

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: SB 1906 Alternative Credit High School Courses

SPONSOR(S): Education Pre-K - 12 Appropriations and Education Pre-K - 12, Gaetz and others

TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:**

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR
1) <u>Schools & Learning Council</u>	<u>12 Y, 0 N</u>	<u>White/Eggers</u>	<u>Cobb</u>
2) <u>Policy & Budget Council</u>	<u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>
3) <u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>
4) <u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>	<u></u>
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SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Currently, most high school students enrolled in industry certification programs at career academies must take separate math and science courses to graduate from high school, even if the same skills are taught in the career academy courses.

Senate Bill 1906 authorizes a pilot project beginning in the 2008-2009 school year to provide opportunities for high school students enrolled in career academies to simultaneously earn alternative credit in Algebra, Geometry, and Biology if:

- The standards for these courses are included in their career coursework; and
- The students verify mastery of the core content by passing a Department of Education (DOE) approved end-of-course assessments.

The pilot project may be offered in up to three school districts selected by the Commissioner of Education from applications submitted by interested districts. The DOE is required to report to the Legislature and Governor by January 1, 2010, on the number of students receiving alternative credit under the pilot and to provide legislative recommendations for expanding the use of alternative credit statewide.

The bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state or local governments. **(See FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT).**

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2008.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

Empower families— Under the bill, career academy students in pilot program districts would have the opportunity to more efficiently earn credit in specified courses for high school graduation.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Present Situation

In order to graduate with a standard high school diploma, Florida secondary students are required to complete a total of 24 courses (credits), 16 of which must include core courses in English, math, science and social studies. Beginning with students entering their first year of high school in the 2007-2008 school year, students must complete four math and three science courses for high school graduation.¹

Section 1003.436, F.S., defines a credit as 135 hours of bona fide instruction in a designated course for purposes of high school graduation.² Students who are able to master content quickly and accelerate to more demanding coursework or students who require additional academic support are not exempted from this requirement.

Further, under s. 1011.60(2), F.S., in order for districts to receive funding through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP), all schools must operate for a term of no less than 180 days. Section 1011.61(1)(a)1., F.S., states that a student must be enrolled in instruction for a minimum of 900 net hours in order to be considered full-time and, therefore, eligible for funding.

Florida secondary students enrolled in rigorous career and professional academies, as described in s. 1003.493, F.S., currently enroll in separate math and science courses with little or no transfer of, or application to, the math and science skills and standards taught within the career course. For example, a student participating in a pre-architecture course within a construction technology academy is required to take a separate, self-contained algebra or geometry course, with little or no opportunity to apply, transfer, or make relevant those math skills in the architecture course. Conversely, students in the pre-architecture course are acquiring the requisite math skills along with the pre-architecture skills and given ample opportunities to apply and master both skill sets, but are not awarded credit for mastery of the math skills without taking an additional course.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill would provide, on a pilot basis, opportunities for students who are enrolled in relevant career-related instruction in high-interest fields to validate their acquisition of core math and science skills through career coursework that integrates and demands application of the math and science concepts. Students would not be held to traditional “seat time,” thus allowing advanced students to accelerate and providing struggling students encouragement to remain in school and acquire essential and relevant academic and work-related skills.

¹ Section 1003.428(2), F.S. Section 1003.43(1), F.S., requires only three math and three science courses for high school students that entered the ninth grade in the 1997-1998 school year.

² Section 1003.436(1)(a), F.S., defines a credit as 120 hours per course in a block scheduling format.

Under the bill, the DOE would select up to three pilot school districts that currently operate approved career academies in high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand occupations³ to offer alternative credit for specific math and science courses to students who verify attainment of math and science concepts via approved end-of-course assessments.

Students enrolled in the approved academies would participate in targeted courses associated with the career theme and simultaneously earn credit in a core math or science course, provided that the career course integrated the required state standards in the math or science course and the student is able to pass an approved end-of-course assessment.

The bill allows a participating district to earn 1/6th of a full-time equivalent (FTE) student in funding under the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) for a student who passes the appropriate end-of-course assessment and receives the alternative credit. A district, however, would not be able to report a student for more than one FTE per year.

