

Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 364

An act relating to public K-12 educational instruction; amending s. 1003.429, F.S.; revising course requirements in the college preparatory accelerated high school graduation program; revising course requirements in the career preparatory accelerated high school graduation program; providing students already participating in an accelerated graduation program the right to continue in the current program; establishing requirements for selection of accelerated graduation options; requiring districts to establish a policy for extending the deadline for certain students to choose an accelerated graduation option; authorizing use of alternate assessments; revising requirements for grades that must be earned to participate in the accelerated graduation program; requiring schools to provide specific notices to students and parents if, at the end of the grade 10, the student is not on track to graduate; specifying certain situations in which a student shall be moved from a 3-year to a 4-year graduation program; amending s. 1003.43, F.S., relating to general requirements for high school graduation; authorizing use of alternate assessments; amending s. 1008.22, F.S.; authorizing the SAT and the ACT as alternative assessments to the grade 10 FCAT required for high school graduation if students have attempted to pass the grade 10 FCAT at least 3 times; deleting obsolete language; amending s. 1013.735, F.S.; modifying the formula for the allocation of funds from the Classrooms for Kids appropriation; amending s. 1002.20, F.S.; providing certain rights to parents of students with reading deficiencies; requiring that parents receive understandable information and are consulted regarding a child's academic progress; amending s. 1008.25, F.S.; removing an obsolete date; providing notification of additional information to parents of students who exhibit a substantial reading deficiency; revising certain good cause exemptions from mandatory retention; requiring school districts to provide certain reading interventions to students who have been retained; providing school district requirements relating to remediation of student reading deficiencies, parental notification, implementation of a mid-year promotion policy, provision of instructional options for students, establishment of a Reading Enhancement and Acceleration Development (READ) Initiative and an Intensive Acceleration Class, and reporting; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Section 1003.429, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1003.429 Accelerated high school graduation options.—

(1) Students who enter grade 9 in the 2004-2005 school year ~~Beginning with the 2003-2004 school year, all students scheduled to graduate in 2004~~ and thereafter may select one of the following three high school graduation options:

(a) Completion of the general requirements for high school graduation pursuant to s. 1003.43;

(b) Completion of a 3-year standard college preparatory program requiring successful completion of a minimum of 18 academic credits in grades 9 through 12. At least 6 of the 18 credits required for completion of this program must be received in classes that are honors, dual enrollment, advanced placement, International Baccalaureate, Advanced International Certificate of Education, specifically listed or identified by the Department of Education as rigorous pursuant to s. 1009.531(3), or weighted by the district school board for class ranking purposes. The 18 credits required for completion of this program shall be primary requirements and shall be distributed as follows:

1. Four credits in English, with major concentration in composition and literature;

2. Three credits in mathematics at the Algebra I level or higher from the list of courses that qualify for state university admission;

3. Three credits in natural science, two of which must have a laboratory component;

4. Three credits in social sciences, which must include one credit in American history, one credit in world history, one-half credit in American government, and one-half credit in economics;

5. Two credits in the same second language unless the student is a native speaker of or can otherwise demonstrate competency in a language other than English. If the student demonstrates competency in another language, the student may replace the language requirement with two credits in other academic courses; and

6. Three credits in electives; or

(c) Completion of a 3-year career preparatory program requiring successful completion of a minimum of 18 academic credits in grades 9 through 12. The 18 credits shall be primary requirements and shall be distributed as follows:

1. Four credits in English, with major concentration in composition and literature;

2. Three credits in mathematics, one of which must be Algebra I;

3. Three credits in natural science, two of which must have a laboratory component;

4. Three credits in social sciences, which must include one credit in American history, one credit in world history, one-half credit in American government, and one-half credit in economics;

5. Three ~~Two~~ credits in a single vocational or career education program, three credits in career and technical certificate dual enrollment courses, or

~~five credits in vocational or career education courses the same second language unless the student is a native speaker of or can otherwise demonstrate competency in a language other than English. If the student demonstrates competency in another language, the student may replace the language requirement with two credits in other academic courses; and~~

6. ~~Two~~ Three credits in electives unless five credits are earned pursuant to subparagraph 5.

Any student who selected an accelerated graduation program before July 1, 2004, may continue that program, and all statutory program requirements that were applicable when the student made the program choice shall remain applicable to the student as long as the student continues that program.

