



LEGISLATIVE ACTION

| Senate | . | House |
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| Comm: RCS | . | |
| 01/14/2026 | . | |
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The Committee on Education Pre-K - 12 (Harrell) recommended the following:

1 **Senate Amendment (with title amendment)**

2
3 Delete everything after the enacting clause
4 and insert:

5 Section 1. Subsection (5) of section 393.063, Florida
6 Statutes, is amended to read:

7 393.063 Definitions.—For the purposes of this chapter, the
8 term:

9 (5) "Autism" or "autism spectrum disorder" means a
10 condition as defined by the most recent edition of the



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11 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders published
12 by the American Psychiatric Association pervasive,
13 neurologically based developmental disability of extended
14 duration which causes severe learning, communication, and
15 behavior disorders with age of onset during infancy or
16 childhood. Individuals with autism exhibit impairment in
17 reciprocal social interaction, impairment in verbal and
18 nonverbal communication and imaginative ability, and a markedly
19 restricted repertoire of activities and interests.

20 Section 2. Paragraph (b) of subsection (3) of section
21 1004.85, Florida Statutes, is amended, and subsection (9) is
22 added to that section, to read:

23 1004.85 Postsecondary educator preparation institutes.—
24 (3) Educator preparation institutes approved pursuant to
25 this section may offer competency-based certification programs
26 specifically designed for noneducation major baccalaureate
27 degree holders to enable program participants to meet the
28 educator certification requirements of s. 1012.56. An educator
29 preparation institute choosing to offer a competency-based
30 certification program pursuant to the provisions of this section
31 must implement a program developed by the institute and approved
32 by the department for this purpose. Approved programs shall be
33 available for use by other approved educator preparation
34 institutes.

35 (b) Each program participant must:

36 1. Meet certification requirements pursuant to s.
37 1012.56(1) by obtaining a statement of status of eligibility in
38 the certification subject area of the educational plan and meet
39 the requirements of s. 1012.56(2)(a)-(f) before participating in



40 field experiences.

41 2. Demonstrate competency and participate in field
42 experiences that are appropriate to his or her educational plan
43 prepared under paragraph (a). Beginning with candidates entering
44 an educator preparation institute in the 2022-2023 school year,
45 a candidate for certification in a coverage area identified
46 pursuant to s. 1012.585(3)(f) must successfully complete all
47 competencies for a reading endorsement, including completion of
48 the endorsement practicum through the candidate's field
49 experience, in order to graduate from the program.

50 3. Before completion of the program, fully demonstrate his
51 or her ability to teach the subject area for which he or she is
52 seeking certification by documenting a positive impact on
53 student learning growth in a prekindergarten through grade 12
54 setting and, except as provided in s. 1012.56(7)(a)3., achieving
55 a passing score on the professional education competency
56 examination, the basic skills examination, and the subject area
57 examination for the subject area certification which is required
58 by state board rule.

59 4. For each participant who is certified in exceptional
60 student education, complete the autism micro-credential created
61 pursuant to s. 1004.551(1)(f).

62 (9) By August 1, 2027, as a condition for continued program
63 approval, each educator preparation institute must offer
64 instruction and training on evidence-based practices for
65 teaching students with autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome,
66 other developmental disabilities, and emotional or behavioral
67 disabilities, consistent with the uniform core curricula
68 developed by the department.



69 Section 3. Section 1009.636, Florida Statutes, is created
70 to read:

71 1009.636 Autism educator loan forgiveness program.—
72 (1) The Legislature finds that an adequate supply of
73 special education teachers is critical to provide students who
74 have a neurodevelopmental disability, such as autism spectrum
75 disorder, with individualized education to foster essential
76 social-emotional skills, provide positive interventions, and
77 build life skills for independence. The Autism Educator Loan
78 Forgiveness Program is created to recruit and retain qualified
79 individuals to serve as special education teachers for students
80 with autism spectrum disorder.

