



Students who attain scores that verify mastery of content on the end-of-course assessments would earn an additional 1/6 FTE. However, a district would not be able to report a student for more than 1 FTE per fiscal year.

This bill creates section 1002.375 and amends section 1011.61 of the Florida Statutes.

## II. **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.<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup> 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.

Furthermore, under s. 1011.60(2), 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, and s. 1011.61(1)(a)1., F.S., stipulates 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 currently 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.

## III. **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.

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<sup>1</sup> s. 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.

<sup>2</sup> s. 1003.436(1)(a), F.S., defines a credit as 120 hours per course in a block scheduling format.

Recently released research studies by the National Governor's Association and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation indicate that 47 percent of dropouts surveyed indicate that courses were not interesting and 81 percent stated that providing opportunities for real-world learning that enhances the connection between school and work would improve a student's chances to remain in school and succeed.<sup>3</sup> The Davidson Institute for Talent Development states that 20 percent of the nation's dropouts test in the gifted range, an additional indication of the need to address and rethink the current high school curriculum and the conventional methods of instructional delivery.

The Department of Education would select up to three pilot school districts that currently operate approved career academies in high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand occupations<sup>4</sup> 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 assigns the following duties to the Commissioner of Education and the Department of Education in order to successfully implement the pilot project:

- Establishment of participation criteria for districts and the selection of up to three participating school districts by July 30, 2008, with interested school districts submitting a letter of intent 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 and credits earned by students as well as recommendations for expanding the use of alternative credit for core academic courses.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.silentepidemic.org>

<sup>4</sup> Secondary career academies are described in s. 1003.493, F.S., and approved by the Agency for Workforce Innovation.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:****A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

**B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

**C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

The bill would allow a district to earn 1/6 FTE for funding for a student who passes the appropriate end-of-course assessment and receives the alternative credit; however, a district would not be able to report a student for more than one FTE per year.

Accordingly, the bill would have an insignificant impact on Florida Education Finance Program funding.

In addition, the Department of Education would have additional responsibilities as a result of this bill, including developing criteria for participation, selecting the districts and assuring compliance with program requirements, adopting passing scores for the end-of-term examinations, and overseeing the administration and scoring of the examinations.

However, the department indicates that these efforts can be accomplished within existing funds.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Additional Information:**

- A. **Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**  
(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

**CS/CS by Education Pre-K – 12 Appropriations on March 20, 2008:**

The CS for CS for SB 1906:

- Adds statewide standardized end-of-course assessments if adopted or developed by the Department of Education to the Florida Virtual School assessments that are approved to measure student mastery of the alternative credit course.

**CS by Education Pre-K – 12 on March 12, 2008:**

The CS for SB 1906:

- Creates a pilot program to provide opportunities for high school students enrolled in rigorous career academies to simultaneously earn alternative credit in specific math and science courses;
- Grants alternative credit to students, provided the content standards and essential concepts of the math or science course is included in the career-academy coursework and the students are able to attain a specific level of mastery of the core content as evidenced by approved end-of-course-assessments;
- Directs the Commissioner of Education to designate up to three pilot projects in school districts with approved career and professional academies. Students in the pilot districts would be engaged in instruction that integrates multiple subjects and disciplines, is relevant to future academic and career opportunities, and allows for relevant instruction and application of knowledge; and
- Provides that students who attain certain scores on approved end-of-course assessments would earn an additional 1/6 FTE; however, a district would not be able to report a student for more than 1 FTE per fiscal year.

- B. **Amendments:**

None.