

<b>Tab 3</b>	<b>SB 556 by Berman;</b> Identical to H 00453 Requirements for a Standard High School Diploma
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<b>Tab 2</b>	<b>SB 420 by Burgess;</b> Identical to H 00371 Patriotic Displays in Classrooms
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<b>Tab 1</b>	<b>SB 206 by Harrell;</b> Identical to H 00851 Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder
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**The Florida Senate**  
**COMMITTEE MEETING EXPANDED AGENDA**

**EDUCATION PRE-K - 12**  
**Senator Simon, Chair**  
**Senator Calatayud, Vice Chair**

**MEETING DATE:** Tuesday, January 13, 2026**TIME:** 1:30—3:30 p.m.**PLACE:** Pat Thomas Committee Room, 412 Knott Building**MEMBERS:** Senator Simon, Chair; Senator Calatayud, Vice Chair; Senators Berman, Burgess, Davis, Gaetz, Osgood, and Yarborough

TAB	BILL NO. and INTRODUCER	BILL DESCRIPTION and SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIONS	COMMITTEE ACTION
1	<b>SB 206</b> Harrell (Identical H 851, Compare H 717)	Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder; Requiring, rather than authorizing, the State Board of Education to adopt certain rules; requiring that such rules include a requirement related to autism spectrum disorder for certain K-12 teachers, etc.  ED 01/13/2026 AED AP	
2	<b>SB 420</b> Burgess (Identical H 371)	Patriotic Displays in Classrooms; Requiring each district school board to adopt rules to require the display of portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in certain classrooms, etc.  ED 01/13/2026 AED RC	
3	<b>SB 556</b> Berman (Identical H 453)	Requirements for a Standard High School Diploma; Providing that students with disabilities may participate in the Special Olympics to meet the physical education requirement for a standard high school diploma, etc.  ED 01/13/2026 CF RC	

TAB	OFFICE and APPOINTMENT (HOME CITY)	FOR TERM ENDING	COMMITTEE ACTION
<b>Senate Confirmation Hearing:</b> A public hearing will be held for consideration of the below-named executive appointment to the office indicated.			
<b>Commission for Independent Education</b>			
5	Euliano, John (Winter Springs)	06/30/2028	
6	Stefano, Troy A. (Wellington)	06/30/2027	
7	Lynn, Christopher (Winter Garden)	06/30/2027	
<b>Education Practices Commission</b>			
4	Monteagudo, Omar ()	09/30/2027	

**COMMITTEE MEETING EXPANDED AGENDA**  
Education Pre-K - 12  
Tuesday, January 13, 2026, 1:30—3:30 p.m.

TAB	BILL NO. and INTRODUCER	BILL DESCRIPTION and SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIONS	COMMITTEE ACTION
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Other Related Meeting Documents

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Education Pre-K -12

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BILL: SB 556

INTRODUCER: Senator Berman

SUBJECT: Requirements for a Standard High School Diploma

DATE: January 12, 2026

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Sabitsch	Bouck	ED	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.			CF	
3.			RC	

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**I. Summary:**

SB 556 allows a student with a disability to meet the required one credit of physical education for a standard high school diploma by participating in the Special Olympics.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2026.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Florida Graduation Requirements**

Florida's graduation requirements for receiving a standard high school diploma are outlined in statute.<sup>1</sup> Florida students entering grade nine may choose from one of five options to earn a standard diploma. The five options are:<sup>2</sup>

- 24-credit program.
- 18-credit program, Academically Challenging Curriculum to Enhance Learning or ACCEL.
- A Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathway.
- An International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum.
- An Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) curriculum.

To be awarded a standard high school diploma under the 24-credit program requires students entering the ninth grade in 2023-2024 or later must earn the following credits:<sup>3</sup>

- Four credits in English Language Arts (ELA).
- Four credits in mathematics.

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<sup>1</sup> Sections 1003.4282, and 1002.3105, F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Florida Department of Education, Student Support Services, *Graduation Requirements*, <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/k-12-public-schools/ssss/graduation-requirements/> (last visited Jan. 10, 2026).

<sup>3</sup> Section 1003.4282(3), F.S.

- Three credits in science.
- Three credits in social studies.
- One credit in fine or performing arts, speech and debate, or career and technical education.
- One credit in physical education, which includes the integration of health.<sup>4</sup>
- Seven and one-half credits in electives.
- One-half credit in personal financial literacy.

Students may choose to substitute the required one credit in physical education through participation in an interscholastic sport at the junior varsity or varsity level for two full seasons, or completion of two years of marching band. Students may also satisfy one-half of the credit for physical education by completing one semester and earning a “C” or better in a marching band class, a physical activity class that requires participation in marching band activities, or a dance class.<sup>5</sup> Students may also substitute the required one credit in physical education through completion of two years of Reserve Officer Training Corps (R.O.T.C) class.

In each circumstance where students may choose a substitute for the one credit in physical education, Florida law does not allow the substitution to be used to satisfy the personal fitness requirement or the requirement for adaptive physical education under an individual education plan (IEP) or 504 plan.<sup>6</sup>

### **Special Olympics**

The mission of the Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.<sup>7</sup>

The origins of the Special Olympics can be traced to the first Camp Shriver that was founded by Eunice Kennedy Shriver in the early 1960’s on her Maryland farm. Her vision was that through sports, the lives of people with intellectual disabilities would be transformed and public perceptions would be changed forever.<sup>8</sup>

The establishment of these camps gathered momentum that led to the first International Special Olympics Summer Games held at Soldier Field in Chicago as a joint venture between the Kennedy Foundation and the Chicago Park District. About 1,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities from the United States and Canada competed in the first Special Olympics International Summer Games in Chicago. The event was so successful that Eunice Kennedy

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<sup>4</sup> Section 1003.4282(3)(f), F.S.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> Special Olympics, *About Page*, <https://www.specialolympics.org/about/mission> (last visited Jan. 6, 2026).

<sup>8</sup> Special Olympics, *Camp Shriver – The Beginning of a Movement*, <https://www.specialolympics.org/about/history/camp-shriver> (last visited Jan. 7, 2026).

Shriver soon pledged that more games would be held in 1970 and every two years thereafter in a "Biennial International Special Olympics."<sup>9</sup>

Today the Special Olympics has grown to be a worldwide organization with 256 national and state programs in 207 countries and jurisdictions. In 2024, there were 4,660,299 participants that included 3.8 million athletes with intellectual disabilities that were joined by over 800,000 unified partners (individuals without an intellectual disability who may or may not have another type of disability).<sup>10</sup>

Through the Special Olympics there are more than 30 Olympic-style individual and team sports that provide meaningful training and competition opportunities for persons with intellectual disabilities. Sports offered are varied and include such diverse activities as:<sup>11</sup>

- Alpine Skiing;
- Basketball;
- Bowling;
- Competitive Cheer;
- Cycling;
- Equestrian;
- Figure Skating;
- Judo;
- Kayaking; and
- Powerlifting.

The Special Olympics also supports Unified Sports, which joins people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. It was inspired by a simple principle: training together and playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding. Young people with disabilities do not often get a chance to play on their school sports teams. U.S. states are adopting the Unified Sports approach that Special Olympics pioneered. Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® programming is in more than 10,800 schools in 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.<sup>12</sup>

### ***Special Olympics in Florida***

The Special Olympics in Florida consists of 69,453 registered athletes and unified partners (2023) supported by 15,521 coaches and 45,225 volunteers. There are 23 different individual and team sports offered.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Special Olympics, *The Beginning of a Worldwide Movement*, <https://www.specialolympics.org/about/history/camp-shriver> (last visited Jan. 7, 2026).

<sup>10</sup> Special Olympics, *Global Reach Report* (2024), available at: <https://www.specialolympics.org/about/reports>.

<sup>11</sup> Special Olympics, *Sports*, <https://www.specialolympics.org/what-we-do/sports/sports-offered> (last visited January 7, 2026).

<sup>12</sup> Special Olympics, *Unified Sports*, <https://www.specialolympics.org/what-we-do/sports/unified-sports> (last visited Jan. 7, 2026).

<sup>13</sup> Special Olympics, *Florida Fact Sheet*, available at: <https://media.specialolympics.org/resources/leading-a-program/program-profiles/SONA/Florida-FactSheet-2024.pdf>.