81 (2) To be eligible, an individual must:

82 (a) 1. Have earned a master's or higher degree in special
83 education or exceptional student education from an accredited
84 institution and have an active student loan balance from
85 completion of that degree, and hold a temporary or professional
86 certificate; or

87 2. Have earned a bachelor's or higher degree from an
88 accredited institution and have an active student loan balance
89 from completion of that degree, hold a temporary or professional
90 certificate, and hold the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement
91 or Severe or Profound Disabilities Endorsement; and

92 (b) Serve as the primary teacher in a public school
93 classroom in which a majority of the students have autism
94 spectrum disorder.

95 (3) Eligible participants may receive up to \$17,500 in
96 total student loan repayment assistance over 5 years, disbursed
97 in annual payments not to exceed \$3,500 per year. Payments must



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98 be made directly to the lender servicing the participant's
99 student loan.

100 (4) In order for the department to release each annual
101 payment, a teacher must:

102 (a) Have completed a full year of service pursuant to
103 paragraph (2) (c).

104 (b) Have received a rating of effective or highly effective
105 pursuant to s. 1012.34.

106 (c) Not have had any disciplinary action taken by the
107 school district or by the department against the teacher's
108 certificate.

109 (5) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to
110 administer this section.

111 Section 4. Paragraph (c) of subsection (1) and paragraph
112 (a) of subsection (3) of section 1012.22, Florida Statutes, are
113 amended to read:

114 1012.22 Public school personnel; powers and duties of the
115 district school board.—The district school board shall:

116 (1) Designate positions to be filled, prescribe
117 qualifications for those positions, and provide for the
118 appointment, compensation, promotion, suspension, and dismissal
119 of employees as follows, subject to the requirements of this
120 chapter:

121 (c) *Compensation and salary schedules.*—

122 1. Definitions.—As used in this paragraph:

123 a. "Adjustment" means an addition to the base salary
124 schedule that is not a bonus and becomes part of the employee's
125 permanent base salary and shall be considered compensation under
126 s. 121.021(22).



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127 b. "Grandfathered salary schedule" means the salary
128 schedule or schedules adopted by a district school board before
129 July 1, 2014, pursuant to subparagraph 4.

130 c. "Instructional personnel" means instructional personnel
131 as defined in s. 1012.01(2) (a)-(d), excluding substitute
132 teachers.

133 d. "Performance salary schedule" means the salary schedule
134 or schedules adopted by a district school board pursuant to
135 subparagraph 5.

136 e. "Salary schedule" means the schedule or schedules used
137 to provide the base salary for district school board personnel.

138 f. "School administrator" means a school administrator as
139 defined in s. 1012.01(3) (c).

140 g. "Supplement" means an annual addition to the base salary
141 for the term of the negotiated supplement as long as the
142 employee continues his or her employment for the purpose of the
143 supplement. A supplement does not become part of the employee's
144 continuing base salary but shall be considered compensation
145 under s. 121.021(22).

146 2. Cost-of-living adjustment.—A district school board may
147 provide a cost-of-living salary adjustment if the adjustment:

148 a. Does not discriminate among comparable classes of
149 employees based upon the salary schedule under which they are
150 compensated.

151 b. Does not exceed 50 percent of the annual adjustment
152 provided to instructional personnel rated as effective.

153 3. Advanced degrees.—A district school board may use
154 advanced degrees in setting a salary schedule for instructional
155 personnel or school administrators if the advanced degree is



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156 held in the individual's area of certification.

157 4. Grandfathered salary schedule.—

158 a. The district school board shall adopt a salary schedule
159 or salary schedules to be used as the basis for paying all
160 school employees hired before July 1, 2014. Instructional
161 personnel on annual contract as of July 1, 2014, shall be placed
162 on the performance salary schedule adopted under subparagraph 5.
163 Instructional personnel on continuing contract or professional
164 service contract may opt into the performance salary schedule if
165 the employee relinquishes such contract and agrees to be
166 employed on an annual contract under s. 1012.335. Such an
167 employee shall be placed on the performance salary schedule and
168 may not return to continuing contract or professional service
169 contract status. Any employee who opts into the performance
170 salary schedule may not return to the grandfathered salary
171 schedule.

