

CHAPTER 2017-55

Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for House Bill No. 293

An act relating to middle grades; requiring the Department of Education to solicit for a contract to conduct a comprehensive study of states with nationally recognized high-performing middle schools in reading and mathematics; requiring a report to the Governor, the State Board of Education, and the Legislature by a specified time; providing for expiration; amending s. 1003.4156, F.S.; deleting requirements related to the career and education planning course for middle grades promotion; providing an appropriation; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, since 1998, Florida has seen a continuing trend of reading improvement in the elementary school grades, which has led to an increase of 17 percentage points in reading at or above proficiency for 4th grade students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, while Florida's 8th grade students achieved only an increase of 7 percentage points, and

WHEREAS, since 2003, Florida's 4th grade students have demonstrated an increase of 11 percentage points in mathematics at or above proficiency on the national assessment, while Florida's 8th grade students have shown an increase of only 3 percentage points, and

WHEREAS, since 2013, Florida's middle school students' proficiencies on the national assessment in both reading and mathematics have remained flat or decreased, and

WHEREAS, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, and New Jersey are the top performing states in the percentage of 4th and 8th grade students scoring at or above proficiency in reading on the national assessment, and

WHEREAS, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and Washington are the top performing states in the percentage of 4th and 8th grade students scoring at or above proficiency in mathematics on the national assessment, and

WHEREAS, Florida's academic expectations for students in both reading and mathematics were raised in 2010 and 2014, and

WHEREAS, the performance of Florida's middle school students on the state assessments in reading has remained flat since the state's standards were raised, while their performance in mathematics increased slightly between 2015 and 2016, and

WHEREAS, success in the middle school grades is a predictor of academic success in high school and college and career readiness, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

Section 1. Comprehensive study on middle school performance.—

(1) The Department of Education shall issue a competitive solicitation for a contract to conduct a comprehensive study of states with high-performing students in grades 6 through 8 in reading and mathematics, based on the states' performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress.

(2) The study must include a review, at a minimum, of all of the following:

(a) Academic expectations and instructional strategies, including:

1. Alignment of elementary and middle grades expectations with high school graduation requirements;

2. Strategies used to improve reading comprehension through the use of background knowledge and the use of sequenced curriculum programming and content rich texts to increase literacy skills in kindergarten through grade 8;

3. Research-based instructional practices in reading and mathematics, including those targeting low-performing students;

4. The rigor of the curriculum and courses and the availability of accelerated courses;

5. The availability of student support services;

6. Course sequencing and prerequisites for advanced courses; and

7. The availability of other academic and non-core classes, and electives.

(b) Attendance policies and student mobility issues.

(c) Teacher quality, including:

1. Teacher certification and recertification requirements;

2. Teacher preparedness to teach rigorous courses;

3. Teacher preparation specific to teaching middle school students;

4. Teacher recruitment and vacancy issues;

5. Staff development requirements and the availability of effective training;

6. Teacher collaboration and planning at the school and district levels;
and

7. Student performance data collection and dissemination.

(d) Middle school administrator leadership and performance.

(e) Parental and community involvement.

(3) The department shall submit a report on the findings of the comprehensive study and make recommendations to improve middle school student performance to the Governor, the State Board of Education, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 2017.

(4) This section expires upon submission of the final report.

Section 2. Subsection (1) of section 1003.4156, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1003.4156 General requirements for middle grades promotion.—

(1) In order for a student to be promoted to high school from a school that includes middle grades 6, 7, and 8, the student must successfully complete the following courses:

(a) Three middle grades or higher courses in English Language Arts (ELA).

(b) Three middle grades or higher courses in mathematics. Each school that includes middle grades must offer at least one high school level mathematics course for which students may earn high school credit. Successful completion of a high school level Algebra I or Geometry course is not contingent upon the student’s performance on the statewide, standardized end-of-course (EOC) assessment. To earn high school credit for Algebra I, a middle grades student must take the statewide, standardized Algebra I EOC assessment and pass the course, and in addition, beginning with the 2013-2014 school year and thereafter, a student’s performance on the Algebra I EOC assessment constitutes 30 percent of the student’s final course grade. To earn high school credit for a Geometry course, a middle grades student must take the statewide, standardized Geometry EOC assessment, which constitutes 30 percent of the student’s final course grade, and earn a passing grade in the course.

(c) Three middle grades or higher courses in social studies. Beginning with students entering grade 6 in the 2012-2013 school year, one of these courses must be at least a one-semester civics education course that includes the roles and responsibilities of federal, state, and local governments; the

structures and functions of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government; and the meaning and significance of historic documents, such as the Articles of Confederation, the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States. Beginning with the 2013-2014 school year, each student's performance on the statewide, standardized EOC assessment in civics education required under s. 1008.22 constitutes 30 percent of the student's final course grade. A middle grades student who transfers into the state's public school system from out of country, out of state, a private school, or a home education program after the beginning of the second term of grade 8 is not required to meet the civics education requirement for promotion from the middle grades if the student's transcript documents passage of three courses in social studies or two year-long courses in social studies that include coverage of civics education.

(d) Three middle grades or higher courses in science. Successful completion of a high school level Biology I course is not contingent upon the student's performance on the statewide, standardized EOC assessment required under s. 1008.22. However, beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, to earn high school credit for a Biology I course, a middle grades student must take the statewide, standardized Biology I EOC assessment, which constitutes 30 percent of the student's final course grade, and earn a passing grade in the course.

~~(e) One course in career and education planning to be completed in 6th, 7th, or 8th grade. The course may be taught by any member of the instructional staff. At a minimum, the course must be Internet-based, easy to use, and customizable to each student and include research-based assessments to assist students in determining educational and career options and goals. In addition, the course must result in a completed personalized academic and career plan for the student; must emphasize the importance of entrepreneurship skills; must emphasize technology or the application of technology in career fields; and, beginning in the 2014-2015 academic year, must include information from the Department of Economic Opportunity's economic security report as described in s. 445.07. The required personalized academic and career plan must inform students of high school graduation requirements, including a detailed explanation of the diploma designation options provided under s. 1003.4285; high school assessment and college entrance test requirements; Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program requirements; state university and Florida College System institution admission requirements; available opportunities to earn college credit in high school, including Advanced Placement courses; the International Baccalaureate Program; the Advanced International Certificate of Education Program; dual enrollment, including career dual enrollment; and career education courses, including career-themed courses and courses that lead to industry certification pursuant to s. 1003.492 or s. 1008.44.~~

~~Each school must inform parents about the course curriculum and activities. Each student shall complete a personal education plan that must be signed by the student and the student's parent. The Department of Education shall~~

~~develop course frameworks and professional development materials for the career and education planning course. The course may be implemented as a stand-alone course or integrated into another course or courses. The Commissioner of Education shall collect longitudinal high school course enrollment data by student ethnicity in order to analyze course-taking patterns.~~

Section 3. For the 2017-2018 fiscal year, the sum of \$50,000 in nonrecurring funds is appropriated from the General Revenue Fund to the Department of Education to implement the provisions of this act.

Section 4. This act shall take effect July 1, 2017.

Approved by the Governor June 2, 2017.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 2, 2017.