

# 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 426

SPONSOR: Education Committee and Senator Geller

SUBJECT: Public School Student Progression

DATE: April 21, 2004      REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>deMarsh-Mathues</u>	<u>O'Farrell</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Favorable/CS</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>CJ</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	<u>AED</u>	_____
4.	_____	_____	<u>AP</u>	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

**I. Summary:**

The bill requires the Department of Education to conduct a study by January 15, 2005, to determine the status of social studies instruction in public schools and social science instruction in community colleges and state universities. The bill specifies the contents of the study.

This bill creates an undesignated section of law.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2004.

**II. Present Situation:**

Current law requires no more than 36 semester credit hours in general education courses in the subject areas of communication, mathematics, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. No specific curriculum or course is required within any of the five content areas. All courses in the associate degree program must be in the Florida common course numbering system.

All twenty eight community colleges offer a course in American Government which is in common course numbering. Three community colleges require that students take at least one course in American government/political science to fulfill their social science requirement. When this course is not required by the college, students often choose one of these courses to fulfill their social science requirement on their own. The Department of Education reports that during the 2002-03 academic year, 31,881 community college students enrolled in at least one political science course. In addition, 39,920 community college students enrolled in at least one American History course.

In addition to the variety of American Government/Political Science/U.S. History courses being offered at all community colleges, American government is a requirement for high school graduation in Florida (s. 1003.43(1)(g), Florida Statutes). Every student who obtains a standard (24 credit) high school diploma must complete at least one semester (.5 credits) in American Government. Students can also take more courses in this area as high school electives. The Sunshine State Standards contain grade level expectations for social studies.

The law (s. 1003.42, Florida Statutes, relating to required instruction) addresses civics requirements that must be included in the K-12 curriculum. These include:

- The content of the Declaration of Independence and how it forms the philosophical foundation of our government;
- The arguments in support of adopting our republican form of government, as they are embodied in the most important of the Federalist Papers;
- The essentials of the United States Constitution and how it provides the structure of our government;
- The elements of civil government, including the primary functions of and interrelationships between the Federal Government, the state, and its counties, municipalities, school districts, and special districts.

Due to the specificity of K-12 requirements relating to civics education, many students who have studied American Government/political science extensively in K-12 may choose to explore other social science areas in college. State university students must complete six hours of social science as a part of the general education requirements.

### III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

**Section 1.** The bill requires the Department of Education to conduct a study by January 15, 2005, to determine the status of social studies instruction in public schools and social science instruction in community colleges and state universities. The contents of the study must include an analysis that:

- Documents compliance by school districts with the required social studies instruction.
- Examines the extent to which the social sciences component of the general education requirements at community colleges and state universities includes civics instruction.

The study must also include information on standards adopted by the State Board of Education on social studies instruction, as well as any recommendations for policy changes.

**Section 2.** The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2004.

### 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 may incur some costs to conduct the study.

**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.

---