

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Appropriations

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BILL: SB 1898

INTRODUCER: Senator Rodriguez

SUBJECT: Student Literacy

DATE: April 14, 2021

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Brick</u>	<u>Bouck</u>	<u>ED</u>	<b>Favorable</b>
2.	<u>Underhill</u>	<u>Elwell</u>	<u>AED</u>	<b>Recommend: Favorable</b>
3.	<u>Underhill</u>	<u>Sadberry</u>	<u>AP</u>	<b>Favorable</b>

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**I. Summary:**

SB 1898 includes requirements to identify student deficiencies in literacy and intervene as early as prekindergarten, support students in transitioning to kindergarten, and monitor student progress. The bill establishes a coordinated screening and progress monitoring system for students enrolled in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program and students enrolled in public schools in kindergarten through grade 8. The bill also requires:

- The Department of Education (DOE) to review the competencies for the reading endorsement and provide a new pathway for teachers to achieve the reading endorsement.
- The DOE to develop a handbook to provide to parents of students with a reading deficiency to support parental engagement in student learning.
- The Just Read, Florida! Office (JRFO) to identify instructional materials that implement evidence-based reading practices and streamlines the process by which school districts may adopt identified and approved instructional materials.
- The JRFO to work with the Office of Early Learning in the development of the emergent literacy training courses and specifies that the courses must be consistent with evidence-based reading instructional and intervention programs.
- Establishes the Reading Achievement Initiative for Scholastic Excellence (RAISE) Program to provide literacy supports statewide through at least 20 regional literacy support teams.
- Establishes a tutoring program that affords high school juniors and seniors the opportunity to satisfy community service requirements and earn a designation as a New Worlds Scholar by providing 500 verified tutoring hours to students with a substantial deficiency in reading in kindergarten through grade 3.
- Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK) instructors to take a required emergent literacy training course every five years.
- VPK providers to be rated based on student performance during the VPK school year.

The bill will have a significant negative fiscal to the state to implement the new coordinated screening and progress monitoring program and to contract with an external entity to implement the new Reading Achievement Initiative for Scholastic Excellence (RAISE) within the department. See Section V.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2021.

## **II. Present Situation:**

The present situation for the relevant portions of the bill is discussed under the Effect of Proposed Changes of this bill analysis.

## **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

### **Educator Certification Requirements**

Florida law specifies certification requirements to assure that educational personnel in public schools possess appropriate skills in reading, writing, and mathematics; adequate pedagogical knowledge; and relevant subject matter competence so as to demonstrate an acceptable level of professional performance.<sup>1</sup>

In order to seek educator certification, a person must meet general eligibility requirements, which include receipt of a bachelor's or higher degree from an approved postsecondary institution.<sup>2</sup> Individuals must also demonstrate mastery of general knowledge, if the person serves as a classroom teacher; mastery of subject area knowledge; and mastery of professional preparation.<sup>3</sup>

### **Education Preparation Programs**

#### ***Present Situation***

In Florida, teacher preparation programs are accountable for producing individuals with the competencies and skills necessary to achieve state education goals.<sup>4</sup> State approved teacher preparation program uniform core curricula must include scientifically researched and evidence-based reading instructional strategies that improve reading performance for all students, including explicit, systematic, and sequential approaches to teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and text comprehension and multisensory intervention strategies.<sup>5</sup> Teacher preparation program completers are eligible for a Florida Professional Educator's Certification upon program completion.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Section 1012.54, F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Section 1012.56(2)(c), F.S., and Rule 6A-4.003, F.A.C.

<sup>3</sup> Section 1012.56(2)(g)-(i), F.S.

<sup>4</sup> Section 1004.04(1)(b), F.S.

<sup>5</sup> Section 1004.04(2)(b)3., F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Florida Department of Education (DOE), *Educator Preparation*, <http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/preparation/> (last visited Mar. 12, 2021), and Rule 6A-5.066(1)(p), F.A.C.

Each teacher preparation program must be approved by the Department of Education (DOE) based on criteria specified in law. In order to be admitted into an approved teacher preparation program, a student must, at a minimum:<sup>7</sup>

- Have a grade point average of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale for the general education component of undergraduate studies or have completed the requirements for a baccalaureate degree with a minimum grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale from an approved college or university.<sup>8</sup>
- Demonstrate mastery of general knowledge sufficient for entry into the program, including the ability to read, write, and perform in mathematics, by passing the General Knowledge Test of the Florida Teacher Certification Examination or, for a graduate level program, obtain a baccalaureate degree from an approved institution.<sup>9</sup>

Each teacher preparation program may waive these admissions requirements for up to ten percent of the students admitted. Programs must implement strategies to ensure that students admitted under a waiver receive assistance to demonstrate competencies to successfully meet requirements for certification, and must annually report to the DOE the status of each candidate admitted under such a waiver.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Effect of Proposed Changes (Section 11)***

The bill modifies s. 1004.04, F.S., to allow students in public postsecondary teacher preparation programs to meet grade point average and General Knowledge Test requirements as a condition to completing the program, instead of as a condition of admission to the program. Accordingly, the bill removes the authority for teacher preparation programs to waive admission requirements. These modifications may enable more people to enter teacher preparation programs and become certified teachers.

## **Teacher Professional Development**

### ***Present Situation***

To renew a professional certificate, an applicant must earn a minimum of 6 college credits or 120 inservice points or a combination thereof. Florida provides subject area specialization requirements for college credits or inservice points.<sup>11</sup> An applicant for renewal of a professional certificate in any area of certification identified by SBE rule<sup>12</sup> which includes reading instruction or intervention for any students in kindergarten through grade 6 must earn a minimum of two college credits or forty inservice points in the use of explicit, systematic, and sequential approaches to reading instruction, developing phonemic awareness, and implementing

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<sup>7</sup> Section 1004.04(3), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> An approved institution is one that is accredited by a specified regional accrediting association or an accrediting agency approved by the United States Department of Education. A qualifying non-accredited institution is one that is identified as having a quality program resulting in a bachelor's degree or higher by criteria specified in SBE rule. Rule 6A-4.003, F.A.C.

<sup>9</sup> Rule 6A-4.003, F.A.C.

<sup>10</sup> Section 1004.04(3), F.S.

<sup>11</sup> Section 1012.585(3), F.S.

