

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 Committee on Rules

BILL: CS/SB 7036

INTRODUCER: Appropriations Committee on Pre-K-12 Education and Education Pre-K - 12 Committee

SUBJECT: Education

DATE: February 23, 2026

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
	<u>Brick/Sabitsch</u>	<u>Bouck</u>		ED Submitted as Comm. Bill/Fav
1.	<u>Gray</u>	<u>Elwell</u>	<u>AED</u>	Fav/CS
2.	<u>Brick/Sabitsch</u>	<u>Kruse</u>	<u>RC</u>	Pre-meeting

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/SB 7036 makes changes across K-12 and postsecondary education laws to update program requirements, expand instructional options, and clarify district responsibilities for student support and safety. The bill:

- Expands district and school operational authority to:
 - Expand the circumstances under which a district school board may declare an educational emergency by adding “persistently low-performing schools” as an additional trigger for existing personnel and compensation strategies.
 - Clarify that a school district’s existing authority to reserve or withhold a portion of Title I funds for allowable districtwide education services includes STEM curricula, instructional materials, and related learning technologies supporting academic achievement in Title I schools, subject to federal allocation requirements.
 - Revise charter school renewal and dismissal provisions by clarifying that “exemplary academic programming” for purposes of eligibility for a 15-year renewal may include performance measured by school improvement ratings and by prohibiting academic-performance-based dismissal while a charter school is implementing a required improvement plan or corrective action plan.
- Updates student carry, self-administration, and school supply provisions for epinephrine to apply to U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved epinephrine delivery devices, rather than limiting the statutes to auto-injectors.
- Modifies early learning programs and modifies specified student and provider eligibility provisions to:

- Remove expired, program-year-specific provisions from Voluntary Prekindergarten accountability statutes.
- Refine Gold Seal Quality Care eligibility and termination by limiting which class I violations are disqualifying or terminable to those for which the provider is the primary cause, removing a discretionary exception process, and retaining a two-year reinstatement standard.
- Expand eligibility for supplemental instruction in the VPK summer bridge program by increasing the performance threshold from the 10th percentile to the 25th percentile.
- Expands instruction standards, courses, and programs from kindergarten through adult education by:
 - Expanding required elementary instruction in the principles of agriculture and directs the Department of Education (DOE), in collaboration with partner agencies and entities, to develop standards, curriculum supports, training, and related resources.
 - Establishing a statewide framework for applied, career-relevant mathematics by creating “applied algebra” courses aligned to career clusters and requiring the DOE workgroup to identify and report corresponding mathematics pathways on specified timelines.
 - Expanding flexibility in the Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) program by authorizing certain online-provider agreements, adjusting age eligibility, and clarifying that adult secondary and career coursework need not be taken simultaneously.
 - Expanding eligibility for institutions to receive startup grants to implement the GATE Program.
- Provides educators with additional preparation and certificate options by:
 - Revising educator preparation institute participation requirements by allowing coursework completion while a participant seeks a statement of eligibility and clarifying what that statement must reflect.
 - Requiring the State Board of Education (SBE) to maintain specified computer science subject area coverages and to adopt competencies and examinations, with deadlines for the DOE recommendations and exam availability.
- Modifies requirements for students in need of educational interventions to:
 - Require a school district, when screening indicates characteristics of dyslexia or dyscalculia, to provide evidence-based interventions with progress monitoring; treat the indication as reasonable suspicion for exceptional student education evaluation purposes and promptly seek parental consent; and conduct screening, intervention, and evaluation activities concurrently as required by SBE rule.
 - Require that parent resources included in an individualized progress monitoring plan for a student with a substantial reading deficiency include information about the student’s eligibility for the New Worlds Reading Initiative.

The bill has an indeterminate fiscal impact on state revenues and expenditures. **See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.**

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

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:

Educational Emergency

Present Situation

An educational emergency tool exists to free schools graded “D” or “F” from contract restrictions that limit a school’s ability to implement programs and strategies needed to improve student performance. A district school board may adopt salary incentives or other strategies addressing the selection, placement, compensation, and expectations of instructional personnel, and provide principals with the autonomy described for participating principals in the Principal Autonomy Program Initiative. An educational emergency exists in a school district if one or more schools in the district have a school grade of “D” or “F.”

Under an educational emergency, a district school board is not subject to collective bargaining restrictions regarding:

- Salary incentives that may differentiate based on a teacher’s certification, subject area taught, or grade level taught.
- Strategies adopted as a management right to assign high-quality teachers more equitably across schools in the district to low-performing schools.¹

A principal of a school participating in the Principal Autonomy Program Initiative has additional authority and responsibilities. That authority includes the selection and placement of instructional personnel and deploying financial resources.²

Schools graded “D” or “F” may not be assigned a higher percentage than the district average of inexperienced teachers, teachers in need of improvement, or out-of-field teachers. District school boards may provide salary incentives to meet the assignment provisions applicable to schools graded “D” or “F,” and a collective bargaining agreement may not preclude providing sufficient incentives to meet those provisions.³

Persistently Low-Performing School

A “persistently low-performing school” means a school:

- That has earned three grades lower than a “C” in at least 3 of the previous 5 years that the school received a grade and has not earned a grade of “B” or higher in the most recent 2 school years. That school closed within 2 years after submission of a notice of intent pursuant to the school improvement and SBE intervention statute.
- In the bottom 10 percent in at least 2 of the previous 3 years for student performance on the end-of-year administration of the coordinated screening and progress monitoring system for grade 3 English Language Arts or grade 4 mathematics.⁴

¹ Section 1001.42(21), F.S.

² Sections 1012.28(8) and 1011.6202, F.S.

³ Section 1012.2315, F.S.

⁴ Section 1002.333(1)(c), F.S.

Effect of Proposed Changes

Educational Emergency

The bill amends s. 1001.42(21), F.S., to expand the circumstances under which a district school board may declare an “educational emergency” for purposes of implementing specified personnel-related strategies to improve student performance. Specifically, the bill expands the educational-emergency trigger to include schools that are “persistently low-performing schools” in addition to schools with a school grade of “D” or “F.”

Charter Schools

Present Situation

Charter Contracts and Renewal Terms

A sponsor and a charter school governing board must set the terms and conditions for operating a charter school in a written contract (a charter). A sponsor and a charter school governing board must use the standard charter contract adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) rule, with limited flexibility to vary terms. A charter must be executed following a public hearing intended to ensure community input.⁵

Long-term Renewal Options

A sponsor may renew a charter when a program review demonstrates that required performance criteria have been accomplished and that grounds for nonrenewal have not been found. A charter school that meets the renewal conditions and received a school grade lower than “B” in the most recently graded school year must be renewed for at least 5 years, subject to specified exceptions.⁶

A charter school operating for at least 3 years and demonstrating exemplary academic programming and fiscal management is eligible for a 15-year charter renewal, subject to annual review and possible termination during the term. A sponsor must grant a 15-year renewal to a charter school that received a school grade of “A” or “B” in the most recently graded school year and is not in a state of financial emergency or deficit position, as referenced in the charter school statute.⁷

School Grades and School Improvement Ratings

All public schools, including charter schools, receive a school grade under Florida’s school grading system, using grades “A” through “F” as defined in SBE rule.⁸ An alternative school may choose to receive either a school grade or a school improvement rating, and a charter school governing board makes that choice for a charter school that meets the definition of an alternative school under SBE rule.⁹ An alternative school that receives a school improvement rating is rated

⁵ Section 1002.33(7), F.S.

⁶ Section 1002.33(7)(c), F.S.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Section 1008.34(2), F.S.

