

Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 856

An act relating to disability history and awareness; creating s. 1003.4205, F.S.; requiring district school boards to designate “Disability History and Awareness Weeks” during the first 2 weeks in October each year; providing for students in all K-12 public schools to be provided disability history and awareness instruction; providing the content and goals of such instruction; encouraging state postsecondary institutions to conduct and promote activities related to disability history and awareness; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Section 1003.4205, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

1003.4205 Disability history and awareness instruction.—

(1) Each district school board may provide disability history and awareness instruction in all K-12 public schools in the district during the first 2 weeks in October each year. The district school board shall designate these 2 weeks as “Disability History and Awareness Weeks.”

(2)(a) During this 2-week period, students may be provided intensive instruction to expand their knowledge, understanding, and awareness of individuals with disabilities, the history of disability, and the disability rights movement. Disability history may include the events and timelines of the development and evolution of services to, and the civil rights of, individuals with disabilities. Disability history may also include the contributions of specific individuals with disabilities, including the contributions of acknowledged national leaders.

(b) The instruction may be integrated into the existing school curriculum in ways including, but not limited to, supplementing lesson plans, holding school assemblies, or providing other school-related activities. The instruction may be delivered by qualified school personnel or by knowledgeable guest speakers, with a particular focus on including individuals with disabilities.

(3) The goals of disability history and awareness instruction include:

(a) Better treatment for individuals with disabilities, especially for youth in school, and increased attention to preventing the bullying or harassment of students with disabilities.

(b) Encouragement to individuals with disabilities to develop increased self-esteem, resulting in more individuals with disabilities gaining pride in being an individual with a disability, obtaining postsecondary education, entering the workforce, and contributing to their communities.

(c) Reaffirmation of the local, state, and federal commitment to the full inclusion in society of, and the equal opportunity for, all individuals with disabilities.

Section 2. State postsecondary institutions are encouraged to conduct and promote activities on their campuses which provide education, understanding, and awareness of individuals with disabilities, disability history, and the disability rights movement.

Section 3. This act shall take effect July 1, 2008.

Approved by the Governor June 13, 2008.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 13, 2008.