

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 7033 PCB ELE 21-02 Task Force on Closing the Achievement Gap for Boys
SPONSOR(S): Early Learning & Elementary Education Subcommittee, Koster and others
TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 1816

FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION: 117 Y's 0 N's **GOVERNOR'S ACTION:** Approved

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

HB 7033 passed the House on April 21, 2021, and subsequently passed the Seante on April 26, 2021. The bill establishes the Task Force on Closing the Achievement Gap for Boys within the Department of Education (DOE) to examine evidence-based strategies for closing the achievement gap for boys and to make recommendations to the DOE, the Governor, and the Legislature. The recommendations must address:

- Professional development for instructional personnel and school administrators.
- The selection of curriculum, supplemental materials, and classroom activities in early learning programs and K-12 schools.
- Academic, behavioral, and mental health supports to help educate and raise young men who are better prepared for success in school and in life.

The Commissioner of Education or a designee will serve as chair of the task force. Other members of the task force must be appointed by July 1, 2021, including stakeholder appointments by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Senate President, and the Governor.

The task force must convene by August 1, 2021, and upon the call of the chair thereafter. The task force must submit a report containing its recommendations to the Governor, the Senate President, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 1, 2021.

The DOE must provide staffing, administrative support, data, and other relevant information to the task force to help it carry out its responsibilities.

The task force expires on June 30, 2022.

The bill has an indeterminate fiscal impact. See Fiscal Comments, *infra*.

The bill was approved by the Governor on June 21, 2021, ch. 2021-155, L.O.F., and became effective on that date.

I. SUBSTANTIVE INFORMATION

A. EFFECT OF CHANGES:

Present Situation

Low reading performance in 3rd grade predicts future poor academic performance, increased risk of not graduating from high school, and lower economic stability as an adult.¹

In Florida, data from the 2018-2019 administration of the statewide, standardized English Language Arts (ELA) assessment shows that 44 percent of 3rd grade boys are reading below grade level, a four percentage point deficit as compared to girls (48 percent). The deficit is 11 percentage points for 10th grade boys.² Similar discrepancies nationwide have been observed on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) for 4th, 8th, and 12th grade boys, as well.³ In Florida, boys had an average scale score on the 2019 NAEP reading assessment that was nine points lower than girls both in 4th grade (220 to 229) and in 8th grade (259 to 268).⁴

Girls generally outperform boys in reading and writing in most school districts in the United States, regardless of the district's demographics—girls are about a half grade ahead by 3rd grade and almost a full grade ahead by 8th grade.⁵

There are some theories as to why the reading skills of boys fall behind that of girls, particularly in early years. Deficits could be a result of sequential processing.⁶ Other theories attribute differences to environmental or cultural and societal causes or a teacher's treatment and expectations of a student and assumptions about how the student typically behaves.⁷ A student's interest or motivation in the subject area could also be a factor; boys are less likely to read for pleasure than girls.⁸ One study has supported cultural-societal theories, suggesting further review of differential responses to school-based instruction as well as student interest and motivation, noting that differences in pre-reading skills apparent in kindergarten are surmountable by later grades.⁹

Some instructional strategies have been identified as helping to improve boys reading skills, including:¹⁰

¹ See The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Early Reading Research Confirmed, A Research Update on the Importance of Third-Grade Reading* (2013) at 3, available at <https://www.aecf.org/resources/early-warning-confirmed/>.

² See Florida Department of Education, *PK-12 Public Schools*, <https://edstats.fldoe.org/SASPortal/main.do> (last visited Apr. 28, 2021) (search query for state level data on the 2018-2019 statewide, standardized ELA assessment, including a gender comparison data point).

³ Jamie L. Below, et al, *Gender Differences in Early Literacy: Analysis of Kindergarten through Fifth-Grade Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills Probes*, 39 SCH. PSYCHOL. REV. 240, 241 (2010).

⁴ The Nation's Report Card, *NAEP Data Explorer*, <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/ndecore/xplore/NDE> (last visited Apr. 28, 2021) (search query for Florida data on the 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress in reading for grades 4 and 8, selecting gender as a variable data point).

