

<b>Tab 1</b>	<b>SB 124</b> by <b>Rodriguez</b> ; Identical to H 00129 Florida Virtual School
<b>Tab 2</b>	<b>CS/SB 206</b> by <b>ED, Harrell</b> ; Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder
<b>Tab 3</b>	<b>SB 420</b> by <b>Burgess (CO-INTRODUCERS) Yarborough</b> ; Identical to H 00371 Patriotic Displays in Classrooms

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**The Florida Senate**  
**COMMITTEE MEETING EXPANDED AGENDA**

**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE ON PRE-K - 12**  
**EDUCATION**  
**Senator Burgess, Chair**  
**Senator Pizzo, Vice Chair**

**MEETING DATE:** Wednesday, January 28, 2026

**TIME:** 1:30—3:15 p.m.

**PLACE:** *Mallory Horne Committee Room*, 37 Senate Building

**MEMBERS:** Senator Burgess, Chair; Senator Pizzo, Vice Chair; Senators Bradley, Calatayud, Gaetz, Jones, Massullo, Osgood, Simon, and Yarborough

TAB	BILL NO. and INTRODUCER	BILL DESCRIPTION and SENATE COMMITTEE ACTIONS	COMMITTEE ACTION
1	<b>SB 124</b> Rodriguez (Identical H 129)	<p>Florida Virtual School; Deleting provisions relating to the Florida Virtual School giving priority to certain students; providing that the board of trustees may use supplemental funding sources to develop a state-of-the-art technology-based education delivery system; authorizing the Florida Virtual School to accrue supplemental revenue from direct-support organizations; revising which entities review and approve expenditures, etc.</p> <p>ED      12/09/2025 Favorable            AED     01/28/2026            FP</p>	
2	<b>CS/SB 206</b> Education Pre-K - 12 / Harrell	<p>Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder; 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 the Autism Educator Loan Forgiveness Program; providing requirements for teachers to receive an annual payment; revising core curricula for teacher preparation programs, etc.</p> <p>ED      01/13/2026 Fav/CS            AED     01/28/2026            AP</p>	
3	<b>SB 420</b> Burgess (Identical H 371)	<p>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.</p> <p>ED      01/13/2026 Favorable            AED     01/28/2026            RC</p>	

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 Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education

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BILL: SB 124

INTRODUCER: Senator Rodriguez

SUBJECT: Florida Virtual School

DATE: January 28, 2025

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

ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1. Palazesi	Bouck	ED	<b>Favorable</b>
2. Gray	Elwell	AED	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
3. _____	_____	FP	_____

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## I. Summary:

SB 124 makes both technical and substantive changes related to the Florida Virtual School (FLVS). These changes impact its governance, funding, reporting, and assessment requirements.

This bill does not have a fiscal impact on state revenues and expenditures. **See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.**

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

## II. Present Situation:

### **Florida Virtual School**

Founded in 1997,<sup>1</sup> the Florida Virtual School (FLVS) was established for the development and delivery of online and distance learning education. The mission of FLVS is to provide all students in Florida with technology-based educational opportunities to gain knowledge and the necessary skills to succeed. The FLVS is required to prioritize students:

- Who need expanded access to courses to meet their educational goals.
- Who are seeking accelerated access to graduate at least one semester early.
- Who are children of an active-duty member of the United States Armed Forces who is not stationed in this state whose home of record or state of legal residence is Florida.

To ensure students are informed of opportunities offered by FLVS, the Commissioner of Education is required to provide the FLVS Board of Trustees with access to records of public school students.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Florida Virtual School, *About Us*, <https://www.flvs.net/about-us>, (last visited Jan. 6, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> Section 1002.37(1), F.S.

In the 2024-2025 school year, 9,035 students were enrolled in FLVS full-time in kindergarten through grade 12 and taught by 2,517 teachers.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, school districts may contract with FLVS to offer an approved FLVS school district franchise for part-time or full-time students.

### ***FLVS Governance***

The FLVS is governed by a Board of Trustees (board) comprised of seven members appointed by the Governor to four-year staggered terms. Board members are public officers who bear fiduciary responsibility for the FLVS. The board is required to meet at least four times a year, upon the call of the chair, or at the request of the majority of the board.

The board oversees the development of the FLVS's technology-based education system, ensuring its programs are cost-effective, educationally sound, marketable, and self-sustaining through the Florida Education Finance Program. The board is also tasked with seeking avenues to generate revenue to support its future programs, and any funds that are generated from patents, copyrights, trademarks, or licenses are considered internal funds. Additionally, the board may receive supplemental revenue from support organizations such as alumni associations, foundations, parent-teacher associations, and booster clubs. These organizations must recommend the expenditures of the money they collect for the FLVS, subject to review by the executive director, who has the authority to reject any spending that violates Florida law or sound educational management.

The FLVS board, like other district school boards, is responsible for administering and maintaining a personnel program for all FLVS employees. All employees of the FLVS, except for temporary, seasonal, and student employees may be state employees eligible to participate in the Florida Retirement System and receive benefits. The classification and pay plan, including terminal leave and other benefits, and any amendments thereto, are subject to review and approval by the Department of Management Services and the Executive Office of the Governor prior to adoption.<sup>4</sup>

### ***FLVS Required Annual Report***

The board is required to annually submit to the Governor, the Legislature, the Commissioner of Education, and the State Board of Education the results from its financial audit and the following:

- The operations and accomplishments of the FLVS within the state and those occurring outside the state as FLVS Global.
- The marketing and operational plan for the FLVS and FLVS Global, including recommendations regarding methods for improving the delivery of education through the Internet and other distance learning technology.
- The assets and liabilities of the FLVS and FLVS Global at the end of the fiscal year.
- Recommendations regarding the unit cost of providing services to students through the FLVS and FLVS Global.

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<sup>3</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Know Your Schools Portal – Population and Enrollment, Overview*, <https://edudata.fl doe.org/ReportCards/Schools.html?school=0000&district=71>, (last visited Jan. 6, 2025).

<sup>4</sup> Section 1002.37(2), F.S.

- Recommendations regarding an accountability mechanism to assess the effectiveness of the services provided by the FLVS and FLVS Global.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Assessment Requirements for FLVS Students***

Public school students receiving full-time instruction in kindergarten through grade 12 by the FLVS must take all required statewide assessments and participate in the coordinated screening and progress monitoring system. Additionally, industry certification examinations, national assessments, and statewide assessments offered by the school district are required to be made available to all FLVS students. If the FLVS and the school district have not agreed upon an alternative testing site, the FLVS student must take the assessments at the school to which the student would be assigned according to district school board attendance areas. A school district is required to provide the student with access to the school's testing facilities and the date and time of the administration of progress monitoring and each examination or assessment.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Recommendations Regarding the Governance, Operation and Organization of the Florida Virtual School***

In 2019, the Department of Education contracted with Ernst & Young to evaluate the FLVS and concluded that certain components of the statutory framework for FLVS no longer fully reflected FLVS's actual operations or the scope of students it serves.