⁹ Section 1008.34(3), F.S.

using measures specified in statute and SBE rule, with outcomes categorized by rating level as defined in rule.¹⁰

Charter School Improvement Plan and Corrective Actions for Low Performance

A charter school that receives a school grade of “D” or “F” must appear before the sponsor to present information on its progress and must submit a charter school improvement plan to the sponsor. The Department of Education (DOE) must offer technical assistance to a charter school that earned a grade of “D” or “F.” A charter school that earns three consecutive school grades below “C” must select and implement one or more specified corrective actions, subject to the sponsor’s ability to waive the requirement upon certain showings.¹¹

Enrollment Limitations and Dismissal Procedures

A charter school’s admissions and dismissal procedures must not be based on a student’s academic performance, except as authorized for certain enrollment-limitation circumstances.¹² A charter school may limit its enrollment process to specified student populations, including students who meet reasonable academic, artistic, or other eligibility standards included in the application and charter (or otherwise consistent with the school’s mission for existing schools).¹³

A charter school using eligibility standards to limit enrollment must place a student on a progress monitoring plan for at least one semester before dismissing the student from the school.¹⁴

Corrective Action Plans Related to Financial Distress

A charter school meeting the statutory criteria for a financial emergency is subject to intervention requirements, which include development and implementation of a corrective action plan and related oversight steps.¹⁵

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1002.33, F.S., to modify charter renewal and student dismissal provisions in the charter school statute by:

- Expanding the description of what may constitute “exemplary academic programming” for purposes of eligibility for a 15-year charter renewal to include academic performance measured by school improvement ratings.
- Prohibiting a charter school from dismissing a student based on academic performance while the school is implementing:
 - A charter school improvement plan required for certain low-performing charter schools;
 - or
 - A corrective action plan related to financial distress.

¹⁰ Section 1008.341(2), F.S.

¹¹ Section 1002.33(9)(n), F.S.

¹² Section 1002.33(7)(a)7., F.S.

¹³ Section 1002.33(10)(e)5., F.S.

¹⁴ Section 1002.33(10)(e)5., F.S.

¹⁵ Section 1002.345(2), F.S.

Mathematics Education

Present Situation

Student Engagement in Mathematics

Student engagement in mathematics is a persistent challenge, particularly when students struggle to connect classroom content to real-world applications. A 2025 report by RAND reviewed reasons why student performance has not recovered to the pre-2019 student performance levels and had three key findings:

- About one-half of middle and high school students reported losing interest during their math lessons about half or more of the time.
- The students who are the most likely to maintain interest in math are the same ones who comprehend math, feel supported in math, are confident in their ability to do well in math, enjoy math, believe in the need to learn math, and see themselves as a math person.
- The students who are the most prone to disengage in math lessons want fewer online activities and more real-world applications in their math classes.¹⁶

Specifically, 55 percent of the least engaged students want fewer online activities compared with 17 percent of the most engaged students. Regarding real-world math problems, 54 percent of the least engaged students want more real-world math problems compared with 37 percent of the most engaged students.¹⁷ The findings on students who are disengaged from mathematics complements other research on career and technical education (CTE), which finds that occupationally focused courses with real-world applications help engage disadvantaged students because the material is directly relevant to their future.¹⁸

Over the course of 10 weeks in the fall of 2023, the University of Florida (UF) Lastinger Center Listening Tour team traveled from the Panhandle to the Florida Keys to listen to students, educators, leaders and policymakers and gather their perspectives on mathematics education in Florida. The Lastinger Center produced several briefs covering the following topics of mathematics education¹⁹

In the “Student Experience” brief, when students were asked what they would change about math class or what they wished for, students asked for opportunities to more actively engage with the mathematics content, collaborate with others, and for their mathematics experience to be fun.²⁰ Students also expressed a desire for less lecture and procedural practice, and more

¹⁶ RAND, *Students Lose Interest in Math*, (2025), available at https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR4300/RR4398-1/RAND_RRA3988-1.pdf, (last visited Feb. 5, 2026).

¹⁷ *Id.* at 6

¹⁸ *Id.* at 8

¹⁹ University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning, *Lastinger Listening Tour Math Summit*, <https://lastinger.ufl.edu/our-work/lastinger-listening-tours/2023-math-listening-tour/>, (last visited Feb. 5, 2026).

²⁰ University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning, *Student Experiences in the Mathematics Classroom*, at 3 (2024), available at <https://lastinger.center.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Brief-1-Students-Experiences.pdf> (last visited Feb. 5, 2026).

interaction with their peers to collaboratively solve problems.²¹ Employers expressed a real need for students to enter the workforce with a core set of skills that can be tailored to a career of their choosing.²²

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) researched the connection of incorporating mathematics instruction into CTE courses. In the study, SREB found that students in the classrooms of teachers who trained in the Math-in-CTE model performed significantly better on standardized math tests and community college math placement tests than students who received the regular CTE curriculum. Students also improved their math skills without losing the technical skills needed for college and career readiness.²³

Student Performance in Mathematics

On Florida's Algebra I end-of-course (EOC) assessment, there is a significant difference in performance between students who take Algebra I prior to entering high school versus students who take Algebra I while in high school. On the Algebra I EOC administration in the Spring of 2025, approximately 81,000 grade 8 students participated in the Algebra I EOC assessment, with 83 percent of students passing. In the same administration, approximately 95,000 grade 9 students participated in the Algebra I EOC assessment, with 40 percent of students passing. The table below shows the passing rate by grade level on the Spring 2025 Algebra I EOC administration.²⁴

Grade	Number of Students	Percentage in Level 3 or Above
All Grades	231,744	60
03	1	*
04	1	*
05	6	*
06	190	100
07	24,772	95
08	81,379	83
09	95,760	40
10	26,764	28
11	2,035	27
12	732	27
AD	104	10

²¹ University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning, *Student Experiences in the Mathematics Classroom*, at 4 (2024), available at <https://lastinger.center.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Brief-1-Students-Experiences.pdf> (last visited Feb. 5, 2026).

²² University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning, *Importance of School Mathematics Beyond High School*, at 3 (2024), available at <https://lastinger.center.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Brief-2-Beyond-High-School.pdf> (last visited Feb. 5, 2026).

²³ Southern Regional Education Board, *Math-in-CTE Resources*, available at <https://www.sreb.org/nrccte-math-cte-resources>, (last visited Feb. 5, 2026).

²⁴ Florida Department of Education, *2025 Florida Assessment of Student Thinking and B.E.S.T. Assessments*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/5668/urlt/33Spring25Alg1SS.xls>, (last visited Feb. 5, 2026).

High School Graduation Requirements

To be awarded a standard high school diploma under the 24-credit program requires students entering the ninth grade in 2023-2024 or later must earn the following credits:

- Four credits in English Language Arts (ELA), and students must pass the grade 10 ELA assessment.
- Four credits in mathematics, and students must pass the Algebra I end-of-course assessment.
- Three credits in science.
- Three credits in social studies.
- One credit in fine or performing arts, speech and debate, or CTE.
- One credit in physical education, which includes the integration of health.
- Seven and one-half credits in electives.
- One-half credit in personal financial literacy.²⁵

Students who earn an industry certification for which there is a statewide college credit articulation agreement approved by the SBE may substitute the certification for one mathematics credit. Substitution may occur for up to two mathematics credits, except for Algebra I and Geometry.

Mathematics Pathways

In 2023, the Legislature required the Department of Education (DOE) to convene a workgroup, no later than December 1, 2024, to:

- Identify best practices in CTE pathways from middle school to high school to aid middle school students in career planning and facilitate their transition to high school programs. The career pathway must be linked to postsecondary programs.
- Establish three mathematics pathways for students enrolled in secondary grades by aligning mathematics courses to programs, postsecondary education, and careers. The workgroup must collaborate to identify the three mathematics pathways and the mathematics course sequence within each pathway which align to the mathematics skills needed for success in the corresponding academic programs, postsecondary education, and careers.²⁶

The DOE gathered a workgroup to discuss and determine three mathematics pathways for students enrolled in grades K-12 by aligning mathematics courses to Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, postsecondary education and careers. The workgroup consisted of teacher-experts across the state selected through an application process and approved by the DOE. The workgroup met regularly to gather information and provide data for each of the mathematics pathways. Based on workgroup collaboration, the Bureau of Standards and Instructional Support within the DOE recommends the three pathways, that are tentatively scheduled to be adopted by rule in the Fall of 2026:

- Algebraic Thinking - Students will engage in mathematics courses that provide a strong foundation for success within various fields including engineering, health sciences, information technology and energy.

²⁵ Section 1003.4282(3), F.S.

²⁶ Chapter 2023-87, s.22 Laws of Fla. *see also* s. 1003.4282(10), F.S.