Currently, there are 303 public high schools participating in the Special Olympics United Champion Schools and Developmental Sports Program that include 4,664 athletes and 1,144 unified partners. Additionally, there are 1,330 high school level programs taking place in Florida communities outside of public schools that include 4,664 athletes and 1,144 unified partners.<sup>14</sup>

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

SB 556 amends s. 1003.4282, F.S., to allow students with disabilities who participate in the Special Olympics to substitute that participation for the required one credit of physical education to earn a standard high school diploma.

The provision requires one year of participation in the Special Olympics as determined by the student's individual education plan (IEP) team.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

#### **A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

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

None.

#### **C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

#### **D. State Tax or Fee Increases:**

None.

#### **E. Other Constitutional Issues:**

None.

### **V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

#### **A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

#### **B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

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<sup>14</sup> Email, Special Olympics Florida (January 6, 2026).

C. Government Sector Impact:

This bill does not have a fiscal impact on state revenues or expenditures.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends s. 1003.4282 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:**

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.





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LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate

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House

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The Committee on Education Pre-K - 12 (Berman) recommended the following:

**Senate Amendment (with directory and title amendments)**

Between lines 13 and 14  
insert:

(3) STANDARD HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA; COURSE AND ASSESSMENT  
REQUIREMENTS.—

(f) *One credit in physical education.*—Physical education  
must include the integration of health. Participation in an  
interscholastic sport at the junior varsity or varsity level for  
two full seasons shall satisfy the one-credit requirement in



766280

physical education. A district school board may not require that the one credit in physical education be taken during the 9th grade year. Completion of 2 years of marching band shall satisfy the one-credit requirement in physical education and ~~or~~ the one-credit requirement in performing arts. This credit may not be used to satisfy the personal fitness requirement or the requirement for adaptive physical education under an individual education plan (IEP) or 504 plan. Completion of one semester with a grade of "C" or better in a marching band class, in a physical activity class that requires participation in marching band activities as an extracurricular activity, or in a dance class shall satisfy one-half credit in physical education or one-half credit in performing arts. This credit may not be used to satisfy the personal fitness requirement or the requirement for adaptive physical education under an IEP or 504 plan. Completion of 2 years in a Reserve Officer Training Corps (R.O.T.C.) class, a significant component of which is drills, shall satisfy the one-credit requirement in physical education and the one-credit requirement in performing arts. This credit may not be used to satisfy the personal fitness requirement or the requirement for adaptive physical education under an IEP or 504 plan.

==== D I R E C T O R Y C L A U S E A M E N D M E N T =====

And the directory clause is amended as follows:

Delete lines 11 - 12

and insert:

Section 1. Paragraph (f) of subsection (3) and paragraph (b) of subsection (8) of section 1003.4282, Florida Statutes,



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are amended to read:

===== T I T L E   A M E N D M E N T =====

And the title is amended as follows:

Between lines 3 and 4

insert:

that students can substitute marching band experience  
for physical education and performing fine arts credit  
requirements for a standard high school diploma;  
providing

By Senator Berman

26-00148-26

2026556

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to requirements for a standard high school diploma; amending s. 1003.4282, F.S.; providing that students with disabilities may participate in the Special Olympics to meet the physical education requirement for a standard high school diploma; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Paragraph (b) of subsection (8) of section 1003.4282, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1003.4282 Requirements for a standard high school diploma.—

(8) STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.—Beginning with students entering grade 9 in the 2014-2015 school year, this subsection applies to a student with a disability.

(b) The following options, in addition to the other options specified in this section, may be used to satisfy the standard high school diploma requirements, as specified in the student's individual education plan:

1. For a student with a disability for whom the IEP team has determined that the Florida Alternate Assessment is the most appropriate measure of the student's skills:

a. A combination of course substitutions, assessments, industry certifications, other acceleration options, or occupational completion points appropriate to the student's unique skills and abilities that meet the criteria established by State Board of Education rule.

b. A portfolio of quantifiable evidence that documents a

Page 1 of 3

**CODING:** Words ~~stricken~~ are deletions; words underlined are additions.

26-00148-26

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student's mastery of academic standards through rigorous metrics established by State Board of Education rule. A portfolio may include, but is not limited to, documentation of work experience, internships, community service, and postsecondary credit.

2. A student with a disability may participate in the Special Olympics as a course substitution for the physical education requirement under paragraph (3) (f). A student who chooses this option must participate in the Special Olympics for one school year, as determined by the student's IEP team.

3. For a student with a disability for whom the IEP team has determined that mastery of academic and employment competencies is the most appropriate way for a student to demonstrate his or her skills:

a. Documented completion of the minimum high school graduation requirements, including the number of course credits prescribed by rules of the State Board of Education.

b. Documented achievement of all annual goals and short-term objectives for academic and employment competencies, industry certifications, and occupational completion points specified in the student's transition plan. The documentation must be verified by the IEP team.

c. Documented successful employment for the number of hours per week specified in the student's transition plan, for the equivalent of 1 semester, and payment of a minimum wage in compliance with the requirements of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act.

d. Documented mastery of the academic and employment competencies, industry certifications, and occupational

Page 2 of 3

**CODING:** Words ~~stricken~~ are deletions; words underlined are additions.

26-00148-26

2026556

completion points specified in the student's transition plan.

The documentation must be verified by the IEP team, the employer, and the teacher. The transition plan must be developed and signed by the student, parent, teacher, and employer before placement in employment and must identify the following:

(I) The expected academic and employment competencies, industry certifications, and occupational completion points;

(II) The criteria for determining and certifying mastery of the competencies;

(III) The work schedule and the minimum number of hours to be worked per week; and

(IV) A description of the supervision to be provided by the school district.

~~4.3-~~ Any change to the high school graduation option specified in the student's IEP must be approved by the parent and is subject to verification for appropriateness by an independent reviewer selected by the parent as provided in s. 1003.572.

The State Board of Education shall adopt rules under ss. 120.536(1) and 120.54 to implement this subsection, including rules that establish the minimum requirements for students described in this subsection to earn a standard high school diploma. The State Board of Education shall adopt emergency rules pursuant to ss. 120.536(1) and 120.54.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Education Pre-K -12

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BILL: SB 420

INTRODUCER: Senator Burgess

SUBJECT: Patriotic Displays in Classrooms

DATE: January 12, 2026

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1. Sabitsch	Bouck	ED	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2. _____	_____	AED	_____
3. _____	_____	RC	_____

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**I. Summary:**

SB 420 requires each school district to adopt rules to require the display of portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in each social studies classroom and in each kindergarten through grade-5 classroom.

The bill requires the Department of Education to select the portraits and make them available to each school district.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2026.

**II. Present Situation:**

**Patriotic Programs**

Florida law addresses patriotic programs in schools by allowing school districts to adopt rules to require programs of a patriotic nature to encourage greater respect for the government of the United States and its national anthem and flag.<sup>1</sup> The same law addresses behavior when the national anthem is played and requires that the pledge of allegiance be recited at the beginning of the day in all public elementary, middle and high schools in the state. A student's parent may request in writing that the student be excused from reciting the pledge.<sup>2</sup>

Each district school board may allow any teacher or administrator to read, or to post in a public school building or classroom or at any school-related event, any excerpt or portion of the following historic materials, subject to limitations specified in law:<sup>3</sup>

- The national motto;

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<sup>1</sup> Section 1003.44(1), F.S.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Section 1003.44(2), F.S.

- The national anthem;
- The pledge of allegiance;
- The Constitution of the State of Florida, including the Preamble;
- The Constitution of the United States, including the Preamble;
- The Bill of Rights;
- The Declaration of Independence;
- The Mayflower Compact;
- The Emancipation Proclamation;
- The writings, speeches, documents, and proclamations of the presidents of the United States, the signers of the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence, and civil rights leaders; and
- The decisions of the United States Supreme Court.

Florida law encourages all public schools within the state to coordinate, at all grade levels, instruction related to the nation's founding fathers during "American Founders' Month"<sup>4</sup> which is designated as the month of September each year.<sup>5</sup>

Florida law requires the DOE to assist stakeholders in preparing students to be civically responsible and knowledgeable adults in the following ways:<sup>6</sup>

- Develop or approve an integrated civic education curriculum that school districts and charter schools are required to incorporate as part of regular schoolwork in kindergarten through grade 12. The curriculum must assist students in developing:
  - An understanding of their shared rights and responsibilities as residents of the state and of the founding principles of the United States.
  - A sense of civic pride and desire to participate regularly with government at the local, state, and federal levels.
  - An understanding of the process for effectively advocating before government bodies and officials.
  - An understanding of the civic-minded expectations, developed by the State Board of Education, of an upright and desirable citizenry that recognizes and accepts responsibility for preserving and defending the blessings of liberty inherited from prior generations and secured by the United States Constitution.
- Curate oral history resources to be used along with the civic education curriculum which provide portraits in patriotism based on the personal stories of diverse individuals who demonstrate civic-minded qualities. These resources constitute the Portraits in Patriotism Act.
- Approve integrated civic education curricula submitted by school districts and charter schools.

