

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 1390

SPONSOR: Education Committee and Senator Mitchell

SUBJECT: Education

DATE: March 27, 2000 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Harkey	O'Farrell	ED	Favorable/CS
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The bill revises funding for exceptional student education programs and revises reporting requirements for those programs. The bill reduces the number of weighted cost factors for exceptional student education from five factors to three and adds a categorical program. Three funding levels are provided for exceptional students with the highest level of need. The percentage of program funds a school district is required to spend on programs for exceptional students on an aggregate program basis is increased from 80 percent to 90 percent.

The bill will take effect July 1, 2000.

This bill amends ss. 236.025, 236.081, and 237.34, Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

In 1994-95 Florida began a pilot program to implement a revised funding model for exceptional student education. Funding on the basis of specific disabilities was replaced by funding according to a matrix of services. There are five levels of service in the matrix and five domains. The domains are curriculum and learning environment, social/emotional behavior, independent functioning, health care, and communication. In each domain a student's need can range from Level 1, requiring no services or assistance beyond that which is normally available to all students, to Level 5, requiring multiple interventions or continuous personal assistance. The use of the matrix was implemented in 1997-98 and the law guaranteed a level of funding for the first three years of implementation. Approximately 85 percent of Florida's exceptional students are ranked in levels 1 and 2 of the matrix.

Teachers complained of the paperwork associated with the matrix. While the matrix itself is a 4-page checklist, other documentation required by federal law and state reporting requirements

caused frustration. For various reasons school districts have experienced fluctuations in the amount of funds generated by using the five cost factors associated with the matrix.

The Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) includes a capping process for weighted cost factors in Group II which contains the 5 cost factors of the matrix. The cap impacts a district when the reported FTE exceeds the appropriated amount of funds.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill amends s. 236.025, F.S., to reduce the number of weighted cost factors for exceptional student education from five factors to three and to add a categorical program. To reduce paperwork, a student's matrix of services must be reviewed once every three years instead of once per year.

The newly created categorical program will serve exceptional education students who do not have a matrix of services. The 85 percent of exceptional students currently rated at levels 1 and 2 of the matrix will be served by the categorical program and by the basic funding generated through the FEFP. The categorical funds will be allocated each year in the General Appropriations Act and will be used to provide special education and related services to students as identified in their individual education plans, family support plans, or educational plans. The bill repeals a requirement that funding levels will be guaranteed for three years beginning in 1997-98.

The bill amends s. 230.081, F.S., to provide three funding levels for exceptional students with the highest level of need. The support levels are level III, level IV, and level V.

The bill amends s. 237.34, F.S., to require school districts to report programs for exceptional students in levels III, IV, and V on an aggregate basis. The percentage of program funds a school district is required to spend on programs for exceptional students on an aggregate program basis is increased from 80 percent to 90 percent.

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:

School districts should realize a cost savings as the paperwork associated with funding for exceptional student education is reduced.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.

This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's sponsor or the Florida Senate.