- Statistical Thinking - Students will engage in mathematics courses that provide a strong foundation for success within various fields including finance, marketing, business administration and education.
- Quantitative Thinking - Students will engage in mathematics courses that provide a strong foundation for success within various fields including human services, education, communication, public safety and manufacturing.²⁷

Artificial Intelligence in Education

Artificial intelligence (AI) provides opportunities to customize and accelerate learning for students and reduce teacher workload.²⁸ However, school districts in Florida implement AI differently and are using different AI tools for educators and students. For example, in Hillsborough County School District, educators and students are using Amira Learning as their main AI tool for instruction, whereas the Pinellas County School District not only uses Amira Learning but several other AI tools. The top general AI tools being used by school districts are Microsoft Copilot, Canva, and Magicschool.ai and the top AI tools being used by students are Gemini for students, Khanmigo, Canva and Microsoft Copilot.²⁹

In 2024, the Legislature passed HB 1361, which created the Florida Tutoring Advantage, administered by the UF Lastinger Center for Learning to support school districts with tutoring programs that include virtual tutoring and automated tutoring software for students in kindergarten through grade 5.³⁰ A school district may receive grant funds for subscription fees and professional learning to support and accelerate learning for students in grades 6 through 12 during the school day. Grant recipients must select an AI platform that:

- Uses large language models based on GPT-4, its equivalent, or a successor, and is on a closed system.
- Provides professional learning to teachers.
- Provides one-on-one tutoring aligned to the Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.) Standards for reading and mathematics.
- Provides standards-aligned lesson plans and provides insights on student progress. Provides district- and school-level reporting and parental access to artificial intelligence interactions.³¹

Effect of Proposed Changes

CTE Credit

The bill amends s. 1003.4282(10), F.S., to revise the DOE's workgroup requirement for career and mathematics pathways by removing an obsolete convening deadline and specifying

²⁷ Email, Florida Department of Education, Governmental Relations (Jan. 13, 2026) (on file with the Senate Committee on Education Pre-K-12).

²⁸ Section 1002.321(3), F.S.

²⁹ Dr. Maya Israel, University of Florida, *Overview of AI in Florida Schools*, Presentation to the Student Academic Success Subcommittee, The Florida House of Representatives (Dec. 10, 2025), available at <https://www.flhouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loadoc.aspx?MeetingId=14953&PublicationType=Committees&DocumentType=Meeting%20Packets> (last visited Feb. 5, 2026).

³⁰ Chapter 2024-162, s. 9, Laws of Fla.

³¹ Section 1002.321(3), F.S.

additional workgroup duties and deliverables related to applied algebra-based mathematics pathways. Specifically, the bill:

- Removes the requirement that the DOE convene the workgroup “no later than December 1, 2024.”
- Requires the workgroup, in establishing three mathematics pathways for students in secondary grades, to:
 - Incorporate the applied algebra courses established under s. 1003.4936, F.S., which align the Florida Standards for Algebra I with CTE standards and benchmarks for each designated career cluster;
 - Include in each mathematics pathway at least one course sequence beginning with an applied algebra course aligned to a specific career cluster, and identify additional mathematics courses that build on the algebraic reasoning, modeling, and quantitative skills introduced through industry-relevant applications, including, as needed, plans to create new mathematics courses to complete a pathway;
 - Offer flexibility and the ability for students to move between pathways, as necessary; and
 - Create clear links between precollege and college-level mathematics pathways and support progression into postsecondary academic programs, state college CTE programs, career center programs, industry certification programs, and high-skill, high-wage occupations.
- Establishes deadlines for identifying the mathematics pathways that incorporate applied algebra courses created in the bill by September 1, 2027, and September 1, 2028, as applicable. The bill requires the workgroup to submit the identified pathways to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Applied Algebra for CTE

The bill creates s. 1003.4936, F.S., to require the DOE to develop “applied algebra” courses aligned to CTE career clusters and to authorize districts to use those courses in lieu of Algebra I for specified purposes. Specifically, the bill:

- Establishes legislative findings regarding the importance of algebra, the purpose of applied algebra courses, and the intended outcomes, including improved relevance and engagement, alignment to workforce needs, and preparation for the Algebra I end-of-course (EOC) assessment.
- Requires the DOE to develop an applied algebra course for each established CTE career cluster.
- Requires each applied algebra course to:
 - Integrate relevant CTE program standards and benchmarks with the Florida Standards for Algebra I;
 - Provide rigorous, career-relevant applications in authentic industry problems, processes, or settings;
 - Prepare students to take the statewide, standardized Algebra I EOC assessment; and
 - Qualify as a mathematics credit that satisfies the Algebra I requirement for high school graduation and for middle grades promotion.
- Requires the DOE to develop courses on specified timelines:
 - The DOE must develop and make available for district adoption in the 2027-2028 school year the following career clusters:
 - Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources.

- Architecture and Construction.
- Business Management and Administration.
- Energy.
- Engineering and Technology Education.
- Finance.
- Health Science.
- Information Technology.
- Manufacturing.
- Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics.
- The DOE must develop and make available for district adoption in the 2028-2029 school year the following career clusters:
 - Arts, Audio-Visual Technology, and Communications.
 - Education and Training.
 - Government and Public Administration.
 - Hospitality and Tourism.
 - Human Services.
 - Law, Public Safety, and Security.
 - Marketing, Sales, and Service.
- Authorizes school districts, in grades 6 through 12, to offer one or more applied algebra courses in lieu of Algebra I, and provides that successful completion satisfies the Algebra I credit requirement for high school graduation or middle grades promotion.
- Requires the DOE to collaborate with the Board of Governors of the State University System to ensure each applied algebra course is accepted as a mathematics credit for state university admissions.
- Requires the DOE to provide professional development, instructional resources, and technical assistance to support district implementation.

Artificial Intelligence Tool to Support Mathematics Instruction

The bill requires the DOE to collaborate with the UF Lastinger Center for Learning to recommend to the Legislature an individualized, adaptive artificial intelligence tool to support mathematics instruction in kindergarten through grade 12. The DOE must submit its recommendations to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 1, 2026. The recommendations must:

- Ensure that recommended tools align to the Florida academic standards and prepare students for state assessments.
- Consider alternate mathematics sequencing and grade-level progression, and alternate funding models to support individualized progression through content.
- Evaluate the extent to which tools provide real-time diagnostic assessments, individualized learning pathways, adaptive sequencing of content, and immediate, personalized feedback to students.
- Evaluate the applicability of the tool to progress monitoring tools, district learning management systems, suggested interventions, small-group instructional supports, and professional development that enables teachers to integrate the tools into classroom instruction.
- Provide for student data privacy and transparency in data collection and retention.

- Consider statewide and district-level costs.

Statewide Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring System

Present Situation

A statewide coordinated screening and progress monitoring (CSPM) system is required for use in non-public and public school Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (VPK) and public schools. The system must:

- Measure student progress in early literacy skills, early mathematics skills, and the English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics standards to inform instruction.
- Provide screening and diagnostic capabilities.
- Identify students with substantial deficiencies in reading or mathematics.
- Identify students with characteristics of dyslexia or dyscalculia.³²

Results must be provided to teachers within one week after completion of the assessment period and to parents within two weeks after administration of the progress monitoring assessment.³³ A student identified by the CSPM system as having characteristics of dyslexia or dyscalculia must undergo further screening.³⁴

The statewide CSPM program is implemented as the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST), administered in three progress monitoring windows each school year, using Renaissance Star assessments in VPK through grade 2 and Cambium testing and reporting systems for grades 3 through 10 ELA Reading and grades 3 through 8 Mathematics.³⁵

Student Progression and Monitoring Plans

Each district school board adopts and implements a comprehensive program for student progression that addresses promotion, retention, remediation, and the use of assessment results to identify and assist students who are not meeting performance expectations.³⁶

A student who is not meeting district or state requirements for satisfactory performance in ELA or mathematics must be covered by at least one of the following:

- A federally required student plan (for example, an individual education plan (IEP)).
- A schoolwide system of progress monitoring for all students, subject to specified exemptions.
- An individualized progress monitoring plan.³⁷

³² Section 1008.25(9)(a), F.S.

³³ Section 1008.25(9)(b)-(c), F.S.

³⁴ Section 1008.25(9)(a), F.S.

³⁵ Florida Department of Education, *Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST), 2025–26 Statewide Assessment Administration Schedule (Progress Monitoring)*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/file/5663/2526StatewideAssessmentSched.pdf> (last visited Feb. 6, 2026); Florida Department of Education, *Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST), 2025–26 Grades K–2 Fact Sheet*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/file/20102/2526FASTK2FS.pdf> (last visited Feb. 6, 2026); and Florida Department of Education, *Coordinated Screening & Progress Monitoring System Overview (Mar. 21, 2022)*, at 6, 9, 19, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/file/7506/FOILStatewideAssessment.pdf> (last visited Feb. 6, 2026).