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<sup>4</sup> Section 683.145, F.S.

<sup>5</sup> Section 1003.44(3), F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Section 1003.44(6), F.S.

## **School and Classroom Displays**

Each school district is required to adopt rules to require that all schools and buildings used by the school district display the state motto of “In God We Trust” in a conspicuous location.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, each public K-20 educational institution in Florida must display daily in each classroom the flag of the United States. The flag must be made in the United States, must be at least 2 feet by 3 feet, and must be properly displayed in accordance with applicable federal law. The principal, director, or president of each educational institution must attempt to acquire the flags through donations or fundraising for 1 year prior to securing other funding sources or allocating funds for the purchase of flags.<sup>8</sup>

## **George Washington and Abraham Lincoln**

George Washington and Abraham Lincoln are both iconic figures in American history that shaped the History of the United States of America.

### ***George Washington***

George Washington was an American general and commander in chief of the colonial armies during the American revolution and subsequently the first president of the United States of America, and is commonly referred to as the father of the nation.<sup>9</sup> He was born on February 22, 1732, in Westmoreland county, Virginia and died on December 14, 1799, at his home in Mount Vernon, Virginia at the age of 67.

### ***Abraham Lincoln***

Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president of the United States who preserved the Union during the American Civil War and brought about the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States of America earning him the nickname “The Great Emancipator.” He was born in 1809 in a one-room cabin near Hodgenville, Kentucky where his youth was marked by the struggles of frontier life and almost no formal education. Later in life he was self-educated and became a lawyer and public figure. Lincoln was assassinated at the Ford Theatre in Washington D.C. in 1865 at 56 years of age.<sup>10</sup>

## **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

SB 420 amends s. 1003.44, F.S., to require that portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln are displayed in a conspicuous place in each public school classroom<sup>11</sup> that is primarily used for social studies instruction as well as in each classroom serving kindergarten through grade 5.

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<sup>7</sup> Section 1003.44(4), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Section 1000.06(2), F.S.

<sup>9</sup> Britannica, *George Washington*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-Washington> (last visited Jan. 5, 2026).

<sup>10</sup> Britannica, *Abraham Lincoln*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Abraham-Lincoln> (last visited Jan. 8, 2026).

<sup>11</sup> This requirement likely does not apply to charter schools. Charter schools are exempt from most statutes, except those specified in s. 1002.33(16), F.S. Section 1003.44, F.S., which contains the requirements of this bill, is not listed as a statute charter schools must follow; this section of law does contain a charter school requirement, but it is limited to adoption of and submission to the DOE an integrated civic education curriculum, which would not appear to include a display of portraits.



The bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to select the portraits and make them available to each school district. The bill does not specify the method or format by which the DOE must make these portraits available.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:**

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

This bill could have a significant negative fiscal impact on the DOE or school districts in order to make the portraits available to each specified classroom. The cost to either entity depends on the method the portraits are made available.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends s. 1003.44 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.

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This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

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By Senator Burgess

23-00134B-26

2026420\_\_

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to patriotic displays in classrooms; amending s. 1003.44, F.S.; requiring each district school board to adopt rules to require the display of portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in certain classrooms; requiring the Department of Education to select the portraits and make them available to each school district; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Subsection (4) of section 1003.44, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1003.44 Patriotic programs; rules.—

(4) Each district school board shall adopt rules to require, in all of the schools of the district and in each building used by the district school board:

(a) The display of the state motto, "In God We Trust," designated under s. 15.0301, in a conspicuous place.

(b) The display of portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in a conspicuous place in each classroom that is primarily used for social studies instruction, and in each kindergarten through grade 5 classroom. The department shall select the portraits and make them available to each school district.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Education Pre-K -12

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BILL: SB 206

INTRODUCER: Senator Harrell

SUBJECT: Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

DATE: January 12, 2026

REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Brick	Bouck	ED	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
2.			AED	
3.			AP	

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## **I. Summary:**

SB 206 modifies requirements for continuing education and inservice training for teaching students with developmental and emotional or behavioral disabilities. The bill:

- Requires, rather than authorizes, the State Board of Education (State Board) to adopt rules to implement such continuing education and inservice training.
- Requires a K-12 teacher who teaches a class in which at least 50 percent of the students have autism spectrum disorder to hold an Autism Spectrum Disorders Endorsement.
- Requires the State Board's rules to allow an exception to the Autism Spectrum Disorders Endorsement requirement if the teacher:
  - Holds an Endorsement in Severe or Profound Disabilities;
  - Has taught students with autism spectrum disorder for at least 3 years; and
  - Has been rated highly effective for the preceding 3-year period under requirements for personnel evaluation procedures.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

## **II. Present Situation:**

### **Continuing Education and Inservice Training Related to Specified Disabilities**

The Commissioner of Education (commissioner) is required to develop recommendations to incorporate instruction on autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, other developmental disabilities, and emotional or behavioral disabilities into continuing education or inservice training requirements for instructional personnel.<sup>1</sup> The recommendations must address the following topics:<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Section 1012.582(1), F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Section 1012.582(1)(a)-(e), F.S.

- Early identification and intervention.
- Curriculum planning and instructional modifications, adaptations, strategies, and techniques.
- Use of available state and local resources.
- Use of positive behavior interventions and supports to de-escalate problem behaviors.
- Use of restraint techniques, positive behavior interventions and supports, and classroom behavior management strategies.

In developing the recommendations, the commissioner must consult with the State Surgeon General, the Director of the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, and specified representatives from the education and disability communities, including regional autism centers.<sup>3</sup> The Department of Education (DOE) must incorporate the recommended course curricula into existing continuing education or inservice training requirements for instructional personnel.<sup>4</sup> The training requirements may not add to the total hours required for continuing education or inservice training as currently established by the DOE.<sup>5</sup>

The State Board of Education may adopt rules to implement the requirements for continuing education and inservice training for teaching students with developmental and emotional or behavioral disabilities.<sup>6</sup> The commissioner reviewed related curricula and reported findings and recommendations for updates to legislative leadership on December 1, 2025.<sup>7</sup>

The report identifies statewide professional learning delivery mechanisms supporting instruction for students with disabilities, including:

- The BEESS<sup>8</sup> Portal to Professional Learning Alternatives, which offers online courses for Florida educators.<sup>9</sup>
- IDEA-funded<sup>10</sup> state projects, supported through IDEA funding, that provide direct services and facilitate professional development and learning for teachers and administrators, including examples such as the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities and the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System.<sup>11</sup>
- Local education agency professional learning opportunities.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Section 1012.582(2), F.S.

<sup>4</sup> Section 1012.582(3), F.S.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> Section 1012.582(4), F.S.

<sup>7</sup> Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, *Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and Inservice Training in Florida: Findings and Recommendations* (Dec. 1, 2025).

<sup>8</sup> Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services.

<sup>9</sup> Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, *Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and Inservice Training in Florida: Findings and Recommendations* (Dec. 1, 2025), at 6.

<sup>10</sup> Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. ss. 1400 et seq.; see 20 U.S.C. s. 1411(a)(1) (authorizing Part B formula grants to states to assist in providing special education and related services to children with disabilities).

<sup>11</sup> Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, *Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and Inservice Training in Florida: Findings and Recommendations* (Dec. 1, 2025), at 6-7.

<sup>12</sup> Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, *Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and Inservice Training in Florida: Findings and Recommendations* (Dec. 1, 2025), at 8.

The report states that local education agencies reported employing 29,964 exceptional student education (ESE) teachers in 2024-25, which comprised 14.5 percent of the total teacher population (174,858).<sup>13</sup>

### **Autism Spectrum Disorders Endorsement**

For SY 2024-25, 66,152 students were reported as eligible under the Autism Spectrum Disorder exceptionality.<sup>14</sup>

An Autism Spectrum Disorders endorsement requires a bachelor's or higher degree with certification in an exceptional student education area and completion of 12 semester hours that include:<sup>15</sup>

- Nature of autism spectrum disorder.
- Assistive and instructional technology and communication systems.
- Behavior management and positive behavior supports.
- Assessment and diagnosis.
- Field-based experience with students with autism spectrum disorder.

