

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to middle grades; requiring the
3 Department of Education to solicit for a contract to
4 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; amending s. 1003.4156, F.S.; deleting
10 requirements related to the career and education
11 planning course for middle grades promotion; providing
12 an appropriation; providing an effective date.

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

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

25 WHEREAS, since 2013, Florida's middle school students'

26 | proficiencies on the national assessment in both reading and
 27 | mathematics have remained flat or decreased, and

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

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

36 | WHEREAS, Florida's academic expectations for students in
 37 | both reading and mathematics were raised in 2010 and 2014, and

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

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

45 |
 46 | Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

47 |
 48 | Section 1. Comprehensive study on middle school
 49 | performance.-

50 | (1) The Department of Education shall issue a competitive

51 solicitation for a contract to conduct a comprehensive study of
52 states with high-performing students in grades 6 through 8 in
53 reading and mathematics, based on the states' performance on the
54 National Assessment of Educational Progress.

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

57 (a) Academic expectations and instructional strategies,
58 including:

59 1. Alignment of elementary and middle grades expectations
60 with high school graduation requirements;

61 2. Strategies used to improve reading comprehension
62 through the use of background knowledge and the use of sequenced
63 curriculum programming and content rich texts to increase
64 literacy skills in kindergarten through grade 8;

65 3. Research-based instructional practices in reading and
66 mathematics, including those targeting low-performing students;

67 4. The rigor of the curriculum and courses and the
68 availability of accelerated courses;

69 5. The availability of student support services;

70 6. Course sequencing and prerequisites for advanced
71 courses; and

72 7. The availability of other academic and non-core
73 classes, and electives.

74 (b) Attendance policies and student mobility issues.

75 (c) Teacher quality, including:

76 1. Teacher certification and recertification requirements;
 77 2. Teacher preparedness to teach rigorous courses;
 78 3. Teacher preparation specific to teaching middle school
 79 students;

80 4. Teacher recruitment and vacancy issues;
 81 5. Staff development requirements and the availability of
 82 effective training;

83 6. Teacher collaboration and planning at the school and
 84 district levels; and

85 7. Student performance data collection and dissemination.
 86 (d) Middle school administrator leadership and
 87 performance.

88 (e) Parental and community involvement.

89 (3) The department shall submit a report on the findings
 90 of the comprehensive study and make recommendations to improve
 91 middle school student performance to the Governor, the State
 92 Board of Education, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker
 93 of the House of Representatives by December 2017.

94 (4) This section expires upon submission of the final
 95 report.

96 Section 2. Subsection (1) of section 1003.4156, Florida
 97 Statutes, is amended to read:

98 1003.4156 General requirements for middle grades
 99 promotion.—

100 (1) In order for a student to be promoted to high school

101 from a school that includes middle grades 6, 7, and 8, the
102 student must successfully complete the following courses:

103 (a) Three middle grades or higher courses in English
104 Language Arts (ELA).

105 (b) Three middle grades or higher courses in mathematics.
106 Each school that includes middle grades must offer at least one
107 high school level mathematics course for which students may earn
108 high school credit. Successful completion of a high school level
109 Algebra I or Geometry course is not contingent upon the
110 student's performance on the statewide, standardized end-of-
111 course (EOC) assessment. To earn high school credit for Algebra
112 I, a middle grades student must take the statewide, standardized
113 Algebra I EOC assessment and pass the course, and in addition,
114 beginning with the 2013-2014 school year and thereafter, a
115 student's performance on the Algebra I EOC assessment
116 constitutes 30 percent of the student's final course grade. To
117 earn high school credit for a Geometry course, a middle grades
118 student must take the statewide, standardized Geometry EOC
119 assessment, which constitutes 30 percent of the student's final
120 course grade, and earn a passing grade in the course.

121 (c) Three middle grades or higher courses in social
122 studies. Beginning with students entering grade 6 in the 2012-
123 2013 school year, one of these courses must be at least a one-
124 semester civics education course that includes the roles and
125 responsibilities of federal, state, and local governments; the

126 structures and functions of the legislative, executive, and
127 judicial branches of government; and the meaning and
128 significance of historic documents, such as the Articles of
129 Confederation, the Declaration of Independence, and the
130 Constitution of the United States. Beginning with the 2013-2014
131 school year, each student's performance on the statewide,
132 standardized EOC assessment in civics education required under
133 s. 1008.22 constitutes 30 percent of the student's final course
134 grade. A middle grades student who transfers into the state's
135 public school system from out of country, out of state, a
136 private school, or a home education program after the beginning
137 of the second term of grade 8 is not required to meet the civics
138 education requirement for promotion from the middle grades if
139 the student's transcript documents passage of three courses in
140 social studies or two year-long courses in social studies that
141 include coverage of civics education.

142 (d) Three middle grades or higher courses in science.
143 Successful completion of a high school level Biology I course is
144 not contingent upon the student's performance on the statewide,
145 standardized EOC assessment required under s. 1008.22. However,
146 beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, to earn high school
147 credit for a Biology I course, a middle grades student must take
148 the statewide, standardized Biology I EOC assessment, which
149 constitutes 30 percent of the student's final course grade, and
150 earn a passing grade in the course.

151 ~~(c) One course in career and education planning to be~~
152 ~~completed in 6th, 7th, or 8th grade. The course may be taught by~~
153 ~~any member of the instructional staff. At a minimum, the course~~
154 ~~must be Internet-based, easy to use, and customizable to each~~
155 ~~student and include research-based assessments to assist~~
156 ~~students in determining educational and career options and~~
157 ~~goals. In addition, the course must result in a completed~~
158 ~~personalized academic and career plan for the student; must~~
159 ~~emphasize the importance of entrepreneurship skills; must~~
160 ~~emphasize technology or the application of technology in career~~
161 ~~fields; and, beginning in the 2014-2015 academic year, must~~
162 ~~include information from the Department of Economic~~
163 ~~Opportunity's economic security report as described in s.~~
164 ~~445.07. The required personalized academic and career plan must~~
165 ~~inform students of high school graduation requirements,~~
166 ~~including a detailed explanation of the diploma designation~~
167 ~~options provided under s. 1003.4285; high school assessment and~~
168 ~~college entrance test requirements; Florida Bright Futures~~
169 ~~Scholarship Program requirements; state university and Florida~~
170 ~~College System institution admission requirements; available~~
171 ~~opportunities to earn college credit in high school, including~~
172 ~~Advanced Placement courses; the International Baccalaureate~~
173 ~~Program; the Advanced International Certificate of Education~~
174 ~~Program; dual enrollment, including career dual enrollment; and~~
175 ~~career education courses, including career-themed courses and~~

176 ~~courses that lead to industry certification pursuant to s.~~
177 ~~1003.492 or s. 1008.44.~~

178
179 ~~Each school must inform parents about the course curriculum and~~
180 ~~activities. Each student shall complete a personal education~~
181 ~~plan that must be signed by the student and the student's~~
182 ~~parent. The Department of Education shall develop course~~
183 ~~frameworks and professional development materials for the career~~
184 ~~and education planning course. The course may be implemented as~~
185 ~~a stand-alone course or integrated into another course or~~
186 ~~courses. The Commissioner of Education shall collect~~
187 ~~longitudinal high school course enrollment data by student~~
188 ~~ethnicity in order to analyze course-taking patterns.~~

189 Section 3. For the 2017-2018 fiscal year, the sum of
190 \$50,000 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the General
191 Revenue Fund to the Department of Education to implement the
192 provisions of this act.

193 Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2017.