

By the Committee on Appropriations; and Senators Stargel and Grimsley

576-04394-17

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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 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; specifying areas that must
7 be reviewed in conducting the study; requiring a
8 report to the Governor, the State Board of Education,
9 and the Legislature by a specified time; providing for
10 expiration; providing an appropriation; providing an
11 effective date.

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

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

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

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

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30 proficiency in reading on the national assessment, and

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

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

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

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

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

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

49 (1) The Department of Education shall issue a competitive
50 solicitation for a contract with private vendors to conduct a
51 comprehensive study of states with high-performing students in
52 grades 6 through 8 in reading and mathematics, based on the
53 states' performance on the National Assessment of Educational
54 Progress.

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

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

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- 59 1. Alignment of elementary and middle grades expectations
60 with high school graduation requirements;
- 61 2. Research-based instructional practices in reading and
62 mathematics, including those targeting low-performing and high-
63 performing students;
- 64 3. The rigor of the curriculum and courses and the
65 availability of accelerated courses;
- 66 4. The availability of student support services;
- 67 5. The sequence of courses and the prerequisites required
68 for advanced courses;
- 69 6. The availability of before- and after-school programs,
70 and efforts to address the summer gap between school years,
71 including related funding; and
- 72 7. The availability of other academic and noncore classes,
73 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 performance.
- 87 (e) Parental and community involvement.

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

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

95 Section 2. For the 2017-2018 fiscal year, the sum of
96 \$50,000 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the General
97 Revenue Fund to the Department of Education to implement the
98 provisions of this act.

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