

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2021 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED
Committee on Education

CS/HB 1159 — Education

by Education and Employment Committee and Rep. Busatta Cabrera (CS/CS/SB 934 by Appropriations Committee; Education Committee; and Senator Wright)

This bill alters approved teacher preparation programs to require that the General Knowledge Test be passed by the time of graduation instead of as a prerequisite, and accordingly, removes the option to waive admissions requirements for teacher preparation programs for up to 10 percent of admitted students.

The bill adds to the uniform core curricula for state-approved teacher preparation programs and educator preparation institutes (EPIs) the identification of and referrals regarding student mental health issues and the use of technology in education.

The bill alters educator certification requirements to allow:

- Applicants for a professional certificate to demonstrate professional competence through completion of an approved EPI, rather than by an examination.
- Nondegree teachers of career programs to substitute specified career education training through an EPI as an alternative to career education training conducted through a school district inservice master plan.
- Documentation of receipt of a master's or higher degree from a postsecondary educational institution that meets specified criteria as a means of demonstrating mastery of general knowledge.

The bill authorizes an organization of private schools or a consortium of charter schools with an approved professional development system to design alternative preparation programs for certified teachers to add additional coverages to their certificates.

The bill expands, from principals to school and district leaders, participation in the William Cecil Golden Professional Development Program for School Leaders, and adds civic education, coaching, mental health awareness, distance learning, and school safety, among others, as goals of the network leadership program.

The bill authorizes a parent or guardian to request his or her K-5 public school student be retained at the same grade level for the 2021-2022 school year. To retain his or her student, a parent or guardian must submit, in writing, a retention request to the school principal. A principal must consider a request received on or before June 30, 2021, but may consider later requests.

The principal must discuss with the parent or guardian any disagreement with the retention request, however, the bill specifies that the parent or guardian holds the final decision whether to retain the student. In lieu of retention, the school and parent or guardian may collaborate to develop an individualized one-year education plan, and must convene an individual education plan (IEP) team, if applicable.

Finally, the bill requires the Commissioner of Education to provide each school district, by July 31 of each year, student learning growth data calculated to measure student performance on specified statewide assessments.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2021.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 114-0