The report noted that the mission statement in law does not capture FLVS's role in serving a wide range of constituencies, including students in career and technical education, alternative and juvenile justice settings, adult high school completion programs, English language learners, gifted education, and other students with unique learning needs, and recommended updating the mission in statute so that it expressly embraces "service to all students in Florida."<sup>7</sup> The report also found that FLVS's governance structure should be more streamlined by clarifying and formalizing the executive director/CEO role in statute, delegating greater operational authority to the CEO, and recalibrating the board's responsibilities so that FLVS executive leadership is empowered to manage day-to-day operations while the board concentrates on high-level governance.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, the report highlighted the importance of FLVS Global and other out-of-state services as revenue streams that should be reinvested into curriculum and course development for Florida students and recommended treating the FLVS foundation like a state-agency direct-support

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<sup>5</sup> Section 1002.37(7), F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Section 1002.37(10), F.S.

<sup>7</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Recommendations Regarding the Governance, Operation and Organization of the Florida Virtual School*, at 16 (Nov. 2019) available at [https://www.google.com/url?client=internal-element-cse&cx=001098588266447694026:-7fbq6htw0&q=https://www.fl DOE.org/core/fileparse.php/18826/ur1t/FLVSReport.pdf&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwiP\\_baoxaSRAxUZJ0QIHULaAboQFnoECAQQAg&usg=AOvVaw1LdV7ODd68cpk9MhaduKIU](https://www.google.com/url?client=internal-element-cse&cx=001098588266447694026:-7fbq6htw0&q=https://www.fl DOE.org/core/fileparse.php/18826/ur1t/FLVSReport.pdf&sa=U&ved=2ahUKEwiP_baoxaSRAxUZJ0QIHULaAboQFnoECAQQAg&usg=AOvVaw1LdV7ODd68cpk9MhaduKIU) (last visited Jan. 6, 2026).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 11, 19-20.

organization<sup>9</sup> to ensure the foundation operates under clear organizational, operational, and audit requirements in law.<sup>10</sup>

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

This bill amends s. 1002.37, F.S., to align the Florida Virtual School (FLVS) statute with several recommendations from the Department of Education's evaluation of the FLVS and to make related technical and conforming changes. Specifically, the bill as it relates to:

- Florida Virtual School (FLVS) governance:
  - Removes FLVS requirements to give priority to students who need expanded access to courses; seeking accelerated access in order to earn a high school diploma a semester early; or who are children of an active-duty member of the United States Armed Forces to reflect the capacity of the FLVS to serve all students without the need for prioritization.
  - Authorizes the FLVS president and chief executive officer to request a meeting of the FLVS Board of Trustees (Board), rather than only the board chair or membership, and authorizes the board to enter into a contract with other public and private entities and government agencies rather than limiting the board to franchise agreements with school districts.
  - Aligns the definition of instructional and administrative personnel at FLVS with current law for K-12 public school personnel, and removes the provision allowing the board to reject such personnel from employment for cause.
  - Requires, rather than authorizes, FLVS employees, except for temporary, seasonal, and student employees, to be state employees for the purpose of being eligible to participate in the Florida Retirement System.
- FLVS funding:
  - Includes all full-time and part-time FLVS students for the purposes of full-time equivalent student calculations.
  - Authorizes the FLVS to approve and accrue supplemental revenue from a direct support organization.
  - Requires that expenditures from all supplemental funds be contingent upon review and approval of the FLVS president and chief executive officer.
- The FLVS annual report, requires the FLVS to only report on the operations and accomplishments of the FLVS and deletes the reporting requirements related to:
  - The marketing and operational plan for the FLVS and FLVS Global.
  - The assets and liabilities of the FLVS and FLVS Global at the end of the fiscal year.
  - Recommendations regarding the unit cost of providing services to students through FLVS and FLVS Global.
  - Recommendations regarding an accountability mechanism to assess the effectiveness of the services provided by the FLVS and FLVS Global.

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<sup>9</sup> Direct-support organizations (DSOs) are statutorily created private entities that are generally required to be non-profit corporations, and are authorized to carry out specific tasks in support of public entities or public causes. The functions and purpose of a DSO are prescribed by its enacting statute and, for most, by a written contract with the agency the DSO was created to support. Section 20.058, F.S., establishes a comprehensive set of transparency and reporting requirements for DSOs.

<sup>10</sup> Florida Department of Education, Recommendations Regarding the Governance, *Operation and Organization of the Florida Virtual School* at 12 and 18.

- Assessment requirements, the bill requires a school district to provide a test administrator when a student from the FLVS is participating in required statewide assessments, the coordinated screening and progress monitoring system, industry certification examinations, and national assessments at the assigned school.

The bill takes effect on 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 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 section 1002.37 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 Rodriguez

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

25       Section 1. Paragraphs (b) and (c) of subsection (1),  
26 subsections (2), (4), and (7), paragraph (b) of subsection (9),  
27 and paragraph (d) of subsection (10) of section 1002.37, Florida  
28 Statutes, are amended to read:

29 1002.37 The Florida Virtual School.-

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30 (1)

31 (b) The mission of the Florida Virtual School is to provide  
32 students with technology-based educational opportunities to gain  
33 the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed. The school shall  
34 serve all students ~~any student~~ in the state who meet ~~meets~~ the  
35 profile for success in this educational delivery context ~~and~~  
36 ~~shall give priority to:~~

37 1. ~~Students who need expanded access to courses in order to~~  
38 ~~meet their educational goals, such as home education students~~  
39 ~~and students in inner-city and rural high schools who do not~~  
40 ~~have access to higher level courses.~~

41 2. ~~Students seeking accelerated access in order to obtain a~~  
42 ~~high school diploma at least one semester early.~~

43 3. ~~Students who are children of an active duty member of~~  
44 ~~the United States Armed Forces who is not stationed in this~~  
45 ~~state whose home of record or state of legal residence is~~  
46 ~~Florida.~~

47 (c) To ensure parents and students are informed of the  
48 opportunities offered by the Florida Virtual School, the  
49 commissioner shall provide the board of trustees of the Florida  
50 Virtual School access to the records of public school students  
51 in a format prescribed by the board of trustees.

52  
53 The board of trustees of the Florida Virtual School shall  
54 identify appropriate performance measures and standards based on  
55 student achievement that reflect the school's statutory mission  
56 and priorities, and shall implement an accountability system for  
57 the school that includes assessment of its effectiveness and  
58 efficiency in providing quality services that encourage high

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59 student achievement, seamless articulation, and maximum access.

60 (2) The Florida Virtual School shall be governed by a board  
61 of trustees consisting ~~comprised~~ of seven members appointed by  
62 the Governor to 4-year staggered terms. The board of trustees  
63 shall be a public agency entitled to sovereign immunity pursuant  
64 to s. 768.28, and board members shall be public officers who  
65 shall bear fiduciary responsibility for the Florida Virtual  
66 School. The board of trustees shall have the following powers  
67 and duties:

68 (a) 1. The board of trustees shall meet at least 4 times  
69 each year, upon the call of the board chair, ~~or~~ at the request  
70 of a majority of the board membership, or at the request of the  
president and chief executive officer of the Florida Virtual  
School.

73 2. The fiscal year for the Florida Virtual School shall be  
74 the state fiscal year as provided in s. 216.011(1)(q).

