

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

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

BILL: CS/SB 336

SPONSOR: Education Committee and Senator Cowin

SUBJECT: Weighed Grades/Dual Enrollment

DATE: February 2, 1999 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>White</u>	<u>O'Farrell</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Favorable/CS</u>
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The Committee Substitute requires grades in a dual enrollment courses to be weighed the same as grades in either an advanced placement or an honors course, depending upon the value of the academic content of the dual enrollment course. When courses are designated as both dual enrollment and advanced placement, the bill allows students to earn college credit as permitted by either program.

This bill amends the following section of the Florida Statutes: 240.1163.

II. Present Situation:

Weighing Grades:

Florida law encourages "articulated acceleration," or the ability to earn college credit while a student is still in high school. The benefit to the state is that it saves money when students progress faster through postsecondary education. The state provides fiscal incentives for three types of articulated acceleration, and this bill relates to two of them:

- Under dual enrollment, a student takes a course that is designated both as a community college course and a high school course. The course is usually taught at a high school by a teacher under contract with the local community college. *The incentive is that both the community college and the school district report the student to the state for funding.*
- Under the national advanced placement program, high school teachers receive special training and teach a prescribed curriculum that is deemed college-level. Students earn college credit only if they make a designated score on a standardized achievement test specific to the content of the prescribed curriculum. *The incentive is that the school district earns additional state funds for each student who achieves the designated score.*

School districts typically encourage students to take rigorous courses by “weighing” the grades. For instance, a grade of C in a rigorous course might be equivalent to a C+ or a B in a regular course. The weights have differed from district to district and course to course, but generally some weights were added to grades in advanced placement courses, honors courses, and some regular courses that are rigorous, such as calculus.

Some community colleges complained that school districts discriminated against dual enrollment courses by not weighing the grades, so students were less eager to take them than advanced placement courses or honors courses. The 1998 Legislature amended s. 240.1163, F.S., to require school districts to weigh grades the same for advanced placement courses, honors courses, and dual enrollment courses. Discrimination against dual enrollment courses is forbidden by law. (This prohibition does not cover dual enrollment in vocational-certificate level courses, only in college-level courses.)

Now, school districts assert that some honors courses are not as rigorous as advanced placement courses, and some dual enrollment courses are not as rigorous as either. They do not like the requirement that weights must be the same for all three.

Joint Dual Enrollment and Advanced Placement:

Another issue arises because some courses are designated both dual enrollment and advanced placement, and students want to select whichever method of earning college credit benefits them the most. Some high school counselors consider advanced placement credit more prestigious because it is a national program and looks better on a transcript. So students want to take the advanced placement test and, if they fail it, they still want to earn college credit for passing the dual enrollment course.

Some school districts allow this fall-back position, and some don't. In the stricter districts, a student must declare at the beginning of the course whether it is -- for him or her -- an advanced placement course or a dual enrollment course. The advanced placement students take the test and they earn no college credit if they fail it, only high school credit. The dual enrollment students earn college credit if they pass the course, but they are not allowed to take the advanced placement test and their transcripts do not reflect an advanced placement course.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The legislation under consideration would authorize more leeway when school districts are weighing grades. They could select whether to weigh the grades earned in a dual enrollment course as either an honors course or an advanced placement course. All three would not have to be given the same weight. The bill would also clarify that only rigorous college-level dual enrollment courses -- not vocational-certificate level courses -- are required to add weights to their grades.

The bill also requires all school districts to allow students to earn college credit through either program if they are enrolled in courses that are designated both dual enrollment and advanced placement. In these courses, all students would be allowed to take the advanced placement test, and if they failed it they could still earn college credit under dual enrollment.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

None.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.