

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

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

BILL: CS/SB 1388

SPONSOR: Education Committee and Senator Pruit

SUBJECT: Educators/Students with learning problems

DATE: February 11, 2002 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	White	O'Farrell	ED	Favorable/CS
2.	_____	_____	AED	_____
3.	_____	_____	AP	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 1388 requires a three-level process to improve the ability of teachers to identify and work with students who have learning problems. The levels are:

- Certification
- Annual evaluation
- Professional development

Each level will guide teachers who need to improve their ability through research-based, effective instructional and behavioral strategies.

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 231.17 and 231.29.

II. Present Situation:

Approximately 15 percent of Florida's public school population, ages 3-21, has an identified disability. Of the 375,716 students with disabilities:

- 45 percent are identified as specific learning disabled
- 24 percent are identified as either speech or language impaired
- 8 percent are identified as educable mentally handicapped
- 8 percent are identified as emotionally handicapped
- 15 percent are identified in other categories

In both 1999 and 2000, the Legislature made major changes in the requirements for licensing teachers. Beginning in July 2002, as a condition of receiving a professional certificate, all teachers will demonstrate competencies on a newly developed Professional Education Certification Examination. This examination is linked to the 12 Educator Accomplished

Practices, and they include the ability to identify and work with diverse learners and students having a disability.

All state-approved teacher preparation programs (colleges of education) now require beginning teachers to learn and demonstrate competency in working effectively with students who have learning problems. However, the majority of teachers employed in Florida did not graduate from one of Florida's colleges of education.

When a teacher is initially employed in Florida, the credential is a "temporary certificate," which generally is valid for only 2 years. The teacher must pass a background check to get a temporary certificate and must pass a test of general knowledge before the second school year of employment, but does not need to take the Professional Education Certification Examination until the temporary certificate is ready to expire. That test and all the other professional competencies are required to earn a credential called a "Professional Certificate."

Each school district must develop, and the Department of Education must review, a system for annual evaluation of educators.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Certification

The legislation under consideration requires an educator to be able to identify and properly respond to children who have learning problems and learning disabilities. This ability is a requirement for initial professional certification and includes the ability to use research-based effective instructional and behavioral strategies for speech and language development, emerging literacy, and developmentally appropriate practices and learning strategies.

Annual Evaluation

The bill requires the annual evaluation of teachers to include a specific evaluation of the ability to identify and work with these students, and it requires the Department of Education to review each school district's method of assessing teachers to make sure they appropriately focus on these abilities.

Professional Development

Finally, the bill requires the department to develop and make available a professional development program for teachers who want to improve their competencies and for those whose annual evaluation indicates a need for improvement. This program will be developed in cooperation with the state-approved colleges of education and with others who have expertise in developmental or learning disabilities. The program will primarily address competencies and strategies for improving academic progress of students who have learning problems.

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:

The Department of Education will incur the expense of developing the professional development program in cooperation with colleges of education and others with expertise in learning disabilities. The department will also establish a tracking system to assure that teachers who are referred to the program complete it successfully. Each school district will incur the cost of implementing the professional development program.

Staff at the Department of Education estimate that the cost will be approximately \$200,000.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.