### **Severe or Profound Disabilities Endorsement**

An endorsement in severe or profound disabilities requires a bachelor's or higher degree with certification in any area of special education and 12 semester hours in the education of students with profound disabilities, including coursework in atypical child development and assessment and interdisciplinary teaming.<sup>16</sup> A qualified applicant must also complete one of several options that pair additional coursework with a supervised field-based experience. The options include coursework on the nature of autism and intervention strategies and a supervised field-based experience with students who are autistic.<sup>17</sup>

### **Adding Endorsements to a Florida Educator Certificate**

The DOE issues a professional educator certificate for a period not to exceed five years to an applicant who meets statutory eligibility criteria.<sup>18</sup>

A school district may process, via the DOE website, applications for public school employees that include the addition of a subject coverage or endorsement to a valid Florida certificate.<sup>19</sup> An addition may be based on completion of the applicable subject area testing requirements or

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<sup>13</sup> Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, *Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and Inservice Training in Florida: Findings and Recommendations* (Dec. 1, 2025), at 8.

<sup>14</sup> Florida Department of Education reports 66,152 students eligible under the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) exceptionality, based on Final Survey 2 for SY 2024-25. Florida Department of Education, *Exceptional Student Data by Exceptionality by Race/Ethnicity, 2024-25, Final Survey 2* (Excel spreadsheet) (ASD worksheet, FLORIDA row, Total column), available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7584/urlt/MPES2425.xlsx>.

<sup>15</sup> Rule 6A-4.01796, F.A.C.

<sup>16</sup> Rule 6A-4.01793, F.A.C.

<sup>17</sup> Rule 6A-4.01793(2)(c)1., F.A.C.

<sup>18</sup> Section 1012.56(7)(a), F.S.

<sup>19</sup> Section 1012.586(1)(a), F.S.

completion of the requirements of an approved school district program or the inservice components for an endorsement.<sup>20</sup>

For 2023-24, district-reported certification data show 2,614 Autism Spectrum Disorders certifications and 169 Severe or Profound Disabilities certifications; certifications are counted once per teacher per certification area.<sup>21</sup>

### **Personnel Evaluation Procedures and Ratings**

Each district school superintendent must establish procedures for evaluating the performance of duties and responsibilities of instructional, administrative, and supervisory personnel employed by the school district.<sup>22</sup>

The DOE must approve each school district's instructional personnel and school administrator evaluation systems and must monitor district implementation for compliance with statutory requirements.<sup>23</sup> Evaluation systems must differentiate among four levels of performance:<sup>24</sup>

- Highly effective.
- Effective.
- Needs improvement, or developing for certain instructional personnel in the first three years of employment.
- Unsatisfactory.

A performance evaluation must be conducted for each employee at least once a year, and a newly hired classroom teacher must be observed and evaluated at least twice in the first year of teaching in the district.<sup>25</sup> A performance evaluation must include, at minimum, specified summative components and minimum weighting provisions, including:<sup>26</sup>

- Student performance, which must comprise at least one-third of the evaluation.
- Instructional practice for instructional personnel, which must comprise at least one-third of the evaluation.
- Instructional leadership for school administrators, which must comprise at least one-third of the evaluation.
- Additional performance indicators beyond the required student performance and instructional practice or instructional leadership components.

Statewide, districts reported 157,905 classroom teachers received an evaluation in 2023-24, and 114,950 of those teachers (72.8 percent) were rated highly effective.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Section 1012.586(1)(a), F.S.

<sup>21</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Identification of High Demand Teacher Needs Areas for 2025-26* (report) (explaining that certifications are counted once per teacher per subject area and providing certification subject code totals) (p. 2; Appendix C, pp. 69-70 (subject code 1066, Severe or Profound Disabilities; subject code 1078, Autism Spectrum Disorders)), available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/20808/urlt/17-2.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Section 1012.34(1)(a), F.S.

<sup>23</sup> Section 1012.34(1)(b), F.S.

<sup>24</sup> Section 1012.34(2)(e), F.S.

<sup>25</sup> Section 1012.34(3)(a), F.S.

<sup>26</sup> Section 1012.34(3)(a)1.-4., F.S.

<sup>27</sup> Florida Department of Education, 2023-24 District Educator Evaluation Ratings (Excel spreadsheet) (Classroom Teachers - % by Dist worksheet, Statewide Total row), available at <https://www.fldoe.org/file/7503/2324DistEduEvalRate.xlsx>.

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

SB 206 amends s. 1012.582, F.S., relating to continuing education and inservice training for teaching students with developmental and emotional or behavioral disabilities. The bill:

- Requires, rather than authorizes, the State Board of Education (State Board) to adopt rules to implement requirements for continuing education and inservice training for teaching students with developmental and emotional or behavioral disabilities.
- Requires a K-12 teacher who teaches a class in which at least 50 percent of the students have autism spectrum disorder to hold an Autism Spectrum Disorders Endorsement. It is unclear if a mid-year addition of a student with autism which brings a class above the 50 percent threshold would result in noncompliance with the rule.
- Requires the State Board's rules to allow an exception to the Autism Spectrum Disorders Endorsement requirement if the teacher:
  - Holds an Endorsement in Severe or Profound Disabilities;
  - Has taught students with autism spectrum disorder for at least 3 years; and
  - Has been rated highly effective for the preceding 3-year period under requirements for personnel evaluation procedures.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

#### **A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

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

None.

#### **C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

#### **D. State Tax or Fee Increases:**

None.

#### **E. Other Constitutional Issues:**

None.

### **V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**

#### **A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.



**B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

None.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends section 1012.582 of the Florida Statutes.

**IX. Additional Information:****A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.



651894

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate

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House

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The Committee on Education Pre-K - 12 (Harrell) recommended the following:

**Senate Amendment (with title amendment)**

Delete everything after the enacting clause  
and insert:

Section 1. Subsection (5) of section 393.063, Florida  
Statutes, is amended to read:

393.063 Definitions.—For the purposes of this chapter, the  
term:

(5) "Autism" or "autism spectrum disorder" means a  
condition as defined by the most recent edition of the



651894

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders published  
by the American Psychiatric Association ~~pervasive,~~  
~~neurologically based developmental disability of extended~~  
~~duration which causes severe learning, communication, and~~  
~~behavior disorders with age of onset during infancy or~~  
~~childhood. Individuals with autism exhibit impairment in~~  
~~reciprocal social interaction, impairment in verbal and~~  
~~nonverbal communication and imaginative ability, and a markedly~~  
~~restricted repertoire of activities and interests.~~

Section 2. Paragraph (b) of subsection (3) of section  
1004.85, Florida Statutes, is amended, and subsection (9) is  
added to that section, to read:

1004.85 Postsecondary educator preparation institutes.—

(3) Educator preparation institutes approved pursuant to  
this section may offer competency-based certification programs  
specifically designed for noneducation major baccalaureate  
degree holders to enable program participants to meet the  
educator certification requirements of s. 1012.56. An educator  
preparation institute choosing to offer a competency-based  
certification program pursuant to the provisions of this section  
must implement a program developed by the institute and approved  
by the department for this purpose. Approved programs shall be  
available for use by other approved educator preparation  
institutes.

(b) Each program participant must:

1. Meet certification requirements pursuant to s.  
1012.56(1) by obtaining a statement of status of eligibility in  
the certification subject area of the educational plan and meet  
the requirements of s. 1012.56(2)(a)-(f) before participating in



651894

field experiences.

2. Demonstrate competency and participate in field experiences that are appropriate to his or her educational plan prepared under paragraph (a). Beginning with candidates entering an educator preparation institute in the 2022-2023 school year, a candidate for certification in a coverage area identified pursuant to s. 1012.585(3)(f) must successfully complete all competencies for a reading endorsement, including completion of the endorsement practicum through the candidate's field experience, in order to graduate from the program.

3. Before completion of the program, fully demonstrate his or her ability to teach the subject area for which he or she is seeking certification by documenting a positive impact on student learning growth in a prekindergarten through grade 12 setting and, except as provided in s. 1012.56(7)(a)3., achieving a passing score on the professional education competency examination, the basic skills examination, and the subject area examination for the subject area certification which is required by state board rule.

4. For each participant who is certified in exceptional student education, complete the autism micro-credential created pursuant to s. 1004.551(1)(f).

(9) By August 1, 2027, as a condition for continued program approval, each educator preparation institute must offer instruction and training on evidence-based practices for teaching students with autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, other developmental disabilities, and emotional or behavioral disabilities, consistent with the uniform core curricula developed by the department.