75 (b) The board of trustees shall be responsible for the  
76 Florida Virtual School's development of a state-of-the-art  
77 technology-based education delivery system that is cost-  
78 effective, educationally sound, marketable, and capable of  
79 sustaining a self-sufficient delivery system through the Florida  
80 Education Finance Program and other supplemental funding  
sources.

82 (c) The board of trustees shall aggressively seek avenues  
83 to generate revenue to support its future endeavors, and shall  
84 enter into agreements with distance learning providers. The  
85 board of trustees may acquire, enjoy, use, and dispose of  
86 patents, copyrights, and trademarks and any licenses and other  
87 rights or interests thereunder or therein. Ownership of all such

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88       patents, copyrights, trademarks, licenses, and rights or  
89       interests thereunder or therein shall vest in the state, with  
90       the board of trustees having full right of use and full right to  
91       retain the revenues derived therefrom. Any funds realized from  
92       patents, copyrights, trademarks, or licenses shall be considered  
93       internal funds ~~as provided in s. 1011.07~~. Such funds shall be  
94       used to support the school's mission and its marketing, and  
95       research, and development activities in order to improve  
96       courseware and services to its students.

97       (d) The board of trustees shall be responsible for the  
98       administration and control of all local school funds derived  
99       from all activities or sources and shall prescribe the  
100       principles and procedures to be followed in administering these  
101       funds.

102       (e) The Florida Virtual School may accrue supplemental  
103       revenue from direct-support organizations and supplemental  
104       support organizations, which include, but are not limited to,  
105       alumni associations, foundations, parent-teacher associations,  
106       and booster associations. The governing body of each direct-  
107       support and supplemental support organization shall recommend  
108       the expenditure of moneys collected by the organization for the  
109       benefit of the school. Such expenditures shall be contingent  
110       upon the review and approval of the president and chief  
111       executive officer of the Florida Virtual School or authorized  
112       designees executive director. The executive director may  
113       override any proposed expenditure of the organization that would  
114       violate Florida law or breach sound educational management.

115       (f) In accordance with law and rules of the State Board of  
116       Education, the board of trustees shall administer and maintain

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117 personnel programs for all employees of the board of trustees  
118 and the Florida Virtual School. The board of trustees may adopt  
119 ~~rules, policies, and procedures~~ related to the appointment,  
120 employment, and removal of personnel.

121 1. The board of trustees shall determine the compensation,  
122 including salaries and fringe benefits, and other conditions of  
123 employment for such personnel.

124 2. The board of trustees may establish and maintain a  
125 personnel loan or exchange program by which persons employed by  
126 the board of trustees for the Florida Virtual School as ~~academic~~  
127 administrative and instructional staff may be loaned to, or  
128 exchanged with persons employed in like capacities by, public  
129 agencies either within or without this state, or by private  
130 industry. With respect to public agency employees, the program  
131 authorized by this subparagraph shall be consistent with the  
132 requirements of part II of chapter 112. The salary and benefits  
133 of board of trustees personnel participating in the loan or  
134 exchange program shall be continued during the period of time  
135 they participate in a loan or exchange program, and such  
136 personnel shall be deemed to have no break in creditable or  
137 continuous service or employment during such time. The salary  
138 and benefits of persons participating in the personnel loan or  
139 exchange program who are employed by public agencies or private  
140 industry shall be paid by the originating employers of those  
141 participants, and such personnel shall be deemed to have no  
142 break in creditable or continuous service or employment during  
143 such time.

144 3. The employment of all Florida Virtual School ~~academic~~  
145 ~~administrative and instructional personnel or administrative~~

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146 personnel, as those terms are defined in s. 1012.01(2) and (3),  
147 ~~respectively shall be subject to rejection for cause by the~~  
148 ~~board of trustees, and shall be subject to policies of the board~~  
149 ~~of trustees relative to certification, tenure, leaves of~~  
150 ~~absence, sabbaticals, remuneration, and such other conditions of~~  
151 ~~employment as the board of trustees deems necessary and proper,~~  
152 ~~not inconsistent with law.~~

153 4. Each person employed by the board of trustees in an  
154 academic administrative or instructional capacity with the  
155 Florida Virtual School shall be entitled to a contract as  
156 provided by policies ~~rules~~ of the board of trustees.

157 5. All employees except temporary, seasonal, and student  
158 employees must ~~may~~ be state employees for the purpose of being  
159 eligible to participate in the Florida Retirement System and  
160 receive benefits. The classification and pay plan, including  
161 terminal leave and other benefits, and any amendments thereto,  
162 shall be subject to review and approval by the Department of  
163 Management Services and the Executive Office of the Governor  
164 prior to adoption.

165 (g) ~~The board of trustees shall establish priorities for~~  
166 ~~admission of students in accordance with paragraph (1)(b).~~

167 (h) The board of trustees shall establish and distribute to  
168 all school districts and high schools in the state procedures  
169 for enrollment of students in courses offered by the Florida  
170 Virtual School.

171 (h) ~~(i)~~ The board of trustees shall establish criteria  
172 defining the elements of an approved franchise. The board of  
173 trustees may enter into contracts and franchise agreements with  
174 Florida district school boards and other ~~public~~ and private

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175        entities and governmental agencies and may establish the terms  
176        and conditions governing such contracts or agreements. The board  
177        of trustees shall establish the performance and accountability  
178        measures and report the performance of each school district  
179        franchise to the Commissioner of Education.

180        (i) (j) The board of trustees shall submit to the State  
181        Board of Education both forecasted and actual enrollments and  
182        credit completions for the Florida Virtual School, according to  
183        procedures established by the State Board of Education. At a  
184        minimum, such procedures must include the number of public,  
185        private, and home education students served by program and by  
186        county of residence.

187        (j) (k) The board of trustees shall provide for the content  
188        and custody of student and employee personnel records. Student  
189        records shall be subject to the provisions of s. 1002.22.  
190        Employee records shall be subject to the provisions of s.  
191        1012.31.

192        (k) (l) The financial records and accounts of the Florida  
193        Virtual School shall be maintained under the direction of the  
194        board of trustees and under rules adopted by the State Board of  
195        Education for the uniform system of financial records and  
196        accounts for the schools of the state.

197  
198        The Governor shall designate the initial chair of the board of  
199        trustees to serve a term of 4 years. Members of the board of  
200        trustees shall serve without compensation, but may be reimbursed  
201        for per diem and travel expenses pursuant to s. 112.061. The  
202        board of trustees shall be a body corporate with all the powers  
203        of a body corporate and such authority as is needed for the

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proper operation and improvement of the Florida Virtual School. The board of trustees is specifically authorized to adopt ~~rules, policies, and procedures~~, consistent with law and rules of the State Board of Education related to governance, personnel, budget and finance, administration, programs, curriculum and instruction, travel and purchasing, technology, students, contracts and grants, and property as necessary for optimal, efficient operation of the Florida Virtual School. Tangible personal property owned by the board of trustees shall be subject to the provisions of chapter 273.

(4) School districts operating a virtual school that is an approved franchise of the Florida Virtual School may count full-time equivalent students, as provided in paragraph (3)(a), if such school has been certified as an approved franchise by the Commissioner of Education based on criteria established by the board of trustees pursuant to paragraph (2)(h) (2)(i).