172 b. In determining the grandfathered salary schedule for
173 instructional personnel, a district school board must base a
174 portion of each employee's compensation upon performance
175 demonstrated under s. 1012.34 and shall provide differentiated
176 pay for both instructional personnel and school administrators
177 based upon district-determined factors, including, but not
178 limited to, additional responsibilities, school demographics,
179 high-demand teacher needs areas, and level of job performance
180 difficulties.

181 5. Performance salary schedule.—By July 1, 2014, the
182 district school board shall adopt a performance salary schedule
183 that provides annual salary adjustments for instructional
184 personnel and school administrators based upon performance



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185 determined under s. 1012.34. Employees hired on or after July 1,
186 2014, or employees who choose to move from the grandfathered
187 salary schedule to the performance salary schedule shall be
188 compensated pursuant to the performance salary schedule once
189 they have received the appropriate performance evaluation for
190 this purpose.

191 a. Base salary.—The base salary shall be established as
192 follows:

193 (I) The base salary for instructional personnel or school
194 administrators who opt into the performance salary schedule
195 shall be the salary paid in the prior year, including
196 adjustments only.

197 (II) Instructional personnel or school administrators new
198 to the district, returning to the district after a break in
199 service without an authorized leave of absence, or appointed for
200 the first time to a position in the district in the capacity of
201 instructional personnel or school administrator shall be placed
202 on the performance salary schedule.

203 b. Salary adjustments.—Salary adjustments for highly
204 effective or effective performance shall be established as
205 follows:

206 (I) The annual salary adjustment under the performance
207 salary schedule for an employee rated as highly effective must
208 be at least 25 percent greater than the highest annual salary
209 adjustment available to an employee of the same classification
210 through any other salary schedule adopted by the district.

211 (II) The annual salary adjustment under the performance
212 salary schedule for an employee rated as effective must be equal
213 to at least 50 percent and no more than 75 percent of the annual



214 adjustment provided for a highly effective employee of the same
215 classification.

216 (III) A salary schedule shall not provide an annual salary
217 adjustment for an employee who receives a rating other than
218 highly effective or effective for the year.

219 c. Salary supplements.—In addition to the salary
220 adjustments, each district school board shall provide for salary
221 supplements for activities that must include, but are not
222 limited to:

223 (I) Assignment to a Title I eligible school.

224 (II) Assignment to a school that earned a grade of "F" or
225 three consecutive grades of "D" pursuant to s. 1008.34 such that
226 the supplement remains in force for at least 1 year following
227 improved performance in that school.

228 (III) Certification and teaching in high-demand teacher
229 needs areas. Statewide high-demand teacher needs areas shall be
230 identified by the State Board of Education under s. 1012.07.
231 However, the district school board may identify other areas of
232 high-demand needs within the school district for purposes of
233 this sub-sub-subparagraph and may remove areas identified by the
234 state board which do not apply within the school district.

235 (IV) Assignment of additional academic responsibilities.

236 (V) Completion of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement.

238 If budget constraints in any given year limit a district school
239 board's ability to fully fund all adopted salary schedules, the
240 performance salary schedule shall not be reduced on the basis of
241 total cost or the value of individual awards in a manner that is
242 proportionally greater than reductions to any other salary



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243 schedules adopted by the district. Any compensation for
244 longevity of service awarded to instructional personnel who are
245 on any other salary schedule must be included in calculating the
246 salary adjustments required by sub subparagraph b.

247 (3) (a) *Collective bargaining.*—Notwithstanding provisions of
248 chapter 447 related to district school board collective
249 bargaining, collective bargaining may not preclude a district
250 school board from carrying out its constitutional and statutory
251 duties related to the following:

252 1. Providing incentives to effective and highly effective
253 teachers.

254 2. Implementing intervention and support strategies under
255 s. 1008.33 to address the causes of low student performance and
256 improve student academic performance and attendance.