<sup>12</sup> Rule 6A-4.0051, F.A.C., requires specialized training in reading instruction for certificate covering Elementary Education (K-6), Prekindergarten/Primary Education (age 3 through grade 3), Elementary Education (grades 1-6), Primary Education (grades K-3), English (grades 1-6), Middle Grades English (grades 5-9), Middle Grades Integrated Curriculum (grades 5-9), English (6-12), Reading (K-12), Reading (Endorsement), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) (grades K-12).

multisensory intervention strategies. Such training must be provided by teacher preparation programs or school district professional development systems approved by the DOE.<sup>13</sup>

#### School District Professional Development

Each school district is required to establish a professional development system that provides training to reading coaches, classroom teachers, and school administrators in effective methods of identifying characteristics of conditions such as dyslexia and other causes of diminished phonological processing skills; incorporating instructional techniques into the general education setting which are proven to improve reading performance for all students; and using predictive and other data to make instructional decisions based on individual student needs. The training must help teachers integrate phonemic awareness; phonics, word study, and spelling; reading fluency; vocabulary, including academic vocabulary; and text comprehension strategies into an explicit, systematic, and sequential approach to reading instruction, including multisensory intervention strategies.<sup>14</sup>

Each district must provide all elementary grades instructional personnel access to training sufficient to meet the requirements for a certificate in an area of certification that includes reading instruction or intervention for students in kindergarten through grade 6.<sup>15</sup>

#### William Cecil Golden Professional Development Program for School Leaders

The William Cecil Golden Professional Development Program for School Leaders provides high standards and sustained support for principals as instructional leaders. The program consists of a collaborative network of state and national professional leadership organizations to respond to instructional leadership needs throughout the state. The goals of the network leadership program include:

- Providing resources to support and enhance the principal's role as the instructional leader.
- Maintaining a clearinghouse and disseminating data-supported information related to enhanced student achievement, based on educational research and best practices.
- Building the capacity to increase the quality of programs for preservice education for aspiring principals and inservice professional development for principals and principal leadership teams.
- Supporting best teaching and research-based instructional practices through dissemination and modeling at the preservice and inservice levels for both teachers and principals.<sup>16</sup>

#### Just Read, Florida! Office

The Just Read, Florida! Office (JRFO) within the DOE is generally directed to perform duties that relate to improving student literacy, and, accordingly, developing training for educational personnel to support student literacy.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Section 1012.585(3)(f), F.S.; Rule 6A-4.0051(7)(a), F.A.C.

<sup>14</sup> Section 1012.98(4)(b)11., F.S.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> Section 1012.986(1), F.S.

<sup>17</sup> Section 1001.215, F.S.

The JRFO, in collaboration with the Lastinger Center for Learning at the University of Florida (Lastinger Center), is required to develop training for K-12 teachers, reading coaches, and school principals on effective content-area-specific reading strategies; the integration of content-rich curriculum from other core subject areas into reading instruction; and evidence-based reading strategies to improve student reading performance. For secondary teachers, emphasis must be on technical text. These strategies must be developed for all content areas in the K-12 curriculum.<sup>18</sup>

***Effect of Proposed Changes (Sections 1, 17, 19, and 20)***

The bill modifies s. 1012.98, F.S., to require the DOE to identify professional development opportunities that require a teacher to demonstrate proficiency in a specific classroom practice, with priority given to implementing evidence-based reading instructional and intervention strategies identified by the JRFO. The bill amends s. 1012.585, F.S., to provide that a teacher may earn inservice points only once during each 5-year validity period for any mandatory training topic that is not linked to student learning or professional growth.

The bill modifies s. 1012.986, F.S., to add to the goals of the William Cecil Golden Professional Development Program the support, through training on observation and evaluation practices aligned to the science of reading, the professional growth of instructional personnel who provide reading instruction and interventions.

The bill modifies s. 1001.215, F.S., to require the JRFO to provide evidence-based reading instruction training to school administrators. To fulfill this requirement, the JRFO must work with the Lastinger Center to modify the training that has been developed for K-12 teachers, reading coaches, and school principals. The bill also replaces the requirement to integrate social studies into the reading instruction curriculum with the requirement to integrate civic literacy into the reading instruction curriculum.

The additional opportunities for training in reading instruction for teachers may support teachers delivering reading instruction or interventions to students enrolled in public schools in kindergarten through grade 12.

**Reading Certification and Endorsement**

***Present Situation***

Teachers are able to earn a subject area certification or endorsement in reading. A teacher is required to be certified or endorsed in reading to:

- Teach summer reading camps.
- Provide instruction to a third grade student retained for failing the English Language Arts (ELA) assessment.
- Provide reading interventions to students with a substantial deficiency in reading, beginning July 1, 2021.
- Qualify as a literacy coach.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Section 1001.215(3), F.S.

<sup>19</sup> Rule 6A-6.053, F.A.C.

A teacher may earn a certification in reading by completing:

- A master's or higher degree with a graduate major in reading.
- A bachelor's or higher degree with thirty semester hours in reading.<sup>20</sup>

A certified teacher may earn an endorsement to a valid Florida certificate by completing the appropriate subject area testing requirements, the requirements of an approved school district program, or the inservice components for an endorsement.<sup>21</sup> There are four pathways to earn a reading endorsement:

- Completing 15 semester hours in college-level reading coursework rooted in scientifically based reading research with a focus on both preventions and remediation of reading difficulties.
- Completing the required competencies through a school district's approved reading endorsement add-on program.
- Obtaining a certificate from an approved internationally known organization with a reputation for setting reading standards.<sup>22</sup>
- Passing the K-12 Reading Certification Subject Area Exam administered by the DOE.<sup>23</sup>

### ***Effect of Proposed Changes (Sections 11 and 18)***

The bill modifies s. 1004.04, F.S., to require, beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, that school district personnel be certified or endorsed in reading if they supervise teacher preparation students during internships in kindergarten through grade 3 or during enrollment in a reading certificate program.

The bill also modifies s. 1012.586, F.S., to require the DOE to review the competencies for the reading endorsement for alignment with evidence-based instructional and intervention practices rooted in the science of reading and consistent with training developed by the Lastinger Center and the JRFO, and recommend improvements to the SBE, which must address identification of the characteristics of conditions such as dyslexia, implementation of evidence-based classroom instruction and interventions, and effective progress monitoring. Accordingly, each school district is required to resubmit its reading endorsement add-on program to the DOE for approval by July 1, 2023. The bill provides that, beginning July 1, 2024, instructional personnel may not earn a reading endorsement simply by passing the K-12 reading certification subject area assessment.

