

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 581 Civic Education
SPONSOR(S): Diamond and Aloupis
TIED BILLS: None **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 918

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) PreK-12 Innovation Subcommittee	15 Y, 0 N	Sleap	Brink
2) PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee	12 Y, 0 N	Bailey	Potvin
3) Education Committee			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

To help students evaluate the roles, rights, and responsibilities of United States citizens and determine methods of active participation in society, government, and the political system, the bill requires the Commissioner of Education to develop minimum criteria for a civic literacy practicum that may be incorporated into a school's curriculum for the high school United States Government course beginning with the 2021-2022 school year. The civic literacy practicum must be nonpartisan, focus on addressing at least one community issue, and promote civil discourse.

The bill establishes minimum requirements for a student to complete a civic literacy practicum, including identifying a civic issue, researching and developing an involvement plan to address the issue, and creating a portfolio evaluating and reflecting on the experience and outcome, or likely outcome, of his or her involvement.

The hours a student spends implementing an involvement plan may be counted toward community service requirements of the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. School districts should integrate practicum activities and hours into requirements for academic awards.

The bill requires the State Board of Education to establish criteria and annually designate public schools that provide students with high-quality civic learning as Freedom Schools.

The bill has a fiscal impact that can be absorbed within existing resources.

The bill has an effective date of July 1, 2020.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Civics Education in Florida

Present Situation

The mission of Florida's K-20 education system is to "allow its students to increase their proficiency by allowing them the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills through rigorous and relevant learning opportunities."¹ Civic literacy and preparing students to become civically engaged and knowledgeable adults who positively contribute to their communities is a priority of the system.²

Secondary Education

Florida law requires each district school board to provide instruction on the history, significance and principles of the Declaration of the Independence and the Constitution of the United States, flag education, and civil government.³ The law also requires districts to provide a character-development program in kindergarten through grade 12. Each school district must develop or adopt a curriculum for its K-12 character-development program and submit it to the Florida Department of Education (DOE) for approval.⁴ The character development curriculum must "stress the qualities of patriotism; responsibility; citizenship; kindness; respect for authority, life, liberty, and personal property; honesty; charity; self-control; racial, ethnic, and religious tolerance; and cooperation."⁵

A district school board may also adopt rules requiring patriotic programs in schools that encourage respect for the government of the United States and its national anthem and flag.⁶ Teachers or administrators in the schools may read or post historic material such as the Constitution of the United States, the Bill of Rights, and others.⁷

Currently, Florida's Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) for social studies include civics content in kindergarten through grade 8 and in grades 9 through 12.⁸ For middle grades, a student must successfully complete three middle school or higher courses in social studies in order to be promoted to high school.⁹ One of the three courses must be in civics.¹⁰ The course curriculum must include the roles and responsibilities of federal, state, and local governments; the structures and functions of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches; and the meaning and significance of documents such as the Articles of Confederation, Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States.¹¹

At the high school level, 24 credits are required for a standard high school diploma¹² of which three must be in social studies, including one credit each in United States History and World History; one-half credit in economics; and one-half credit in United States Government.¹³ Students in the middle grades

¹ Section 1000.03(4), F.S.

² Section 1000.03(5)(c), F.S.

³ Section 1003.42(2)(a)-(e), F.S.

⁴ Section 1003.42(2)(s), F.S.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Section 1003.44(1), F.S.

⁷ *Id.* at (2)

⁸ See CPALMS, *Browse and Search Standards*, <http://www.cpalms.org/Public/search/Standard> (last visited Nov. 14, 2019) (providing the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for each subject area, by grade level).

⁹ Section 1003.4156(1)(c), F.S.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Section 1003.4282(1)(a), F.S.

¹³ Section 1003.4282(3)(d), F.S.

civics course and the high school United States History course must take an end-of-course assessment¹⁴ that constitutes 30 percent of the student's final course grade.¹⁵

To further address civics education in Florida, Governor DeSantis issued Executive Order 19-32 in January 2019, directing the Commissioner of Education (commissioner) to review Florida's K-12 academic standards and identify opportunities to prepare high school graduates to be knowledgeable citizens, particularly in the principles of the United States Constitution.¹⁶ The commissioner must report on the review by January 1, 2020.¹⁷

Additionally, in 2019, the Legislature established a requirement for the commissioner, in consultation with specified organizations and stakeholders, to review the state-approved middle grades civics education course instructional materials and the test specifications for the statewide, standardized civics end-of-course assessment. Recommendations for improvements to the materials and test specifications are due by December 31, 2019. Further, by December 31, 2020, the DOE must complete a review of the statewide civics education course standards.¹⁸

Service Learning

To encourage civic engagement, career exploration, and applying classroom curriculum in a student's community, the DOE encourages school districts to initiate, adopt, expand, and institutionalize service-learning programs, activities, and policies in kindergarten through grade 12.¹⁹ Service learning refers to a student-centered, research-based teaching and learning strategy that engages students in meaningful service activities in their school or communities.²⁰ The service activities are directly tied to academic curriculum, standards, and course, district, or state assessments.²¹ The hours a high school student devotes to course-based service-learning activities may be counted toward meeting the service work requirements of the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.²²

Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program

The Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program is a merit-based program that rewards Florida high school students for their high academic achievement and encourages them to continue their postsecondary education at eligible Florida institutions.²³ The scholarship program consists of the following awards:

- Florida Academic Scholars;
- Florida Medallion Scholars;
- Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars; and
- Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars.²⁴

¹⁴ Section 1008.22(3)b), F.S.

