

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.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education

BILL: CS/SB 1036

INTRODUCER: Education Pre-K - 12 Committee and Senator Calatayud

SUBJECT: School Counselors

DATE: February 3, 2026

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Sabitsch</u>	<u>Bouck</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>
2.	<u>Gray</u>	<u>Elwell</u>	<u>AED</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
3.	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u>RC</u>	<u> </u>

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

PLEASE MAKE SELECTION

I. Summary:

CS/SB 1036 provides an exemption for individuals employed as a school counselor from the current certification requirement to demonstrate mastery of both general and subject area knowledge but does not limit a school district from requiring that mastery as a condition of employment.

The bill does not have a fiscal impact on state revenues or expenditures. See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

II. Present Situation:

Educator Certification

Florida law requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to classify school services, designate the certification subject areas, establish competencies and certification requirements for all school-based personnel. The SBE adopts rules by which professional, temporary, and part-time certificates are issued by the Department of Education (DOE) to applicants who meet the established standards. Florida law requires each person in the following positions in any public school to hold an educator certificate required by law and by rules of the SBE:

- School supervisor.

- School principal.
- Teacher.
- Library media specialist.
- School counselor.
- Athletic coach.
- Other positions in which the individual serves in an instructional capacity.¹

The purpose of certification is to require school-based personnel to “possess the credentials, knowledge, and skills necessary to allow the opportunity for a high-quality education in the public schools.”²

The DOE issues three main types of educator certificates:

- Professional Certificate: The professional certificate is Florida’s highest type of full-time educator certification.³ The professional certificate is valid for five years and is renewable.⁴
- Temporary Certificate: The temporary certificate covers employment in full-time positions for which educator certification is required.⁵ An individual holding a temporary certificate must demonstrate mastery of general knowledge and professional preparation and education competence in order to apply for a professional certificate. Generally, a temporary certificate is valid for five years and is nonrenewable.⁶
- Athletic Coaching Certificate: The athletic coaching certificate covers full-time and part-time employment as a public school’s athletic coach.⁷ The DOE issues two types of athletic coaching certificates – one is valid for five years and may be issued for subsequent five-year periods while the other is valid for three years and may be issued only once. The five-year certificate requires satisfaction of certain specialization requirements established in rule.⁸

Professional Certificate Requirements

To be eligible for a professional certificate, a person must:

- Be at least 18 years of age;
- Sign an affidavit attesting that the applicant will uphold the U.S. and State Constitutions;
- Earn a bachelor’s or higher degree from an accredited institution of higher learning or from a nonaccredited institution identified by the DOE as having a quality program resulting in a bachelor’s or higher degree;
- Submit to fingerprinting and background screening and not have a criminal history that requires the applicant’s disqualification from certification or employment;
- Be of good moral character;
- Be competent and capable of performing the duties, functions, and responsibilities of a teacher;
- Demonstrate mastery of general knowledge;

¹ Section 1012.55(1), F.S.

² Section 1012.54, F.S.

³ Rule 6A-4.004(5), F.A.C.

⁴ Section 1012.56(7), F.S.

⁵ Rule 6A-4.004(1), F.A.C.

⁶ Section 1012.56(7), F.S.

⁷ Section 1012.55(2), F.S.

⁸ Rule 6A-4.004(7), F.A.C.

- Demonstrate mastery of subject area knowledge; and
- Demonstrate mastery of professional preparation and education competence, if the person serves as a classroom teacher or school administrator.⁹

Demonstrating Mastery of General Knowledge

Mastery of general knowledge may be demonstrated through any of the following methods:

- Achieving a passing score on the General Knowledge Test, which consist of subtests areas that include Essay, English Language Skills, Reading and Mathematics;¹⁰
- Achieving passing scores established in SBE rule on national or international examinations that test comparable content and relevant standards in verbal, analytical writing, and quantitative reasoning skills (e.g., the verbal, analytical writing, and quantitative reasoning portions of the Graduate Record Examination);
- Providing documentation of a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued by another U.S. state or territory, by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), or by the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE);
- Completing two semesters of successful, part-time or full-time teaching in a Florida College System institution, state university, or private college or university that awards an associate or higher degree and is an accredited institution or an institution identified by the DOE as having a quality program;
- Achievement of passing scores, identified in state board rule, on national or international examinations that test comparable content and relevant standards in verbal, analytical writing, and quantitative reasoning skills, including, but not limited to, the verbal, analytical writing, and quantitative reasoning portions of the Graduate Record Examination and the SAT, ACT, and Classic Learning Test; or
- Documentation of receipt of a master's or higher degree from an accredited postsecondary institution that the DOE has identified as having a quality program resulting in a baccalaureate degree or higher.¹¹

Demonstrating Mastery of Subject Area Knowledge

Mastery of subject area knowledge may be demonstrated through any of the following methods:

- Bachelor's Degree Level (for certification in a subject area for which SBE rule requires a bachelor's or higher degree):
 - If a Florida subject area examination has been developed, achieving a passing score on the Florida-developed subject area examination specified in SBE rule¹² or documentation of receipt of a master's or higher degree from an accredited postsecondary institution that the DOE has identified as having a quality program resulting in a baccalaureate degree or higher in the certificate subject area as identified in SBE rule.
 - If a Florida subject area examination has not been developed, achieving a passing score on a standardized examination specified in SBE rule, including passing scores on both the

⁹ Section 1012.56(2), F.S.