The bill requires the DOE to adopt at least one statewide, competency-based pathway, by which instructional personnel may earn a reading endorsement, by the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year. The pathway must be available for a participant to complete in person or remotely. The DOE is required by the bill to place a microcredential on a teacher certificate indicating each competency module the teacher successfully completes.

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<sup>20</sup> Rule 6A-4.0291, F.A.C.

<sup>21</sup> Section 1012.586(1), F.S.

<sup>22</sup> Section 1012.586(1)(b), F.S. Reading Recovery Teacher of the National Louis University Reading Recovery Center is the only approved program. DOE, *Florida Internationally Recognized Organizations*, available at <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7539/urlt/FAIRO.pdf> (last visited Mar. 12, 2021).

<sup>23</sup> Rule 6A-4.0292, F.A.C.

The additional pathway for teachers to earn a reading endorsement may assist district school boards in meeting state requirements for teachers delivering reading instruction or interventions to students enrolled in public schools in kindergarten through grade 12.

## **Student Literacy Supports**

### *Present Situation*

#### Student Progress Monitoring

State board rule provides criteria for determining whether a student has a substantial deficiency in reading. A student is identified as having a substantial deficiency in reading if the student:

- Scores the lowest level or benchmark on any assessment identified in the school district’s reading plan;
- Scores the lowest achievement level during a progress monitoring assessment identified in the school district’s K-12 comprehensive reading plan (reading plan); or
- Demonstrates, through consecutive formative assessments or teacher observation, skills that are below grade-level expectations in one or more areas of phonological awareness; phonics; vocabulary, including oral language skills; reading fluency; and reading comprehension.<sup>24</sup>

Students in kindergarten through grade 3 who are determined to have a substantial deficiency in reading based on any of these criteria must be given intensive reading interventions immediately following the identification of the deficiency.<sup>25</sup> Students who do not achieve a Level 3 or above on the statewide, standardized ELA assessment must be evaluated to determine the nature of the student’s difficulty, the areas of academic need, and strategies for providing academic supports to improve the student’s performance.<sup>26</sup> District school boards are required to prioritize remedial and supplemental instructional resources first to students in kindergarten through grade 3 who have a substantial reading deficiency and then to students who fail to meet performance levels required for promotion under the district’s student progression plan.<sup>27</sup>

School districts have a variety of intervention and progress monitoring options available to help students improve their academic performance. The law requires districts to develop and implement a multi-tiered system of supports, which utilizes a problem-solving process to identify and support student needs based upon available data, including attendance, behavior and discipline, statewide assessment, and progress monitoring data.<sup>28</sup> Retention is mandatory for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students who score at Level 1 on the statewide, standardized ELA assessment.<sup>29</sup> Any student retained in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade because of his or her statewide, standardized ELA assessment score must receive intensive interventions and be taught by a “highly-effective” teacher with a reading endorsement or certification.<sup>30</sup> This intervention process must include parent involvement,

<sup>24</sup> Rule 6A-6.053(12), F.A.C.

<sup>25</sup> Section 1008.25(5)(a), F.S.

<sup>26</sup> Section 1008.25(4)(a), F.S.

<sup>27</sup> Section 1008.25(3), F.S.

<sup>28</sup> See Rules 6A-6.0331(1) and 6A-1.099811(2)(r), F.A.C.

<sup>29</sup> Section 1008.25(5)(b), F.S. A student may be promoted if he or she meets a “good cause” exception as provided in s. 1008.25(6)(b), F.S.

<sup>30</sup> See ss. 1008.25(5)(b) and (7) and 1012.34(2)(e), F.S.

student observation, review of data, vision and hearing screening to rule out sensory deficits, and evidence-based interventions implemented in the general education environment.<sup>31</sup>

#### Research-Based Reading Instruction Allocation

The state allocates funding to school districts for research-based reading instruction to students in kindergarten through grade 12. Funds must be used to provide a system of comprehensive reading instruction to students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12, including:<sup>32</sup>

- An additional hour of intensive reading instruction beyond the normal school day for students in the 300 lowest-performing elementary schools.
- Reading intervention teachers and reading coaches.
- Professional development for teachers to earn a certification or an endorsement in reading.
- Summer reading camps for students in kindergarten through grade 5 who exhibit certain reading deficiencies, depending on grade level.<sup>33</sup>
- Supplemental instructional materials that are grounded in scientifically based reading research as identified by the JRFO.
- Intensive interventions for students in kindergarten through grade 12 who have been identified as having a reading deficiency or who are reading below grade level as determined by the statewide, standardized ELA assessment.

District school boards must develop reading plans that detail the specific uses of the research-based reading instruction allocation. The plans must be annually submitted to the DOE for approval and provide for intensive reading interventions through integrated curricula that incorporate strategies identified by the JRFO and are delivered by a teacher who is certified or endorsed in reading. The DOE monitors and tracks the implementation of each district plan and collects specific data on expenditures and reading improvement results. By February 1 of each year, the DOE reports its findings to the Legislature.<sup>34</sup>

#### Parental Notification and Supports

The parent of any student who exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading must be notified in writing of the deficiency and of all available services and proposed interventions, and be provided with a “read at home plan,” which outlines strategies that parents can use to help their children improve in reading.<sup>35</sup>

Students enrolled in public school in grades 3 through 5 and score below grade level on the statewide, standardized ELA assessment in the prior school year may also be eligible for a reading scholarship account of \$500. A total of 6,763 students received reading scholarship accounts in the 2019-2020 school year. The state appropriated \$7.6 million for reading scholarship accounts for the 2020-2021 school year.

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<sup>31</sup> Rule 6A-6.0331(1), F.A.C.

<sup>32</sup> Section 1011.62(9), F.S. The state appropriated \$130 million to school districts for the research-based reading instruction allocation for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Specific Appropriations 8 and 92, ch. 2020-111, s. 2, Laws of Fla.

<sup>33</sup> All students in kindergarten through grade 2 who demonstrate a reading deficiency as determined by district and state assessments, and students in grades 3 through 5 who score at Level 1 on the statewide, standardized English Language Arts assessment. Section 1011.62(9)(c)5., F.S.

<sup>34</sup> Section 1011.62(9)(d)1., F.S.

<sup>35</sup> Section 1008.25(5)(c), F.S.



