

By Senator Crist

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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, based on an
26 evaluation of the child's reading and writing skills and needs
27 and of 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

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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 context.
33 This section does not require the exclusive use of braille if
34 other special education services are appropriate to the child's
35 educational needs. The provision of appropriate services does not
36 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 at 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 under
44 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
57 braille instruction and use; and

58 b. The evidence used to determine that the child's ability

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59 | to read and write effectively without special education services
60 | is not impaired.

61 | Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2008.