³⁶ Section 1008.25(2), F.S.

³⁷ Section 1008.25(4)(b), F.S.

A student with a substantial deficiency in reading or a substantial deficiency in mathematics must be covered by a federally required student plan, an individualized progress monitoring plan, or both, as necessary. An individualized progress monitoring plan must be developed within 45 days after the CSPM results become available.

At a minimum, an individualized progress monitoring plan must include:

- The student's identified reading or mathematics skill deficiency.
- Goals and benchmarks for growth in reading or mathematics.
- The measures used to evaluate and monitor progress.
- For a substantial reading deficiency, the evidence-based literacy instruction grounded in the science of reading that will be provided.
- Strategies, resources, and materials to be provided to the parent to support the student's progress.
- Any additional services that the teacher deems available and appropriate to accelerate the student's skill development.³⁸

Reading and Mathematics Deficiencies

Reading and mathematics deficiencies, and characteristics of dyslexia or dyscalculia, may be identified using screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring, or assessment data; statewide assessments; or teacher observations. Once a student is identified as having a substantial deficiency in early literacy skills, reading, or mathematics, the applicable interventions must begin immediately.³⁹

For a student who exhibits characteristics of dyslexia, as defined in SBE rule, dyslexia-specific interventions must be provided.⁴⁰ Appropriate, evidence-based interventions must be initiated upon receipt of documentation from a licensed psychologist demonstrating that the student has been diagnosed with dyslexia or dyscalculia, and initiation may not wait for completion of an exceptional student education eligibility evaluation.⁴¹

Written parent notification is required when a student has been identified as having a substantial deficiency in reading or mathematics and must include specified information about the deficiency, current services, proposed interventions, and home-based supports and resources as applicable. After the initial notification, written progress updates must be provided at least monthly and must include an explanation of any additional interventions implemented when progress is insufficient, with additional meetings and supports provided upon request.⁴²

The reading intervention and parent notification requirements apply to students in public school VPK through grade 3.⁴³ The mathematics intervention and parent notification requirements apply to students in public school VPK through grade 4.⁴⁴

³⁸ Section 1008.25(4)(c), F.S.

³⁹ Section 1008.25(5)(a) and (6)(a), F.S.

⁴⁰ Section 1008.25(5)(a), F.S.; Rule 6A-6.053(7), F.A.C.

⁴¹ Section 1008.25(5)(a) and (6)(a), F.S.

⁴² Section 1008.25(5)(d) and (6)(c), F.S.

⁴³ Section 1008.25(5)(a), F.S.; Rule 6A-6.053(5), F.A.C.

⁴⁴ Section 1008.25(6)(a), F.S.; Rule 6A-6.0533(7), F.A.C.

Evaluation and IEP Timelines

Each district school board must provide exceptional student education and include professional services for diagnosis and evaluation.⁴⁵ The initial evaluation process is triggered when the school district has reasonable suspicion that a student may have a disability and need special education and related services.⁴⁶ Response-to-intervention strategies may not be used to delay or deny an evaluation for a child suspected of having a disability.⁴⁷

A full and individual initial evaluation must be conducted before the initial provision of exceptional student education, and either a parent or the school district may initiate a request for an initial evaluation.

When a parent requests, or when the school district suspects that a student may have a disability, parental consent for an evaluation must be requested within 30 days, unless the parent and school agree otherwise in writing, or the district rejects the parent's request.⁴⁸

Before a school district requests an initial evaluation for a K-12 student suspected of having a disability, school personnel must document one of the following determinations in the student's educational record:

- General education intervention procedures have been implemented and the data indicate that the student may be a student with a disability who needs special education and related services.
- The evaluation was initiated at parent request and the general education intervention activities will be completed concurrently with the evaluation, but before the determination of the student's eligibility for special education and related services.
- The nature or severity of the student's areas of concern makes the general education intervention procedures inappropriate in addressing the student's immediate needs.⁴⁹

Initial evaluations must be completed within 60 calendar days after receipt of parental consent, excluding specified school holidays and breaks and summer vacation, and subject to specified exceptions and extensions.⁵⁰ An IEP must be developed within 30 days after a determination that the child needs special education and related services, and services must be made available as soon as possible following IEP development.⁵¹

New Worlds Reading Initiative

A student in prekindergarten through grade 5 who meets specified reading-related criteria must be provided books through the New Worlds Reading Initiative. A school district must notify the

⁴⁵ Section 1003.57(1)(a)-(b), F.S.

⁴⁶ 34 C.F.R. s. 300.111(c)(1); *Leigh Ann H. v. Riesel Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 18 F.4th 788, 796 n.6 (5th Cir. 2021) (citing *Krawietz ex rel. Parker v. Galveston Indep. Sch. Dist.*, 900 F.3d 673, 676 (5th Cir. 2018)).

⁴⁷ Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, *OSEP Memorandum 11-07, "A Response to Intervention (RTI) Process Cannot Be Used to Delay-Deny an Evaluation for Eligibility under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)"* (Jan. 21, 2011).

⁴⁸ Rule 6A-6.0331(3), F.A.C.

⁴⁹ Rule 6A-6.0331(3)(d), F.A.C.

⁵⁰ Rule 6A-6.0331(3)(g), F.A.C.

⁵¹ 34 C.F.R. s. 300.323(c).

parent of an eligible student that the student is eligible to receive books at no cost through the initiative and must provide an application form. A student's eligibility continues until promotion to grade 6 or until the parent opts out.⁵²

Effect of Proposed Changes

Student Progression and Monitoring Plans

The bill modifies s. 1008.25, F.S., to require a school district to take specified actions when the statewide coordinated screening and progress monitoring system, or a district-approved screening instrument, indicates that a student exhibits characteristics of dyslexia or dyscalculia.

When a student exhibits characteristics of dyslexia or dyscalculia, the district must ensure the student is covered by the progress monitoring plan already required for students who need intervention supports. The plan must include evidence-based interventions specific to the identified characteristics of dyslexia or dyscalculia. The interventions must be aligned, as appropriate, with the required reading intervention framework and the required mathematics intervention framework for students with the specific learning disabilities.

The bill also requires the district to treat the screening indication as reasonable suspicion that the student may be a student with a disability for purposes of the initial evaluation process for exceptional student education, and to promptly seek parental consent to conduct an initial evaluation consistent with SBE rule and applicable federal law.

In addition, the bill requires screening activities and required intervention procedures to occur concurrently with the evaluation process and prohibits using those activities or procedures to delay or deny an appropriate evaluation to determine eligibility for exceptional student education and related services.

The bill retains the requirement for further screening when the statewide coordinated screening and progress monitoring (CSPM) system indicates that a student exhibits characteristics of dyslexia or dyscalculia. The bill adds a further screening requirement when the system is not capable of identifying characteristics of dyslexia or dyscalculia and a student meets performance thresholds established by SBE rule.

The bill specifies that further screening is used to refine instructional planning and parent communication and is not a prerequisite to the intervention and evaluation obligations in the bill. The bill requires further screening activities to occur concurrently with required interventions and the evaluation process and prohibits using screening activities to delay or deny an appropriate evaluation.

The bill requires the SBE to adopt rules establishing timelines, performance thresholds, and parental notification requirements for further screening required under the CSPM system provisions governing identification of characteristics of dyslexia or dyscalculia.

⁵² Section 1003.485(6), F.S.

New Worlds Reading Initiative

The bill revises the minimum content of an individualized progress monitoring plan by requiring that the parent resources included in the plan contain information about the student's eligibility for the New Worlds Reading Initiative.

Equity in School-Level Funding

Present Situation

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA),⁵³ as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015,⁵⁴ is a federal funding program to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.⁵⁵ For the 2024-2025 fiscal year, Florida received approximately \$1.09 billion for Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title I programs.⁵⁶

Part A of Title I focuses on improving basic programs operated by local educational agencies, including district school boards and eligible charter schools within the school district.⁵⁷

District school boards must allocate Title I-A funds first to serve schools in areas with poverty rates of at least 75 percent, or 50 percent for high schools.⁵⁸ If funds remain, the school board may serve schools in rank order according to the percentage of children from low-income families in the area, but a school board may serve schools in areas with a poverty rate of less than 35 percent only if the per student allocation of state and local funds is 125 percent greater than the per student amount received under Title I-A.⁵⁹

Prior to the allocation of Title I funds to eligible schools, Florida law authorizes a district school board to withhold funds only as follows:

- One percent for parent involvement, in addition to the one percent the district must reserve under federal law for allocations to eligible schools for parent involvement;
- A necessary and reasonable amount for administration which includes the district's indirect cost rate, not to exceed a total of ten percent;
- A reasonable and necessary amount to provide:
 - Homeless programs;
 - Delinquent and neglected programs;
 - Prekindergarten programs and activities;
 - Private school equitable services; and
 - Transportation for foster care children to their school of origin or choice programs; and

⁵³ Pub. L. No. 89-10, 79 Stat. 27 (Apr. 11, 1965).