(7) The board of trustees shall annually submit to the Governor, the Legislature, the Commissioner of Education, and the State Board of Education the audit report prepared pursuant to subsection (6) and a complete and detailed report setting forth:

(a) the operations and accomplishments of the Florida Virtual School ~~within the state and those occurring outside the state as Florida Virtual School Global~~.

(b) ~~The marketing and operational plan for the Florida Virtual School and Florida Virtual School Global, including recommendations regarding methods for improving the delivery of education through the Internet and other distance learning technology.~~

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233       (e) The assets and liabilities of the Florida Virtual  
234 School and Florida Virtual School Global at the end of the  
235 fiscal year.

236       (d) Recommendations regarding the unit cost of providing  
237 services to students through the Florida Virtual School and  
238 Florida Virtual School Global. In order to most effectively  
239 develop public policy regarding any future funding of the  
240 Florida Virtual School, it is imperative that the cost of the  
241 program is accurately identified. The identified cost of the  
242 program must be based on reliable data.

243       (e) Recommendations regarding an accountability mechanism  
244 to assess the effectiveness of the services provided by the  
245 Florida Virtual School and Florida Virtual School Global.

246       (9)

247       (b) For students receiving full-time or part-time  
248 instruction in kindergarten through grade 5 and ~~students~~  
249 ~~receiving full-time instruction in kindergarten through grade 12~~  
250 from the Florida Virtual School, the full-time equivalent  
251 student enrollment calculated under this subsection is subject  
252 to the requirements in s. 1011.61(3).

253       (10)

254       (d) Unless an alternative testing site is mutually agreed  
255 to by the Florida Virtual School and the school district or as  
256 contracted under s. 1008.24, all industry certification  
257 examinations, national assessments, progress monitoring under s.  
258 1008.25(9), and statewide assessments must be taken at the  
259 school to which the student would be assigned according to  
260 district school board attendance areas. A school district must  
261 provide the student with access to the school's testing

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262 facilities, a test administrator, and the date and time of the  
263 administration of progress monitoring and each examination or  
264 assessment.

265 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 Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education

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BILL: CS/SB 206

INTRODUCER: Education Pre-K - 12 Committee and Senator Harrell

SUBJECT: Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder

DATE: January 27, 2026 REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1. <u>Brick</u>	<u>Bouck</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>
2. <u>Gray</u>	<u>Elwell</u>	<u>AED</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
3. _____	_____	<u>AP</u>	_____

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**Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:**

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

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### I. Summary:

CS/SB 206 revises educator preparation, credentialing, professional learning, and incentives related to autism spectrum disorder and other specified disabilities. The bill:

- Requires the autism microcredential for specified exceptional student education certification and teacher preparation pathways.
- Aligns the uniform core curricula, professional certificate renewal, and district professional learning to evidence-based practices for autism spectrum disorder and other specified disabilities.
- Creates the Autism Educator Loan Forgiveness Program to provide student loan repayment assistance for eligible special education teachers serving as the primary teacher in a public school classroom in which a majority of students have autism spectrum disorder.
- Revises district compensation provisions to include completion of the Autism Spectrum Disorder endorsement in salary supplements and to authorize incentives for certain eligible teachers.

This bill has an indeterminate fiscal impact on state revenues and expenditures. **See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.**

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.

## II. Present Situation:

### **Educator Preparation and Training**

#### ***Uniform Core Curricula***

Beginning August 1, 2027, each state-approved teacher preparation program must provide uniform core curricula courses aligned with the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices, as established by the State Board of Education (SBE) rule.<sup>1</sup> Minimum uniform core curricula standards include training on differentiated instruction to meet student needs, including the needs of students with disabilities.<sup>2</sup>

#### ***Educator Preparation Institutes***

An “educator preparation institute” (EPI) is created by a postsecondary institution or a qualified private provider and approved by the Department of Education (DOE).<sup>3</sup> Accredited or approved postsecondary institutions may seek DOE approval to create an EPI to provide specified forms of instruction, including instruction for baccalaureate degree holders to become certified teachers and additional professional learning and instructional offerings identified in statute.<sup>4</sup>

Educator preparation institutes may offer competency-based certification programs designed for noneducation major baccalaureate degree holders to meet educator certification requirements.<sup>5</sup> To approve a certification program, the department must find evidence the EPI can implement a competency-based program that instructs and assesses each candidate in required areas, including the Florida Educator Accomplished Practices and state academic standards, and requires an educational plan, field experiences, and a certification ombudsman.<sup>6</sup>

Each program participant must meet specified requirements, including obtaining a statement of status of eligibility in the certification subject area and satisfying specified prerequisites before participating in field experiences.<sup>7</sup> A participant who completes an approved certification program receives a credential from the sponsoring institution and is eligible for educator certification through the department upon satisfaction of statutory certification requirements.<sup>8</sup>

The SBE must adopt rules for the continued approval of each EPI program approved under s. 1004.85, F.S., and each institute must submit annual performance evaluations measuring program effectiveness.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Section 1012.551(1), F.S.

<sup>2</sup> Section 1012.551(2), F.S.

<sup>3</sup> Section 1004.85(1), F.S.

<sup>4</sup> Section 1004.85(2), F.S.

<sup>5</sup> Section 1004.85(3), F.S.

<sup>6</sup> Section 1004.85(3)(a), F.S.

<sup>7</sup> Section 1004.85(3)(b), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Sections 1004.85(3)(c) and 1012.56(2), F.S.

<sup>9</sup> Section 1004.85(4)-(5) and (8), F.S.

### ***CERT Program***

The DOE is required to create the Coaching for Educator Readiness and Teaching (CERT) Certification Program as an alternative pathway to professional certification, and specified entities may implement CERT programs that meet statutory requirements. A CERT program must include specified mentorship, assessment, and professional learning components aligned to applicable evaluation and professional learning systems.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Autism Microcredential***

The University of Florida Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment (UF-CAN) is required to develop an autism microcredential that provides specialized training in supporting students with autism. The microcredential must be stackable with the autism endorsement and must be competency-based and offered at no cost to eligible participants.<sup>11</sup>

The microcredential is required to be available to specified categories of personnel, including instructional personnel and specified early learning personnel. Individuals who complete the microcredential are eligible for a one-time stipend, as determined in the General Appropriations Act (GAA).<sup>12</sup>

In Fiscal Year 2025-2026, the GAA appropriated \$10 million from the General Revenue Fund was appropriated in the GAA for the UF-CAN. The appropriation included:

- Up to \$4.5 million for costs associated with the UF-CAN's role as the statewide coordinating body, administrator, and fiscal agent for programs and services, including the microcredential; and
- The remainder to support and implement programs that include the administration of the microcredential and stipend, based on actual participation and demonstrated need.<sup>13</sup>

### ***State Financial Assistance Programs Tied to Employment in a Profession***

The SBE is required to annually identify high-demand teacher needs areas based on the supply of graduates of state-approved teacher preparation programs and the number of vacant positions in a teaching discipline or positions filled by out-of-field teachers. The latest report indicates that the certification in highest demand is exceptional student education.<sup>14</sup>

Florida offers the Autism Endorsement Tuition Support Program to provide financial assistance to add the appropriate endorsement for ESE teachers who are teaching students identified as having autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in a Florida public school. The program provides up to \$1000 per course for tuition support from federal funds. The applicant must be ESE certified and be teaching students with ASD.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Section 1012.552, F.S.

