

By the Committee on Military Affairs and Domestic Security; and  
Senator Wise

583-03027-10

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1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2           An act relating to high school graduation; creating s.  
3           1003.452, F.S.; establishing the Florida National  
4           Guard Youth Challenge Program for the purpose of  
5           training and mentoring certain high school dropouts;  
6           requiring that the Clay County School District, the  
7           Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of  
8           Children and Family Services, and the Florida National  
9           Guard jointly administer the program; providing for  
10          the program to be located at Camp Blanding Military  
11          Reservation; requiring that certain core academic  
12          courses be taught; requiring that the program include  
13          occupational or technical studies and physical  
14          training or applied health studies; requiring that  
15          students be prepared to assume leadership roles and  
16          demonstrate the principles of followership; requiring  
17          that each student volunteer to benefit his or her  
18          community and work as an unpaid intern or paid  
19          employee in order to successfully complete the  
20          program; providing for a residential and  
21          postresidential component of the program; providing  
22          for mentorship; requiring that students pass all  
23          sections of the General Education Development test and  
24          both parts of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment  
25          Test; providing for funding the program; creating s.  
26          1003.4282, F.S.; establishing the general education  
27          development exit option for the purpose of providing  
28          an alternative route to receiving a standard high  
29          school diploma for students who are enrolled in the

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30 Florida National Guard Youth Challenge Program or  
31 programs offered by or under contract with the  
32 Department of Juvenile Justice and approved by the  
33 Department of Education; specifying eligibility  
34 requirements for student participation; providing  
35 certain exemptions and requirements for successful  
36 completion of the GED exit option; requiring that a  
37 student's transcript identify certain information  
38 regarding the program; requiring that the Department  
39 of Education include the program in its calculation of  
40 the high school graduation rate; amending s. 1003.435,  
41 F.S.; revising provisions relating to the high school  
42 equivalency diploma program; providing for the  
43 Department of Education to authorize a district school  
44 board to award high school equivalency diplomas;  
45 authorizing a district school board to participate in  
46 a program for students who are currently enrolled in  
47 K-12 public schools to be awarded high school  
48 equivalency diplomas; authorizing the State Board of  
49 Education to adopt rules establishing conditions for  
50 taking an examination to receive a high school  
51 equivalency diploma; amending s. 1008.34, F.S.,  
52 relating to the student assessment data used in  
53 determining school grades; providing that a school may  
54 earn additional points toward its grade if a  
55 significant percentage of the school's students are  
56 earning high school equivalency diplomas in lieu of  
57 standard diplomas; providing an effective date.

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

60  
61 Section 1. Section 1003.452, Florida Statutes, is created  
62 to read:

63 1003.452 The Florida National Guard Youth Challenge  
64 Program.—

65 (1) PURPOSE.—The Florida National Guard Youth Challenge  
66 Program is created as a community-based program for the purpose  
67 of leading, training, and mentoring at-risk youths to become  
68 productive citizens in the future.

69 (2) ADMINISTRATION.—The program shall be jointly  
70 administered on a statewide basis by the Clay County School  
71 District, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of  
72 Children and Family Services, and the Florida National Guard.  
73 The program facilities shall be located at Camp Blanding  
74 Military Reservation.

75 (3) ELIGIBILITY.—High school dropouts who are between the  
76 ages of 16 years and 19 years, who have not been convicted of a  
77 felony, and who are drug free are eligible to participate in the  
78 program.

79 (4) PROGRAM DURATION.—

80 (a) The program shall consist of at least a 22-week  
81 residential component during which each student must raise his  
82 or her mathematics, science, and reading scores.

83 (b) After the residential component of the program, each  
84 student shall be assigned a case manager and a highly trained  
85 mentor for a period of at least 12 months.

86 (5) CORE ACADEMICS.—Each core academic course shall be  
87 taught in a traditional classroom setting by computer-assisted

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88 instructors or shall be taught virtually. The core academic  
89 courses must include, at a minimum:

90 (a) Mathematics;

91 (b) Communications;

92 (c) Science;

93 (d) Social studies; and

94 (e) Literature.