¹⁵ Section 1003.4156(1)(c), F.S. and s. 1003.4282(3)(d), F.S.

¹⁶ Fla. Exec. Order No. 19-32 (January 31, 2019).

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ Section 1003.4156(1)(c), F.S. (2019)

¹⁹ Section 1003.497(1), F.S.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.* at (3)(b)

²³ Section 1009.53, F.S.

²⁴ Section 1009.53(2), F.S. and s.1009.536, F.S.

High school students who wish to qualify for a scholarship, must among other things, meet specified academic requirements and complete service work during high school.²⁵ Service work requirements for the scholarship awards include:

- Florida Academic Scholars - 100 service hours;
- Florida Medallion Scholars - 75 service hours;
- Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars - 30 service hours; and
- Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars - 30 service hours.²⁶

A student must identify a social or civic issue or professional area, develop a plan for personal involvement in addressing the issue or learning about the area, and through papers or other presentations, evaluate and reflect upon the experience.²⁷ Service work may include a business or governmental internship, work for a nonprofit community service organization, or activities on behalf of a candidate for public office.²⁸

Each district school board and the administrators of a nonpublic school must establish the approved activities and the process for the documentation of service hours for students.²⁹ The hours must be documented in writing and signed by the student, the student's parent or guardian, and a representative of the organization where the student volunteered. If a high school student participates in the Florida Debate Initiative, the YMCA Youth and Government program, the American Legion Boys or Girls State programs, or other similar programs approved by the commissioner, the hours count toward the student's service work hour requirements.³⁰

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill requires the Commissioner of Education to develop minimum criteria for a nonpartisan civic literacy practicum that may be incorporated into a school's curriculum for the high school United States Government course beginning with the 2021-2022 school year. The commissioner must also develop a process for a district school board to verify that a student has successfully completed a practicum.

The bill requires a student in a civic literacy practicum to identify a civic issue that impacts his or her community, rigorously research the issue, develop a plan of involvement to address the issue, and create a portfolio to evaluate and reflect upon the experience and the outcome, or likely outcome, of his or her involvement.

The practicum must be nonpartisan, address at least one community issue, and promote a student's ability to consider different points of view and engage in civil discourse with individuals who hold an opposing opinion. The hours outside of classroom instruction that a student devotes to the civic literacy practicum may be counted toward meeting the community service work requirement for participation in the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. School districts should also include and accept practicum activities and hours in requirements for academic awards, especially those awards that currently include community service as a criterion or selection factor.

²⁵ Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *2019-20 Bright Futures Student Handbook, Chapter 1: Initial Eligibility Requirements* (Aug. 16, 2019), available at <https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/PDF/BFHandbookChapter1.pdf>.

²⁶ See s. 1009.534(1)(e), F.S.; s. 1009.535(1)(e), F.S.; s. 1009.536(1)(e) and (2)(b), F.S.

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *2019-20 Bright Futures Student Handbook, Chapter 1: Initial Eligibility Requirements*, at 4 (Aug. 16, 2019), available at <https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/PDF/BFHandbookChapter1.pdf>.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ Section 1003.44(5), F.S.

The bill requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to annually designate each public school in Florida that provides students with high-quality civic learning, including civic-engagement skills, as a Freedom School. The SBE must establish the criteria for designation as a Freedom school and must include:

- the extent to which strategies to develop high-quality civic learning, including civic-engagement skills, are integrated into the classroom using best instructional practices;
- the scope of integration of high-quality civic learning, including civic-engagement skills, across the school's curricula;
- the extent to which the school supports interdisciplinary, teacher-led professional learning communities to support continuous improvement in instruction and student achievement; and
- the percentage of students graduating with a standard high school diploma who successfully completed a civic literacy practicum and earned community service hours.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Amends section 1003.44, F.S., requiring the Commissioner of Education to develop minimum criteria for a nonpartisan civic literacy practicum; authorizing the integration of such practicum into a specified course; requiring the commissioner to develop a process to verify successful completion of such practicum; providing requirements for such criteria and practicum; providing the hours devoted to such practicum and the practicum may be used for specified purposes; authorizing a school to integrate a nonpartisan civic literacy practicum into requirements for academic awards; requiring the State Board of Education to annually designate public schools that meet specified criteria as Freedom Schools; requiring the state board to establish the criteria for designation as a Freedom School; providing requirements for such criteria.

Section 2. Provides an effective date of July 1, 2020.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

The bill requires the Department of Education to develop criteria for the practicum, to determine the status of whether or not each school in in each district has a practicum as part of the U.S. Government course, to review the process by which a district can verify that a student successfully completes a practicum, and to establish the criteria for designation of a participating school as a Freedom School.³¹ The number of schools that may participate in unknown. The department indicated that two additional staff members, including a Program Specialist IV and an Administrative Assistant, may be needed to implement the bill provisions.³² However, the department appears to have sufficient vacant positions to absorb any additional workload once the positions are filled.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

³¹ 2020 Agency Legislative Bill Analysis, Florida Department of Education, email sent by Jessica Fowler, January 10, 2020.

³² *Id.*

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

None.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

None.