

1 A bill to be entitled
 2 An act relating to literacy education for blind persons;
 3 amending s. 1003.55, F.S.; requiring that instruction in
 4 braille be part of the individualized education program
 5 for a child who is blind or visually impaired; providing
 6 exceptions and conditions to that requirement; providing
 7 standards for such instruction and specifying contents of
 8 the individualized education program; providing an
 9 effective date.

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

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13 Section 1. Subsection (4) of section 1003.55, Florida
 14 Statutes, is amended to read:

15 1003.55 Instructional programs for blind or visually
 16 impaired students and deaf or hard-of-hearing students.--

17 (4) (a) In developing an individualized written education
 18 program for each blind student, the presumption shall be that
 19 blind students can communicate effectively and efficiently with
 20 the same level of proficiency expected of the students' peers of
 21 comparable ability and grade level. Accordingly, in developing
 22 the individualized education program for a child who is blind or
 23 visually impaired, provision must be made for instruction in
 24 braille and the use of braille unless the team developing the
 25 individualized education program unanimously agrees, after an
 26 evaluation of the child's reading and writing skills, needs, and
 27 appropriate reading and writing media, including, but not
 28 limited to, an evaluation of the child's future needs for

29 instruction in braille or the use of braille, that such
 30 instruction or use is not appropriate for the child proficiency
 31 in reading and writing braille shall be considered during the
 32 individualized planning and assessment processes in this
 33 context. This section does not require the exclusive use of
 34 braille if other special education services are appropriate to
 35 the child's educational needs. The provision of appropriate
 36 services must not preclude braille use or instruction.

37 (b) Instruction in braille reading and writing must be
 38 sufficient to enable each blind or visually impaired child to
 39 communicate effectively and efficiently with the same level of
 40 proficiency expected of the child's peers of comparable ability
 41 and grade level. The child's individualized education program
 42 must specify:

43 1. The results obtained from the evaluations required
 44 under paragraph (a);

45 2. How braille will be implemented as the primary mode for
 46 learning through integration with other classroom activities;

47 3. The date on which braille instruction will commence;

48 4. The length of the period of instruction and the
 49 frequency and duration of each instructional session;

50 5. The level of competency in braille reading and writing
 51 to be achieved by the end of the period and the objective
 52 assessment measures to be used; and

53 6. If a decision has been made under paragraph (a) that
 54 braille instruction or use is not required for the child:

55 a. That the decision was reached after a review of
 56 pertinent literature describing the educational benefits of

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57 braille instruction and use; and

58 b. The evidence used to determine that the child's ability
59 to read and write effectively without special education services
60 is not impaired.

61 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2007.