¹⁰ Florida Department of Education, Competencies and Skills Required for Teacher Certification in Florida, pg. 14 (2025), available at: <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7479/urlt/FTCE28thEdition22Rule.pdf> (last visited Jan. 26, 2026).

¹¹ Section 1012.56(3), F.S.

¹² Note: The Competencies and Skills Required for Teacher Certification in Florida (2025), Twenty-Eighth Edition, includes the subject area examination for School Counseling PK-12.

- oral proficiency and written proficiency examinations administered by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages or successful completion of a United States Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center program or a passing score on the Defense Language Proficiency Test.
- For certification in any other subject area for which there is no Florida subject area test or standardized examination specified in state board rule (e.g., Dance), completing the required bachelor's or higher degree and content courses specified in SBE rule and verification of subject area competence by the district school superintendent or, for a state-supported or private school, the school's chief administrative officer.
 - Master's Degree Level (for certification in a subject area for which SBE rule requires a master's or higher degree): completing the required master's or higher degree and content courses specified in SBE rule and achieving a passing score on the corresponding Florida-developed subject area test or standardized examination specified in SBE rule.
 - Out-of-State Certification: providing documentation of a valid professional standard teaching certificate issued for a subject area by another U.S. state or territory or by NBPTS or ABCTE, if the certificate is comparable to the Florida professional certificate issued for the same subject area.¹³

Educator Certification Examination Fees

The DOE sets registration fees for the various exams required for educator certification, including initial registration and retakes. For the general knowledge exam, the initial registration fee is \$130.00 for the full battery of four subjects. An individual is able to retake the general knowledge exam by subtest with the retake registration fees being the following:

- One subtest - \$32.50.
- Two subtests - \$65.00.
- Three subtests - \$97.50.
- Full battery retake - \$130.00.

For subject area examinations and the professional educational test, the initial and retake registration fee is \$150.00.¹⁴

Current law and rule provide for several fee waivers including the Military Testing Fee Waiver, Retired First Responder Fee Waiver,¹⁵ and Exceptional Student Education K–12/Elementary Education K–6 Waivers.¹⁶

Specific Requirements for School Counseling Certification

Florida Law provides multiple pathways to better enable students enrolled in postsecondary school counseling program to enter the workforce as certified school counselors.¹⁷ SBE rules outline three plans for specialized requirements for certification in school counseling in addition to the basic requirements for certification, as follows:

¹³ Section 1012.56(5), F.S.

¹⁴ Rule 6A-4.0021(4), F.A.C.

¹⁵ Section 1012.59(3), F.S.

¹⁶ Section 1012.59(4), F.S.

¹⁷ Section 1004.0982, F.S.

- Plan one consists of a master's or higher degree with a graduate major in guidance and counseling or school counseling that includes a minimum of 600 clock hours of supervised internship serving school-aged students in a prekindergarten, an elementary or a secondary school setting.¹⁸
- Plan two consists of a master's or higher degree with a graduate major in counseling other than guidance and counseling or school counseling as specified in plan one that includes a minimum of 600 clock hours of supervised internship with school-aged children and their families with at least 9 semester hours of graduate credit to include the following areas:
 - Student appraisal and evaluation methods in prekindergarten, elementary and secondary schools;
 - College and career planning for prekindergarten, elementary and secondary school students including college and career exploration and knowledge of financial aid and financing of postsecondary education options;
 - Principles, philosophy, organization and administration of a comprehensive school counseling program in prekindergarten, elementary and secondary schools; and
 - Consultation skills and techniques for conferring with groups such as agencies, teachers and parents.¹⁹
- Plan three consists of a master's or higher degree with a graduate major in school counseling that includes a minimum of 300 clock hours of supervised internship serving school-aged students in a prekindergarten, elementary or secondary school setting if the applicant:
 - Is a current full-time teacher;
 - Has been employed as a teacher for at least 5 school years; and
 - Has earned an effective or highly effective rating under Section 1012.34, F.S., on his or her performance evaluation for the most recent 3 years the teacher was employed in a Florida public school.²⁰

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill amends s. 1012.55, F.S., to exempt school guidance counselors from the demonstration of mastery of both general knowledge and subject area knowledge requirements for educator certification. The bill specifies, however, that school districts are not precluded from requiring demonstration of mastery as a condition of employment.

The bill is effective on July 1, 2026.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

¹⁸ Rule 6A-4.0181(1), F.A.C.

¹⁹ Rule 6A-4.0181(2), F.A.C.

²⁰ Rule 6A-4.0181(4), F.A.C.

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:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

This bill does not have a fiscal impact on state revenues or expenditures.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends section 1012.55 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:

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

CS by Education Pre-K – 12 Committee on January 20, 2026:

The committee substitute clarifies that the exemption from certification requirements authorized in the bill does not preclude public school districts from requiring the mastery of general and subject area knowledge as a condition of employment.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.