⁵⁴ Pub. L. 114-95, 129 Stat 1802 (Dec. 10, 2015).

⁵⁵ 20 U.S.C. s. 6301.

⁵⁶ Florida Department of Education, *Finance Data Base: Fiscal Year 2024-2025*, at 8 available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7507/urlt/StateTotalBUD2425.pdf>, (last visited Feb. 6, 2025).

⁵⁷ 20 U.S.C. s. 6311, et seq. Local educational agencies are public boards of education and include district school boards. 34 C.F.R. s. 303.23. *See also* s. 1011.69(2), F.S., specifying that an eligible school includes a charter school that is eligible to receive Title I funds.

⁵⁸ 20 U.S.C. s. 6313(a)(3).

⁵⁹ 34 C.F.R. s. 200.78(b).

- A necessary and reasonable amount, not to exceed one percent, for eligible schools to provide educational services in accordance with the approved Title I plan.⁶⁰

In accordance with federal law and the district's approved Title I plan, districts may use Title I funds to provide a wide range of supplemental academic services and supports in eligible schools, including evidence-based interventions and enrichment in core subjects such as reading, mathematics, and science, as well as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) activities that are designed to improve student achievement.⁶¹

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill modifies s. 1011.69, F.S., to specify that the education services for which a school district may withhold a portion of Title I funds prior to allocation include the provision of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) curricula, instructional materials, and related learning technologies that support academic achievement in Title I schools. Such technologies may include drones, coding, animation, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, data science, the engineering design process, mobile development, and robotics. Such withholding must comply with allocation levels required in federal law.

Epinephrine Use and Supply in Schools

Present Situation

A student who has experienced or is at risk for life-threatening allergic reactions may carry an epinephrine auto-injector and self-administer epinephrine by auto-injector while in school, participating in school-sponsored activities, or in transit to or from school or school-sponsored activities, when parental and physician authorization has been provided to the school.

Public and private schools may obtain a supply of epinephrine auto-injectors through purchase from a wholesale distributor or through an arrangement with a wholesale distributor or manufacturer, and the supply must be maintained in a secure location on the school's premises.⁶²

A school district, county health department, and public-private partner, and their employees and volunteers, are indemnified by the parent of an authorized student for liability relating to the student's use of an epinephrine auto-injector.⁶³

A physician-developed protocol governs administration by school personnel trained to recognize an anaphylactic reaction and administer an epinephrine auto-injection. The school supply may be provided to and used by a student authorized to self-administer epinephrine by auto-injector or by trained school personnel.⁶⁴

Liability protections apply to the school district or private school and its employees and agents and the physician who provides the standing protocol for school epinephrine auto-injectors.

⁶⁰ Section 1011.69(4), F.S.

⁶¹ See, e.g., 20 U.S.C. ss. 6314(b), 6315(b).

⁶² Sections 1002.20(3)(i) and 1002.42(17)(a), F.S.

⁶³ Section 1002.20(3)(i), F.S.

⁶⁴ Sections 1002.20(3)(i) and 1002.42(17)(a), F.S.

Those protections apply to injuries arising from use of an epinephrine auto-injector administered by trained school personnel who:

- Follow the adopted protocol; and
- Have a professional opinion that the student is having an anaphylactic reaction.⁶⁵

A written authorization from a physician and the student's parent or guardian is required for a student to carry an epinephrine auto-injector and self-administer epinephrine by auto-injector. An individualized health plan is developed for a student with life-threatening allergies and includes an emergency action plan, with annual development coordinated by the school nurse in collaboration with:

- The student;
- The parent or guardian;
- the health care provider; and
- School personnel.⁶⁶

For schools serving students in kindergarten through grade 8, training is provided to an adequate number of school personnel and contracted personnel on prevention and response to allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis. Training content includes:

- Recognition of anaphylaxis signs and symptoms; and
- Administration of a United States Food and Drug Administration-approved epinephrine delivery device with appropriate weight-based dosing.⁶⁷

Effect of Proposed Changes

Epinephrine Use and Supply

The bill amends ss. 1002.20(3)(i) and 1002.42(17), F.S., to update terminology and broaden statutory references for student carry, self-administration, and school supply of epinephrine to encompass U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved epinephrine delivery devices in public and private schools, rather than limiting those provisions to epinephrine auto-injectors.

Voluntary Prekindergarten Program

Present Situation

Accountability Timeline and Student Supports

Beginning with the 2022-2023 program year, each private prekindergarten provider and public school participating in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program must participate in the statewide coordinated screening and progress monitoring program. The coordinated screening and progress monitoring results are used by the DOE to identify student learning gains, index development learning outcomes upon program completion relative to specified performance standards and representative norms, and inform a private prekindergarten provider's and public school's performance metric.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Sections 1002.20(3)(i) and 1002.42(17)(b), F.S.

⁶⁶ Rule 6A-6.0251(2), F.A.C.

⁶⁷ Rule 6A-6.0251(4), F.A.C.

⁶⁸ Section 1002.68(1)(a), F.S.

For the 2020-2021 program year, the DOE calculated a kindergarten readiness rate for each private prekindergarten provider and public school participating in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program based upon learning gains and the percentage of students assessed as ready for kindergarten. For the 2021-2022 school year, each school district administered the statewide kindergarten screening then in use to each kindergarten student within the first 30 school days, and private schools were authorized to administer the statewide kindergarten screening to each kindergarten student in a private school who was enrolled in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program. Learning gains for the 2020-2021 program year were determined using a value-added measure based on growth demonstrated by specified preassessment and postassessment results. A provider could not be newly placed on probationary status, and a provider that was currently on probationary status could only be removed from such status if the provider earned the minimum rate determined by the DOE. The methodology for calculating a provider's readiness rate could not include students who were not administered the statewide kindergarten screening.⁶⁹

For the 2021-2022 program year, kindergarten screening results were prohibited from use in the calculation of readiness rates, and a private prekindergarten provider or public school that fails to meet the minimum kindergarten readiness rate for that program year is subject to probation requirements.⁷⁰

Supports for students in the VPK program are provided through a summer bridge program to address early literacy deficiencies demonstrated on the final administration of the coordinated screening and progress monitoring system. Students who score below the 10th percentile are required to be referred to the local school district and may be eligible to receive early literacy skill instructional support through the summer bridge program that consists of four hours of daily instruction for a total of at least one hundred hours of instruction.⁷¹

Gold Seal Quality Care Program

The Gold Seal Quality Care (Gold Seal) program was established in 1996 to acknowledge child care facilities and family day care homes that have gone above the required minimum licensing standards to become accredited by recognized agencies whose standards reflect quality in the level of care and supervision provided to children. The designation offered certain tax exemptions, higher reimbursement rates for School Readiness providers, and eligibility to participate in the state VPK program.⁷²

A child care facility, large family child care home, or family day care home must meet additional criteria to obtain and maintain designation as a Gold Seal Quality Care provider.

A child care provider must not have had any class I violations, as defined by rule of the Department of Children and Families, within the 2 years preceding its application for Gold Seal

⁶⁹ Section 1002.68(3)(a), F.S.

⁷⁰ Section 1002.68(3)(b), F.S.

⁷¹ Section 1008.25(5)(b), F.S.

⁷² Florida Department of Education, *Gold Seal Quality Care Program*, <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/early-learning/providers/gold-seal.html> (last visited Feb. 6, 2026).

designation. A class I violation is grounds for termination of the Gold Seal designation until the provider has no class I violations for a period of 2 years.

