

CHAPTER 98-70

Senate Bill No. 660

An act relating to education; providing that state-funded education and care programs for infants and toddlers must foster brain development; encouraging family daycare centers to comply with specified requirements; requiring an evaluation and a report; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, at birth, a child has one hundred billion brain cells that will be developed by the experiences of life, and

WHEREAS, the stimulation that causes brain development can be positive, such as conversation, music, and parental love, or it can be negative, such as neglect or emotional and physical abuse, and

WHEREAS, during the first year of a child's life the connections between the cells, the synapses, increase twenty-fold, making the first year a crucial time for brain development, and

WHEREAS, infants develop synapses when they listen to language and music, see colors and shapes, and feel and handle objects of different sizes, shapes, and textures, and

WHEREAS, there is no other time in a child's life as productive for brain development as the first year, NOW THEREFORE,

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Each state-funded education and care program for children from birth to 5 years of age must provide activities to foster brain development in infants and toddlers. A program must provide an environment rich in language and music and filled with objects of various colors, shapes, textures, and sizes to stimulate visual, tactile, auditory, and linguistic senses in the children and must include classical music and at least 30 minutes of reading to the children each day. A program may be offered through an existing early childhood program such as Healthy Start, the Title I program, contracted or directly operated subsidized child care, the prekindergarten early-intervention program, Florida First Start, the Head Start program, or a private childcare program. A program must provide training for the infants' and toddlers' parents including direct dialogue and interaction between teachers and parents demonstrating the urgency of brain development in the first year of a child's life. Family daycare centers are encouraged, but not required, to comply with this section.

Section 2. The Executive Office of the Governor shall contract for an evaluation of programs to stimulate brain development in infants and toddlers and shall report the results of the evaluation to the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by January 1, 2000.

Section 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

Approved by the Governor May 21, 1998.

Filed in Office Secretary of State May 21, 1998.