95 (6) OCCUPATIONAL OR TECHNICAL STUDIES.—The program must  
96 also include occupational or technical studies taught in  
97 cooperation with a technical training center or college that  
98 awards occupational or technical certificates.

99 (7) PHYSICAL TRAINING OR APPLIED HEALTH STUDIES.—The  
100 program must also include physical training or applied health  
101 studies.

102 (8) LEADERSHIP ROLES.—Students shall be prepared to assume  
103 leadership roles and demonstrate the principles of good  
104 followership and the value of collaborative effort.

105 (9) VOLUNTEERISM.—In addition to the program's academic  
106 requirements, each student shall be required to volunteer his or  
107 her service for the benefit of the student's community.

108 (10) INTERNSHIPS OR EMPLOYMENT.—Each student must also  
109 successfully work as an unpaid intern or paid worker during the  
110 12-month, postresidential component of the program in order to  
111 successfully complete the program.

112 (11) MENTORSHIP.—Each student must be paired with an  
113 individual who, through his or her accomplishments, rank, or  
114 social posture, serves as a positive role model and mentor who  
115 will help guide the student on a successful path to productivity  
116 and social assimilation.

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117       (12) TESTING REQUIREMENTS.—Students must also pass all five  
118 sections of the General Education Development (GED) test and  
119 pass both parts of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test  
120 (FCAT).

121       (13) FUNDING.—The Department of Defense, through a  
122 cooperative agreement with the National Guard Bureau and the  
123 Florida National Guard, and in conjunction with the Department  
124 of Juvenile Justice and the Department of Children and Family  
125 Services, shall provide for the costs associated with the  
126 program, including student housing, food, and clothing. The Clay  
127 County School District shall fund the instructional component of  
128 the program through funds provided in the Florida Education  
129 Finance Program.

130       Section 2. Section 1003.4282, Florida statutes, is created  
131 to read:

132       1003.4282 General education development exit option.—

133       (1) GENERAL EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT EXIT OPTION.—The general  
134 education development (GED) exit option is a graduation strategy  
135 for students who are enrolled in the Florida National Guard  
136 Youth Challenge Program created in s. 1003.452 or programs  
137 offered by or under contract with the Department of Juvenile  
138 Justice and approved by the Department of Education.

139       (a) Eligibility.—To be eligible to participate in the GED  
140 exit option, a student must be enrolled in the Florida National  
141 Guard Youth Challenge Program or a selected program offered by  
142 or under contract with the Department of Juvenile Justice and  
143 approved by the Department of Education and must meet the  
144 following criteria:

145       1. Be enrolled in courses that meet high school graduation

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146 requirements.

147 2. Have been a drop-out student or currently be in the  
148 custody of the Department of Juvenile Justice.

149 3. Have earned acceptable scores on the official GED  
150 practice test administered under the student-testing conditions  
151 approved by the school district.

152 4. Have a student cumulative record that indicates that the  
153 GED exit option is the most appropriate educational program for  
154 the student.

155 (b) Exemption and requirements.-

156 1. A student who participates in the GED exit option shall  
157 be exempt from the minimum graduation requirements prescribed  
158 for the standard high school diploma, including the grade point  
159 average and credit requirements. For exceptional education  
160 students, this exemption shall be included in the individual  
161 education plan.

162 2. Upon entering the GED exit option, a student who has not  
163 previously met the requirements for promotion to grade 10 shall  
164 be promoted to grade 10 to enable the student to take the grade  
165 10 FCAT.

166 3. A student who does not meet the requirements for high  
167 school graduation in grade 12 and who chooses to return for a  
168 13th year of school in order to participate in the GED exit  
169 option is not required to continue classes upon meeting the GED  
170 exit option requirements for graduation. After completing the  
171 requirements of the GED exit option, a student shall be  
172 considered a high school graduate. If the school district or  
173 school to which the student returns for a 13th year has  
174 implemented a program that requires a vocational component for

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175 graduation, the student may be required to complete this  
176 requirement in addition to the GED exit option requirements in  
177 order to be considered a high school graduate.

