

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

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

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Education Pre-K - 12 Committee

BILL: Proposed Committee Substitute for SB 1906

INTRODUCER: Education Pre-K - 12 Committee and Senator Gaetz

SUBJECT: Alternative Credit/High School Courses

DATE: March 7, 2008

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Carrouth</u>	<u>Matthews</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>EA</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	<u>RC</u>	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The bill creates a pilot program to provide opportunities for high school students enrolled in rigorous career academies to simultaneously earn alternative credit in specific math and science courses.

High school students enrolled in career and professional academies as currently defined in law, could potentially earn credit for Integrated Math 1 and 2, Algebra 1a and 1b, Algebra 1, Geometry, and Biology, provided the standards and essential concepts of these courses were included in their career coursework and the students could verify mastery of the core content on approved end-of-course-assessments.

Pilot-project career academy students would be engaged in instruction that integrates multiple subjects and disciplines, is relevant to future academic and career opportunities, and allows for integrated, relevant instruction and application of knowledge. The pilot project would also allow students who are struggling academically, as well as academically advanced students, to accelerate time to graduation.

Students who attain scores that verify mastery of content on the end-of-course assessments would earn an additional 1/6 FTE. However, a district would not be able to report a student for more than 1 FTE per fiscal year.

This bill creates section 1002.375 and amends section 1011.61 of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

In order to graduate with a standard high school diploma, Florida secondary students are required to complete a total of 24 courses (credits), 16 of which must include core courses in English, math, science and social studies. For students entering their first year of high school in the 2007-2008 school year, current law requires the completion of four math and three science courses for high school graduation.¹

Section 1003.436, F.S., defines a credit as 135 hours of bona fide instruction in a designated course for purposes of high school graduation.² Students who are able to master content quickly and accelerate to more demanding coursework or students who require additional academic support are not exempted from this requirement.

Furthermore, under s. 1011.60(2), in order for districts to receive funding through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP), all schools must operate for a term of no less than 180 days, and s. 1011.61(1)(a)1., F.S., stipulates that a student must be enrolled in instruction for a minimum of 900 net hours in order to be considered full time and, therefore, eligible for funding.

Florida secondary students enrolled in rigorous career and professional academies, as described in s. 1003.493, F.S., currently enroll in separate math and science courses with little or no transfer of, or application to, the math and science skills and standards taught within the career course. For example, a student participating in a pre-architecture course within a construction technology academy is required to take a separate, self-contained algebra or geometry course, with little or no opportunity to apply, transfer, or make relevant those math skills in the architecture course. Conversely, students in the pre-architecture course are currently acquiring the requisite math skills along with the pre-architecture skills and given ample opportunities to apply and master both skill sets, but are not awarded credit for mastery of the math skills without taking an additional course.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill would provide, on a pilot basis, opportunities for students who are enrolled in relevant career-related instruction in high-interest fields to validate their acquisition of core math and science skills through career coursework that integrates and demands application of the math and science concepts. Students would not be held to traditional “seat time,” thus allowing advanced students to accelerate and providing struggling students encouragement to remain in school and acquire essential and relevant academic and work-related skills.

Recently released research studies by the National Governor’s Association and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation indicate that 47 percent of dropouts surveyed indicate that courses were not interesting and 81 percent stated that providing opportunities for real-world learning that enhances the connection between school and work would improve a student’s chances to remain in school and succeed.³ The Davidson Institute for Talent Development states that 20

¹ s. 1003.428(2), F.S. Section 1003.43(1), F.S., requires only three math and three science courses for other high school students.

² s. 1003.436(1)(a), F.S., defines a credit as 120 hours per course in a block scheduling format.

³ <http://www.silentepidemic.org>

percent of the nation's dropouts test in the gifted range, an additional indication of the need to address and rethink the current high school curriculum and the conventional methods of instructional delivery.

The Department of Education would select up to three pilot school districts that currently operate approved career academies in high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand occupations⁴ to offer alternative credit for specific math and science courses to students who verify attainment of math and science concepts via approved end-of-course assessments.

Students enrolled in the approved academies would participate in targeted courses associated with the career theme and simultaneously earn credit in a core math or science course, provided that the career course integrated the required state standards in the math or science course and the student is able to pass an approved end-of-course assessment.

The bill assigns the following duties to the Department and Commissioner of Education in order to successfully implement the pilot project:

- Establishment of participation criteria for districts and the selection of up to three participating school districts by July 30, 2008, with interested school districts submitting a letter of intent to commissioner by July 15, 2008;
- Approval of a course as an alternative credit course within a qualified career and professional academy;
- Selection and approval of administering end-of-course assessments for alternative credit;
- Maintenance of a list of approved assessments and minimum passing scores for each approved course and incorporation of the list into the Course Code Directory.;
- Approval or denial within 30 days of receipt of requests from a participating pilot district for a course to be included for alternative credit purposes;
- Procedures for school districts to report all enrollments and credits earned for alternative education courses; and
- A report from the commissioner to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives is required by January 1, 2010, on the participation and credits earned by students as well as recommendations for expanding the use of alternative credit for core academic courses.

IV. **Constitutional Issues:**

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

⁴ Secondary career academies are described in s. 1003.493, F.S., and approved by the Agency for Workforce Innovation.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. **Fiscal Impact Statement:**

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Florida businesses may realize the benefits of more educated and skilled workforce.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Students who pass the appropriate end-of-course assessments and receive the alternative credit would generate 1/6 FTE; however, a district would not be able to report a student for more than one FTE per year. Accordingly, the bill may be revenue neutral.

The state could benefit from a potential decrease in the dropout rate, students more engaged in relevant curriculum, and a more educated and skilled workforce.

The Department of Education estimates that additional workload costs would be associated with developing the criteria for participation, selecting the districts and assuring compliance with the requirements of the pilot program, adopting passing scores for the end-of-term examinations, and overseeing the administration and scoring of the examinations.

VI. **Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

VII. **Related Issues:**

None.

VIII. **Additional Information:**

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.