257 3. Implementing student discipline provisions required by
258 law, including a review of a student's abilities, past
259 performance, behavior, and needs.

260 4. Implementing school safety plans and requirements.

261 5. Implementing staff and student recognition programs.

262 6. Distributing correspondence to parents, teachers, and
263 community members related to the daily operation of schools and
264 the district.

265 7. Providing any required notice or copies of information
266 related to the district school board or district operations
267 which is readily available on the school district's website.

268 8. The school district's calendar.

269 9. Providing incentives to exceptional student education
270 teachers who complete the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement,
271 in addition to any stipend funded in the General Appropriations



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272 Act for completion of the endorsement, and who serve as the
273 primary teacher in classroom in which a majority of the students
274 have autism spectrum disorder.

275 Section 5. Paragraph (g) of subsection (2) of section
276 1012.551, Florida Statutes, is amended, and subsection (4) is
277 added to that section to read:

278 1012.551 Teacher preparation core principles, standards,
279 and content.—

280 (2) The uniform core curricula for each state-approved
281 teacher preparation program must meet, at a minimum, the
282 following standards:

283 (g) Must include strategies for differentiated instruction
284 to meet student needs, including English language learners and
285 students with disabilities, while maintaining grade-level
286 expectations. The strategies must also include specific training
287 aligned with evidence-based practices for supporting students
288 with autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, other
289 developmental disabilities, and emotional or behavioral
290 disabilities applicable across all levels of support.

291 (4) Each state-approved teacher preparation program using
292 the uniform core curricula developed pursuant to this section
293 must include the autism micro-credential created pursuant to s.
294 1004.551(1)(f), which shall count for at least 1 semester hour
295 toward completion of the program.

296 Section 6. Paragraph (g) is added to subsection (2) of
297 section 1012.552, Florida Statutes, to read:

298 1012.552 The Coaching for Educator Readiness and Teaching
299 (CERT) Certification Program.—

300 (2) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—A CERT program must include all



301 of the following:

302 (g) Required successful completion of the autism micro-
303 credential created pursuant to s. 1004.551(1)(f) for a candidate
304 certification in exceptional student education.

305 Section 7. Paragraph (e) of subsection (3) of section
306 1012.585, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

307 1012.585 Process for renewal of professional certificates.—

308 (3) For the renewal of a professional certificate, the
309 following requirements must be met:

310 (e) Beginning July 1, 2014, an applicant for renewal of a
311 professional certificate must earn a minimum of one college
312 credit or the equivalent inservice points in the area of
313 instruction for teaching students with disabilities. The
314 requirement in this paragraph may not add to the total hours
315 required by the department for continuing education or inservice
316 training. Beginning August 1, 2027:

317 1. Instruction for teaching students with disabilities must
318 include autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, other
319 developmental disabilities, and emotional or behavioral
320 disabilities.

321 2. An applicant certified in exceptional student education
322 must earn the autism micro-credential created pursuant to s.
323 1004.551(1)(f), which must count toward 3 college credits or the
324 equivalent inservice points. Once earned, an applicant is not
325 required to earn the micro-credential for additional renewal
326 periods.

327 Section 8. Subsection (3) is added to section 1012.586,
328 Florida Statutes, to read:

329 1012.586 Additions or changes to certificates; duplicate



certificates; reading endorsement pathways.—

(3) Personnel certified in exceptional student education who complete the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement are eligible for a stipend as specified in the General Appropriations Act.

Section 9. Paragraph (b) of subsection (5) of section 1012.98, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1012.98 School Community Professional Learning Act.—

(5) The Department of Education, school districts, schools, Florida College System institutions, and state universities share the responsibilities described in this section. These responsibilities include the following:

(b) Each school district shall develop a professional learning system as specified in subsection (4). The system shall be developed in consultation with teachers, teacher-educators of Florida College System institutions and state universities, business and community representatives, and local education foundations, consortia, and professional organizations. The professional learning system must:

1. Be reviewed and approved by the department for compliance with s. 1003.42(3) and this section. Effective March 1, 2024, the department shall establish a calendar for the review and approval of all professional learning systems. A professional learning system must be reviewed and approved every 5 years. Any substantial revisions to the system must be submitted to the department for review and approval. The department shall establish a format for the review and approval of a professional learning system.