(2) Prior to selecting a program described in paragraph (1)(b) or paragraph (1)(c), the following requirements must be met:

(a) Designated school personnel shall meet with the student and student's parent to give an explanation of the relative requirements, advantages, and disadvantages of each graduation option.

(b) The student shall submit to the high school principal and guidance counselor a signed parental consent to enter the 3-year accelerated graduation program.

(c) The student shall have achieved at least an FCAT reading achievement level of 3, an FCAT mathematics achievement level of 3, and an FCAT Writing score of 3 on the most recent assessments taken by the student.

(3)(2) Beginning with the 2004-2005 ~~2003-2004~~ school year, each district school board shall provide each student in grades 6 through 9 ~~12~~ and their parents with information concerning the 3-year and 4-year high school graduation options listed in subsection (1), including the respective curriculum requirements for those options, so that ~~with curriculum~~ for the students and their parents ~~may to~~ select the postsecondary education or career plan that best fits their needs. The information ~~options~~ shall include a timeframe for achieving each graduation option.

(4)(3) Selection of one of the graduation options listed in subsection (1) must be completed by the student prior to the end of grade 9 and is exclusively up to the student and parent, subject to the requirements in subsection (2). Each district school board shall establish policies for extending this deadline to the end of a student's first semester of grade 10 for a student who entered a Florida public school after grade 9 upon transfer from a private school or another state or who was prevented from choosing a graduation option due to illness during grade 9. If the student and parent fail to select a graduation option, the student shall be considered to have selected the general requirements for high school graduation pursuant to paragraph (1)(a).

(5)(4) District school boards shall not establish requirements for accelerated 3-year high school graduation options in excess of the requirements in paragraphs (1)(b) and (c).

(6)(5) Students pursuing accelerated 3-year high school graduation options pursuant to paragraph (1)(b) or paragraph (1)(c) are required to:

(a) Earn passing scores on the FCAT as defined in s. 1008.22(3)(c) or scores on a standardized test that are concordant with passing scores on the FCAT as defined in s. 1008.22(9).

(b)1. Achieve a cumulative weighted grade point average of 3.0 ~~2.0~~ on a 4.0 scale, or its equivalent, in the courses required for the college preparatory by the chosen accelerated 3-year high school graduation option pursuant to paragraph (1)(b); or

2. Achieve a cumulative weighted grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, or its equivalent, in the courses required for the career preparatory accelerated 3-year high school graduation option pursuant to paragraph (1)(c).

(c) Receive a weighted or unweighted grade that earns at least 3.0 points, or its equivalent, to earn course credit toward the 18 credits required for the college preparatory accelerated 3-year high school graduation option pursuant to paragraph (1)(b).

(d) Receive a weighted or unweighted grade that earns at least 2.0 points, or its equivalent, to earn course credit toward the 18 credits required for the career preparatory accelerated 3-year high school graduation option pursuant to paragraph (1)(c).

Weighted grades referred to in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) shall be applied to those courses specifically listed or identified by the department as rigorous pursuant to s. 1009.531(3) or weighted by the district school board for class ranking purposes.

(7) If, at the end of grade 10, a student is not on track to meet the credit, assessment, or grade-point-average requirements of the accelerated graduation option selected, the school shall notify the student and parent of the following:

(a) The requirements that the student is not currently meeting.

(b) The specific performance necessary in grade 11 for the student to meet the accelerated graduation requirements.

(c) The right of the student to change to the 4-year program set forth in s. 1003.43.

(8) A student who selected one of the accelerated 3-year graduation options shall automatically move to the 4-year program set forth in s. 1003.43 if the student:

(a) Exercises his or her right to change to the 4-year program;

(b) Fails to earn 5 credits by the end of grade 9 or fails to earn 11 credits by the end of grade 10;

(c) Does not achieve a score of 3 or higher on the grade 10 FCAT Writing assessment; or

(d) By the end of grade 11 does not meet the requirements of subsections (1) and (6).

~~(9)(6)~~ A student who meets all requirements prescribed in subsections (1) and ~~(6)(5)~~ shall be awarded a standard diploma in a form prescribed by the State Board of Education.