651894

Section 3. Section 1009.636, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

1009.636 Autism educator loan forgiveness program.—

(1) The Legislature finds that an adequate supply of special education teachers is critical to provide students who have a neurodevelopmental disability, such as autism spectrum disorder, with individualized education to foster essential social-emotional skills, provide positive interventions, and build life skills for independence. The Autism Educator Loan Forgiveness Program is created to recruit and retain qualified individuals to serve as special education teachers for students with autism spectrum disorder.

(2) To be eligible, an individual must:

(a)1. Have earned a master's or higher degree in special education or exceptional student education from an accredited institution and have an active student loan balance from completion of that degree, and hold a temporary or professional certificate; or

2. Have earned a bachelor's or higher degree from an accredited institution and have an active student loan balance from completion of that degree, hold a temporary or professional certificate, and hold the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement or Severe or Profound Disabilities Endorsement; and

(b) Serve as the primary teacher in a public school classroom in which a majority of the students have autism spectrum disorder.

(3) Eligible participants may receive up to \$17,500 in total student loan repayment assistance over 5 years, disbursed in annual payments not to exceed \$3,500 per year. Payments must



651894

be made directly to the lender servicing the participant's  
student loan.

(4) In order for the department to release each annual  
payment, a teacher must:

(a) Have completed a full year of service pursuant to  
paragraph (2)(c).

(b) Have received a rating of effective or highly effective  
pursuant to s. 1012.34.

(c) Not have had any disciplinary action taken by the  
school district or by the department against the teacher's  
certificate.

(5) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to  
administer this section.

Section 4. Paragraph (c) of subsection (1) and paragraph  
(a) of subsection (3) of section 1012.22, Florida Statutes, are  
amended to read:

1012.22 Public school personnel; powers and duties of the  
district school board.—The district school board shall:

(1) Designate positions to be filled, prescribe  
qualifications for those positions, and provide for the  
appointment, compensation, promotion, suspension, and dismissal  
of employees as follows, subject to the requirements of this  
chapter:

(c) *Compensation and salary schedules.*—

1. Definitions.—As used in this paragraph:

a. "Adjustment" means an addition to the base salary  
schedule that is not a bonus and becomes part of the employee's  
permanent base salary and shall be considered compensation under  
s. 121.021(22).



651894

b. "Grandfathered salary schedule" means the salary schedule or schedules adopted by a district school board before July 1, 2014, pursuant to subparagraph 4.

c. "Instructional personnel" means instructional personnel as defined in s. 1012.01(2)(a)-(d), excluding substitute teachers.

d. "Performance salary schedule" means the salary schedule or schedules adopted by a district school board pursuant to subparagraph 5.

e. "Salary schedule" means the schedule or schedules used to provide the base salary for district school board personnel.

f. "School administrator" means a school administrator as defined in s. 1012.01(3)(c).

g. "Supplement" means an annual addition to the base salary for the term of the negotiated supplement as long as the employee continues his or her employment for the purpose of the supplement. A supplement does not become part of the employee's continuing base salary but shall be considered compensation under s. 121.021(22).

2. Cost-of-living adjustment.—A district school board may provide a cost-of-living salary adjustment if the adjustment:

a. Does not discriminate among comparable classes of employees based upon the salary schedule under which they are compensated.

b. Does not exceed 50 percent of the annual adjustment provided to instructional personnel rated as effective.

3. Advanced degrees.—A district school board may use advanced degrees in setting a salary schedule for instructional personnel or school administrators if the advanced degree is



651894

held in the individual's area of certification.

4. Grandfathered salary schedule.—

a. The district school board shall adopt a salary schedule or salary schedules to be used as the basis for paying all school employees hired before July 1, 2014. Instructional personnel on annual contract as of July 1, 2014, shall be placed on the performance salary schedule adopted under subparagraph 5. Instructional personnel on continuing contract or professional service contract may opt into the performance salary schedule if the employee relinquishes such contract and agrees to be employed on an annual contract under s. 1012.335. Such an employee shall be placed on the performance salary schedule and may not return to continuing contract or professional service contract status. Any employee who opts into the performance salary schedule may not return to the grandfathered salary schedule.

b. In determining the grandfathered salary schedule for instructional personnel, a district school board must base a portion of each employee's compensation upon performance demonstrated under s. 1012.34 and shall provide differentiated pay for both instructional personnel and school administrators based upon district-determined factors, including, but not limited to, additional responsibilities, school demographics, high-demand teacher needs areas, and level of job performance difficulties.

5. Performance salary schedule.—By July 1, 2014, the district school board shall adopt a performance salary schedule that provides annual salary adjustments for instructional personnel and school administrators based upon performance





651894

determined under s. 1012.34. Employees hired on or after July 1, 2014, or employees who choose to move from the grandfathered salary schedule to the performance salary schedule shall be compensated pursuant to the performance salary schedule once they have received the appropriate performance evaluation for this purpose.

a. Base salary.—The base salary shall be established as follows:

(I) The base salary for instructional personnel or school administrators who opt into the performance salary schedule shall be the salary paid in the prior year, including adjustments only.

(II) Instructional personnel or school administrators new to the district, returning to the district after a break in service without an authorized leave of absence, or appointed for the first time to a position in the district in the capacity of instructional personnel or school administrator shall be placed on the performance salary schedule.

b. Salary adjustments.—Salary adjustments for highly effective or effective performance shall be established as follows:

(I) The annual salary adjustment under the performance salary schedule for an employee rated as highly effective must be at least 25 percent greater than the highest annual salary adjustment available to an employee of the same classification through any other salary schedule adopted by the district.

(II) The annual salary adjustment under the performance salary schedule for an employee rated as effective must be equal to at least 50 percent and no more than 75 percent of the annual



651894

adjustment provided for a highly effective employee of the same classification.

(III) A salary schedule shall not provide an annual salary adjustment for an employee who receives a rating other than highly effective or effective for the year.

c. Salary supplements.—In addition to the salary adjustments, each district school board shall provide for salary supplements for activities that must include, but are not limited to:

(I) Assignment to a Title I eligible school.

(II) Assignment to a school that earned a grade of "F" or three consecutive grades of "D" pursuant to s. 1008.34 such that the supplement remains in force for at least 1 year following improved performance in that school.

(III) Certification and teaching in high-demand teacher needs areas. Statewide high-demand teacher needs areas shall be identified by the State Board of Education under s. 1012.07. However, the district school board may identify other areas of high-demand needs within the school district for purposes of this sub-sub-subparagraph and may remove areas identified by the state board which do not apply within the school district.

(IV) Assignment of additional academic responsibilities.

(V) Completion of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement.

If budget constraints in any given year limit a district school board's ability to fully fund all adopted salary schedules, the performance salary schedule shall not be reduced on the basis of total cost or the value of individual awards in a manner that is proportionally greater than reductions to any other salary



651894

schedules adopted by the district. Any compensation for longevity of service awarded to instructional personnel who are on any other salary schedule must be included in calculating the salary adjustments required by sub-subparagraph b.

(3)(a) *Collective bargaining*.—Notwithstanding provisions of chapter 447 related to district school board collective bargaining, collective bargaining may not preclude a district school board from carrying out its constitutional and statutory duties related to the following:

1. Providing incentives to effective and highly effective teachers.

2. Implementing intervention and support strategies under s. 1008.33 to address the causes of low student performance and improve student academic performance and attendance.

3. Implementing student discipline provisions required by law, including a review of a student's abilities, past performance, behavior, and needs.

4. Implementing school safety plans and requirements.

5. Implementing staff and student recognition programs.

6. Distributing correspondence to parents, teachers, and community members related to the daily operation of schools and the district.

7. Providing any required notice or copies of information related to the district school board or district operations which is readily available on the school district's website.

8. The school district's calendar.

9. Providing incentives to exceptional student education teachers who complete the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement, in addition to any stipend funded in the General Appropriations



651894

Act for completion of the endorsement, and who serve as the primary teacher in classroom in which a majority of the students have autism spectrum disorder.

Section 5. Paragraph (g) of subsection (2) of section 1012.551, Florida Statutes, is amended, and subsection (4) is added to that section to read:

1012.551 Teacher preparation core principles, standards, and content.—

(2) The uniform core curricula for each state-approved teacher preparation program must meet, at a minimum, the following standards:

(g) Must include strategies for differentiated instruction to meet student needs, including English language learners and students with disabilities, while maintaining grade-level expectations. The strategies must also include specific training aligned with evidence-based practices for supporting students with autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, other developmental disabilities, and emotional or behavioral disabilities applicable across all levels of support.

