

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: CS/HB 157 Service Learning in the Public School System

SPONSOR(S): Kriseman and others

TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 450

	REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR
1)	PreK-12 Policy Committee	11 Y, 0 N	Duncan	Ahearn
2)	Education Policy Council	10 Y, 0 N, As CS	Brock	Cobb
3)				
4)				
5)				

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Committee Substitute for House Bill 157 creates a new section of law that addresses service learning. The bill encourages service-learning programs and activities. Service learning is a student-centered, research-based teaching and learning strategy that engages students in meaningful service activities in their schools and communities. Service-learning activities are directly tied to academic curricula and foster academic achievement, character development, civic engagement, and career exploration.

The bill requires the Florida Department of Education (DOE) to:

- Encourage school districts to initiate, adopt, expand, and institutionalize service-learning programs, activities, and policies in K-12.
- Provide assistance to any school district electing to implement service-learning programs, activities, or policies.
- Develop and adopt elective service-learning courses for middle and high school course code directories.

School districts are encouraged to:

- Include K-12 service-learning programs and activities in proposals submitted to the DOE under federal entitlement grants and competitive state and federal grants.
- Provide support for the use of service learning as an instructional strategy to address appropriate areas of state education standards for student knowledge and performance.
- Include service learning as part of any course or activity required for high school graduation.
- Accept service-learning activities and hours in requirements for academic awards.

The hours that high school students devote to course-based service-learning activities may count toward high school graduation and the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program community service requirements.

HOUSE PRINCIPLES

Members are encouraged to evaluate proposed legislation in light of the following guiding principles of the House of Representatives

- Balance the state budget.
- Create a legal and regulatory environment that fosters economic growth and job creation.
- Lower the tax burden on families and businesses.
- Reverse or restrain the growth of government.
- Promote public safety.
- Promote educational accountability, excellence, and choice.
- Foster respect for the family and for innocent human life.
- Protect Florida's natural beauty.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Background

Florida's Learn & Serve Program

The Florida Learn & Serve Program is a federally funded grant program, supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service, that awards grants to schools and school districts to engage youth in service learning. Florida's Learn & Serve Program is within the Bureau of Family and Community Outreach at the Florida Department of Education (DOE) and is administered by Florida State University's Center for Leadership and Civic Education. The Florida Learn & Serve Program is part of the Florida Alliance for Student Service (FASS), a collaboration among several statewide programs dedicated to infusing service learning into the curriculum of all Florida schools, from kindergarten to higher education.¹

Since 1991, approximately 3,000 grant awards in the amount of more than \$23.6 million have been made by DOE to support service-learning projects across the state. These programs include the following: Drug Prevention Community Service Grant (1991-1994), Florida Learn & Serve Formula grants (1992-present, approximately \$14.4 million to date), Florida Learn & Serve Competitive Grants (1999-present, \$4.2 million to date), and Title IV Community Service Grants (2003-2005, approximately \$5 million). Service-learning language has also been inserted into the request for proposals for 2008 21st Century Community Learning Center² grants as a choice for school districts.³

Currently, there are approximately 75 service-learning projects funded through the DOE's Florida Learn & Serve Program. Several of the projects issue mini-grants for an estimated 300 additional smaller projects. Combined, it is estimated these projects engage approximately 50,000 students in service learning statewide. About two-thirds (33,000) of these students are in high school. These high school students will provide approximately 1,000,000 hours (30 hours per student) of community service this school year.⁴ Based on research of past projects, students who participated in service learning,

¹ <http://www.fsu.edu/~flserve/whoweare.html>

² Florida's 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program is a component of the federal No Child Left Behind Act and helps students attending Title I eligible schools meet state and local standards in core academic subjects, such as reading and math. See http://www.afterschoolflorida.hhp.ufl.edu/about_us.html

³ Florida Department of Education. Bill Analysis for HB 157, February 13, 2009.

⁴ *Id.*

especially those at risk, improve their grades, attend school more often, and have fewer discipline referrals.⁵

In service-learning projects funded through Florida Learn & Serve Program activities are related to important learning goals and designed to apply specific learning objectives linked to the Sunshine State Standards. In a school context, the service is directly related to curricula and components of the project are course assignments and part of the student's grade. Examples of service learning are: students serving as reading tutors for other students or for adults; students serving as museum docents; and students conducting service projects for and with seniors including exercise programs, teaching use of computers, or working with seniors to put on public forums on important issues.⁶

The Florida Learn & Serve Program also provides training, technical assistance, evaluation, publications, resource materials, a web site, and conferences to all stakeholders in service learning in Florida.⁷ On February 15, 2008, Governor Charlie Crist issued a proclamation designating April as Florida Service-Learning Month.⁸

Endeavor Elementary School in Brevard County, Coral Shores High School in Monroe County, and Seven Springs Middle School in Pasco County incorporate service learning in their curriculum.⁹

Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program

The Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program is comprised of three lottery funded scholarships to reward high academic achievement by Florida high school graduates who enroll in a degree program, a certificate program, or applied technology program at an eligible Florida postsecondary institution within 3 years of graduation from high school.¹⁰ The three scholarships under the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program are: 1) the Florida Academic Scholarship; 2) the Florida Medallion Scholarship; and 3) the Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholarship.¹¹