To implement the pilot project, the bill assigns the following duties to the Commissioner of Education and the DOE:

- Establishment of participation criteria for districts and the selection of up to three participating school districts by July 30, 2008 from letters of intent from interested school districts, which must be submitted to the Commissioner of Education by July 15, 2008;
- Approval of a course as an alternative credit course within a qualified career and professional academy;
- Selection and approval of end-of-course assessments for alternative credit;
- Maintenance of a list of approved assessments and minimum passing scores for each approved course and incorporation of the list into the Course Code Directory;
- Approval or denial within 30 days of receipt of requests from a participating pilot district for a course to be included for alternative credit purposes;
- Procedures for school districts to report all enrollments and credits earned for alternative education courses; and
- Submission of a report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by January 1, 2010, on the participation of, and credits earned by, students as well as recommendations for expanding the use of alternative credit for core academic courses.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Creating s. 1002.375, F.S.; authorizing a pilot project in up to three school districts to award alternative credit for certain high school courses to career academy students.

Section 2. Amending s. 1011.61, F.S.; authorizing 1/6th of a FTE to be reported by school districts participating in the pilot project for FEFP funding purposes for specified students.

Section 3. Providing an effective date.

³ Secondary career academies are described in s. 1003.493, F.S., and approved by the Agency for Workforce Innovation.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

The bill allows a participating district to earn 1/6th of a full-time equivalent (FTE) student in funding under the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) for a student who passes the appropriate end-of-course assessment and receives the alternative credit. A district, however, would not be able to report a student for more than one FTE per year. Accordingly, the bill would have an insignificant impact on FEFP funding.

In addition, the bill assigns the DOE responsibilities that include developing criteria for participation, selecting the districts and assuring compliance with program requirements, adopting passing scores for the end-of-course assessments, and overseeing the administration and scoring of the examinations. DOE representatives indicate that these responsibilities be accomplished within existing funds.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

None.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

Not applicable. The bill does not appear to require a county or municipality to spend funds or take an action requiring expenditures; reduce the authority that counties and municipalities had as of

February 1, 1989, to raise revenues in the aggregate; or reduce the percentage of a state tax shared in the aggregate with counties and municipalities as of February 1, 1989.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

The bill requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to adopt rules to implement s. 1002.375, F.S., which is created by the bill to establish the pilot program for the award of alternative credit for high school courses.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

D. STATEMENT OF THE SPONSOR

IV. AMENDMENTS/COUNCIL SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

On April 11, 2008, the Schools and Learning Council reported CS/CS/SB 1906 favorably with one amendment. The amendment adds the substance of HBs 817 and 985, both of which were reported favorably as Council Substitutes by the Schools and Learning Council on March 25, 2008. The following describes these bills.

CS/HB 817: The bill creates the Student Preparedness Pilot Program (pilot program) to be piloted by school districts beginning with the 2008-2009 school year, and continuing through the 2014-2015 school year. For purposes of the 2008-2009 school year, each school district selected shall review, identify, and develop curricula options for implementation of the pilot program in the 2009-2010 school year. The DOE is required to develop an application process and the SBE is required to select the pilot program districts, one of which must be the Duval County School District.

In participating pilot program districts, students who attain the age of 16 years but have not reached the age of 18 years and who choose to exercise their option to not regularly attend school are subject to the pilot program's attendance and completion requirements. Such students must choose to:

- Continue towards and earn a high school diploma;
- Pursue and earn a high school equivalency diploma and earn a bronze level or higher Florida Ready to Work Credential (credential);
- Participate in a career or job training program and earn an industry certification or skill licensure; or
- Participate in the Ready to Work Certification Program and earn a credential.

The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) must conduct an annual study on the impact of the pilot program on dropout and graduation rates, on the employability of students, and on juvenile crime and make the results available January 1, 2012.

The pilot program is a voluntary program. Each school district that applies and is selected to participate may incur costs when the district implements the pilot program in the 2009-2010 school year.

CS /HB 985: The bill requires students entering the ninth grade in the 2008-2009 school year to earn a Florida Ready to Work Credential (credential) as requirement for graduation, if the student selects the traditional 24-credit graduation option and chooses a career or technical major area of interest.

The bill adds a new student eligibility requirement to the Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars (Gold Seal) award. Beginning in the 2008-2009 school year a student must earn a gold level Florida Ready to Work Credential for receipt of a Gold Seal award. The bill provides for bronze, silver, and gold levels of the credential and establishes the minimum score needed to attain each credential level. To achieve a gold level credential, a student must score a minimum of five or above on the Reading for Information, Applied Mathematics, and Locating Information assessments or assessments of comparable rigor.

There is no direct cost to students, job seekers, employers, schools or other partners to participate in the Florida Ready to Work Certificate Program. The bill may result in minor savings to Educational Enhancement Trust Fund appropriations if students who otherwise would have earned a Gold Seal do not because of the new requirement to earn the credential. Gold Seal awards account for less than one percent of all Bright Futures awards.