

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

The bill does not appear to implicate any of the House principles.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Present Situation:

In 2002, the voters of Florida approved an amendment to the State Constitution which required the Legislature to establish a prekindergarten program for every 4-year-old child in the state.¹ The amendment specified that the prekindergarten program must be voluntary, high quality, free, and delivered according to professionally accepted standards. In December 2004, to implement the constitutional amendment, the Legislature created the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program.² The VPK program allows a parent to enroll his or her child in a voluntary, free prekindergarten program offered during the year before the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten. The program gives parents of eligible children a choice among three program options:³

- A 540-instructional-hour school-year prekindergarten program delivered by a private provider that has a director with a prekindergarten director credential, that has classes of at least 4 and not more than 18 students, that has for each class at least one instructor who holds at least a child development associate (CDA) or equivalent state-approved credential and who completes a 5-clock-hour course in emergent literacy training, and that, for classes of 11 or more students, has a second instructor who is not required to have those credentials or training;⁴
- A 300-instructional-hour summer prekindergarten program delivered by a public school or private provider that has classes of at least 4 and not more than 10 students, and that has for each class at least one Florida-certified teacher or an instructor who holds a bachelor's or higher degree in specified early learning degree programs;⁵ or
- If offered in a school district that meets class-size reduction requirements, a 540-instructional-hour school-year prekindergarten program delivered by a public school that has classes of at least 4 and not more than 18 students, that has for each class at least one instructor who holds at least a CDA or equivalent state-approved credential and who completes a 5-clock-hour course in emergent literacy training, and that, for classes of 11 or more students, has a second instructor who is not required to have those credentials or training.⁶

Current law allows a private provider or public school offering the VPK program to select or design its own curriculum.⁷ However, a curriculum must be developmentally appropriate and must:

- Be designed to prepare a student for early literacy;

¹ Section 1(b) & (c), Art. IX of the State Constitution.

² Chapter 2004-484, L.O.F. (2004); part V of ch. 1002, F.S.

³ Section 1002.53, F.S.

⁴ Section 1002.55, F.S.

⁵ Section 1002.61, F.S.

⁶ Section 1002.63, F.S.

⁷ Section 1002.67(2)(a), F.S.

- Enhance the age-appropriate progress of students in achieving performance standards adopted by the Department of Education (DOE); and
- Prepare students to be ready for kindergarten.⁸

DOE is required to assign each private provider and public school in the VPK program a “kindergarten readiness rate” based on the performance of the provider’s or school’s students on a statewide kindergarten screening (currently known as the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS)⁹).¹⁰

If a private provider’s or public school’s kindergarten readiness rate falls below the minimum satisfactory rate established by the State Board of Education for 2 consecutive years, the provider or school is placed on probation and must, among other corrective actions, use of a curriculum approved by DOE.¹¹

The 2004 legislation expressed the intent of the Legislature that prekindergarten instructors continue to improve their skills and preparation through education and training, so that the following “aspirational” goals are achieved:

- By the 2010-2011 school year:
 - Each prekindergarten class will have at least one instructor who holds an associate’s or higher degree in the field of early childhood education or child development; and
 - Each prekindergarten class composed of 11 or more students, in addition to an instructor with an associate’s or higher degree, will have a second instructor who has a child development associate (CDA) or state-approved equivalent credential.¹²
- By the 2013-2014 school year, each prekindergarten class will have at least one instructor who holds a bachelor’s or higher degree in the field of early childhood education or child development.¹³

Thirty-one early learning coalitions are regionally established in communities to administer early learning programs at the local level.¹⁴ The Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend Region currently serves families in Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor, and Wakulla counties.¹⁵

Proposed Changes:

The bill establishes a pilot program for enhancing the quality of the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program in Gadsden, Jefferson, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Taylor, and Wakulla counties. The design for the pilot program is as follows:

- The program is established as a 3-year coordinated pilot;
- Participation by prekindergarten education providers is voluntary;
- The program must provide opportunities for individuals with baccalaureate or higher degrees to teach in the VPK program;

⁸ Section 1002.67(2)(b), F.S.

⁹ See, e.g., Florida Department of Education, *Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS) State Report of District Results, Fall 2007* (2007), available at <http://www.fldoe.org/earlylearning/pdf/flkrs-stdt-public-schools.pdf> (last visited Mar. 14, 2008).

¹⁰ Section 1002.69(5), F.S.

¹¹ Sections 1002.67(2)(a), (2)(c), (3)(c)2. & 1002.69(6), F.S.

¹² Section 1, ch. 2004-484, L.O.F. (2004); § 1002.65(2)(a), F.S.

¹³ Section 1002.65(2)(b), F.S.

¹⁴ Each early learning coalition is composed of 18 to 35 members. Section 411.01(5)(a)4., F.S. The chair and two additional members of a coalition are appointed by the Governor, and the remaining members are appointed locally. Section 411.01(5)(a)5. and 6., F.S.

¹⁵ Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend Region, *About Us*, at <http://www.elcbigbend.org/About.htm> (last visited Mar. 14, 2008).

- The Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend Region must develop a curriculum for the pilot program in consultation with a community college, and the curriculum must provide each participant with early education training designed to enhance the quality of the VPK program and with health and safety training; and
- Individuals participating in the pilot program must complete the curriculum.

The bill specifies that the pilot program is to be administered by the Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend Region. The coalition is directed to recruit participants for the program, determine the required training, and provide assistance for the placement of participants (individuals and prekindergarten education providers).

The bill does not provide funding for the pilot program but authorizes the coalition to apply for “appropriate grants and funding for implementation of the pilot program.” The bill also specifies that implementation of the pilot program is not required until the coalition secures the necessary funding.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2008.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Creates an unnumbered section establishing a pilot program for enhancing the quality of the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program.

Section 2. Provides an effective date of July 1, 2008.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

See D. FISCAL COMMENTS.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

The bill does not provide funding for the pilot program but authorizes the Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend Region to apply for “appropriate grants and funding for implementation of the pilot program.” The bill also specifies that implementation of the pilot program is not required until the coalition secures the necessary funding. Thus, the bill does not appear to create a fiscal impact on the state.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not applicable. The bill does not appear to require a county or municipality to spend funds or take an action requiring expenditures; reduce the authority that counties and municipalities had as of February 1, 1989, to raise revenues in the aggregate; or reduce the percentage of a state tax shared in the aggregate with counties and municipalities as of February 1, 1989.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

The bill appears to interchangeably use the term "participant" to mean both children enrolled in the VPK program and prekindergarten education providers. Accordingly, the bill is unclear (lines 23-29) whether children enrolling in the VPK program with a prekindergarten education provider must complete a curriculum developed by the Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend Region, whether providers are required to complete a training curriculum, or both.

D. STATEMENT OF THE SPONSOR

Waived by sponsor due to time constraints.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COUNCIL SUBSTITUTE CHANGES