

1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to a middle school study; requiring
3 the Department of Education to solicit for a contract
4 to conduct a comprehensive study of states with
5 nationally recognized high-performing middle schools
6 in reading and mathematics; requiring a report to the
7 Governor, the State Board of Education, and the
8 Legislature by a specified time; providing for
9 expiration; providing an appropriation; providing an
10 effective date.

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12 WHEREAS, since 1998, Florida has seen a continuing trend of
13 reading improvement in the elementary school grades, which has
14 led to an increase of 17 percentage points in reading at or
15 above proficiency for 4th grade students on the National
16 Assessment of Educational Progress, while Florida's 8th grade
17 students achieved only an increase of 7 percentage points, and

18 WHEREAS, since 2003, Florida's 4th grade students have
19 demonstrated an increase of 11 percentage points in mathematics
20 at or above proficiency on the national assessment, while
21 Florida's 8th grade students have shown an increase of only 3
22 percentage points, and

23 WHEREAS, since 2013, Florida's middle school students'
24 proficiencies on the national assessment in both reading and
25 mathematics have remained flat or decreased, and

26 WHEREAS, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont,
 27 Connecticut, and New Jersey are the top performing states in the
 28 percentage of 4th and 8th grade students scoring at or above
 29 proficiency in reading on the national assessment, and

30 WHEREAS, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New
 31 Jersey, and Washington are the top performing states in the
 32 percentage of 4th and 8th grade students scoring at or above
 33 proficiency in mathematics on the national assessment, and

34 WHEREAS, Florida's academic expectations for students in
 35 both reading and mathematics were raised in 2010 and 2014, and

36 WHEREAS, the performance of Florida's middle school
 37 students on the state assessments in reading has remained flat
 38 since the state's standards were raised, while their performance
 39 in mathematics increased slightly between 2015 and 2016, and

40 WHEREAS, success in the middle school grades is a predictor
 41 of academic success in high school and college and career
 42 readiness, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

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46 Section 1. Comprehensive study on middle school
 47 performance.—

48 (1) The Department of Education shall issue a competitive
 49 solicitation for a contract to conduct a comprehensive study of
 50 states with high-performing students in grades 6 through 8 in

51 reading and mathematics, based on the states' performance on the
52 National Assessment of Educational Progress.

53 (2) The study must include a review, at a minimum, of all
54 of the following:

55 (a) Academic expectations and instructional strategies,
56 including:

57 1. Alignment of elementary and middle grades expectations
58 with high school graduation requirements;

59 2. Research-based instructional practices in reading and
60 mathematics, including those targeting low-performing students;

61 3. The rigor of the curriculum and courses and the
62 availability of accelerated courses; and

63 4. The availability of student support services.

64 (b) Attendance policies and student mobility issues.

65 (c) Teacher quality, including:

66 1. Teacher certification and recertification requirements;

67 2. Teacher preparedness to teach rigorous courses;

68 3. Teacher recruitment and vacancy issues; and

69 4. Staff development requirements and the availability of
70 effective training.

71 (d) Middle school administrator leadership and
72 performance.

73 (e) Parental and community involvement.

74 (3) The department shall submit a report on the findings
75 of the comprehensive study and make recommendations to improve

76 middle school student performance to the Governor, the State
77 Board of Education, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker
78 of the House of Representatives by December 2017.

79 (4) This section expires upon submission of the final
80 report.

81 Section 2. For the 2017-2018 fiscal year, the sum of
82 \$50,000 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the General
83 Revenue Fund to the Department of Education to implement the
84 provisions of this act.

85 Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2017.