

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BILL ANALYSIS

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BILL #: [CS/CS/HB 127](#)

TITLE: Exceptional Student Education

SPONSOR(S): Kendall

COMPANION BILL: [CS/SB 102](#) (Gaetz)

LINKED BILLS: None

RELATED BILLS: None

Committee References

[Careers & Workforce](#)

15 Y, 0 N, As CS



[Human Services](#)

17 Y, 0 N



[PreK-12 Budget](#)

15 Y, 0 N



[Education & Employment](#)

16 Y, 0 N, As CS

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:

The bill seeks to enhance the employment opportunities for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or on a modified curriculum by requiring the Florida Department of Education (DOE) to develop and implement a workforce credential program by January 31, 2026. The DOE is required to work with both the Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities housed within the University of Central Florida and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in the development of the badges awarded to students through the program. To evaluate the program's effectiveness, the bill requires that the DOE submit an annual report from 2026 through 2030 with participation and outcomes data.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:

The bill requires DOE to develop and implement a workforce credential program for students with ASD. A curriculum framework for students with disabilities already exists. As such, it is unclear if the bill requires DOE to leverage this existing framework or create a brand-new framework. Additionally, adoption and implementation of the workforce credential program is at the discretion of school districts. Therefore, the bill will have an indeterminate fiscal impact on state and local expenditures.

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ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill creates a workforce credential program for [students with autism](#) spectrum disorder (ASD) or on a modified curriculum with the goal of assisting students with securing employment upon graduation. The bill requires the Florida Department of Education (DOE) to develop and implement this program by January 31, 2026. Adoption and implementation of the workforce credential program is at the discretion of school districts.

The program must allow students to earn badges that indicate they have acquired specific skills that meet employer needs. Each workforce certificate must require the student to demonstrate five discrete skills or behaviors, including, but not limited to, workplace safety. Additionally, the student's demonstration of the required skills for each workforce certificate must be validated by two instructional staff members who specialize in exceptional student education.

In developing the workforce credential program, the bill requires the DOE to work with the Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities housed within the University of Central Florida. For those badges associated with workplace safety, the DOE must consult with the Occupational Health and Safety Administration.

Beginning in 2026 and continuing through 2030, the bill requires the DOE to prepare an annual report by January 31 of the following year detailing the program's operations. At a minimum, the report must include:

- The badges offered by the program;
- Data on post-graduation student employment;

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- Student participation rates; and
- Any other outcome data deemed necessary by the DOE. (Section [1](#))

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2025. (Section [2](#))

FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:

STATE GOVERNMENT:

The bill requires DOE to develop and implement a workforce credential program for students with ASD and students on a modified curriculum. A curriculum framework for students with disabilities already exists. As such, it is unclear if the bill requires DOE to leverage this existing framework or create a brand-new framework. For this reason, the bill will have an indeterminate impact to state expenditures.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT:

Adoption and implementation of the workforce credential program is at the discretion of school districts. Therefore, the bill will have an indeterminate impact on local government expenditures.

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

Exceptional Student Education

The Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA)¹ and Florida law² mandate that all students who are between the ages of 3 to 21 and have a disability have the right to a free, appropriate public education (FAPE). School districts have the responsibility to ensure that students suspected of having a disability are subject to general education intervention procedures.³ Each district school board is required to provide for an appropriate program of special instruction, facilities, and services for exceptional students. Each district program must:⁴

- Provide the necessary professional services for diagnosis and evaluation of exceptional students.
- Provide the special instruction, classes, and services, either within the district school system, in cooperation with other district school systems, or through contractual arrangements with approved private schools or community facilities.

Once a child meets IDEA’s eligibility criteria, FAPE is implemented through the individualized education plan (IEP), which is the plan for providing special education and related services by the local education agency. The IEP is the primary tool for outlining a student’s specialized education needs.⁵ The IEP is developed by an IEP team composed of school personnel and the child’s parents or guardian.⁶ A student must be properly evaluated and found eligible as an exceptional student before receiving special instruction or services as follows:⁷

- A school district must evaluate a student within 60 days after receiving signed parental consent.⁸
- An IEP team, to include the parents of the affected student, must then review the evaluation and determine the educational needs of the student.⁹

Autism Spectrum Disorder and Workforce Challenges

¹ 34 C.F.R. Part 300.

² Section [1003.5716, F.S.](#)

³ Rule 6A-6.0331, F.A.C.

⁴ Section [1003.57\(1\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

⁵ Florida Department of Education, *Developing Quality Individual Education Plans* (2015), p. 9, available at <http://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7690/urlt/0070122-qualityieps.pdf> (last visited Apr. 8, 2025).