Notwithstanding the class I violation lookback and termination standard for Gold Seal designation, the DOE may recommend to the SBE that a provider maintain its Gold Seal Quality Care status if, through a formal process, the DOE determines the provider has been in business for at least 5 years and has no other class I violations recorded. The SBE's determination regarding the provider's status is final.⁷³

Effect of Proposed Changes

Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program Accountability and Student Supports

The bill amends s. 1002.68, F.S., to revise Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) provider eligibility consequences and early literacy supports tied to coordinated screening and progress monitoring. Specifically, the bill:

- Limits the VPK participation prohibition for a public school or private prekindergarten provider that fails to meet the minimum program assessment composite score for contracting to the consecutive program year, rather than applying until the provider later meets the minimum score.
- Deletes expired provisions relating to the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 program years that addressed the calculation and use of kindergarten readiness rates and screening results.

The bill amends s. 1008.25, F.S., to expand eligibility for early literacy instructional support through the VPK summer bridge program by increasing the final screening percentile threshold from below the 10th percentile to below the 25th percentile.

Gold Seal Quality Care Eligibility and Termination Criteria

The bill amends s. 1002.945(4), F.S., to narrow which class I violations affect a provider's Gold Seal Quality Care designation and to delete an existing discretionary exception process. Specifically, the bill:

- For applications to be designated Gold Seal status limits the two-year lookback disqualification so that a child care provider is ineligible for a Gold Seal designation only if it has had a class I violation for which the Department of Children and Families determines the provider is the primary cause of the violation within the 2 years preceding the application.
- Limits termination authority so that commission of a class I violation is grounds for termination of the Gold Seal designation only when the Department of Children and Families determines the provider is the primary cause of the violation.
- Removes the authority of the DOE to recommend that the SBE allow a provider to maintain Gold Seal status if the DOE determines through a formal process that the provider has been in business for at least 5 years and has no other class I violations recorded.
- Retains the current reinstatement standard by providing that a terminated provider may regain eligibility after having no such disqualifying class I violations for a period of 2 years.

⁷³ Section 1002.945(4), F.S.

Agricultural Education

Present Situation

Required Instruction

The mission of Florida's Early Learning-20 education system is to allow its students to increase their proficiency by allowing them the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills through rigorous and relevant learning opportunities.⁷⁴ Each district school board must provide appropriate instruction to ensure that students meet SBE adopted standards in the following subject areas: reading and other language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign languages, health and physical education, and the arts.⁷⁵

Instructional staff of public schools, subject to the rules of the SBE and the district school board, must provide instruction in:

- The history and content of the Declaration of Independence.
- The history, meaning, significance, and effect of the provisions of the Constitution of the United States.
- The arguments in support of adopting our republican form of government.
- Flag education, including proper flag display and flag salute.
- The elements of civil government.
- The history of the United States.
- The history of the Holocaust.
- The history of African Americans.
- The elementary principles of agriculture.
- The effects of alcoholic and intoxicating liquors and beverages and narcotics.
- Kindness to animals.
- The history of the state.
- The conservation of natural resources.
- Comprehensive age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate K-12 instruction on health education and life skills.
- The study of Hispanic contributions to the United States.
- The study of women's contributions to the United States.
- The nature and importance of free enterprise to the United States economy.
- Civic and character education.
- The sacrifices that veterans and Medal of Honor recipients have made serving the country.⁷⁶

Agricultural Education in Florida

To help support students interested in the agricultural industry in Florida, the DOE created nine middle school courses focused on careers in the agricultural field, ranging from the "Exploration of Agriscience" to the "Introduction to Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources." At the secondary level, the DOE created 18 courses and programs ranging from "Agricultural

⁷⁴ Section 1000.03(4), F.S.

⁷⁵ Section 1003.42(1), F.S.

⁷⁶ Section 1003.42(2), F.S.

Biotechnology” to “Food Science Applications.”⁷⁷ In 2022-2023 school year, there were 640 Secondary CTE Programs in Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. Florida standards and benchmarks related to agriculture are limited to ancient and modern society, and do not address agriculture in Florida. The following are current benchmarks related to the impact agriculture has had on society:

- Compare the lifestyles of hunter-gatherers with those of settlers of early agricultural communities.⁷⁸
- Explain how the physical landscape has affected the development of agriculture and industry in the ancient world.⁷⁹
- Describe how the developments of agriculture and metallurgy related to settlement, population growth, and the emergence of civilization.⁸⁰
- Describe the agricultural and technological innovations that led to industrialization in Great Britain and its subsequent spread to continental Europe, the United States and Japan.⁸¹

Effects of Proposed Changes

Required instruction: Elementary Principles of Agriculture

The bill amends s. 1003.42(2)(j), F.S., to expand and specify the required instruction in the elementary principles of agriculture and to direct the DOE to develop supporting standards and curriculum resources. Specifically, the bill:

- Requires that the agriculture component include, at a minimum:
 - The history of agriculture nationally and in Florida;
 - The economic and societal impact of agriculture; and
 - The various agricultural industry sectors.
- Requires the DOE, in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the UF’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), to prepare and offer standards and a curriculum for the agriculture instruction required by the bill.
- Authorizes the DOE to seek input from state or nationally recognized agricultural educational organizations in developing the standards and curriculum.
- Authorizes the DOE to contract with state or nationally recognized agricultural educational organizations to develop training for instructional personnel and grade-appropriate classroom resources to support the developed curriculum.

⁷⁷ Florida Department of Education, *2025-26 CTE Curriculum Frameworks: Agriculture Food & Natural Resources*, <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/career-tech-edu/curriculum-frameworks/2025-26-frameworks/>, (last visited Feb. 6, 2026).

⁷⁸ Florida Department of Education, *Florida’s State Academic Standards Social Studies 2024* (2024) at 56, available at https://cpalmsmediaprod.blob.core.windows.net/uploads/docs/standards/best/ss/ss_standardsbook_bc_240417_finalada.pdf, (last visited Feb. 6, 2026). This standard is included in Grade 6 World History.

⁷⁹ Florida Department of Education, *Florida’s State Academic Standards Social Studies 2024* (2024) at 64, available at https://cpalmsmediaprod.blob.core.windows.net/uploads/docs/standards/best/ss/ss_standardsbook_bc_240417_finalada.pdf, (last visited Feb. 6, 2026). This standard is included in Grade 6 Geography.

⁸⁰ Florida Department of Education, *Florida’s State Academic Standards Social Studies 2024* (2024) at 56, available at https://cpalmsmediaprod.blob.core.windows.net/uploads/docs/standards/best/ss/ss_standardsbook_bc_240417_finalada.pdf, (last visited Feb. 6, 2026). This standard is included in Grade 6 World History.

⁸¹ Florida Department of Education, *Florida’s State Academic Standards Social Studies 2024* (2024) at 132, available at https://cpalmsmediaprod.blob.core.windows.net/uploads/docs/standards/best/ss/ss_standardsbook_bc_240417_finalada.pdf, (last visited Feb. 6, 2026). This standard is included in Grades 9-12 World History.

Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education Program

Present Situation

Created within the DOE, the Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program offers a unique opportunity for students who have left high school to get back on track. Designed for students aged 16 to 21, GATE provides a pathway to earn valuable career education credentials while also completing a standard high school diploma or its equivalent.

Through the GATE program, students can enroll in a CTE program and an Adult Secondary Education (ASE) program simultaneously. Eligible ASE programs include Adult High School or GED® Preparation. Participants will work towards earning both a high school diploma and a credential from a Career Education Program on the Master Credential list in their chosen career field. Students have up to three years to complete the GATE Program.⁸²

To be eligible for participation in the GATE Program, a student must:

- Not have earned a standard high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma before enrolling in the GATE Program.
- Have been withdrawn from high school.
- Be a resident of the state for tuition purposes.
- Be 16 to 21 years of age at the time of initial enrollment, and if 16 or 17 years of age, have withdrawn from school enrollment pursuant to certain requirements and safeguards.⁸³
- Select the adult secondary education program and career education program of his or her choice at the time of admission to the GATE Program, provided that the career education program is included on the Master Credentials List. The student must remain in their chosen pathway after enrollment, except that, if necessary, the student may enroll in an adult basic education program prior to enrolling in the adult secondary education program.
- Maintain a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) for CTE coursework.
- Complete the adult secondary education program and the career education program within three years unless the institution determines that an extension is warranted due to extenuating circumstances.⁸⁴

GATE Startup Grant Program

DOE administers the GATE Startup Grant Program and determines eligibility and distributes grant awards, subject to legislative appropriation. The grant program is intended to support startup and implementation of the GATE Program.

