

# 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: SB 1740  
 SPONSOR: Senator Cowin  
 SUBJECT: Education/Exceptional students  
 DATE: February 28, 2002      REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## I. Summary:

Senate Bill 1740 creates a grant program in which 75 regular-education teachers first will receive training by the Florida Inclusion Network and then will include one student who has a developmental disability in each class during the 2002-2003 school year.

This bill creates an undesignated section of law. The Division of Statutory Revision will decide whether to leave it in the Laws of Florida or include it in the Florida Statutes.

The bill takes effect upon becoming a law.

## II. Present Situation:

### Exceptional-education teachers

Teachers certified to teach exceptional student education are in short supply in Florida, and ESE has always been on the list of critical teacher shortage areas. An indicator of the shortage is the increase in numbers of teachers in that area who are employed before they are certified – these teachers must be reported as out-of-field. According to the Department of Education, the proportion of ESE teachers who were employed but not certified has increased from 18.7 percent in 1990 to 30.1 percent in 2000.

### Regular-education teachers

A regular-education teacher is one who does not hold a certificate in Exceptional Student Education and is not assigned to teach ESE classes. However, almost half of all students with a disability (49 percent) spend 80 percent of their school day in regular classes, under the goal of

“least restrictive environment,” or inclusion.<sup>1</sup> Regular-education teachers who have students who have a disability in their classes are supposed to receive a variety of training and support, especially by the Florida Inclusion Network.

### **FIN**

The Florida Inclusion Network (FIN) provides services to school districts in their efforts to secure the least restrictive environment for students who have disabilities. The services are provided through 16 direct-support centers and include learning opportunities, consultation, information and support to educators, families and community members to promote inclusive education opportunities for school districts. At least one statewide training seminar is provided for teachers annually. An annual conference is conducted each summer. The program is funded with \$5.1 million in federal funds provided through the Department of Education.

The Florida Inclusion Network does not provide classroom support for individual students nor does it provide a team member for developing the student’s individual education plan.

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

The legislation under consideration requires 15 regular-education teachers in the following school districts first to receive training by the Florida Inclusion Network and then to teach one student who has a developmental disability in each class during the 2002-2003 school year:

- Citrus, Pasco, and Polk Counties, served by the FIN site at the University of South Florida
- Lake County, served by the FIN site at the University of Central Florida
- Marion County, served by the FIN site at the University of North Florida.

The participating teachers and service providers will attend a summer institute to receive the required training.

The bill requires additional support in accordance with each student’s individual education plan, and it requires FIN to develop a pre- and post-survey for the teachers. According to the Department of Education, FIN is developing such a survey but has not yet compiled data from the surveys in a format that may be easily analyzed.

### **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

#### **A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

#### **B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

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<sup>1</sup> The federal law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, No. 34 CFR §300.347, uses the term “least restrictive environment.” The word “inclusion” has the same meaning, inclusion of students who have disabilities in classrooms that also include nondisabled children.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

**V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

During the 2002 – 2003 school year, at least 75 students who have a developmental disability will receive education in the least restrictive environment in classes taught by teachers who have received training in inclusion. Additional classroom support will probably be required. More students may receive this benefit if some participate for only part of the day.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill does not specify a funding source or an amount for the grants. In addition to services that are already available,<sup>2</sup> the bill requires an additional summer institute, development of the pre- and post-surveys, and additional support to the students in their classes.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

The bill requires “recruitment” of teachers for the inclusion program, although all teachers may be assigned to teach students who have a disability in their regular-education classes.

**VII. Related Issues:**

The term used in the bill, “student who has a developmental disability” is broadly inclusive of students with mild to significant disabilities. The bill’s other provisions appear to direct services to students with moderate to significant disabilities.

**VIII. Amendments:**

None.

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

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<sup>2</sup> Funds provided through the Department of Education from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B Discretionary Federal Grant.