

By Senator Stargel

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1 A bill to be entitled

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

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

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

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

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

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

32 WHEREAS, Florida's academic expectations for students in

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33 both reading and mathematics were raised in 2010 and 2014, and

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

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

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

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44 Section 1. Comprehensive study on middle school
45 performance.—

46 (1) The Department of Education shall conduct a
47 comprehensive study of states with high-performing students in
48 grades 6 through 8 in reading and mathematics, based on the
49 states' performance on the National Assessment of Educational
50 Progress.

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

53 (a) Academic expectations and instructional strategies,
54 including:

55 1. Alignment of elementary and middle grades expectations
56 with high school graduation requirements;

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

59 3. The rigor of the curriculum and courses and the
60 availability of accelerated courses; and

61 4. The availability of student support services.

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- 62 (b) Attendance policies and student mobility issues.
- 63 (c) Teacher quality, including:
- 64 1. Teacher certification and recertification requirements;
- 65 2. Teacher preparedness to teach rigorous courses;
- 66 3. Teacher recruitment and vacancy issues; and
- 67 4. Staff development requirements and the availability of
- 68 effective training.
- 69 (d) Middle school administrator leadership and performance.
- 70 (e) Parental and community involvement.
- 71 (3) The department shall submit a report on its findings
- 72 and make recommendations to improve middle school student
- 73 performance to the Governor, the State Board of Education, the
- 74 President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of
- 75 Representatives by December 2017.
- 76 (4) This section expires upon submission of the final
- 77 report.
- 78 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2017.