An eligible institution for the GATE Startup Grant Program includes a school district career center, a charter technical career center, or a Florida College System institution that offers the GATE Program. DOE may solicit proposals only from institutions that do not offer programs meeting the requirements of the GATE Program.⁸⁵

⁸² Section 1004.933, F.S. and Florida Department of Education, Adult Education, *Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program*, <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/adult-edu/gate.shtml> (last visited Feb. 6, 2026).

⁸³ Section 1003.21(1), F.S.

⁸⁴ Section 1004.933(4), F.S.

⁸⁵ Section 1011.804, F.S.

An institution solicited under the grant program must be located in or serve a rural area of opportunity designated by the Governor.⁸⁶ The Governor may designate a rural community, or a region composed of rural communities, as a rural area of opportunity under the statutory definition in Section 288.0656(2)(d), Florida Statutes.⁸⁷

DOE must prioritize grant proposals that co-locate adult basic education, adult secondary education, and career education programs, or that allow program completion through distance learning. An applicant may not receive more than 10 percent of the total amount appropriated for the grant program.

DOE must make the grant application available to potential applicants no later than August 15, 2024. A grant proposal must include specified program, enrollment, credential, cost, outreach, and implementation information. A credential associated with the proposed career education program must be included on the Master Credentials List.⁸⁸

Grant funds may be used for planning activities and other expenses associated with creation of the GATE Program, including certain instructional, personnel, and student services costs. Grant funds may not be used for indirect costs.⁸⁹

Effects of Proposed Changes

Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program

The bill amends s. 1004.933, F.S., to expand program delivery options for participating institutions and to revise eligibility and program participation requirements for students in the GATE Program. Specifically, the bill:

- Authorizes an eligible institution to enter into an agreement with an online provider for the adult education or career instruction portion of the program if the provider's content and services align with the state career and adult education curriculum frameworks.
- Revises the age eligibility requirement by providing that a student must be at least 16 years of age at the time of initial enrollment, rather than limiting eligibility to students ages 16 through 21, while retaining the requirement that a 16- or 17-year-old must have withdrawn from school enrollment pursuant to specified withdrawal safeguards.
- Clarifies program participation by providing that a student is not required to enroll in adult secondary education and career education program coursework simultaneously.

GATE Startup Grant Program

The bill amends s. 1011.804, F.S., to revise eligibility, application administration, and allowable costs under the GATE Startup Grant Program by:

- Replacing the existing rural eligibility reference with a cross-reference to the statutory definition of "rural area of opportunity" in s. 288.0656(2)(d), F.S.
- Clarifying that an institution "serves" a rural area of opportunity when its service area includes one or more counties or municipalities included within a rural area of opportunity,

⁸⁶ Section 1011.804(3), F.S.

⁸⁷ Section 288.0656(2)(d), F.S.

⁸⁸ Sections 445.004(4) and 1011.804(5)(d), F.S.

⁸⁹ Section 1011.804(6), F.S.

and specifying that an institution's principal place of business, main campus, or administrative offices need not be located in a rural area of opportunity to satisfy the service requirement.

- Authorizing DOE to award grants to:
 - An institution that does not offer programs meeting the requirements of the GATE Program to support startup and implementation activities.
 - An institution that offers programs meeting the requirements of the GATE Program, limited to costs authorized for the program and excluding new construction, structural expansion, and major renovation.
- Revising the application availability deadline from a single date to an annual requirement applicable to each year in which funds are appropriated for the program.
- Requiring a grant proposal to include documentation identifying the counties or municipalities in the institution's service area that fall within a rural area of opportunity.
- Expanding allowable direct costs by authorizing grant funds for GATE Program implementation expenses and specified startup-related costs, including minor facility modifications necessary to install or operate instructional equipment and marketing and outreach activities to recruit and enroll eligible students.

Eligibility for Educator Certification

Present Situation

Teacher Preparation Programs

Teacher preparation programs are accountable for producing individuals with the competencies and skills necessary to achieve the state education goals. State-approved teacher preparation programs are offered by Florida public and private postsecondary institutions, public school districts, and private providers, through which candidates for educator certification can, depending on the type of program, demonstrate mastery of general knowledge, professional preparation and education competence, and/or subject area knowledge for purposes of attaining an educator certificate.⁹⁰

There are various state-approved teacher preparation programs that individuals may use to receive the training needed to attain an educator certificate, including:

- Initial Teacher Preparation programs in public and private colleges and universities that require candidates to demonstrate mastery of subject area knowledge⁹¹ in one or more specific subject areas, mastery of general knowledge,⁹² and mastery of professional preparation and education competence. Program completers qualify for a professional educator certificate.
- Educator Preparation Institutes (EPIs) that offer alternative certification programs by postsecondary institutions and qualified private providers for baccalaureate degree holders. These programs provide professional preparation for career-changers and recent college

⁹⁰ Section 1004.04, F.S. See Florida Department of Education, *Educator Preparation*, <http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/preparation> (last visited Feb. 6, 2026). See also Rule 6A-5.066, F.A.C.

⁹¹ Florida Department of Education, *Subject Area Knowledge*, <https://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/general-cert-requirements/subject-area-knowledge.shtml> (last visited Feb. 6, 2026).

⁹² Florida Department of Education, *General Knowledge*, <https://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/general-cert-requirements/general-knowledge.shtml> (last visited Feb. 6, 2026).

graduates who do not already possess a Professional Educator Certificate and require mastery of general knowledge, subject-area knowledge, and professional preparation and education competence.

- District professional learning certification and education competency programs. Such programs are cohesive competency-based professional preparation certification programs offered by school districts, charter schools, and charter management districts, through which instructional staff can satisfy the mastery of professional preparation and education competence requirements. In addition to completing the district program, candidates must demonstrate mastery of general knowledge and subject area knowledge.⁹³

Educator Preparation Institute Participant Criteria

Each EPI participant must:

- Meet certification application requirements, including obtaining a statement of eligibility, established in law, and meet all basic eligibility requirements for an educator certificate before participating in field experiences. Generally, a student must receive a statement of eligibility for a certificate prior to enrollment in an EPI.
- Demonstrate competency and participate in field experiences that are appropriate to the participant's educational plan, including completion of all competencies for a reading endorsement when seeking certification in a certificate area that includes reading instruction or interventions in kindergarten through grade six.
- Before completion of the program, fully demonstrate his or her ability to teach the subject area for which he or she is seeking certification by documenting a positive impact on student learning growth in a prekindergarten through grade 12 setting.
- Achieve a passing score on the professional education competency examination,⁹⁴ the General Knowledge Test, and the subject area examination for the subject area certification, as required by the SBE rule.⁹⁵

Educator Certification

To serve as an educator in a traditional public school, charter school, virtual school, or other publicly operated school, a person must hold a certificate issued by the DOE.⁹⁶ 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.”⁹⁷

To be eligible for an educator certificate, a person must meet the following basic eligibility requirements:

- Be at least 18 years of age;
- Sign an affidavit attesting that the applicant will uphold the U.S. and State Constitutions;

⁹³ Florida Department of Education, *Educator Preparation*, <http://www.fldoe.org/teaching/preparation> (last visited Feb. 6, 2026). See also Rule 6A-5.066, F.A.C.

⁹⁴ Section 1012.56(7)(a)3., F.S. An individual who completes an educator preparation institute and is rated highly effective by his or her performance evaluation is not required to take or achieve a passing score on the professional education competency examination in order to be awarded a professional certificate.

⁹⁵ Section 1004.85(3)(b), F.S.

⁹⁶ Sections 1012.55(1) and 1002.33(12), F.S.

⁹⁷ Section 1012.54, F.S. See Rule 6A-4.001(1), F.A.C.

- Earn a bachelor's or higher degree from an accredited institution of higher learning or from a non-accredited institution identified by the DOE as having a quality program resulting in a bachelor's or higher degree and have attained at least a 2.5 overall grade point average in the applicant's major field of study;⁹⁸
- 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; and
- Be competent and capable of performing the duties, functions, and responsibilities of a teacher.⁹⁹

Effect of proposed Changes

Postsecondary Educator Preparation Institutes: Eligibility

The bill amends s. 1004.85(3)(b), F.S., to revise the requirements for participants in competency-based certification programs offered by educator preparation institutes by clarifying what a statement of status of eligibility must reflect and by allowing earlier enrollment and coursework completion while a participant seeks that statement. Specifically, the bill:

- Revises the requirement related to obtaining a statement of status of eligibility by specifying that the statement must determine that the participant is eligible for a certificate in the certification subject area of the participant's educational plan.
- Authorizes an educator preparation institute to allow a program participant to enroll in and complete coursework while the participant is working to obtain the required statement of status of eligibility indicating eligibility for a certificate in the certification subject area of the educational plan.