In the 2020-2021 school year, 112,295 students enrolled in public schools in kindergarten through grade 5 were identified as having substantial deficiencies in reading and receiving Tier III supports.<sup>36</sup>

#### Federally funded Department of Education Literacy Initiatives

As part of its plan for federal funding provided under the CARES Act,<sup>37</sup> the DOE has launched a statewide system of regional reading supports.<sup>38</sup> The program allocates \$5 million from the CARES Act funds for the establishment of 20 regions in the state, each with a designated regional reading consultant that will lead a regional literacy support team. The reading consultants and their teams will be trained to monitor district-level, school-level and classroom-level data in order to identify and provide needed professional development and interventions.<sup>39</sup> The first year of the program will support implementation of reading plans in the early grades while overall the program focus will be on building capacity of the teams with an emphasis on updated standards, evidence-based<sup>40</sup> practices, and data-based decision making.<sup>41</sup> Implementation has been set to begin in 2021, during the second half of the 2020-2021 school year.

The DOE allocated \$20 million from the CARES Act funds for progress monitoring and data informed supports.<sup>42</sup> From October 1, 2020, through February 19, 2021, the DOE made available to all public schools on a voluntary basis a new progress monitoring tool developed by Cambium Assessment, Inc., to serve as a connective support between the foundational skills that students seek to acquire and their progress through early education years and drive informed teaching practices and curriculum decisions. The progress monitoring tool was available for multiple administrations and was aligned to the state standards for grades 3 through 10 ELA Reading and grades 3 through 8 Mathematics.<sup>43</sup>

The DOE also used funds from the CARES Act to develop several other programs related to improving student literacy. Specifically, the DOE allocated:

- \$5 million to upskill highly effective reading coaches.

<sup>36</sup> Email, DOE (Mar. 11, 2021) (on file with the Senate Committee on Education).

<sup>37</sup> Pub. L. No. 116-136, 134 Stat. 281 (Mar. 27, 2020).

<sup>38</sup> DOE, *Reopening Florida's Schools and the CARES Act*, available at <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/19861/urlt/FLDOEReopeningCARESAct.pdf> (last visited Mar. 12, 2021).

<sup>39</sup> *Id.* at 105. Each regional literacy director retains employment with the district with a salary of \$80,000 plus benefits funded by the DOE.

<sup>40</sup> Federal law defines the term “evidence-based” as an activity, strategy, or intervention that demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on: strong evidence from at least 1 well-designed and well-implemented experimental study; moderate evidence from at least 1 well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study; or promising evidence from at least 1 well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; or demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes, and includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention. 20 U.S.C. s. 7801(21)(a)(i).

<sup>41</sup> DOE, *Act with Urgency for Literacy*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7506/urlt/Act-with-Urgency-for-Literacy.pdf> at 11, (last visited Mar. 13, 2021).

<sup>42</sup> DOE, *Reopening Florida's Schools and the CARES Act*, available at <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/19861/urlt/FLDOEReopeningCARESAct.pdf> at 102, (last visited Mar. 13, 2021).

<sup>43</sup> DOE, *Free Optional Progress Monitoring Tool Available to Public Schools* (Sept. 2, 2020), available at <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/19861/urlt/CambiumProgressMonitoring2020-21.pdf> (last visited Mar. 13, 2021).

- \$20 million, in addition to \$4 million of the funds reserved under the CARES Act to the Governor, for strengthening K-3 reading instructional materials.
- \$5 million for deploying professional development for teachers to attain a reading endorsement; training on how to use progress monitoring data to inform instruction; improving existing reading endorsement options; and improved resources for teachers and families.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, the DOE secured a Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant (CLSD) of \$21 million.<sup>45</sup> A CLSD is a discretionary federal grant to create a comprehensive literacy program to advance literacy skills, including pre-literacy skills, reading, and writing, for children from birth through grade 12, with an emphasis on disadvantaged children, including children living in poverty, English learners, and children with disabilities.<sup>46</sup>

### *Effect of Proposed Changes (Sections 2, 12, 14, 15)*

#### Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring

The bill modifies s. 1008.25, F.S., to require the DOE, in collaboration with the OEL, to procure and require, and provide training and support for implementing, a statewide, standardized coordinated screening and progress monitoring (CSPM) for VPK program providers and for public schools serving kindergarten through grade 8 students, whom the bill requires to participate in the CSPM. The bill outlines requirements for the CSPM. Specifically, the CSPM must:

- Measure student progress in early literacy, ELA, and mathematics standards.
- Measure student performance in oral language, development, phonemic and phonological awareness, knowledge of print and letters, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- Be a valid, reliable and developmentally appropriate computer-adaptive direct instrument that provides screening and diagnostic capabilities for monitoring student progress; identifies students with a substantial deficiency in reading, including students with characteristics of dyslexia; and informs instruction.
- Provide data sufficient for VPK program accountability.
- Provide data and resources to enhance differentiated instruction.
- Provide information to the DOE to aid in the development of educational programs, policies, and supports for providers, districts, and schools.
- Beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, be administered at least three times within a program year or school year, as applicable, with the first administration occurring no later than the first 30 instructional days after the start of the program year or school year.

Results of the CSPM, including the number of students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia, must:

- Be reported to the DOE and maintained in the DOE's Educational Data Warehouse.

<sup>44</sup> DOE, *Act with Urgency for Literacy*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7506/urlt/Act-with-Urgency-for-Literacy.pdf> at 15, (last visited Mar. 13, 2021).

<sup>45</sup> DOE, *Reopening Florida's Schools and the CARES Act*, available at <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/19861/urlt/FLDOEReopeningCARESAct.pdf> at 15, (last visited Mar. 13, 2021).

<sup>46</sup> 20 U.S.C. s. 6642.

- Be timely provided to a student’s teachers and parents.
- Inform parents annually of their child’s educational progress based on the CSPM.

#### Evidence-based Reading Instruction Allocation

The bill modifies s. 1011.62, F.S., to rename the “research-based reading instruction allocation” as the “evidence-based reading instruction allocation” to conform the reading instruction allocation to the other evidence-based initiatives. The bill aligns the definition of evidence-based with federal law, to provide that evidence-based means demonstrating a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes.