⁶ Congressional Research Service, *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B: Key Statutory and Regulatory Provisions* (August 20, 2024), p. 2, available at <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R41833> (last visited Apr. 8, 2025).

⁷ Section [1003.57\(1\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

⁸ Rule 6A-6.0331(3)(f), F.A.C.

⁹ Rule 6A-6.0331(6)(a), F.A.C.

ASD is a developmental disability caused by differences in the brain.¹⁰ As individuals with ASD transition to adolescence and adulthood, they may face challenges in developing and maintaining friendships, communicating with peers and adults, or understanding what behaviors are expected in school or on the job.¹¹ These challenges can make it difficult to secure and sustain competitive employment, even for those with strong technical skills.¹²

Research indicates that employees with ASD have many skills that can contribute a great deal to the workforce. Despite possessing valuable skill sets, individuals with ASD face higher unemployment and underemployment rates compared to the general population.¹³ Research suggests that targeted training, employer-recognized credentials, and structured workforce support can significantly enhance employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, including ASD.¹⁴

Career Education Services for Students with Disabilities

The DOE has adopted a curriculum framework specifically for career education services for students with disabilities through a structured sequence of courses designed to develop employability skills, technical training, and industry certification opportunities. This program is individualized for each student through that student's IEP or other accommodations plan and allows students to gain the skills necessary for competitive employment in their desired occupation.¹⁵

The curriculum framework integrates competency-based applied learning, including instruction in:¹⁶

- Career Ready Practices;¹⁷
- Workplace safety;
- Job-seeking and employability skills;
- Self-advocacy and career planning; and
- Technical skills in industry-specific fields.

Students may earn multiple credits as they progress through career education courses, with their achievements documented through the Occupational Completion Point system. Some students may also participate in on-the-job training opportunities.¹⁸

¹⁰ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *About Autism Spectrum Disorder*, <https://www.cdc.gov/autism/about/index.html> (last visited Apr. 8, 2025).

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Kate Jackson, *Autism in the Technology Workplace*, *Social Work Today*, Vol. 13, No. 6, p. 8 (Nov./Dec. 2013), available at <https://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/111113p8.shtml>.

¹³ A.J. Griffiths et al., *Developing Employment Environments Where Individuals with ASD Thrive: Using Machine Learning to Explore Employer Policies and Practices*, *Brain Sci.*, Vol. 10, No. 9, p. 632 (Sept. 11, 2020), available at <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7564237/>.

¹⁴ Florida Department of Education, Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, and CareerSource Florida, *2024-2028 WIOA Combined Plan*, pp. 426-507, available at <https://careersourceflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2024-2028-WIOA-Combined-Plan.pdf>.

¹⁵ Florida Department of Education, *2024-25 CTE Curriculum Frameworks*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/career-tech-edu/curriculum-frameworks/2024-25-frameworks/additional-cte-programs-courses.stml>, download "Career Education Services for Students with Disabilities (9603100) (RTF)." (last visited Apr. 8, 2025).

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ Career Ready Practices include, but are not limited to, acting as a responsible and contributing citizen and employee, applying appropriate academic and technical skills, communicating clearly, and using technology to enhance productivity. *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*

BILL HISTORY

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
Careers & Workforce Subcommittee	15 Y, 0 N, As CS	3/13/2025	Kiner	Wolff
THE CHANGES ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required the DOE to develop and implement a micro-credential program for students with disabilities by leveraging an existing curriculum framework. • Required that each course within the curriculum framework have at least one associated micro-credential that reflects a student’s demonstration of specified career ready practices or career and technical education standards. • Required the DOE to consult with both the Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities and the Occupational Health and Safety Administration in the development of the micro-credentials. • Required that one member of instructional staff that specialized in ESE instruction and one member of the student’s IEP team validate micro-credential attainment. 			
Human Services Subcommittee	17 Y, 0 N	3/18/2025	Mitz	Aderibigbe
PreK-12 Budget Subcommittee	15 Y, 0 N	3/25/2025	Potvin	Bailey
Education & Employment Committee	16 Y, 0 N, As CS	4/8/2025	Hassell	Wolff
THE CHANGES ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrowed the scope of the workforce credential program to those students with ASD or on a modified curriculum. • Provided the DOE discretion in the development of the workforce credential program and required the development of the badges to be awarded under the program. • Removed the requirements that the DOE use the existing curriculum framework for students with disabilities and create micro-credentials associated with courses within that framework. 			

THIS BILL ANALYSIS HAS BEEN UPDATED TO INCORPORATE ALL OF THE CHANGES DESCRIBED ABOVE.