(4) Each state-approved teacher preparation program using the uniform core curricula developed pursuant to this section must include the autism micro-credential created pursuant to s. 1004.551(1)(f), which shall count for at least 1 semester hour toward completion of the program.

Section 6. Paragraph (g) is added to subsection (2) of section 1012.552, Florida Statutes, to read:

1012.552 The Coaching for Educator Readiness and Teaching (CERT) Certification Program.—

(2) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—A CERT program must include all



651894

of the following:

(g) Required successful completion of the autism micro-credential created pursuant to s. 1004.551(1)(f) for a candidate certification in exceptional student education.

Section 7. Paragraph (e) of subsection (3) of section 1012.585, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1012.585 Process for renewal of professional certificates.—

(3) For the renewal of a professional certificate, the following requirements must be met:

(e) Beginning July 1, 2014, an applicant for renewal of a professional certificate must earn a minimum of one college credit or the equivalent inservice points in the area of instruction for teaching students with disabilities. The requirement in this paragraph may not add to the total hours required by the department for continuing education or inservice training. Beginning August 1, 2027:

1. Instruction for teaching students with disabilities must include autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, other developmental disabilities, and emotional or behavioral disabilities.

2. An applicant certified in exceptional student education must earn the autism micro-credential created pursuant to s. 1004.551(1)(f), which must count toward 3 college credits or the equivalent inservice points. Once earned, an applicant is not required to earn the micro-credential for additional renewal periods.

Section 8. Subsection (3) is added to section 1012.586, Florida Statutes, to read:

1012.586 Additions or changes to certificates; duplicate



651894

certificates; reading endorsement pathways.—

(3) Personnel certified in exceptional student education who complete the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement are eligible for a stipend as specified in the General Appropriations Act.

Section 9. Paragraph (b) of subsection (5) of section 1012.98, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1012.98 School Community Professional Learning Act.—

(5) The Department of Education, school districts, schools, Florida College System institutions, and state universities share the responsibilities described in this section. These responsibilities include the following:

(b) Each school district shall develop a professional learning system as specified in subsection (4). The system shall be developed in consultation with teachers, teacher-educators of Florida College System institutions and state universities, business and community representatives, and local education foundations, consortia, and professional organizations. The professional learning system must:

1. Be reviewed and approved by the department for compliance with s. 1003.42(3) and this section. Effective March 1, 2024, the department shall establish a calendar for the review and approval of all professional learning systems. A professional learning system must be reviewed and approved every 5 years. Any substantial revisions to the system must be submitted to the department for review and approval. The department shall establish a format for the review and approval of a professional learning system.

2. Be based on analyses of student achievement data and



651894

instructional strategies and methods that support rigorous, relevant, and challenging curricula for all students. Schools and districts, in developing and refining the professional learning system, shall also review and monitor school discipline data; school environment surveys; assessments of parental satisfaction; performance appraisal data of teachers, managers, and administrative personnel; and other performance indicators to identify school and student needs that can be met by improved professional performance.

3. Provide inservice activities coupled with follow-up ~~follow-up~~ support appropriate to accomplish district-level and school-level improvement goals and standards. The inservice activities for instructional and school administrative personnel shall focus on analysis of student achievement data; ongoing formal and informal assessments of student achievement; identification and use of enhanced and differentiated instructional strategies that emphasize rigor, relevance, and reading in the content areas; enhancement of subject content expertise; integrated use of classroom technology that enhances teaching and learning; classroom management; parent involvement; and school safety.

4. Provide inservice activities and support targeted to the individual needs of new teachers participating in the professional learning certification and education competency program under s. 1012.56(8)(a).

5. Include a professional learning catalog for inservice activities, pursuant to rules of the State Board of Education, for all district employees from all fund sources. The catalog must be updated annually by September 1, must be based on input



651894

from teachers and district and school instructional leaders, and must use the latest available student achievement data and research to enhance rigor and relevance in the classroom. Each district inservice catalog must be aligned to and support the school-based inservice catalog and school improvement plans pursuant to s. 1001.42(18). Each district inservice catalog must provide a description of the training that middle grades instructional personnel and school administrators receive on the district's code of student conduct adopted pursuant to s. 1006.07; integrated digital instruction and competency-based instruction and CAPE Digital Tool certificates and CAPE industry certifications; classroom management; student behavior and interaction; extended learning opportunities for students; and instructional leadership. District plans must be approved by the district school board annually in order to ensure compliance with subsection (1) and to allow for dissemination of research-based best practices to other districts. District school boards shall submit verification of their approval to the Commissioner of Education no later than October 1, annually. Each school principal may establish and maintain an individual professional learning plan for each instructional employee assigned to the school as a seamless component to the school improvement plans developed pursuant to s. 1001.42(18). An individual professional learning plan must be related to specific performance data for the students to whom the teacher is assigned, define the inservice objectives and specific measurable improvements expected in student performance as a result of the inservice activity, and include an evaluation component that determines the effectiveness of the professional learning plan.





651894

6. Include inservice activities for school administrative personnel, aligned to the state's educational leadership standards, which address updated skills necessary for instructional leadership and effective school management pursuant to s. 1012.986.

7. Provide for systematic consultation with regional and state personnel designated to provide technical assistance and evaluation of local professional learning programs.

8. Provide for delivery of professional learning by distance learning and other technology-based delivery systems to reach more educators at lower costs.

9. Provide for the continuous evaluation of the quality and effectiveness of professional learning programs in order to eliminate ineffective programs and strategies and to expand effective ones. Evaluations must consider the impact of such activities on the performance of participating educators and their students' achievement and behavior.

10. For all grades, emphasize:

a. Interdisciplinary planning, collaboration, and instruction.

b. Alignment of curriculum and instructional materials to the state academic standards adopted pursuant to s. 1003.41.

c. Use of small learning communities; problem-solving, inquiry-driven research and analytical approaches for students; strategies and tools based on student needs; competency-based instruction; integrated digital instruction; and project-based instruction.

Each school that includes any of grades 6, 7, or 8 shall include



651894

in its school improvement plan, required under s. 1001.42(18), a description of the specific strategies used by the school to implement each item listed in this subparagraph.

11. Provide training to reading coaches, classroom teachers, and school administrators in effective methods of identifying characteristics of conditions such as dyslexia and other causes of diminished phonological processing skills; incorporating instructional techniques into the general education setting which are proven to improve reading performance for all students; and using predictive and other data to make instructional decisions based on individual student needs. The training must help teachers integrate phonemic awareness; phonics, word study, and spelling; reading fluency; vocabulary, including academic vocabulary; and text comprehension strategies into an explicit, systematic, and sequential approach to reading instruction, including multisensory intervention strategies. Such training for teaching foundational skills must be based on the science of reading and include phonics instruction for decoding and encoding as the primary instructional strategy for word reading. Instructional strategies included in the training may not employ the three-cueing system model of reading or visual memory as a basis for teaching word reading. Such instructional strategies may include visual information and strategies which improve background and experiential knowledge, add context, and increase oral language and vocabulary to support comprehension, but may not be used to teach word reading. Each district must provide all elementary grades instructional personnel access to training sufficient to meet the requirements of s. 1012.585(3)(f).



651894

12. Provide at least one autism-specific professional development opportunity annually for instructional personnel and school-based administrators. The professional development must be developed and delivered in coordination with the district's assigned Center for Autism and Related Disabilities and must include evidence-based practices for supporting students with autism spectrum disorder across all levels of need, including academic instruction, behavioral supports, communication strategies, and inclusive practices.

Section 10. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

===== T I T L E   A M E N D M E N T =====  
And the title is amended as follows:

Delete everything before the enacting clause  
and insert:

A bill to be entitled  
An act relating to students with autism spectrum disorder; amending s. 393.063, F.S.; revising the definition of the term "autism"; amending s. 1004.85, F.S.; requiring certain program participants at educator preparation institutes to complete the autism micro-credential; requiring each educator preparation institute to offer training on teaching students with certain disabilities; creating s. 1009.636, F.S.; providing legislative findings; creating the Autism Educator Loan Forgiveness Program; providing eligibility requirements; providing criteria for loan repayment assistance; providing requirements for teachers to receive an annual payment; requiring the



651894

State Board of Education to adopt rules; amending s. 1012.22, F.S.; revising salary supplements a district school board must provide; revising which district school board duties collective bargaining may not preclude; amending s. 1012.551, F.S.; revising core curricula for teacher preparation programs; requiring a teacher preparation program to include the autism micro-credential; amending s. 1012.552, F.S.; providing that the Coaching for Educator Readiness and Teaching Certification Program must include completion of the autism micro-credential; amending s. 1012.585, F.S.; revising requirements for the renewal of a professional certificate; amending s. 1012.586, F.S.; providing that personnel certified in exceptional student education who complete the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement are eligible for a stipend; amending s. 1012.98, F.S.; requiring a professional learning system to provide at least one autism-specific professional development opportunity; providing requirements for the professional development; providing an effective date.