Section 2. Paragraph (a) of subsection (5) of section 1003.43, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1003.43 General requirements for high school graduation.—

(5) Each district school board shall establish standards for graduation from its schools, and these standards must include:

(a) Earning passing scores on the FCAT, as defined in s. 1008.22(3)(c) or scores on a standardized test that are concordant with passing scores on the FCAT as defined in s. 1008.22(9).

The standards required in this subsection, and any subsequent modifications, shall be reprinted in the Florida Administrative Code even though not defined as “rules.”

Section 3. Subsection (9) of section 1008.22, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1008.22 Student assessment program for public schools.—

(9) EQUIVALENCIES FOR STANDARDIZED TESTS.—

~~(a) The Commissioner of Education shall determine the comparable validity of other available standardized tests, including the SAT, ACT, College Placement Test, PSAT, PLAN, and tests used for entry into the military. If such tests are deemed to be valid and reliable measures, the commissioner shall approve the use of the SAT and ACT such tests as alternative alternate assessments to the grade 10 FCAT for the 2003-2004 2002-2003 school year. Students who attain scores on the SAT or ACT which that equate to the passing scores on the grade 10 FCAT for purposes of high school graduation on any of the approved alternative assessments shall satisfy the assessment requirement for a standard high school diploma as provided in s. 1003.429(6)(a) or s. 1003.43(5)(a) for the 2003-2004 2002-2003 school year graduating class if the students meet the requirement in paragraph (b). Prior to the application of these alternative assessments in subsequent school years, the Legislature shall review the continued use of these alternative tests.~~

(b) A student shall be required to take the grade 10 FCAT a total of three times without earning a passing score in order to use the scores on an alternative assessment pursuant to paragraph (a). This requirement shall not apply to a student who is a new student to the public school system in grade 12.

Section 4. Subsection (1) of section 1013.735, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1013.735 Classrooms for Kids Program.—

(1) ALLOCATION.—The department shall allocate funds appropriated for the Classrooms for Kids Program. It is the intent of the Legislature that this program be administered as nearly as practicable in the same manner as the capital outlay program authorized under s. 9(a), Art. XII of the State Constitution. Each district school board's share of the annual appropriation for the Classrooms for Kids Program must be calculated according to the following formula:

(a) Twenty-five percent of the appropriation shall be prorated to the districts based on each district's percentage of K-12 base capital outlay full-time equivalent membership, and 65 percent shall be based on each district's percentage of K-12 growth capital outlay full-time equivalent membership as specified for the allocation of funds from the Public Education Capital Outlay and Debt Service Trust Fund by s. 1013.64(3).

(b) Ten percent of the appropriation must be allocated among district school boards according to the allocation formula in s. 1013.64(1)(a), excluding adult vocational technical facilities.

Section 5. Subsections (11) through (22) of section 1002.20, Florida Statutes, are renumbered as subsections (12) through (23), respectively, and a new subsection (11) is added to said section to read:

1002.20 K-12 student and parent rights.—Parents of public school students must receive accurate and timely information regarding their child's academic progress and must be informed of ways they can help their child to succeed in school. K-12 students and their parents are afforded numerous statutory rights including, but not limited to, the following:

(11) STUDENTS WITH READING DEFICIENCIES.—Each elementary school shall regularly assess the reading ability of each K-3 student. The parent of any K-3 student who exhibits a reading deficiency shall be immediately notified of the student's deficiency with a description and explanation, in terms understandable to the parent, of the exact nature of the student's difficulty in learning and lack of achievement in reading; shall be consulted in the development of a detailed academic improvement plan, as described in s. 1008.25(4)(b); and shall be informed that the student will be given intensive reading instruction until the deficiency is corrected. This subsection operates in addition to the remediation and notification provisions contained in s. 1008.25 and in no way reduces the rights of a parent or the responsibilities of a school district under that section.

Section 6. Subsection (5) and paragraph (b) of subsection (6) of section 1008.25, Florida Statutes, are amended, subsections (7), (8), and (9) are renumbered as subsections (8), (9), and (10), respectively, and a new subsection (7) is added to said section, to read:

1008.25 Public school student progression; remedial instruction; reporting requirements.—

(5) READING DEFICIENCY AND PARENTAL NOTIFICATION.—

(a) It is the ultimate goal of the Legislature that every student read at or above grade level. Any student who exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading, based upon locally determined or statewide assessments conducted in kindergarten or grade 1, grade 2, or grade 3, or through teacher observations, must be given intensive reading instruction immediately following the identification of the reading deficiency. The student's reading proficiency must be reassessed by locally determined assessments or through teacher observations at the beginning of the grade following the intensive reading instruction. The student must continue to be provided with intensive reading instruction until the reading deficiency is remedied.