The bill also modifies the requirements and the authorized uses by school districts of the allocation. Specifically, the bill:

- Provides that funds may be used for supports to assist students identified with a substantial deficiency in early literacy transition from the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (VPK) to kindergarten.
- Replaces the requirement to integrate social studies with the requirement for the coordinated integration of civic literacy in the curriculum for the extra hour of reading instruction for the 300 lowest performing elementary schools.
- Provides that a school district’s reading plan will no longer be deemed approved if it is not approved by June 1 or if 100 percent of the funds are spent.
- Makes mandatory the withholding of funds by the DOE upon a determination that reading instruction allocation funds are not being used to implement the approved plan.
- Requires school district reading plans to include a root-cause analysis of student performance data and reflection tool developed by the DOE to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions implemented in the prior year.

The bill requires the annual report of the DOE to the Legislature on the evidence-based reading instruction allocation to also be submitted to the SBE and include recommendations for improving implementation of evidence-based reading and intervention strategies in classrooms.

#### Reading Achievement Initiative for Scholastic Excellence Program

The bill creates s. 1008.365, F.S., to establish within the DOE the Reading Achievement Initiative for Scholastic Excellence Program (RAISE Program) to provide instructional supports to school districts and their staff in implementing evidence-based reading instruction and interventions in order to improve student reading achievement. Under the RAISE Program, and similar to current federally funded initiatives of the DOE, the DOE must establish at least 20 literacy support regions and regional support teams, each at the direction of a regional literacy support director appointed by the commissioner, to assist school districts in improving low reading scores. Each regional literacy support director must be an employee of a school district and manage a regional support team. Directors and teams are required by the bill to consist of personnel who have completed the competency-based reading endorsement pathway and meet other specified requirements related to reading instruction and progress monitoring.

The bill requires the DOE to provide progress monitoring data to the regional literacy support teams to assist with providing designated schools with supports, which must include all of the following:

- Professional development aligned with evidence based strategies for reading instruction.
- Evaluating a school's improvement plan for alignment with the school district's reading plan.
- Assistance with implementing:
  - Data-informed instructional decision making.
  - The selection and consistent, coordinated use of high-quality instructional materials.
  - Reading instruction in other core subject area curricula, with an emphasis on civic literacy.
  - A multitiered system of supports in order to provide students effective interventions and identify students who may require an evaluation for special educational services, including identifying characteristics of conditions that affect phonological processing, such as dyslexia.

The bill authorizes the DOE to establish criteria to identify a school that must receive supports from a regional support team. The bill also modifies s. 1001.42, F.S., to require each school district to include in its school improvement plan schools identified for supports under the RAISE Program, but specifies that regardless of a school's grade, a school must receive supports if at least 50 percent of the school's students who take the statewide, standardized ELA assessment score below a Level 3 for any grade level, or, for students in kindergarten through grade 3, if results from the CSPM demonstrate that at least 50 percent of the students are not on track to pass the statewide, standardized grade 3 ELA assessment. If the regional support team determines that the school district's reading plan does not address the school's need to improve student outcomes, the regional literacy support director, the district school superintendent, or his or her designee, and the director of the JRFO are required by the bill to convene a meeting to rectify the deficiencies of the reading plan.

A school identified for supports is not required by the bill to implement a turnaround option or take other corrective action under the state's school improvement program. The bill authorizes a school to stop receiving supports and implementing a school improvement plan when the school's data reflects that it no longer meets the requirements to receive supports and implement a school improvement plan. The school may nevertheless continue to receive supports based on the availability of resources.

#### RAISE Program Tutors

The RAISE Program also requires the DOE to establish a tutoring program and develop training in effective reading tutoring practices and content, based on evidence-based practices, and aligned to the state ELA standards, to prepare eligible high school students to tutor students with a substantial deficiency in reading in kindergarten through grade 3. The bill requires the SBE to adopt rules to administer the program.

The bill requires school districts that wish to participate to recruit, train, and deploy eligible high school students. Tutoring must occur during the school day on school district property in the presence and under the supervision of instructional personnel who are school district employees. Under the bill, a student must obtain written permission from his or her parent before receiving tutoring services.

The bill prescribes eligibility requirements for tutors. Specifically, a tutor must:

- Be a rising junior or senior.
- Have a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher.
- Have no history of out-of-school suspensions or expulsions.
- Be on track to complete all course requirements for graduation.
- Have written recommendations from at least two of his or her present or former high school teachers of record or extracurricular activity sponsors.

The bill authorizes a district school board to adopt a service-learning<sup>47</sup> course that includes a tutoring program and authorizes students to:

- Earn up to 3 elective credits for high school graduation based on the verified number of hours the student spends tutoring.
- Count hours devoted to tutoring toward meeting community service requirements for high school graduation<sup>48</sup> and participation in the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.<sup>49</sup>
- Earn a New Worlds Scholar award from the DOE by providing at least 500 verified hours of tutoring.

The option for a high school student to tutor a K-3 student may support both students in their academic development.

#### Parental Notification and Supports

The bill requires a school to apprise in writing, at least monthly, the parent of a student who has a substantial deficiency in reading of the student's progress in response to intensive reading interventions and supports. The written appraisal must inform the parent of any additional interventions or supports to be provided to the student if the initial supports do not lead to improvement.

To further encourage parental participation in a student's reading progress, the bill requires the DOE to develop a handbook that schools must provide to the parent of a student who is identified as having a substantial reading deficiency. The handbook must be made available in an electronic format that is accessible online and must include:

- An overview of the types and frequency of assessments used to identify reading deficiencies and the requirements for interventions and supports that districts must provide to students who do not make adequate academic progress.

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<sup>47</sup> The hours that high school students devote to course-based service-learning activities may be counted toward meeting community service requirements for high school graduation and community service requirements for participation in the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. School districts are encouraged to include service learning as part of any course or activity required for high school graduation and to include and accept service-learning activities and hours in requirements for academic awards, especially those awards that currently include community service as a criterion or selection factor. Section 1003.497(3)(b), F.S.

<sup>48</sup> A student is not specifically required to complete a minimum number of community service hours to earn a standard high school diploma, but school districts are encouraged to include service learning as part of a course or activity required for high school graduation. *See* ss. 1003.4282 and 1003.497(3)(b), F.S.

<sup>49</sup> Scholarship awards for students under the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program have varying minimum service hour requirements, based on the amount of the award. For eligibility requirements, *see* DOE, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *2020-2021 Bright Futures Student Handbook, Chapter 1: Initial Eligibility Requirements*, available at <https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/PDF/BFHandbookChapter1.pdf> (last visited Mar. 13, 2021).

