that could be taken to retain the student;
- Information regarding alternative educational opportunities available in different environments; and
- Have the student complete a survey in order to provide information to the Department of Education (DOE) regarding reasons for enrollment termination.

Additionally, current law allows for students who have taken the FCAT a minimum of three times without passing to use concordant test scores earned on other assessments such as the PSAT, SAT, ACT, and College Placement Test.<sup>6</sup>

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

The bill requires that all 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, prior to the second semester, and students who withdraw from public school without graduating or transferring to another school, must be provided instruction, with information concerning the financial and cultural value of a high school education, alternative assessments through which the student might obtain a high school diploma, available opportunities to participate in career academies, and workforce training and postsecondary education options that are available to the student. The bill requires the instruction to include the relative advantages and disadvantages of each option.

The bill requires the school to assign a counselor or other school personnel who must serve as a resource for educational information for any student who withdraws without graduating or transferring to another school, until the student reaches 18 years of age.

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<sup>3</sup> s. 1003.413(3), F.S.

<sup>4</sup> <https://access.bridges.com/auth/login.do?sponsor=7>

<sup>5</sup> FACTS.org is Florida's free online student advisement system to help students make informed choices and achieve their educational goals.

<sup>6</sup> s. 1008.22(9), F.S.

All of these provisions are currently provided for in law,<sup>7</sup> with the exception of the requirement to assign an individual guidance counselor or other school personnel to each student terminating enrollment prior to graduation. Current statutory provisions include a much more in-depth approach for student support and decision-making through the required middle grades comprehensive career and educational planning course. Furthermore, these plans must be signed by the student, the student's parent, and the guidance counselor or academic advisor. The plan essentially serves as framework for student decisions relative to course selection and secondary, postsecondary, and workforce-related aspirations and goals. If provisions contained in the bill are required in addition to existing statutory requirements, there may be an unnecessary duplication of efforts and requirements. In addition, implementing these provisions could prove to be financially prohibitive.<sup>8</sup> In the event existing counselors or other school personnel were required to take on this additional responsibility, other students may be adversely affected.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, the requirement to provide a guidance counselor or school personnel to students after they have terminated enrollment may be difficult to accomplish, unless the student provides continuously up-to-date contact information.

#### **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.

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<sup>7</sup> s. 1003.21(1)(c), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> The average salary for a Florida guidance counselor is \$48,517 – DOE Statistical Brief, Series 2007-02B

<sup>9</sup> Florida high schools currently employ one guidance counselor for every 389 secondary students. Ratios are based upon district self-reporting as follows: Elementary – 1:535; Middle – 1:403; High School – 1:389

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

School districts may incur additional costs if they employ additional high school guidance counselors or school personnel to meet the requirements of the bill.

Alternatively, a district may extend the responsibilities for currently employed counselors or other staff members. The financial impact is indeterminate.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

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This Senate Professional Staff Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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## **VIII. Summary of Amendments:**

None.

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