<sup>11</sup> Section 1004.551(1)(f), F.S.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> Chapter 2025-198, Laws of Fla., s. 2, Specific Appropriation 162A.

<sup>14</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Identification of High Demand Teacher Needs Areas for 2025-26*, available at <https://www.fl DOE.org/core/fileparse.php/20808/ur1/17-2.pdf>, at 1-2 (last visited Jan. 15, 2026).

<sup>15</sup> Florida Department of Education, Bureau of Exceptional Student Education, *Autism Endorsement Tuition Support Program*, available at [https://florida-ese.org/docs/Autism\\_Application\\_Revised%2010\\_8\\_21.pdf](https://florida-ese.org/docs/Autism_Application_Revised%2010_8_21.pdf) (last visited Jan. 15, 2026).

The DOE administers the ESE training grant program, which provides financial assistance to teachers for special training in exceptional student education to meet professional requirements. Grant amounts are determined based on rates established by the DOE, and the program is administered under SBE rules. Grants are limited to teachers who:

- Hold a full-time contract to teach in a district school system, a state-operated or state-supported program, or an entity under contract with the DOE;
- Hold a valid Florida educator certificate that does not reflect an ESE coverage or endorsement appropriate for the teacher's assignment; and
- Satisfactorily complete eligible courses.<sup>16</sup>

A state loan repayment assistance model exists in the Nursing Student Loan Forgiveness Program, which makes repayments toward certain nursing education loans to encourage employment and retention of nurses in designated facilities. Eligibility includes graduation from an accredited or approved nursing program and Florida licensure as a licensed practical nurse, registered nurse, or advanced practice registered nurse. Loans covered under the program are limited to tuition, books, and living expenses, up to \$4,000 for each year of education toward the degree obtained.<sup>17</sup>

### **Autism Endorsements and Certificate Additions**

An endorsement is a credential added to an educator certificate to reflect specialized training and qualifications in a particular instructional area.<sup>18</sup> SBE rules establish requirements for endorsements, including the Endorsement in Autism Spectrum Disorders<sup>19</sup> and the Endorsement in Severe or Profound Disabilities.<sup>20</sup> Those rules specify eligibility prerequisites and completion requirements, which generally include required coursework and supervised field experience.

A professional educator certificate is issued for a period not to exceed five years to an applicant who meets statutory eligibility criteria. A district may process applications through the DOE system for certain certificate transactions for public school employees, including adding a subject coverage or endorsement to a valid Florida certificate.<sup>21</sup>

For the 2023-2024 school year, district-reported certification data show 2,614 Autism Spectrum Disorders endorsements; endorsements are counted once per teacher per certification area.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Section 1009.62(2), F.S.

<sup>17</sup> Section 1009.66, F.S.

<sup>18</sup> Florida Department of Education, Educator Certification, *Certificate Additions*, <https://www.fl DOE.org/teaching/certification/additions/> (last visited Jan. 15, 2026).

<sup>19</sup> Rule 6A-4.01796, F.A.C.

<sup>20</sup> Rule 6A-4.01793, F.A.C.

<sup>21</sup> Sections 1012.56 and 1012.586(1), F.S.

<sup>22</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 1078, Autism Spectrum Disorders)), available at <https://www.fl DOE.org/core/fileparse.php/20808/urlt/17-2.pdf> (last visited Jan. 15, 2026).

## **Compensation, Salary Supplements, And Incentives**

District school boards adopt salary schedules, including a performance salary schedule. The performance salary schedule provides annual salary adjustments for instructional personnel and school administrators based on performance. In addition to salary adjustments, each district school board provides salary supplements for specified activities.<sup>23</sup> Collective bargaining may not preclude a district school board from providing incentives to effective and highly effective teachers.<sup>24</sup>

## **Certificate Renewal Requirements**

An educator must renew his or her professional certificate every five years. An applicant for renewal of a professional certificate is required to satisfy continuing education requirements of a minimum of 6 college credits or 120 inservice points or a combination thereof, including at least one college credit or the equivalent inservice points in the area of instruction for teaching students with disabilities.<sup>25</sup>

## **District Professional Learning Systems.**

### ***The School Community Professional Learning Act***

The School Community Professional Learning Act requires each district to maintain a professional learning system meeting statutory requirements and subject to DOE review and approval. District systems include, among other components:

- Maintaining a district professional learning catalog for inservice activities, updated annually.
- Providing inservice activities with follow-up support aligned to district and school improvement goals.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Regional Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities.***

Regional Centers for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) serve individuals with autism in assigned geographic service areas throughout the state. Each center provides technical assistance and consultation services, including intervention and assistance for a client, the client's family, and the school district. Each center also develops, provides, and evaluates professional training programs, including preservice and inservice training in state-of-the-art practices for personnel who work with the populations served by the centers and their families.<sup>27</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.

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<sup>23</sup> Sections 1012.22(1) and 1012.34, F.S.

<sup>24</sup> Section 1012.22(3)(a), F.S.

<sup>25</sup> Section 1012.585(3)(e), F.S.

<sup>26</sup> Section 1012.98(5)(b), F.S.

<sup>27</sup> Section 1004.55(4), F.S.

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>28</sup> Evaluation systems must differentiate among four levels of performance:

- Highly effective.
- Effective.
- Needs improvement, or developing for certain instructional personnel in the first three years of employment.
- Unsatisfactory.<sup>29</sup>

Statewide, districts reported that 157,905 classroom teachers received an evaluation in the 2023-2024 school year, and 114,950 of those teachers (72.8 percent) were rated highly effective.<sup>30</sup>

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

The bill revises educator preparation, credentialing, professional learning, and incentives related to autism spectrum disorder and other specified disabilities.

#### **Educator Preparation and Training (Sections 1, 4, and 5)**

**Section 1** amends s. 1004.85, F.S., related to postsecondary educator preparation institutes (EPIs), to require:

- An EPI program participant who is certified in exceptional student education to complete the autism microcredential created by the University of Florida Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment; and
- By August 1, 2027, as a condition of continued EPI program approval, each EPI to 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 of Education.

**Section 4** amends s. 1012.551, F.S., related to teacher preparation core principles and uniform core curricula, to require:

- The uniform core curricula to include 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; and
- Each state-approved teacher preparation program using the uniform core curricula to include the autism microcredential, which must count for at least 1 semester hour toward program completion.

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<sup>28</sup> Section 1012.34(1), F.S.

<sup>29</sup> Section 1012.34(2)(e), F.S.

<sup>30</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.fl DOE.org/file/7503/2324DistEduEvalRate.xlsx> (last visited Jan. 15, 2026).

**Section 5** amends s. 1012.552, F.S., related to Coaching for Educator Readiness and Teaching (CERT) Program, to require successful completion of the autism microcredential for a candidate seeking certification in exceptional student education through a CERT program.

### **Autism Educator Loan Forgiveness Program**

**Section 2** creates s. 1009.636, F.S., to establish the Autism Educator Loan Forgiveness Program within the Department of Education (DOE) to provide student loan repayment assistance for eligible special education teachers who serve as the primary teacher in a public school classroom in which a majority of the students have autism spectrum disorder.