(b) Beginning with the 2002-2003 school year, if the student's reading deficiency, as identified in paragraph (a), is not remedied by the end of grade 3, as demonstrated by scoring at Level 2 or higher on the statewide assessment test in reading for grade 3, the student must be retained.

(c) ~~Beginning with the 2002-2003 school year,~~ The parent of any student who exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading, as described in paragraph (a), must be notified in writing of the following:

1. That his or her child has been identified as having a substantial deficiency in reading.

2. A description of the current services that are provided to the child.

3. A description of the proposed supplemental instructional services and supports that will be provided to the child that are designed to remediate the identified area of reading deficiency.

4. That if the child's reading deficiency is not remediated by the end of grade 3, the child must be retained unless he or she is exempt from mandatory retention for good cause.

5. Strategies for parents to use in helping their child succeed in reading proficiency.

6. That the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is not the sole determiner of promotion and that additional evaluations, portfolio reviews, and assessments are available to the child to assist parents and the school district in knowing when a child is reading at or above grade level and ready for grade promotion.

7. The district's specific criteria and policies for mid-year promotion. Mid-year promotion means promotion of a retained student at any time during the year of retention once the student has demonstrated ability to read at grade level.

(6) ELIMINATION OF SOCIAL PROMOTION.—

(b) The district school board may only exempt students from mandatory retention, as provided in paragraph (5)(b), for good cause. Good cause exemptions shall be limited to the following:

1. Limited English proficient students who have had less than 2 years of instruction in an English for Speakers of Other Languages program.
2. Students with disabilities whose individual education plan indicates that participation in the statewide assessment program is not appropriate, consistent with the requirements of State Board of Education rule.
3. Students who demonstrate an acceptable level of performance on an alternative standardized reading assessment approved by the State Board of Education.
4. Students who demonstrate, through a student portfolio, that the student is reading on grade level as evidenced by demonstration of mastery of the Sunshine State Standards in reading equal to at least a Level 2 performance on the FCAT.
5. Students with disabilities who participate in the FCAT and who have an individual education plan or a Section 504 plan that reflects that the student has received the intensive remediation in reading, as required by paragraph (4)(b), for more than 2 years but still demonstrates a deficiency in reading and was previously retained in kindergarten, grade 1, ~~or grade 2, or grade 3~~.
6. Students who have received the intensive remediation in reading as required by paragraph (4)(b) for 2 or more years but still demonstrate a deficiency in reading and who were previously retained in kindergarten, grade 1, ~~or grade 2, or grade 3~~ for a total of 2 years. Intensive reading instruction for students so promoted must include an altered instructional day based upon an academic improvement plan that includes specialized diagnostic information and specific reading strategies for each student. The district school board shall assist schools and teachers to implement reading strategies that research has shown to be successful in improving reading among low performing readers.

(7) SUCCESSFUL PROGRESSION FOR RETAINED READERS.—

(a) Students retained under the provisions of paragraph (5)(b) must be provided intensive interventions in reading to ameliorate the student's specific reading deficiency, as identified by a valid and reliable diagnostic assessment. This intensive intervention must include effective instructional strategies, participation in the school district's summer reading camp, and appropriate teaching methodologies necessary to assist those students in becoming successful readers, able to read at or above grade level, and ready for promotion to the next grade.

(b) Beginning with the 2004-2005 school year, each school district shall:

1. Conduct a review of student academic improvement plans for all students who did not score above Level 1 on the reading portion of the FCAT and did not meet the criteria for one of the good cause exemptions in paragraph (6)(b). The review shall address additional supports and services, as described in this subsection, needed to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency. The school district shall require a student portfolio to be completed for each such student.

2. Provide students who are retained under the provisions of paragraph (5)(b) with intensive instructional services and supports to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency, including a minimum of 90 minutes of daily, uninterrupted, scientifically research-based reading instruction and other strategies prescribed by the school district, which may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Small group instruction.
- b. Reduced teacher-student ratios.
- c. More frequent progress monitoring.
- d. Tutoring or mentoring.
- e. Transition classes containing 3rd and 4th grade students.
- f. Extended school day, week, or year.
- g. Summer reading camps.