- An overview of the process for initiating and conducting evaluations for exceptional education eligibility. The overview must include an explanation that a diagnosis of a medical condition alone is not sufficient to establish exceptional education eligibility but may be used to document how that condition relates to the student's eligibility determination and may be disclosed in an eligible student's individual education plan when necessary to inform school personnel responsible for implementing the plan.
- Characteristics of conditions associated with learning disorders, including dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and developmental aphasia.
- A list of resources that support informed parent involvement in decision making processes for students who have difficulty in learning.

The handbook may support parental awareness and involvement in the progress of a student's education.

## **Instructional Material Review Process**

### *Present Situation*

The DOE is authorized to allocate and distribute to each district an amount as prescribed annually by the Legislature for instructional materials for students in grades K-12.<sup>50</sup> Each district school superintendent is required to certify to the commissioner that the district school board has approved a comprehensive staff development plan that supports fidelity of implementation of instructional materials programs, including verification that training was provided; that the materials are being implemented as designed; and, beginning July 1, 2021, for core reading materials and reading intervention materials used in kindergarten through grade 5, that the materials have been identified by JRFO in collaboration with the Florida Center for Reading Research as scientifically researched and evidence-based reading instructional and intervention programs that incorporate explicit, systematic, and sequential approaches to teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and text comprehension and incorporate decodable or phonetic text instructional strategies.<sup>51</sup>

The term of adoption of any instructional materials must be a five-year period, beginning on April 1 following the adoption, except that the commissioner may approve terms of adoption of less than five years for materials in content areas that require more frequent revision.<sup>52</sup>

Prior to the purchase of any instructional material, whether from the state-adopted list or through a district-established instructional materials review process, the district school board must:

- Establish a process to allow student editions of recommended instructional materials to be accessed and viewed online by the public at least 20 calendar days before the required school board hearing and public meeting. This process must include reasonable safeguards against the unauthorized use, reproduction, and distribution of instructional materials considered for adoption.

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<sup>50</sup> Section 1011.67(1), F.S. The state appropriated \$236.6 million to school districts for instructional materials for the 2020-2021 fiscal year. Specific Appropriations 8 and 92, ch. 2020-111, s. 2, Laws of Fla.

<sup>51</sup> Sections 1011.67(2) and 1001.215(8), F.S.

<sup>52</sup> Section 1006.36(1), F.S.

- Conduct an open, noticed school board hearing to receive public comment on the recommended instructional materials.
- Conduct an open, noticed public meeting to approve an annual instructional materials plan to identify any instructional materials that will be purchased. This public meeting must be held on a different date than the school board hearing.
- Provide notice for the school board hearing and the public meeting that specifically states the instructional materials being reviewed and how the instructional materials can be accessed for public review.<sup>53</sup>

### ***Effect of Proposed Changes***

The bill modifies s. 1001.215, F.S., to require the JRFO, as part of the adoption cycle for ELA instructional materials, to:

- Assist in evaluating elementary grades instructional materials submitted for adoption consideration.
- Identify those materials that are closely aligned to the content and evidence-based strategies for reading instructional and intervention programs that have been identified in collaboration with the Florida Center for Reading Research.
- Incorporate professional development to implement such strategies.

The bill modifies s. 1011.67, F.S., to authorize instructional materials identified by JRFO to be purchased by a school district without undergoing the comprehensive process for adopting instructional materials at the local level.

## **The Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program**

### ***Present Situation***

The Florida Constitution requires the State of Florida to provide every four-year old child a high quality, pre-kindergarten learning opportunity, in the form of an early childhood development and education program, which must be voluntary, high quality, free, and delivered according to professionally accepted standards.<sup>54</sup> In 2004, the State established a free VPK program offered to eligible four-year-old children.<sup>55</sup> Parents may choose either a school-year or summer program offered by either a public or private school.<sup>56</sup>

### **VPK Administration**

Early Learning Coalitions (ELCs) and district school boards administer the VPK program at the county or regional level. Each ELC is the single point of entry for VPK program registration and

<sup>53</sup> Sections 1006.40(4)(b) and 1006.283(2)(b)8., 9., and 11., F.S.

<sup>54</sup> Art. IX, s. 1(b), Fla. Const. An early childhood development and education program means an organized program designed to address and enhance each child's ability to make age appropriate progress in an appropriate range of settings in the development of language and cognitive capabilities and emotional, social, regulatory and moral capacities through education in basic skills and such other skills as the Legislature may determine to be appropriate.

<sup>55</sup> Chapter 2004-484, s. 1, Laws of Fla.; part V, ch. 1002, F.S.; *see also* Art. IX, s. 1(b)-(c), Fla. Const.

<sup>56</sup> Section 1002.53(3), F.S.

enrollment in the coalition's county or multi-county service area.<sup>57</sup> A local ELC must coordinate with the local school district in the ELC's service area to develop procedures for enrolling children in public school VPK programs.<sup>58</sup>

The Office of Early Learning (OEL) adopts procedures governing the administration of the VPK program for ELCs and school districts, including procedures for:

- Child enrollment.
- Attendance reporting.
- Eligibility of VPK program providers.
- Regulating the compliance of VPK program providers.
- Reimbursing VPK program providers for the costs of the VPK program.<sup>59</sup>

### VPK Instructor Requirements

A VPK provider offering a school-year VPK program must have, for each class, at least one instructor with the following credentials:

- A Child Development Associate (CDA) issued by the National Credentialing Program of the Council for Professional Recognition.
- A credential approved by the Department of Children and Families as being equivalent to or greater than the CDA.
- Five clock hours of training in emergent literacy and successful completion of a student performance standards training course.<sup>60</sup>

In lieu of the minimum credentials listed above, a private VPK program instructor may hold:

- An associate's or higher degree in child development;
- An associate's or higher degree in an unrelated field, at least six credit hours in early childhood education or child development, and at least 480 hours of teaching or providing child care services for children any age from birth through eight years of age;
- A bachelor's or higher degree in early childhood education, prekindergarten or primary education, preschool education, or family and consumer science;
- A bachelor's or higher degree in elementary education, if the instructor has been certified to teach children any age from birth through grade 6, regardless of whether the educator certificate is current; or
- An educational credential approved by the OEL as being equivalent to or greater than any of these educational credentials.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Section 1002.53(4), F.S. There are currently 30 ELCs. Florida's Office of Early Learning, *Early Learning Coalitions*, <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/family-resources/find-quality-child-care/locate-your-early-learning-coalition> (last visited Mar. 13, 2021).

<sup>58</sup> Section 1002.53(4), F.S.