#### ***Program Eligibility and Benefits***

The bill establishes eligibility pathways based on degree level and endorsements and provides loan repayment assistance up to \$17,500 over 5 years, capped at \$3,500 per year. The bill requires annual payments to be made directly to the participant's lender.

#### ***Conditions for Annual Payment***

The bill conditions each annual payment on the teacher:

- Completing a full year of service in the qualifying position;
- Receiving an effective or highly effective evaluation rating under s. 1012.34, F.S.; and
- Meeting specified certificate-related eligibility requirements which include a teacher holding an active loan balance who has earned a bachelor's degree with a specified endorsement, or a master's degree in special or exceptional education.

#### ***Administration and Rulemaking***

The bill requires the State Board of Education to adopt rules to administer the program.

### **Compensation, Salary Supplements, and Incentives**

**Section 3** amends s. 1012.22, F.S., related to teacher compensation, salary supplements, and incentives, to:

- Add completion of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement to the activities that must be included in district salary supplements under the performance salary schedule; and
- Provide that collective bargaining may not preclude a district from providing incentives to exceptional student education teachers who complete the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement, in addition to any stipend funded in the General Appropriations Act for completion of the endorsement, and who serve as the primary teacher in a classroom in which a majority of the students have autism spectrum disorder.

### **Certificate Renewal Requirements**

**Section 6** amends s. 1012.585, F.S., related to the process for renewal of professional certificates, to, beginning August 1, 2027:

- Specify that the renewal requirement for instruction for teaching students with disabilities must include autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, other developmental disabilities, and emotional or behavioral disabilities.

- Require an applicant certified in exceptional student education to earn the autism microcredential for renewal, provides that it counts as 3 college credits or the equivalent inservice points, and provides that once earned it is not required again for additional renewal periods.

### **Stipend Authorization**

**Section 7** amends s. 1012.586, F.S., to provide that 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.

### **District Professional Learning Systems**

**Section 8** amends s. 1012.98, F.S., to require each district professional learning system to 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.

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:**

The bill has an indeterminate fiscal impact to the DOE related to administration and funding of the Autism Educator Loan Forgiveness Program. The stipends referred to in the bill are contingent on amounts provided in the General Appropriations Act. The bill may also have an indeterminate fiscal impact related to implementation of new educator preparation, certificate renewal, and district professional learning requirements.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 1004.85, 1012.22, 1012.551, 1012.552, 1012.585, 1012.586, and 1012.98.

This bill creates section 1009.636 of the Florida Statutes.

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

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

**CS by Education Pre-K – 12 on January 13, 2026:**

The committee substitute deletes the bill's amendments to s. 1012.582, F.S., related to a teacher holding the Endorsement in Autism Spectrum Disorders in a class in which at least 50 percent of students have autism spectrum disorder.

The committee substitute creates s. 1009.636, F.S., related to the Autism Educator Loan Forgiveness Program. The committee substitute:

- Creates a student loan repayment assistance program for eligible special education teachers who serve as the primary teacher in a public school classroom in which a majority of the students have autism spectrum disorder.

- Provides eligibility pathways based on degree level and endorsements and limits repayment assistance to a total of \$17,500 over 5 years, with annual payments capped at \$3,500 and paid directly to the lender.
- Conditions annual payments on a full year of service, an effective or highly effective evaluation rating, and no certificate-related disciplinary action.
- Requires State Board of Education rulemaking to administer the Autism Educator Loan Forgiveness Program.

The committee substitute adds to the bill provisions amending:

- Section 1004.85, F.S., related to training at Postsecondary Educator Preparation Institutes (EPIs):
  - Requires ESE-certified program participants to complete the autism microcredential created under s. 1004.551(1)(f), F.S.
  - Requires each EPI, by August 1, 2027, as a condition of continued program approval, to offer 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.
- Section 1012.22, F.S., related to district school board duties related to compensation and bargaining. The committee substitute:
  - Adds completion of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement to the activities that must be included in salary supplements under the performance salary schedule.
  - Provides that collective bargaining may not preclude incentives to ESE teachers who complete the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement (in addition to any General Appropriations Act stipend for completion) and who serve as the primary teacher in a classroom in which a majority of the students have autism spectrum disorder.
- Section 1012.551, F.S., related to teacher preparation core principles and uniform core curricula. The committee substitute:
  - Requires the uniform core curricula to include training aligned to 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.
  - Requires state-approved teacher preparation programs using the uniform core curricula to include the autism microcredential, which must count for at least 1 semester hour toward program completion.
- Section 1012.552, F.S., related to CERT Program requirements. The committee substitute requires a candidate for certification in exceptional student education through a Coaching for Educator Readiness and Teaching (CERT) program to successfully complete the autism microcredential.
- Section 1012.585, F.S., related to renewal of professional certificates. The committee substitute:
  - Beginning August 1, 2027, specifies that the required disability-training credit must include autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, other developmental disabilities, and emotional or behavioral disabilities.

- Beginning August 1, 2027, requires applicants certified in exceptional student education to earn the autism microcredential for renewal, provides it counts as 3 college credits or the equivalent inservice points, and provides that once earned it is not required again for additional renewal periods.
- Section 1012.586, F.S., related to stipend authorization. The committee substitute authorizes personnel certified in exceptional student education who complete the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement to be eligible for a stipend as specified in the General Appropriations Act.
- Section 1012.98, F.S., related to district professional learning systems. The committee substitute requires:
  - Each district professional learning system to provide at least one autism-specific professional development opportunity annually for instructional personnel and school-based administrators.
  - The training to be developed and delivered in coordination with the district's assigned Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) and to cover evidence-based practices across levels of need.

**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** the Committee on Education Pre-K - 12; and Senator Harrell

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to students with autism spectrum disorder; 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 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;

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30       amending s. 1012.98, F.S.; requiring a professional  
31       learning system to provide at least one autism-  
32       specific professional development opportunity;  
33       providing requirements for the professional  
34       development; providing an effective date.

35  
36       Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

37  
38       Section 1. Paragraph (b) of subsection (3) of section  
39       1004.85, Florida Statutes, is amended, and subsection (9) is  
40       added to that section, to read:

41       1004.85 Postsecondary educator preparation institutes.—  
42       (3) Educator preparation institutes approved pursuant to  
43       this section may offer competency-based certification programs  
44       specifically designed for noneducation major baccalaureate  
45       degree holders to enable program participants to meet the  
46       educator certification requirements of s. 1012.56. An educator  
47       preparation institute choosing to offer a competency-based  
48       certification program pursuant to the provisions of this section  
49       must implement a program developed by the institute and approved  
50       by the department for this purpose. Approved programs shall be  
51       available for use by other approved educator preparation  
52       institutes.

53       (b) Each program participant must:

54       1. Meet certification requirements pursuant to s.  
55       1012.56(1) by obtaining a statement of status of eligibility in  
56       the certification subject area of the educational plan and meet  
57       the requirements of s. 1012.56(2) (a)-(f) before participating in  
58       field experiences.