2. Be based on analyses of student achievement data and



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359 instructional strategies and methods that support rigorous,
360 relevant, and challenging curricula for all students. Schools
361 and districts, in developing and refining the professional
362 learning system, shall also review and monitor school discipline
363 data; school environment surveys; assessments of parental
364 satisfaction; performance appraisal data of teachers, managers,
365 and administrative personnel; and other performance indicators
366 to identify school and student needs that can be met by improved
367 professional performance.

368 3. Provide inservice activities coupled with follow-up
369 ~~followup~~ support appropriate to accomplish district-level and
370 school-level improvement goals and standards. The inservice
371 activities for instructional and school administrative personnel
372 shall focus on analysis of student achievement data; ongoing
373 formal and informal assessments of student achievement;
374 identification and use of enhanced and differentiated
375 instructional strategies that emphasize rigor, relevance, and
376 reading in the content areas; enhancement of subject content
377 expertise; integrated use of classroom technology that enhances
378 teaching and learning; classroom management; parent involvement;
379 and school safety.

380 4. Provide inservice activities and support targeted to the
381 individual needs of new teachers participating in the
382 professional learning certification and education competency
383 program under s. 1012.56(8)(a).

384 5. Include a professional learning catalog for inservice
385 activities, pursuant to rules of the State Board of Education,
386 for all district employees from all fund sources. The catalog
387 must be updated annually by September 1, must be based on input



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388 from teachers and district and school instructional leaders, and
389 must use the latest available student achievement data and
390 research to enhance rigor and relevance in the classroom. Each
391 district inservice catalog must be aligned to and support the
392 school-based inservice catalog and school improvement plans
393 pursuant to s. 1001.42(18). Each district inservice catalog must
394 provide a description of the training that middle grades
395 instructional personnel and school administrators receive on the
396 district's code of student conduct adopted pursuant to s.
397 1006.07; integrated digital instruction and competency-based
398 instruction and CAPE Digital Tool certificates and CAPE industry
399 certifications; classroom management; student behavior and
400 interaction; extended learning opportunities for students; and
401 instructional leadership. District plans must be approved by the
402 district school board annually in order to ensure compliance
403 with subsection (1) and to allow for dissemination of research-
404 based best practices to other districts. District school boards
405 shall submit verification of their approval to the Commissioner
406 of Education no later than October 1, annually. Each school
407 principal may establish and maintain an individual professional
408 learning plan for each instructional employee assigned to the
409 school as a seamless component to the school improvement plans
410 developed pursuant to s. 1001.42(18). An individual professional
411 learning plan must be related to specific performance data for
412 the students to whom the teacher is assigned, define the
413 inservice objectives and specific measurable improvements
414 expected in student performance as a result of the inservice
415 activity, and include an evaluation component that determines
416 the effectiveness of the professional learning plan.



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417 6. Include inservice activities for school administrative
418 personnel, aligned to the state's educational leadership
419 standards, which address updated skills necessary for
420 instructional leadership and effective school management
421 pursuant to s. 1012.986.

422 7. Provide for systematic consultation with regional and
423 state personnel designated to provide technical assistance and
424 evaluation of local professional learning programs.

425 8. Provide for delivery of professional learning by
426 distance learning and other technology-based delivery systems to
427 reach more educators at lower costs.

428 9. Provide for the continuous evaluation of the quality and
429 effectiveness of professional learning programs in order to
430 eliminate ineffective programs and strategies and to expand
431 effective ones. Evaluations must consider the impact of such
432 activities on the performance of participating educators and
433 their students' achievement and behavior.

434 10. For all grades, emphasize:

435 a. Interdisciplinary planning, collaboration, and
436 instruction.