⁵ Stanford Graduate School of Education, *New Stanford education study shows where boys and girls do better in math, English*, <https://ed.stanford.edu/news/new-stanford-education-study-shows-where-boys-and-girls-do-better-math-english> (last visited Apr. 28, 2021).

⁶ Sequential processing refers to the ability to process information in sequence. Deficiencies in sequential processing may affect early literacy skill development, including phonetic decoding. See *id* at 241.

⁷ See *id* at 241.

⁸ See *id* at 241.

⁹ See *id* at 252.

¹⁰ See e.g., Ohio State University, *Strategies to Engage Boys in Reading (and the Girls, Too)*, <https://beyondpenguins.ehe.osu.edu/issue/arctic-and-anarctic-birds/strategies-to-engage-boys-in-reading-and-the-girls-too> (last visited Apr. 28, 2021); Tiffany Rudek, *Instructional Approaches That Increase Reading Achievement for Boys, Grades 3-6* (2015), available at <https://scholarworks.waldenu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2286&context=dissertations>; Pinellas Education Foundation, *Closing the Gap: Presentation to the House Early Learning and Elementary Education Subcommittee* (March 9, 2021), available at

- autonomy in selecting text, including informational texts, to increase interest and motivation to read;
- robust classroom libraries with high-interest books;
- small reading groups including common texts or subjects of interest;
- setting a purpose for a reading activity;
- providing flexible seating options;
- incorporating movement into reading lessons;
- differentiating instruction to ensure success; and
- explicit, systematic instruction including goalsetting with monitoring and feedback.

At least one school district in Florida has implemented an initiative to provide teacher training on strategies that can help close the reading gap for boys.¹¹ However, there has not been an effort statewide to understand and address the reading gap.

Effect of the Bill

The bill establishes the Task Force on Closing the Achievement Gap for Boys within the Department of Education (DOE) to examine evidence-based strategies for closing the achievement gap for boys and to make recommendations to the DOE, the Governor, and the Legislature. The recommendations must address:

- professional development for instructional personnel and school administrators;
- the selection of curriculum, supplemental materials, and classroom activities in early learning programs and K-12 schools; and
- academic, behavioral, and mental health supports to help educate and raise young men who are better prepared for success in school and in life.

The bill establishes the Commissioner of Education or a designee as chair of the task force. Other members of the task force must be appointed by July 1, 2021, as follows:

- Five members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives:
 - A representative of a nonprofit organization that has conducted research or implemented a program designed to close the achievement gap for boys through specific instructional, behavioral, and mental health supports.
 - The superintendent of a school district that has implemented programming and strategies specifically to help close the achievement gap for boys through a partnership with one or more nonprofit organizations.
 - The director of an early learning provider participating in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program or the school readiness program.
 - The principal of a public elementary school.
 - A member of the House of Representatives.
- Five members appointed by the Senate President:
 - A school psychologist employed by a school district.
 - An elementary classroom teacher.
 - A prekindergarten teacher employed by a provider participating in the VPK Education Program or the school readiness program.
 - The executive director of an early learning coalition.
 - A member of the Senate.
- Two members appointed by the Governor:

<https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?PublicationType=Committees&CommitteeId=3106&Session=2021&DocumentType=Meeting%20Packets&FileName=ele%203-9-21.pdf>.

¹¹ Pinellas Education Foundation, *Closing the Gap* (2020), available at <https://pinellaseducation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Closing-the-Gap.pdf>.

- The parent of a boy enrolled in either the VPK Education Program the school readiness program.
- The parent of a boy enrolled in a public elementary school.

The bill requires the task force to convene by August 1, 2021, and upon the call of the chair thereafter. Meetings may be held through teleconference or other electronic means. The task force must submit a report containing its recommendations to the Governor, the Senate President, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 1, 2021.

The DOE must provide staffing, administrative support, data, and other relevant information to the task force to help it carry out its responsibilities. The bill specifies that members may not receive compensation for serving on the task force but may receive reimbursements for per diem and travel expenses.

The task force expires on June 30, 2022.

The bill takes effect upon becoming a law.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

See Fiscal Comments, *infra*.

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

B. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

C. FISCAL COMMENTS:

The DOE may incur indeterminate expenses to facilitate the functions and meetings of the task force.