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

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

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

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

87        Section 2. Section 1009.636, Florida Statutes, is created

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88 to read:

89 1009.636 Autism educator loan forgiveness program.—90 (1) The Legislature finds that an adequate supply of  
91 special education teachers is critical to provide students who  
92 have a neurodevelopmental disability, such as autism spectrum  
93 disorder, with individualized education to foster essential  
94 social-emotional skills, provide positive interventions, and  
95 build life skills for independence. The Autism Educator Loan  
96 Forgiveness Program is created to recruit and retain qualified  
97 individuals to serve as special education teachers for students  
98 with autism spectrum disorder.99 (2) To be eligible, an individual must:100 (a) 1. Have earned a master's or higher degree in special  
101 education or exceptional student education from an accredited  
102 institution and have an active student loan balance from  
103 completion of that degree, and hold a temporary or professional  
104 certificate; or105 2. Have earned a bachelor's or higher degree from an  
106 accredited institution and have an active student loan balance  
107 from completion of that degree, hold a temporary or professional  
108 certificate, and hold the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement  
109 or Severe or Profound Disabilities Endorsement; and110 (b) Serve as the primary teacher in a public school  
111 classroom in which a majority of the students have autism  
112 spectrum disorder.113 (3) Eligible participants may receive up to \$17,500 in  
114 total student loan repayment assistance over 5 years, disbursed  
115 in annual payments not to exceed \$3,500 per year. Payments must  
116 be made directly to the lender servicing the participant's

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117 student loan.118 (4) In order for the department to release each annual  
119 payment, a teacher must:120 (a) Have completed a full year of service pursuant to  
121 paragraph (2) (b) .122 (b) Have received a rating of effective or highly effective  
123 pursuant to s. 1012.34.124 (c) Not have had any disciplinary action taken by the  
125 school district or by the department against the teacher's  
126 certificate.127 (5) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to  
128 administer this section.129 Section 3. Paragraph (c) of subsection (1) and paragraph  
130 (a) of subsection (3) of section 1012.22, Florida Statutes, are  
131 amended to read:132 1012.22 Public school personnel; powers and duties of the  
133 district school board.—The district school board shall:134 (1) Designate positions to be filled, prescribe  
135 qualifications for those positions, and provide for the  
136 appointment, compensation, promotion, suspension, and dismissal  
137 of employees as follows, subject to the requirements of this  
138 chapter:139 (c) *Compensation and salary schedules.*—

140 1. Definitions.—As used in this paragraph:

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

145 b. "Grandfathered salary schedule" means the salary

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146 schedule or schedules adopted by a district school board before  
147 July 1, 2014, pursuant to subparagraph 4.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

171 3. Advanced degrees.—A district school board may use  
172 advanced degrees in setting a salary schedule for instructional  
173 personnel or school administrators if the advanced degree is  
174 held in the individual's area of certification.

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175        4. Grandfathered salary schedule.—

176        a. The district school board shall adopt a salary schedule

177        or salary schedules to be used as the basis for paying all

178        school employees hired before July 1, 2014. Instructional

179        personnel on annual contract as of July 1, 2014, shall be placed

180        on the performance salary schedule adopted under subparagraph 5.

181        Instructional personnel on continuing contract or professional

182        service contract may opt into the performance salary schedule if

183        the employee relinquishes such contract and agrees to be

184        employed on an annual contract under s. 1012.335. Such an

185        employee shall be placed on the performance salary schedule and

186        may not return to continuing contract or professional service

187        contract status. Any employee who opts into the performance

188        salary schedule may not return to the grandfathered salary

189        schedule.

190        b. In determining the grandfathered salary schedule for

191        instructional personnel, a district school board must base a

192        portion of each employee's compensation upon performance

193        demonstrated under s. 1012.34 and shall provide differentiated

194        pay for both instructional personnel and school administrators

195        based upon district-determined factors, including, but not

196        limited to, additional responsibilities, school demographics,

197        high-demand teacher needs areas, and level of job performance

198        difficulties.

199        5. Performance salary schedule.—By July 1, 2014, the

200        district school board shall adopt a performance salary schedule

201        that provides annual salary adjustments for instructional

202        personnel and school administrators based upon performance

203        determined under s. 1012.34. Employees hired on or after July 1,

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204 2014, or employees who choose to move from the grandfathered  
205 salary schedule to the performance salary schedule shall be  
206 compensated pursuant to the performance salary schedule once  
207 they have received the appropriate performance evaluation for  
208 this purpose.

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

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

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

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

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

229 (II) The annual salary adjustment under the performance  
230 salary schedule for an employee rated as effective must be equal  
231 to at least 50 percent and no more than 75 percent of the annual  
232 adjustment provided for a highly effective employee of the same

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233 classification.

234 (III) A salary schedule shall not provide an annual salary  
235 adjustment for an employee who receives a rating other than  
236 highly effective or effective for the year.237 c. Salary supplements.—In addition to the salary  
238 adjustments, each district school board shall provide for salary  
239 supplements for activities that must include, but are not  
240 limited to:

241 (I) Assignment to a Title I eligible school.

242 (II) Assignment to a school that earned a grade of "F" or  
243 three consecutive grades of "D" pursuant to s. 1008.34 such that  
244 the supplement remains in force for at least 1 year following  
245 improved performance in that school.246 (III) Certification and teaching in high-demand teacher  
247 needs areas. Statewide high-demand teacher needs areas shall be  
248 identified by the State Board of Education under s. 1012.07.  
249 However, the district school board may identify other areas of  
250 high-demand needs within the school district for purposes of  
251 this sub-sub-subparagraph and may remove areas identified by the  
252 state board which do not apply within the school district.

253 (IV) Assignment of additional academic responsibilities.

254 (V) Completion of the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement.255  
256 If budget constraints in any given year limit a district school  
257 board's ability to fully fund all adopted salary schedules, the  
258 performance salary schedule shall not be reduced on the basis of  
259 total cost or the value of individual awards in a manner that is  
260 proportionally greater than reductions to any other salary  
261 schedules adopted by the district. Any compensation for

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262 longevity of service awarded to instructional personnel who are  
263 on any other salary schedule must be included in calculating the  
264 salary adjustments required by sub-subparagraph b.

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

270 1. Providing incentives to effective and highly effective  
271 teachers.

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

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

278 4. Implementing school safety plans and requirements.

279 5. Implementing staff and student recognition programs.

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

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

286 8. The school district's calendar.

287 9. Providing incentives to exceptional student education  
288 teachers who complete the Autism Spectrum Disorder Endorsement,  
289 in addition to any stipend funded in the General Appropriations  
290 Act for completion of the endorsement, and who serve as the

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291 primary teacher in a classroom in which a majority of the  
292 students have autism spectrum disorder.

293       Section 4. Paragraph (g) of subsection (2) of section  
294 1012.551, Florida Statutes, is amended, and subsection (4) is  
295 added to that section to read:

296       1012.551 Teacher preparation core principles, standards,  
297 and content.—

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

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

309       (4) Each state-approved teacher preparation program using  
310 the uniform core curricula developed pursuant to this section  
311 must include the autism micro-credential created pursuant to s.  
312 1004.551(1)(f), which shall count for at least 1 semester hour  
313 toward completion of the program.