Of the three awards, only the Florida Academic Scholars award requires a student to complete a program of community service work approved by the district school board or the administrators of a nonpublic school. A minimum of 75 hours of service work is required and the student must identify a social problem that interests him or her, develop a plan for his or her personal involvement in addressing the problem, and through papers or other presentations, evaluate and reflect upon his or her service.¹²

Effect of Proposed Changes

CS/HB 157 creates section 1003.497, F.S., to encourage service learning in public schools. Service learning is a student-centered, research-based teaching and learning strategy that engages students in meaningful service activities in their communities and schools. Service-learning activities are directly tied to academic curricula; standards; and course, district, or state assessments. These activities foster academic achievement, character development, civic engagement, and career exploration and enable students to apply curriculum content, skills, and behaviors taught in the classroom.

The Department of Education (DOE) must:

- Encourage school districts to initiate, adopt, expand, and institutionalize service-learning programs, activities, and policies in kindergarten through grade 12.

⁵ <http://www.fsu.edu/~flserve/sl/sl.html>

⁶ <http://www.fsu.edu/~flserve/sl/sl.html>

⁷ <http://www.fsu.edu/~flserve/index.html> Standards for Service-Learning in Florida, Florida Department of Education, 2009.

⁸ <http://www.fsu.edu/~flserve/resources/e-news.html> Florida Learn & Serve-In the News, March-May 2008.

⁹ <http://www.fsu.edu/~flserve/resources/e-news.html> Florida Learn & Serve In the News, March – May 2008.

¹⁰ s. 1009.53, F.S., see also s. 1009.531, F.S. and s. 1009.533, F.S.

¹¹ s. 1009.53, F.S., see also s. 1009.534, F.S., s. 1009.535, F.S., and s. 1009.536, F.S.

¹² s. 1009.534(1), F.S.

- Provide assistance to any school district that elects to implement service-learning programs, activities, or policies in locating, leveraging, and utilizing available or alternative financial resources that will assist school districts or teachers desiring to receive training and other resources to develop and administer service-learning programs or activities.
- Develop and adopt elective service-learning courses for inclusion in middle and high school course code directories.

The bill encourages school districts to:

- Include kindergarten through grade 12 service-learning programs and activities in proposals they submit to the DOE under federal entitlement grants and competitive state and federal grants administered through the DOE.
- Provide support for the use of service learning at any grade level as an instructional strategy to address appropriate areas of state education standards for student knowledge and performance.
- Include service learning as part of any course or activity required for high school graduation.
- Accept service-learning activities and hours in requirements for academic awards, especially those that currently include community service as a criterion or selection factor.

For districts choosing to participate in the program, service-learning lesson plans, profiles of effective service-learning projects, and lists of standards for elementary, middle, and high schools, and other materials are available from the Florida Learn & Serve Program at no cost and may be downloaded on the website.¹³

The hours that high school students devote to course-based service-learning activities may count toward high school graduation community service requirements and the community service requirements of the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. Thus, more students may have the opportunity to meet the community service requirements for high school graduation and the Florida Academic Scholars award under the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Creates s. 1003.497, F.S., relating to service learning in the public school system; requiring the Department of Education to encourage districts to initiate, adopt, expand, and institutionalize service-learning programs, activities, and policies; defining service learning; requiring the department to provide assistance to districts; requiring development and adoption of course programs; authorizing service-learning activities to count toward high school graduation or academic awards requirements; and encouraging districts to include service learning as part of courses or activities required for high school graduation or the receipt of academic awards under the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.

Section 2. Provides for an effective date.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

The bill appears to have no fiscal impact on state government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

The bill appears to have no fiscal impact on state government expenditures.

¹³ <http://www.fsu.edu/~flserve/index.html> Standards for Service Learning in Florida: Florida Department of Education, 2009.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

The bill appears to have no fiscal impact on local government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

The bill appears to have no fiscal impact on local government expenditures.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

The DOE is required to develop and adopt elective service-learning courses for middle and high school course code directories. The Course Code Directory System Guide has no language related specifically to service learning. Many courses include experiential or applied components and two high school courses, Voluntary Public Service and Voluntary School/Community Service, have service learning as part of their curriculum. There are numerous courses that could have service learning included with minor adjustments or additions to their course descriptions.¹⁴

Funds from the Florida Learn & Serve Program have been used to pay for the creation of draft templates for the high school service-learning courses.¹⁵

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

The bill does not appear to require a city or county to expend funds or take any action requiring the expenditure of funds. The bill does not appear to reduce the authority that municipalities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate. The bill does not appear to reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COUNCIL OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

On March 25 the Education Policy Council met and adopted an amendment to the bill and reported the bill favorable as a council substitute. The amendment replaced the word "elects" with the word "chooses," to clarify that school districts choose, rather than elect, to implement service learning programs.

¹⁴ Florida Department of Education. Analysis for HB 157 on Service-Learning in the Public School System for the 2009 Legislative Session.

¹⁵ *Id.*