437 b. Alignment of curriculum and instructional materials to
438 the state academic standards adopted pursuant to s. 1003.41.

439 c. Use of small learning communities; problem-solving,
440 inquiry-driven research and analytical approaches for students;
441 strategies and tools based on student needs; competency-based
442 instruction; integrated digital instruction; and project-based
443 instruction.

444
445 Each school that includes any of grades 6, 7, or 8 shall include



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446 in its school improvement plan, required under s. 1001.42(18), a
447 description of the specific strategies used by the school to
448 implement each item listed in this subparagraph.

449 11. Provide training to reading coaches, classroom
450 teachers, and school administrators in effective methods of
451 identifying characteristics of conditions such as dyslexia and
452 other causes of diminished phonological processing skills;
453 incorporating instructional techniques into the general
454 education setting which are proven to improve reading
455 performance for all students; and using predictive and other
456 data to make instructional decisions based on individual student
457 needs. The training must help teachers integrate phonemic
458 awareness; phonics, word study, and spelling; reading fluency;
459 vocabulary, including academic vocabulary; and text
460 comprehension strategies into an explicit, systematic, and
461 sequential approach to reading instruction, including
462 multisensory intervention strategies. Such training for teaching
463 foundational skills must be based on the science of reading and
464 include phonics instruction for decoding and encoding as the
465 primary instructional strategy for word reading. Instructional
466 strategies included in the training may not employ the three-
467 cueing system model of reading or visual memory as a basis for
468 teaching word reading. Such instructional strategies may include
469 visual information and strategies which improve background and
470 experiential knowledge, add context, and increase oral language
471 and vocabulary to support comprehension, but may not be used to
472 teach word reading. Each district must provide all elementary
473 grades instructional personnel access to training sufficient to
474 meet the requirements of s. 1012.585(3)(f).



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475 12. Provide at least one autism-specific professional
476 development opportunity annually for instructional personnel and
477 school-based administrators. The professional development must
478 be developed and delivered in coordination with the district's
479 assigned Center for Autism and Related Disabilities and must
480 include evidence-based practices for supporting students with
481 autism spectrum disorder across all levels of need, including
482 academic instruction, behavioral supports, communication
483 strategies, and inclusive practices.

484 Section 10. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

485
486 ===== T I T L E A M E N D M E N T =====
487 And the title is amended as follows:

488 Delete everything before the enacting clause
489 and insert:

490 A bill to be entitled
491 An act relating to students with autism spectrum
492 disorder; amending s. 393.063, F.S.; revising the
493 definition of the term "autism"; amending s. 1004.85,
494 F.S.; requiring certain program participants at
495 educator preparation institutes to complete the autism
496 micro-credential; requiring each educator preparation
497 institute to offer training on teaching students with
498 certain disabilities; creating s. 1009.636, F.S.;
499 providing legislative findings; creating the Autism
500 Educator Loan Forgiveness Program; providing
501 eligibility requirements; providing criteria for loan
502 repayment assistance; providing requirements for
503 teachers to receive an annual payment; requiring the



504 State Board of Education to adopt rules; amending s.
505 1012.22, F.S.; revising salary supplements a district
506 school board must provide; revising which district
507 school board duties collective bargaining may not
508 preclude; amending s. 1012.551, F.S.; revising core
509 curricula for teacher preparation programs; requiring
510 a teacher preparation program to include the autism
511 micro-credential; amending s. 1012.552, F.S.;
512 providing that the Coaching for Educator Readiness and
513 Teaching Certification Program must include completion
514 of the autism micro-credential; amending s. 1012.585,
515 F.S.; revising requirements for the renewal of a
516 professional certificate; amending s. 1012.586, F.S.;
517 providing that personnel certified in exceptional
518 student education who complete the Autism Spectrum
519 Disorder Endorsement are eligible for a stipend;
520 amending s. 1012.98, F.S.; requiring a professional
521 learning system to provide at least one autism-
522 specific professional development opportunity;
523 providing requirements for the professional
524 development; providing an effective date.