314       Section 5. Paragraph (g) is added to subsection (2) of  
315 section 1012.552, Florida Statutes, to read:

316       1012.552 The Coaching for Educator Readiness and Teaching  
317 (CERT) Certification Program.—

318       (2) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—A CERT program must include all  
319 of the following:

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

323        Section 6. Paragraph (e) of subsection (3) of section  
324        1012.585, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

325        1012.585 Process for renewal of professional certificates.—

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

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

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

339        2. An applicant certified in exceptional student education  
340        must earn the autism micro-credential created pursuant to s.  
341        1004.551(1)(f), which must count toward 3 college credits or the  
342        equivalent inservice points. Once earned, an applicant is not  
343        required to earn the micro-credential for additional renewal  
344        periods.

345        Section 7. Subsection (3) is added to section 1012.586,  
346        Florida Statutes, to read:

347        1012.586 Additions or changes to certificates; duplicate  
348        certificates; reading endorsement pathways.—

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

353        Section 8. Paragraph (b) of subsection (5) of section  
354        1012.98, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

355        1012.98 School Community Professional Learning Act.—

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

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

367        1. Be reviewed and approved by the department for  
368        compliance with s. 1003.42(3) and this section. Effective March  
369        1, 2024, the department shall establish a calendar for the  
370        review and approval of all professional learning systems. A  
371        professional learning system must be reviewed and approved every  
372        5 years. Any substantial revisions to the system must be  
373        submitted to the department for review and approval. The  
374        department shall establish a format for the review and approval  
375        of a professional learning system.

376        2. Be based on analyses of student achievement data and  
377        instructional strategies and methods that support rigorous,

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378 relevant, and challenging curricula for all students. Schools  
379 and districts, in developing and refining the professional  
380 learning system, shall also review and monitor school discipline  
381 data; school environment surveys; assessments of parental  
382 satisfaction; performance appraisal data of teachers, managers,  
383 and administrative personnel; and other performance indicators  
384 to identify school and student needs that can be met by improved  
385 professional performance.

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

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

402 5. Include a professional learning catalog for inservice  
403 activities, pursuant to rules of the State Board of Education,  
404 for all district employees from all fund sources. The catalog  
405 must be updated annually by September 1, must be based on input  
406 from teachers and district and school instructional leaders, and

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407 must use the latest available student achievement data and  
408 research to enhance rigor and relevance in the classroom. Each  
409 district inservice catalog must be aligned to and support the  
410 school-based inservice catalog and school improvement plans  
411 pursuant to s. 1001.42(18). Each district inservice catalog must  
412 provide a description of the training that middle grades  
413 instructional personnel and school administrators receive on the  
414 district's code of student conduct adopted pursuant to s.  
415 1006.07; integrated digital instruction and competency-based  
416 instruction and CAPE Digital Tool certificates and CAPE industry  
417 certifications; classroom management; student behavior and  
418 interaction; extended learning opportunities for students; and  
419 instructional leadership. District plans must be approved by the  
420 district school board annually in order to ensure compliance  
421 with subsection (1) and to allow for dissemination of research-  
422 based best practices to other districts. District school boards  
423 shall submit verification of their approval to the Commissioner  
424 of Education no later than October 1, annually. Each school  
425 principal may establish and maintain an individual professional  
426 learning plan for each instructional employee assigned to the  
427 school as a seamless component to the school improvement plans  
428 developed pursuant to s. 1001.42(18). An individual professional  
429 learning plan must be related to specific performance data for  
430 the students to whom the teacher is assigned, define the  
431 inservice objectives and specific measurable improvements  
432 expected in student performance as a result of the inservice  
433 activity, and include an evaluation component that determines  
434 the effectiveness of the professional learning plan.

435 6. Include inservice activities for school administrative

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436 personnel, aligned to the state's educational leadership  
437 standards, which address updated skills necessary for  
438 instructional leadership and effective school management  
439 pursuant to s. 1012.986.

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

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

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

452 10. For all grades, emphasize:

453 a. Interdisciplinary planning, collaboration, and  
454 instruction.

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

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

462  
463 Each school that includes any of grades 6, 7, or 8 shall include  
464 in its school improvement plan, required under s. 1001.42(18), a

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465 description of the specific strategies used by the school to  
466 implement each item listed in this subparagraph.

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

493       12. Provide at least one autism-specific professional

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494 development opportunity annually for instructional personnel and  
495 school-based administrators. The professional development must  
496 be developed and delivered in coordination with the district's  
497 assigned Center for Autism and Related Disabilities and must  
498 include evidence-based practices for supporting students with  
499 autism spectrum disorder across all levels of need, including  
500 academic instruction, behavioral supports, communication  
501 strategies, and inclusive practices.

502       Section 9. 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 Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education

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BILL: SB 420

INTRODUCER: Senators Burgess and Yarborough

SUBJECT: Patriotic Displays in Classrooms

DATE: January 27, 2026 REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1. Sabitsch	Bouck	ED	<b>Favorable</b>
2. Gray	Elwell	AED	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
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-five classroom.

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

This bill could have a significant fiscal impact on state expenditures. **See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.**

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. 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>1</sup>

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

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:

- The national motto;
- 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.<sup>2</sup>

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>3</sup> which is designated as the month of September each year.<sup>4</sup>

Florida law requires the Department of Education (DOE) to assist stakeholders in preparing students to be civically responsible and knowledgeable adults in the following ways:

- 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.<sup>5</sup>

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

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

<sup>4</sup> Section 683.1455, F.S.

<sup>5</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>6</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>7</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>8</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>9</sup>

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

The bill amends s. 1003.44, F.S., to require that portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln be displayed in a conspicuous place in each public school classroom<sup>10</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>6</sup> Section 1003.44(4), F.S.

<sup>7</sup> Section 1000.06(2), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Britannica, *George Washington*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-Washington> (last visited Jan. 15, 2026).

<sup>9</sup> Britannica, *Abraham Lincoln*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Abraham-Lincoln> (last visited Jan. 15, 2026).

<sup>10</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:

The bill is likely to have a significant negative fiscal impact on the DOE. The exact cost depends on the method by which the portraits are made available for each specified classroom and which portraits the DOE selects.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This bill substantially amends section 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.



LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Senate

House

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•  
•  
•  
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The Appropriations Committee on Pre-K - 12 Education (Burgess) recommended the following:

1                   **Senate Amendment (with title amendment)**

2  
3                   Delete everything after the enacting clause  
4 and insert:

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

7                   1003.44 Patriotic programs; rules.—

8                   (4) Each district school board shall adopt rules to  
9 require, ~~in all of the schools of the district and in each~~  
10 ~~building used by the district school board;~~,



11       (a) The display of the state motto, "In God We Trust,"  
12 designated under s. 15.0301, in a conspicuous place at each  
13 public school in the district and in each building used by the  
14 district school board.

15       (b) Subject to legislative appropriation, the display of  
16 portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in a  
17 conspicuous place at each public school in the district. The  
18 Department of Education shall select the portraits and make them  
19 available to each school district.

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

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

24       Delete everything before the enacting clause  
25 and insert:

26                   A bill to be entitled

27       An act relating to patriotic displays at public  
28 schools; amending s. 1003.44, F.S.; requiring, subject  
29 to legislative appropriation, each district school  
30 board to adopt rules to require the display of  
31 portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln at  
32 each public school in the district; requiring the  
33 Department of Education to select the portraits and  
34 make them available to each school district; providing  
35 an effective date.