Computer Science Educator Certification

Present Situation

Computer Science Instruction and Access

Public schools provide opportunities for computer science instruction in grades K-12, including identified courses in middle and high school. The DOE identifies computer science courses in the Course Code Directory and publishes the list for districts. Florida Virtual School offers the identified courses, and districts that do not offer a listed course provide student access through an authorized mechanism.¹⁰⁰

Course Code Directory and Staffing

The Course Code Directory and Instructional Personnel Assignments lists each course and the certificates or endorsements that may staff that course. The SBE adopts the directory by rule each year, and districts use the listed assignments to confirm that instructional personnel hold an appropriate coverage for scheduled courses.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Rule 6A-4.003(2), F.A.C.

⁹⁹ Section 1012.56(2), F.S.

¹⁰⁰ Section 1007.2616, F.S.

¹⁰¹ Rule 6A-1.09441, F.A.C.

Educator Certification Framework and Examinations

Educator certification includes demonstration of subject area knowledge aligned to state academic standards, with competencies and passing scores adopted by rule.¹⁰² The Florida Teacher Certification Examinations (FTCE) are set in rule, including incorporation of competencies, scoring, and passing standards.¹⁰³

Assessment Characteristics and Outcomes for Computer Science K–12

The FTCE for Computer Science K–12 subject area certification is approximately 80 multiple-choice questions, and the applicant has up to 2 hours and 30 minutes of testing time.¹⁰⁴ The applicant must answer 71 percent correct to achieve a passing score.¹⁰⁵ Statewide 2024 pass rates for the FTCE Computer Science K–12 were 39 percent on first attempts, 38 percent on retake attempts, and 39 percent across all attempts.¹⁰⁶

Elementary Course Emphasis and Exam Domains

Elementary computer science course descriptions emphasize early computational thinking and age-appropriate skills, while several domains assessed on the FTCE reflect secondary-level content:

- K–5 course descriptions focus on digital citizenship, algorithmic problem solving, data recognition, and introductory or block-based programming integrated with core subjects.¹⁰⁷
- FTCE competency materials include domains such as digital communications features, HTML and web concepts, privacy and security threats, computing history, and pedagogy.¹⁰⁸
- Elementary course descriptions do not include HTML authoring or detailed networking and security content as K–5 outcomes, indicating limited overlap with those assessed domains at the elementary grade band.

Effects of Proposed Changes

Computer Science and Technology Instruction

The bill amends s. 1007.2616, F.S., to add requirements for computer science subject area coverages, competencies, and examinations, and to establish timelines for development and implementation. Specifically, the bill:

¹⁰² Section 1012.56(4)–(5), F.S.

¹⁰³ Section 1012.56(10); Rule 6A-4.0021, F.A.C.

¹⁰⁴ Florida Teacher Certification Examinations, *Computer Science K–12 (005) Test Information Guide*, https://www.fl.nesinc.com/FL_prepBlueprints.asp (select “Computer Science K–12 (005)” or use the worksheet selector a (last visited Feb 6, 2026).

¹⁰⁵ Florida Department of Education, *FTCE/FELE Maximum Percentages of Correct Answers Needed to Achieve a Minimum Passing Score*, updated October 1, 2025, effective January 1, 2026, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/file/7664/FTCEFELEMaxPercentTable.pdf> (last visited Feb. 6, 2026).

¹⁰⁶ Florida Department of Education, *FTCE/FELE 2024 Annual Administration and Technical Report*, Appendix B, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/file/5164/AnnualTechReport.pdf> (last visited Feb. 6, 2026).

¹⁰⁷ Florida Department of Education, *Computer Science Course Information 2025–2026*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/file/7746/2526CompSci.pdf> (last visited Feb. 6, 2026).

¹⁰⁸ Florida Teacher Certification Examinations, *Competencies and Skills for Computer Science K–12 (005)*, https://www.fl.nesinc.com/FL_prepBlueprints.asp (select “Computer Science K–12 (005)” or use the worksheet selector at https://www.fl.nesinc.com/FL_prepWorksheet.asp (last visited Feb. 6, 2026).

- Requires the SBE, by rule, to establish or maintain the following computer science subject area coverages:
 - Computer science (grades K–5);
 - Computer science (grades 6–12); and
 - Computer science (grades K–12).
- Requires the SBE, by rule, to adopt competencies and skills and designate corresponding examinations for each of the specified coverages.
- Requires the comprehensive computer science (grades K–12) coverage and its examination to remain available unless amended by rule of the SBE.
- Requires the DOE to present recommended competencies and skills for the grades K–5 and grades 6–12 coverages to the SBE for approval by September 1, 2026.
- Requires the DOE, after SBE approval, to coordinate development, piloting, and standard-setting for the grades K–5 and grades 6–12 examinations, and requires that both examinations be available for administration by January 1, 2028.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

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:

None

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill has an indeterminate fiscal impact on the Department of Education (DOE), which may include:

- Contracting with state or nationally recognized agricultural education organizations to develop training and grade-appropriate classroom resources for required instruction in the elementary principles of agriculture, to the extent DOE contracts for those services.
- Coordinating development, piloting, and standard-setting for computer science subject area examinations for grade-band coverages, with exams available for administration by January 1, 2028.

The bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to develop algebra courses. In order to implement the bill, the DOE estimated it would need \$698,693, which includes salary and benefits for five new positions and funding to support workgroup operations such as travel, lodging, meeting space and related operating expenses.

The bill also requires the DOE to collaborate with the Lastinger Center for Learning to recommend to the Legislature an individualized, adaptive artificial intelligence tool to support mathematics instruction in kindergarten through grade 12. The costs for developing such recommendations can be absorbed within existing resources.

The bill authorizes school districts to choose to offer one or more applied algebra courses in lieu of Algebra I. If any school district chooses to offer one of the courses developed by the DOE, then the DOE is required to provide professional development, instructional resources, and technical assistance to support district implementation.¹⁰⁹

If every eligible child participated, the bill may increase Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (VPK)-related expenditures by an estimated \$2.2 million due to expanding the summer bridge eligibility by changing the final coordinated screening and progress monitoring threshold from below the 10th percentile to below the 25th percentile.

Institutions participating in the Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program may incur costs if they choose to enter agreements with online providers for the adult education or career instruction portion of the program. Removing the upper age limit for initial eligibility may increase participation, with an indeterminate fiscal impact.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

¹⁰⁹ Department of Education, *Senate Bill 920 Fiscal Analysis* (Dec. 19, 2025) (on file with the Senate Appropriations Committee on Pre-K-12 Education).

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 1001.42, 1002.20, 1002.33, 1002.42, 1002.68, 1002.945, 1003.42, 1003.4282, 1004.85, 1004.933, 1007.2616, 1008.2125, 1008.25, 1011.69, and 1011.804 F.S.

This bill creates section 1003.4936 of the Florida Statutes.

This bill creates an undesignated section of law.

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 Appropriations Committee on Pre-K – 12 Education:

The committee substitute removes from the bill provisions that would:

- Remove school district authority to use of temporary door-locking devices on certain school doors.
- Authorize school districts to purchase certain instructional materials developed by or under the direction of the Department of Education.

The committee substitute adds to the bill a section revising the GATE Startup Grant Program to:

- Redesignate “rural area of opportunity” by cross-reference to the statutory definition in s. 288.0656(2)(d), F.S.
- Clarify that institutions that serve areas designated as a rural area of opportunity are eligible for the GATE Startup Grant Program.
- Authorize grant awards to eligible institutions that are establishing a new GATE Program or implementing an existing GATE Program.
- Authorize the Department of Education to accept grant applications annually for each year in which funds are appropriated.
- Expand allowable direct costs to include implementation costs and specified startup-related expenses, including:
 - Minor facility modifications and classroom supplies for program delivery.
 - Marketing and outreach related to participant recruitment and engagement.

The committee substitute includes a technical clarification that students with only a substantial deficiency in math are not subject to the provision of the bill requiring parents to be notified about eligibility for the New Worlds Reading Initiative.

B. Amendments:

None.

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