178 (c) Successful completion.—

179 1. To successfully complete the GED exit option and receive  
180 a standard high school diploma, a student must pass the GED test  
181 and all sections of the grade 10 FCAT. A student must also  
182 complete any vocational components included in an approved  
183 school program.

184 2. A student who participates in the GED exit option may  
185 not graduate before his or her cohort group.

186 (d) Transcripts.—The transcript shall identify only the  
187 actual credits earned, the successful completion of the FCAT  
188 requirements, and the date on which the diploma is awarded.

189 (2) HIGH SCHOOL GRADES.—A student who successfully  
190 completes the GED exit option and receives a standard high  
191 school diploma shall be included in the high school grade  
192 calculated by the Department of Education pursuant to s. 1008.34  
193 as if the student had completed the requirements for high school  
194 graduation prescribed in s. 1003.43.

195 Section 3. Subsections (1), (2), (3), (4), and (6) of  
196 section 1003.435, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

197 1003.435 High school equivalency diploma program.—

198 (1) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules that  
199 prescribe performance standards and provide for comprehensive  
200 examinations to be administered to candidates for high school  
201 equivalency diplomas. Such rules shall include, but are not  
202 limited to, eligibility requirements, provisions for fees,  
203 frequency of examinations, and procedures for retaking an

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204 examination upon unsatisfactory performance.

205 (2) The department may award, or may authorize a district  
206 school board to award, high school equivalency diplomas to  
207 candidates who meet the performance standards prescribed by the  
208 State Board of Education.

209 (3) (a) Each district school board shall offer and  
210 administer the high school equivalency diploma examinations and  
211 the subject area examinations to all candidates pursuant to  
212 rules of the State Board of Education.

213 (b) A district school board may participate in a program  
214 leading to the award of a high school equivalency diploma to  
215 students who are currently enrolled in K-12 public schools,  
216 pursuant to rules adopted by the State Board of Education.

217 (4) A candidate for a high school equivalency diploma shall  
218 be at least 18 years of age on the date of the examination,  
219 except that in extraordinary circumstances, as provided for in  
220 rules of the district school board of the district in which the  
221 candidate resides or attends school, a candidate may take the  
222 examination after reaching the age of 16. The State Board of  
223 Education may adopt rules establishing conditions under which a  
224 student who is enrolled in a K-12 public school may take the  
225 examination before the student reaches 18 years of age if the  
226 student is participating in a program leading to the award of a  
227 high school equivalency diploma.

228 (6) (a) Except as otherwise provided in s. 1008.34, all high  
229 school equivalency diplomas issued under the provisions of this  
230 section shall have equal status with other high school diplomas  
231 for all state purposes, including admission to any state  
232 university or community college.



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233 (b) The State Board of Education may ~~shall~~ adopt rules  
234 providing for the award of a standard high school diploma to  
235 holders of high school equivalency diplomas who are assessed as  
236 meeting designated criteria, and the commissioner shall  
237 establish procedures for administering the assessment.

238 Section 4. Paragraph (d) is added to subsection (3) of  
239 section 1008.34, Florida Statutes, to read:

240 1008.34 School grading system; school report cards;  
241 district grade.—

242 (3) DESIGNATION OF SCHOOL GRADES.—

243 (d) Beginning in 2010-2011, schools may earn additional  
244 points towards their school grade if a significant percentage of  
245 students not earning a standard diploma pursuant to s. 1003.43  
246 earn a high school equivalency diploma pursuant to s. 1003.435.  
247 The state Board of Education may elect to afford greater weight  
248 to diplomas awarded pursuant to s. 1003.435(3)(b) than is  
249 granted to other equivalency diplomas.

250 Section 5. This act shall take effect July 1, 2010.