By Senator Harrell

31-00391-26

2026206\_\_

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to students with autism spectrum disorder; amending s. 1012.582, F.S.; requiring, rather than authorizing, the State Board of Education to adopt certain rules; requiring that such rules include a requirement related to autism spectrum disorder for certain K-12 teachers; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Subsection (4) of section 1012.582, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1012.582 Continuing education and inservice training for teaching students with developmental and emotional or behavioral disabilities.—

(4)(a) The State Board of Education shall ~~may~~ adopt rules pursuant to ss. 120.536(1) and 120.54 to implement this section.

(b) Such rules must require a K-12 teacher who teaches a class with at least 50 percent of students having autism spectrum disorder to hold an Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement.

(c) Such rules must allow for an exception to the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement requirement in paragraph (b) if a teacher holds an Endorsement in Severe or Profound Disabilities, has taught students with autism spectrum disorder for a minimum of 3 years, and has been rated as highly effective in the preceding 3-year period pursuant to s. 1012.34.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

600

**STATE OF FLORIDA  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Division of Elections**

I, Cord Byrd, Secretary of State,  
do hereby certify that

***Omar Monteagudo***

is duly appointed a member of the

**Education Practices Commission**

for a term beginning on the Thirteenth day of November, A.D.,  
2025, until the Thirtieth day of September, A.D., 2027 and is  
subject to be confirmed by the Senate during the next regular  
session of the Legislature.

*Given under my hand and the Great Seal of the  
State of Florida, at Tallahassee, the Capital, this  
the Tenth day of December, A.D., 2025.*



Secretary of State



**State Board of Education**

Ryan Petty, *Chair*  
Esther Byrd, *Vice Chair*  
*Members*  
Grazie P. Christie  
Layla Collins  
Daniel P. Foganholl, Sr.  
Kelly Garcia  
MaryLynn Magar

Anastasios Kamoutsas  
Commissioner of Education

November 19, 2025

The Honorable Cord Byrd  
Secretary of State  
R.A. Gray Building  
500 South Bronough Street, Room 316  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

Dear Secretary Byrd:

Please find below a listing of the Education Practices Commission's newly appointed member. Florida's State Board of Education officially appointed this member at its November 13, 2025, meeting. The appointee is now subject to Senate confirmation.

APPOINTEE	TERM BEGAN	SEAT FILLED	TERM EXPIRES	REPLACING
Omar Monteagudo	October 1, 2023	November 13, 2025	September 30, 2027	Benjamin Henry

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Dr. Omar Monteagudo**  
Administrator

**Address:** [REDACTED]  
**Phone:** [REDACTED]

If I can assist you further, please do not hesitate to contact me at 850-245-0340. We look forward to this confirmation.

Sincerely,

Josey McDaniel, Ed.D.  
Deputy Chancellor of Educator Quality

JM/rk

RECEIVED  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
2025 DEC -8 PM 2:09  
DIVISION OF ELECTIONS  
TALLAHASSEE, FL

# OATH OF OFFICE

(Art. II, § 5(b), Fla. Const.; § 92.50, Florida Statutes)

STATE OF FLORIDA

County of Broward

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support, protect, and defend the Constitution and Government of the United States and of the State of Florida; that I am duly qualified to hold office under the Constitution of the State, and that I will well and faithfully perform the duties of

Education Practices Commission

(Full Name of Office - Abbreviations Not Accepted)

on which I am now about to enter, so help me God.

[NOTE: If you affirm, you may omit the words "so help me God." See § 92.52, Fla. Stat.]

Signature [Signature]

Sworn to and subscribed before me by means of physical presence ☒ OR online notarization ☐  
this 5 day of December, 2025.

[Signature]  
Signature of Officer Administering Oath or of Notary Public

(To be completed only by judges administering oath— see § 92.50, Florida Statutes.)

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Court \_\_\_\_\_

(To be completed by officer administering oath, other than judges— see § 92.50, Florida Statutes.)

Affix Seal Below

Personally Known ☐ OR Produced Identification ☒

Type of Identification Produced Florida Driver License

## ACCEPTANCE

I accept the office listed in the above Oath of Office.

Mailing Address: Home ☒ Office ☐

[Redacted]  
Street or Post Office Box

[Redacted]  
City, State, Zip Code

Omar Monteagudo

Print Name

Signature [Signature]



1185

**STATE OF FLORIDA  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Division of Elections**

I, Cord Byrd, Secretary of State,  
do hereby certify that

***John Euliano***

is duly appointed a member of the

**Commission for Independent Education**

for a term beginning on the Seventeenth day of October, A.D.,  
2025, until the Thirtieth day of June, A.D., 2028 and is subject  
to be confirmed by the Senate during the next regular session of  
the Legislature.

*Given under my hand and the Great Seal of the  
State of Florida, at Tallahassee, the Capital, this  
the Fourteenth day of November, A.D., 2025.*



A handwritten signature of Cord Byrd, Secretary of State, is located in the bottom right corner.

Secretary of State

DSDE 99 (3/03)

The original document has a reflective line mark in paper. Hold at an angle to view when checking.



**RON DeSANTIS**  
GOVERNOR

RECEIVED

2025 OCT 24 AM 10:35

DIVISION OF ELECTIONS  
TALLAHASSEE, FL

October 17, 2025

Secretary Cord Byrd  
Department of State  
R.A. Gray Building, Room 316  
500 South Bronough Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

Dear Secretary Byrd:

Please be advised I have made the following appointment under the provisions of Section 1005.21, Florida Statutes:

Mr. John Euliano  
1152 Queen Anne Court  
Winter Springs, Florida 32708

as a member of the Commission for Independent Education, filling a vacant seat previously occupied by Sharon Taylor Ellis, subject to confirmation by the Senate. This appointment is effective October 17, 2025, for a term ending June 30, 2028.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron DeSantis".

Ron DeSantis  
Governor

RD/dw

# OATH OF OFFICE

(Art. II, § 5(b), Fla. Const.; § 92.50, Florida Statutes)

RECEIVED  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

2025 NOV 12 PM 12:53

DIVISION OF ELECTIONS  
TALLAHASSEE, FL

STATE OF FLORIDA

County of Seminole

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support, protect, and defend the Constitution and Government of the United States and of the State of Florida; that I am duly qualified to hold office under the Constitution of the State, and that I will well and faithfully perform the duties of

the Commission for Independent Education

(Full Name of Office - Abbreviations Not Accepted)

on which I am now about to enter, so help me God.

[NOTE: If you affirm, you may omit the words "so help me God." See § 92.52, Fla. Stat.]

Signature [Signature]

Sworn to and subscribed before me by means of physical presence ☒ OR online notarization ☐  
this 5 day of 11, 2025

[Signature]

Signature of Officer Administering Oath or of Notary Public

(To be completed only by judges administering oath - see § 92.50, Florida Statutes.)

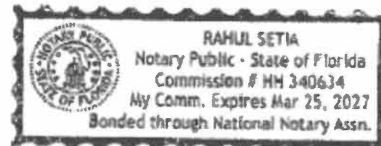
Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Court \_\_\_\_\_

(To be completed by officer administering oath, other than judges - see § 92.50, Florida Statutes.)

Affix Seal Below



Personally Known ☐ OR Produced Identification ☒

Type of Identification Produced Florida Driver's License

## ACCEPTANCE

I accept the office listed in the above Oath of Office.

Mailing Address: Home ☒ Office ☐

1152 GUGEN AUNE COURT

Street or Post Office Box

WINTER SPRINGS, FL 32708

City, State, Zip Code

JOHN EULIANO

Print Name

[Signature]

Signature

1185

**STATE OF FLORIDA  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Division of Elections**

I, Cord Byrd, Secretary of State,  
do hereby certify that


***Troy A. Stefano***

is duly appointed a member of the

**Commission for Independent Education**

for a term beginning on the First day of July, A.D., 2025, until  
the Thirtieth day of June, A.D., 2027 and is subject to be  
confirmed by the Senate during the next regular session of the  
Legislature.