<sup>59</sup> Section 1002.75(2), F.S.

<sup>60</sup> Sections 1002.55(3)(c)1.a. and 2., 1002.59, and 1002.63(4), F.S. An active Birth Through Five Child Care Credential awarded as a Florida Child Care Professional Credential, Florida Department of Education Child Care Apprenticeship Certificate, or Early Childhood Professional Certificate satisfies the staff credential requirement. Florida Department of Children and Families, *Child Care Facility Handbook* (2019), incorporated by reference in Rule 65C-22.001(7), F.A.C.

<sup>61</sup> Section 1002.55(4), F.S.



### VPK Instructor Training

The OEL sets minimum standards for emergent literacy training courses for VPK instructors. Each course must be at least five clock hours long and provide strategies and techniques regarding the age-appropriate progress of prekindergarten students in developing emergent literacy skills, including:

- Oral communication;
- Knowledge of print and letters;
- Phonemic and phonological awareness; and
- Vocabulary and comprehension.<sup>62</sup>

Each emergent literacy training course must also provide strategies for helping students with disabilities and other special needs maximize their benefit from the VPK program.<sup>63</sup> In addition, the OEL must adopt minimum standards for training courses on the VPK performance standards for students. Each course on performance standards must be at least three clock hours, provide instruction in strategies and techniques to address age-appropriate progress of each child in attaining the standards, and be available online.<sup>64</sup>

OEL outlines a 5-Tier career pathway with certifications that require different levels of foundational training up to a bachelor's degree or higher.<sup>65</sup>

Early Learning Florida, developed in partnership between the OEL and the Lastinger Center, is a statewide professional learning system designed to support the development of early childhood professionals' knowledge and skills in effectively educating and caring for young children.<sup>66</sup> Since 2015, Early Learning Florida has delivered over 400,000 hours of online and blended training to more than 30,000 early childhood practitioners in Florida, at no cost to educators. All Early Learning Florida courses and trainings provide teachers with Continuing Education Units that articulate to national and state credentials.<sup>67</sup>

The OEL has also developed early learning professional development and career pathways.<sup>68</sup> Professional development and teacher resources are available online, including courses developed by the OEL in collaboration with the Lastinger Center, to provide opportunities to earn educator credentials.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Section 1002.59(1), F.S.

<sup>63</sup> *Id.*

<sup>64</sup> Section 1002.59(2), F.S.

<sup>65</sup> Office of Early Learning, *Florida Early Care and Education Career Pathway*, available at [http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/Content/Uploads/floridaearlylearning.com/files/Career%20Pathway%20Revised\\_ADA.pdf](http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/Content/Uploads/floridaearlylearning.com/files/Career%20Pathway%20Revised_ADA.pdf).

<sup>66</sup> Early Learning Florida, *Who We Are*, <https://www.earlylearningflorida.com/about> (last visited Mar. 13, 2021).

<sup>67</sup> The Lastinger Center at the University of Florida, *Early Learning Florida*, <https://lastinger.center.ufl.edu/early-learning/early-learning-florida/> (last visited Mar. 13, 2021).

<sup>68</sup> Section 1002.995, F.S., and Rule 6A-4.735, F.A.C.

<sup>69</sup> See Florida Office of Early Learning, *Professional Development*, <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/providers/professional-development/professional-development-training-resources> (last visited Mar. 13, 2021). See also Early Learning Florida, *Courses*, <https://www.earlylearningflorida.com/catalog> (last visited Mar. 13, 2021).

### VPK Accountability

The DOE developed a statewide kindergarten readiness screening<sup>70</sup> and requires each school district to administer the statewide kindergarten readiness screening within the first 30 days of each school year.<sup>71</sup> The screening must measure a child’s readiness for kindergarten in the following eight domains: physical development; approaches to learning; social and emotional development; language and literacy; mathematical thinking; scientific inquiry; social studies; and creative expression through the arts.<sup>72</sup>

The OEL annually calculates a kindergarten readiness rate for each VPK provider based on results of the annual screening.<sup>73</sup> The readiness rates are expressed as the percentage of children whose scores demonstrate readiness for kindergarten.<sup>74</sup> The methodology for calculating the readiness rate must include student learning gains, when available, based on a VPK preassessment and postassessment, known as the “Florida VPK Assessment.”<sup>75</sup> The OEL must determine learning gains using a value-added measure based on growth demonstrated by the results of the Florida VPK Assessment from at least two successive years of administration.<sup>76</sup>

At least 60 percent of a VPK provider’s students must meet the “ready for kindergarten” score on the screening in order for the provider to avoid probationary status.<sup>77</sup> Providers that do not meet the minimum readiness rate are placed on probation. An ELC or school district must require a VPK provider that falls below the minimum kindergarten readiness rate to:

- Submit for approval and implement an improvement plan;
- Place the provider or school on probation; and
- Take certain corrective actions, including the use of an OEL-approved curriculum or an OEL approved staff development plan to strengthen instruction in language development and phonological awareness.<sup>78</sup>

Out of 126,238 students who completed the VPK program, 63 percent were “ready for kindergarten” in the fall of 2019. Of 6,611 rated VPK providers, 2,175 failed to meet the minimum rate.<sup>79</sup> Of these 2,175 providers, 2,203 remained on probation.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>70</sup> The DOE selected the Star Early Literacy Assessment, developed by Renaissance Learning, Inc., as the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS). Rule 6M-8.601(3)(b)1., F.A.C.; see also DOE, *Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener*, <http://www.fldoe.org/accountability/assessments/k-12-student-assessment/flkrs/> (last visited Mar. 13, 2021).

<sup>71</sup> Sections 1002.69(1)-(3) and 1002.73, F.S.

<sup>72</sup> See s. 1002.67(1), F.S. See also Florida’s Office of Early Learning, *Early Learning and Developmental Standards: 4 Years Old to Kindergarten* (2017) at 1, incorporated by reference in rule 6M-8.602, F.A.C.

<sup>73</sup> Rule 6M-8.601(3)(b), F.A.C.

<sup>74</sup> Section 1002.69(5)-(6), F.S.; To be considered “ready for kindergarten,” a student must achieve a score of 500 or higher on the Star Early Literacy assessment. Rule 6M-8.601, F.A.C.

<sup>75</sup> Section 1002.69(5), F.S.; Rule 6A-1.09433(1)(b), F.A.C.