3. Provide written notification to the parent of any student who is retained under the provisions of paragraph (5)(b) that his or her child has not met the proficiency level required for promotion and the reasons the child is not eligible for a good cause exemption as provided in paragraph (6)(b). The notification must comply with the provisions of s. 1002.20(14) and must include a description of proposed interventions and supports that will be provided to the child to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency.

4. Implement a policy for the mid-year promotion of any student retained under the provisions of paragraph (5)(b) who can demonstrate that he or she is a successful and independent reader, reading at or above grade level, and ready to be promoted to grade 4. Tools that school districts may use in reevaluating any student retained may include subsequent assessments, alternative assessments, and portfolio reviews, in accordance with rules of the State Board of Education. Students promoted during the school year after November 1 must demonstrate proficiency above that required to score at Level 2 on the grade 3 FCAT, as determined by the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education shall adopt standards that provide a reasonable expectation that the student's progress is sufficient to master appropriate 4th grade level reading skills.

5. Provide students who are retained under the provisions of paragraph (5)(b) with a high-performing teacher as determined by student performance data and above-satisfactory performance appraisals.

6. In addition to required reading enhancement and acceleration strategies, provide parents of students to be retained with at least one of the following instructional options:

a. Supplemental tutoring in scientifically research-based reading services in addition to the regular reading block, including tutoring before and/or after school.

b. A “Read at Home” plan outlined in a parental contract, including participation in “Families Building Better Readers Workshops” and regular parent-guided home reading.

c. A mentor or tutor with specialized reading training.

7. Establish a Reading Enhancement and Acceleration Development (READ) Initiative. The focus of the READ Initiative shall be to prevent the retention of grade 3 students and to offer intensive accelerated reading instruction to grade 3 students who failed to meet standards for promotion to grade 4 and to each K-3 student who is assessed as exhibiting a reading deficiency. The READ Initiative shall:

a. Be provided to all K-3 students at risk of retention as identified by the statewide assessment system used in Reading First schools. The assessment must measure phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

b. Be provided during regular school hours in addition to the regular reading instruction.

c. Provide a state-identified reading curriculum that has been reviewed by the Florida Center for Reading Research at Florida State University and meets, at a minimum, the following specifications:

(I) Assists students assessed as exhibiting a reading deficiency in developing the ability to read at grade level.

(II) Provides skill development in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

(III) Provides scientifically based and reliable assessment.

(IV) Provides initial and ongoing analysis of each student’s reading progress.

(V) Is implemented during regular school hours.

(VI) Provides a curriculum in core academic subjects to assist the student in maintaining or meeting proficiency levels for the appropriate grade in all academic subjects.

8. Establish at each school, where applicable, an Intensive Acceleration Class for retained grade 3 students who subsequently score at Level 1 on the reading portion of the FCAT. The focus of the Intensive Acceleration Class shall be to increase a child’s reading level at least two grade levels in one school year. The Intensive Acceleration Class shall:

a. Be provided to any student in grade 3 who scores at Level 1 on the reading portion of the FCAT and who was retained in grade 3 the prior year because of scoring at Level 1 on the reading portion of the FCAT.

b. Have a reduced teacher-student ratio.

c. Provide uninterrupted reading instruction for the majority of student contact time each day and incorporate opportunities to master the grade 4 Sunshine State Standards in other core subject areas.

d. Use a reading program that is scientifically research-based and has proven results in accelerating student reading achievement within the same school year.

e. Provide intensive language and vocabulary instruction using a scientifically research-based program, including use of a speech language therapist.

f. Include weekly progress monitoring measures to ensure progress is being made.

g. Report to the Department of Education, in the manner described by the department, the progress of students in the class at the end of the first semester.

9. Report to the State Board of Education, as requested, on the specific intensive reading interventions and supports implemented at the school district level. The Commissioner of Education shall annually prescribe the required components of requested reports.

10. Provide a student who has been retained in grade 3 and has received intensive instructional services but is still not ready for grade promotion, as determined by the school district, the option of being placed in a transitional instructional setting. Such setting shall specifically be designed to produce learning gains sufficient to meet grade 4 performance standards while continuing to remediate the areas of reading deficiency.

Section 7. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

Approved by the Governor May 12, 2004.

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