*Given under my hand and the Great Seal of the  
State of Florida, at Tallahassee, the Capital, this  
the Tenth day of December, A.D., 2025.*



Secretary of State

DSDE 99 (3/03)



**RON DESANTIS**  
GOVERNOR

RECEIVED  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
2025 JUL -2 AM 10:22  
DIVISION OF ELECTIONS  
TALLAHASSEE, FL

July 1, 2025

Secretary Cord Byrd  
Department of State  
R.A. Gray Building, Room 316  
500 South Bronough Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

Dear Secretary Byrd:

Please be advised I have made the following reappointment under the provisions of Section 1005.21, Florida Statutes:

Mr. Troy Stefano  
4145 Wellington Shores Drive  
Wellington, Florida 33449

as a member of the Commission for Independent Education, subject to confirmation by the Senate. This appointment is effective July 1, 2025, for a term ending June 30, 2027.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature of Ron DeSantis in black ink.

Ron DeSantis  
Governor

RD/kf

# OATH OF OFFICE

(Art. II, § 5(b), Fla. Const.; § 92.50, Florida Statutes)

RECEIVED  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
2025 DEC -1 PM 2:51  
DIVISION OF ELECTIONS  
TALLAHASSEE FL

STATE OF FLORIDA

County of Lake County

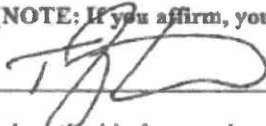
I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support, protect, and defend the Constitution and Government of the United States and of the State of Florida; that I am duly qualified to hold office under the Constitution of the State, and that I will well and faithfully perform the duties of

Commissioner, Commission for Independent Education  
(Full Name of Office - Abbreviations Not Accepted)

on which I am now about to enter, so help me God.

[NOTE: If you affirm, you may omit the words "so help me God." See § 92.52, Fla. Stat.]

Signature



Sworn to and subscribed before me by means of physical presence ☒ OR online notarization ☐  
this 25th day of November, 2025.

Susanna E Clark

Signature of Officer Administering Oath or of Notary Public

(To be completed only by judges administering oath - see § 92.50, Florida Statutes.)

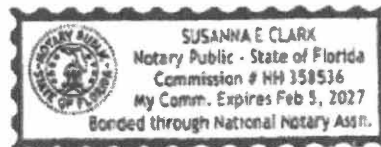
Print Name

Title

Court

(To be completed by officer administering oath, other than judges - see § 92.50, Florida Statutes.)

Affix Seal Below



Personally Known ☐ OR Produced Identification ☒

Type of Identification Produced Florida Driver License

## ACCEPTANCE

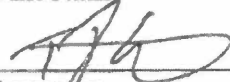
I accept the office listed in the above Oath of Office.

Mailing Address: Home ☒ Office ☐

4145 Wellington Shores Dr.  
Street or Post Office Box

Wellington, FL 33449  
City, State, Zip Code

Troy A. Stefano  
Print Name

  
Signature



1185

**STATE OF FLORIDA  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE**

**Division of Elections**

I, Cord Byrd, Secretary of State,  
do hereby certify that

***Christopher Lynn***

is duly appointed a member of the

**Commission for Independent Education**

for a term beginning on the Seventeenth day of October, A.D.,  
2025, until the Thirtieth day of June, A.D., 2027 and is subject  
to be confirmed by the Senate during the next regular session of  
the Legislature.

*Given under my hand and the Great Seal of the  
State of Florida, at Tallahassee, the Capital, this  
the Tenth day of December, A.D., 2025.*



Secretary of State

DSDE 99 (3/03)



**RON DeSANTIS**  
GOVERNOR

RECEIVED

2025 OCT 24 AM 10:35

DIVISION OF ELECTIONS  
TALLAHASSEE, FL

October 17, 2025

Secretary Cord Byrd  
Department of State  
R.A. Gray Building, Room 316  
500 South Bronough Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0250

Dear Secretary Byrd:

Please be advised I have made the following appointment under the provisions of Section 1005.21, Florida Statutes:

Dr. Christopher "Sam" Lynn  
512 Duff Drive  
Winter Garden, Florida 34787

as a member of the Commission for Independent Education, succeeding Judith Marty, subject to confirmation by the Senate. This appointment is effective October 17, 2025, for a term ending June 30, 2027.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Ron DeSantis".

Ron DeSantis  
Governor

RD/dw



RECEIVED

# OATH OF OFFICE

(Art. II, § 5(b), Fla. Const.; § 92.50, Florida Statutes)

2025 DEC -8 PM 2:34

DIVISION OF ELECTIONS  
TALLAHASSEE, FL

STATE OF FLORIDA

County of Orange

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support, protect, and defend the Constitution and Government of the United States and of the State of Florida; that I am duly qualified to hold office under the Constitution of the State, and that I will well and faithfully perform the duties of

**the Commission for Independent Education**

(Full Name of Office - Abbreviations Not Accepted)

on which I am now about to enter, so help me God.

[NOTE: If you affirm, you may omit the words "so help me God." See § 92.52, Fla. Stat.]

Signature

*[Signature]*

Sworn to and subscribed before me by means of physical presence ☒ OR online notarization ☐  
this 5<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2025

*[Signature]*

Signature of Officer Administering Oath or of Notary Public

(To be completed only by judges administering oath- see § 92.50, Florida Statutes.)

Print Name

Title

Court

(To be completed by officer administering oath, other than judges - see § 92.50, Florida Statutes.)

Affix Seal Below



THALES R. SAMSOONDAR  
Notary Public  
State of Florida  
Comm# HH607454  
Expires 1/19/2029

Personally Known ☐ OR Produced Identification ☒

Type of Identification Produced FL Drivers License

## ACCEPTANCE

I accept the office listed in the above Oath of Office.

Mailing Address: Home ☒ Office ☐

512 Duff Drive  
Street or Post Office Box

Winter Garden, FL 34787  
City, State, Zip Code

Christopher Lynn  
Print Name

*[Signature]*  
Signature



The Florida Senate

## Committee Agenda Request

**To:** Senator Corey Simon, Chair  
Committee on Education Pre-K -12

**Subject:** Committee Agenda Request

**Date:** December 10, 2025

---

I respectfully request that **Senate Bill #556**, relating to Requirements for a Standard High School Diploma, be placed on the:

- ☒ committee agenda at your earliest possible convenience.
- ☐ next committee agenda.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lori Berman", followed by a horizontal line.

---

Senator Lori Berman  
Florida Senate, District 26

cc:  
Senator Alexis Calatayud, Vice Chair  
Matthew Bouck, Staff Director



## THE FLORIDA SENATE

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

### COMMITTEES:

Appropriations Committee on Higher  
Education, *Chair*  
Health Policy, *Vice Chair*  
Appropriations  
Appropriations Committee on Health  
and  
Human Services  
Children, Families, and Elder Affairs  
Education Postsecondary  
Environment and Natural Resources  
Rules

**SENATOR GAYLE HARRELL**  
31st District

December 10, 2025

Senator Corey Simon, Chair  
Senate Committee on Education Pre-K - 12  
415 Knott Building  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Chair Simon,

I respectfully request that SB 206 – Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, be placed on the next available agenda for the Committee on Education Pre-K - 12.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact my office. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gayle".

Senator Gayle Harrell  
Senate District 31

Cc: Matthew Bouck, Staff Director  
Secret Williams, Committee Administrative Assistant

### REPLY TO:

☐ 312 SE Denver Avenue, Stuart, Florida 34994 (772) 221-4019 FAX: (888) 263-7895  
☐ 404 Senate Building, 404 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100 (850) 487-5031

Senate's Website: [www.flsenate.gov](http://www.flsenate.gov)

**BEN ALBRITTON**  
President of the Senate

**JASON BRODEUR**  
President Pro Tempore



The Florida Senate

## Committee Agenda Request

**To:** Senator Corey Simon, Chair  
Committee on Education Pre-K -12

**Subject:** Committee Agenda Request

**Date:** November 24, 2025

---

I respectfully request that **Senate Bill #420**, relating to Patriotic Displays in Classrooms, be placed on the:

- ☐ committee agenda at your earliest possible convenience.
- ☒ next committee agenda.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Danny", is written above a horizontal line.

Senator Danny Burgess  
Florida Senate, District 23

CC: Matthew Bouck, Staff Director  
CC: Secret Williams, Committee Administrative Assistant