<sup>76</sup> Section 1002.69(5), F.S.; Rule 6M-8.601(3)(b), F.A.C.

<sup>77</sup> *Id.*

<sup>78</sup> Section 1002.67(4), F.S.

<sup>79</sup> Email, DOE (Dec. 15, 2020) (on file with the Senate Committee on Education).

<sup>80</sup> Email, Office of Early Learning (Mar. 29, 2019) (on file with the Senate Committee on Education).

A VPK provider on probation and failing to meet the minimum readiness rate for two consecutive years must be removed from eligibility to provide the VPK program for 5 years, unless the provider receives from the OEL a good cause exemption.<sup>81</sup>

The DOE launched a VPK progress monitoring pilot program by permitting, beginning in January 2021 and continuing through the 2021-2022 school year, up to 1900 VPK providers to access the assessment used for the statewide kindergarten screening. The DOE allocated \$2.9 million from the CARES Act funds for the program.<sup>82</sup>

The DOE allocated \$18 million of the Child Care Development and Block Grant Fund from the CARES Act to implement summer programs for rising kindergarten students identified with limited language and emergent literacy skills as determined by the VPK assessments and teacher recommendations.<sup>83</sup>

### *Effect of Proposed Changes*

#### VPK Instructor Requirements

The bill modifies s. 1002.59, to add requirements to the emergent literacy training courses, developed by the OEL, for prekindergarten instructors. The bill requires the JRFO to work with the OEL in the development of the emergent literacy training courses and specifies that the courses must be consistent with the evidence-based reading instructional and intervention programs developed by the JRFO and the Florida Center for Reading Research.

The bill also modifies s. 1002.55, F.S., to revise emergent literacy training to require that the training course be available online and that private prekindergarten instructors complete at least one qualifying emergent literacy training course every 5 years. The additional requirements for VPK instructors may provide instructors with more skills to teach VPK students.

#### VPK Accountability

The bill modifies s. 1008.25, F.S., to require a VPK student who demonstrates a substantial deficiency in early literacy skills based upon the results of the CSPM to be referred to the school district following completion of the VPK term and prior to the beginning of the next school year. The bill makes the student eligible for intensive reading interventions from the school district, which may be funded from the evidence-based reading instruction allocation. The additional reading interventions may provide additional opportunities for students to improve reading skills.

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<sup>81</sup> Section 1002.67(4)(c)3., F.S. A VPK provider must submit a request for a good cause exemption to the OEL for review and approval and include specified data. Section 1002.69(7)(b)-(c), F.S. A VPK provider that receives a good cause exemption must continue to implement its improvement plan and take corrective actions until the provider meets the minimum kindergarten readiness rate. Sections 1002.69(7)(e) and 1002.67(3)(c)2., F.S.

<sup>82</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Progress Monitoring: Building Effective, Data-Informed Strategies to Close Achievement Gaps* (Nov. 18, 2020), available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/19925/urlt/2-3.pdf> at 6, (last visited Mar. 13, 2021).

<sup>83</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Reopening Florida's Schools and the CARES Act*, available at <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/19861/urlt/FLDOEReopeningCARESAct.pdf> at 98, (last visited Mar. 13, 2021).

The CSPM replaces current VPK program progress monitoring and accountability requirements in ss. 1002.67 and 1002.69, F.S. With the implementation of the CSPM beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, the bill:

- Phases out the pre- and post-assessment and the statewide kindergarten readiness screening.
- Requires learning gains and kindergarten readiness rates to be calculated using data from the CSPM.

The VPK accountability metrics provided in the bill may measure student performance more contemporaneously with the instruction provided and support the timely provision of information to parents, school districts, and VPK providers.

#### Kindergarten Readiness

To assist all parents with the transition from prekindergarten to kindergarten, the bill modifies s. 1002.83, F.S. to require the OEL to provide guidance for successful kindergarten transitions to ELCs, school districts, charter schools, and parents. The bill requires each ELC to develop a best-practices plan for transitioning students into kindergarten, which must include all of the following:

- Opportunities for prekindergarten students and their parents to visit schools in which they may be enrolled in kindergarten.
- Written information for parents on school registration and academic and social expectations for kindergarten.
- Meetings at least annually with school districts and charter schools in the coalition's service area to identify and address areas for improvement in transitioning prekindergarten students into kindergarten.
- Transferring prekindergarten student information for continuity in progress monitoring and the provision of supports.

The additional supports for transitioning students to kindergarten may help prepare students for kindergarten. ELCs may require coordination from school districts regarding kindergarten enrollment, visits, and student data.

#### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

##### A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

##### B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

##### C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Providers may incur costs associated with having private VPK instructors to complete at least one qualifying emergent literacy training course every five years and having to participate in the new coordinated screening and progress monitoring system, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The coordinated screening and progress monitoring required by the bill for students enrolled in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program through grade 8 will require the expenditure of state funds.

The Department of Education estimates that it will cost \$15 million annually to implement the new coordinated screening and progress monitoring program. These costs could be offset, in part, by the elimination of the current VPK assessment and kindergarten screening in fiscal year 2022-2023. To assist with the procurement of the new system and its ongoing management, the department anticipates needing one additional Program Specialist IV position, at a cost of \$87,075 annually. School districts may also incur costs associated with computer equipment needed to administer the new assessments.

The department estimates that it will cost \$5 million annually to contract with an external entity to implement the new Reading Achievement Initiative for Scholastic Excellence (RAISE) within the department. In addition, the department also anticipates needing two additional Program Specialist IVs and one additional administrative assistant at a cost of \$240,014 annually to establish and maintain the literacy support teams and tutoring program. School districts may also incur costs associated with recruiting, training and deploying eligible high school students as part of the tutoring program.

The department anticipates that the addition of microcredentials to teacher certificates will require programming changes to the educator certification system at an indeterminate cost.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

Section 15 of the bill includes an incorrect cross-reference to federal law. A provision of the bill that defines “evidence-based” to mean demonstrating a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes as provided in 20 U.S.C. s. 8101(21)(A)(i). The definition of the term “evidence-based” is included in the United States Code at 20 U.S.C. s. 7801(21)(A)(i).

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 1001.215, 1001.42, 1002.33, 1002.55, 1002.59, 1002.67, 1002.69, 1002.83, 1002.995, 1003.621, 1004.04, 1008.25, 1008.345, 1011.62, 1011.67, 1012.585, 1012.586, 1012.98, and 1012.986.

This bill creates section 1008.365 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.