

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 659 Service Learning in the Public School System

SPONSOR(S): Kriseman and others

TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** SB 1498

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR
1) Schools & Learning Council		Hassell	Cobb
2) Policy & Budget Council			
3) _____			
4) _____			
5) _____			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The bill creates section 1003.497, F.S., to encourage service-learning, a student-centered, research-based teaching and learning strategy that engages students in meaningful service activities in their community and school, in public school. Service-learning is directly tied to academic curricula and fosters academic achievement, character development, civic engagement, and career exploration.

The bill requires the Department of Education to:

- Encourage districts to initiate, adopt, expand, and institutionalize service-learning programs, activities, and policies in K-12.
- Provide assistance to any district electing to implement service-learning programs, activities, or policies.
- Develop and adopt elective service-learning courses for middle and high school course code directories.

The bill encourages school districts to:

- Include K-12 service-learning programs and activities in proposals submitted to the DOE under federal entitlement grants and competitive state and federal grants.
- Provide support for the use of service-learning as an instructional strategy to address appropriate areas of state education standards for student knowledge and performance.
- Include service-learning as part of any course or activity required for high school graduation.
- Accept service-learning activities and hours in requirements for academic awards.

The bill authorizes the hours that high school students devote to course-based service-learning activities to count toward high school graduation and the Florida Bright Futures Program community service requirements.

The bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state or local government because it does not require the implementation of service-learning programs in K-12. DOE estimates that current resources from the Florida's Learn & Serve program can be used to absorb any costs through current and future grant funding.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

Safeguard Individual Liberties – The bill safeguards individual liberties by increasing the opportunities for students to participate in service-learning programs and activities. It has the potential to enhance and increase the service provided to others in Florida communities by students.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Background

The Florida Learn & Serve program is a federally funded grant program that awards grants to schools and school districts to engage youth in service-learning. The Florida Department of Education (DOE) issues the awards to school districts.¹ Currently there are approximately 80 service-learning projects funded through the DOE's Florida Learn & Serve program. Several of the projects themselves issue mini-grants for an estimated 300 additional smaller projects. Altogether, it is estimated these projects engage approximately 50,000 students in service-learning throughout the state. About two thirds of these students (33,000) are in high school. These high school students will provide approximately 1,000,000 hours (approximately 30 per student) of service this school year.²

Since 1981, the DOE has awarded over \$23.6 million in grants statewide to support service-learning projects.³ These programs include the following:

- Drug Prevention Community Service Grant (1991-1994),
- Florida Learn & Serve Formula Grants (1992-present, approximately \$14.4 million to date),
- Florida Learn & Serve Competitive Grants (1999-present, \$4.2 million to date), and
- Title IV Community Service Grants (2003-0505, approximately \$5 million).⁴

Service-learning language has also been inserted into the Request For Proposal (RFP) for the 2008 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants as a choice for districts among the eight strategies they must employ.

In service-learning projects funded through Florida Learn & Serve, students practice and apply skills, knowledge, and behaviors they need to learn through service to others in their school or community. Current projects reach specific academic, behavioral, or skills-acquisition goals for students. These goals include raising student academic performance, increasing FCAT scores, improving attendance, reducing conflict, fostering career exploration and civic engagement, or as a prevention and

¹ <http://www.fsu.edu/~flserve/>

² Florida Department of Education. *Analysis for HB 659 on Service Learning in the Public School System for the 2008 Legislative Session*.; The Independent Sector has placed the national value of this service at \$18.77 per hour, which means the high school students alone are providing service worth \$18 million. If this service were only valued at the level of the current minimum wage, the service would still be worth over \$6 million. http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html

³ Florida Department of Education. *Analysis for HB 659 on Service Learning in the Public School System for the 2008 Legislative Session*.

⁴ Id.

intervention strategy for at-risk students. Florida Learn & Serve funds are used to support lesson planning and curriculum development.⁵

The DOE currently assists school districts by providing training and resources for the development and administration of current service-learning programs and activities in the state. The training is provided by the federally funded Florida Learn & Serve programs. The program has conducted several trainings-of-trainers, and these local district and school staff provide training in their communities across much of the state.⁶

Current law does not have any specific requirements for service-learning activities, programs, or policies. However, according to the Department of Education, several districts are engaging in the various service-learning activities, programs, or policies:

- A few districts, including Bay and Lake, have incorporated service-learning into their high school curriculums through the implementation of courses such as Community Service, Leadership Skills Development, Voluntary School/Community Service, and Peer Counseling I-IV; a dual enrollment Service Learning Course is offered at a local community college in Brevard County.
- In Lake County School District there are 9 classes at 6 schools (4 high schools, 2 middle schools) that have Service-Learning Youth Councils dedicated solely to service-learning. The curriculum was written specifically for students to facilitate service-learning projects for various teachers within their community as well as participate and facilitate their own projects. The core curriculum is based on a list of the 21st Century Skills and includes a pre and post test that is evaluated each semester by a district evaluator.
- In Lake County School District there is also a broad category of courses that integrate service-learning projects in elementary, middle and high schools.
- Through the Florida Learn & Serve program, 11 districts (Bay, Brevard, Flagler, Lake, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Orange, Palm Beach, Polk, Volusia, and Wakulla) have received multi-year infrastructure-building awards to put in place the programming, staffing, dedicated funding, partnerships, and links with policy to sustain their efforts. These districts are at different levels of progress, but none has a requirement or is contemplating one.
- A couple of districts have school board and superintendent approved statements encouraging the use of the service-learning strategy.
- Wakulla County School District lists service-learning as a strategy in its reading plan.
- In Brevard County School District service-learning was added to the list of school board priorities for 2007-08.
- Bay County School District has 2 service-learning magnet schools: a charter school and an elementary school.
- In Miami-Dade, teachers at two schools have voted/approved to make their schools into service-learning schools, and there are a couple of service-learning academies in other districts including Orange and Lake Counties.
- Bay, Lake, Wakulla, and Brevard County School Districts have web sites or links related to service-learning.⁷

Currently, the Course Code Directory System Guide does not include language that refers specifically to service-learning. However, many courses include experiential or applied components, which is what occurs in service-learning projects where students apply knowledge and skills to meet identified needs. Voluntary Public Service and Voluntary School/Community Service are two courses for grades 9-12 that have service-learning as part of their curriculum.

⁵ <http://www.fldoe.org/family/whatis.asp>

⁶ Florida Department of Education. *Analysis for HB 659 on Service Learning in the Public School System for the 2008 Legislative Session.*

⁷ Id.

There are numerous courses that could have service-learning included with minor adjustments or additions to their course descriptions. In school districts throughout Florida, teachers primarily integrate some service-learning activities into existing courses. However, a growing number are using existing elective courses as service-learning-dedicated classes. The following are currently being used in Lake County, for example: 0500500 Personal Career and School Development I; 0500510 Personal Career and School Development II; 0500520 Personal Career and School Development III; 0500530 Personal Career and School Development IV; 0500370 Voluntary Public Service; 2104330 Voluntary School/Community Service; 2400300 Leadership Skills Development; 2400310 Leadership Techniques; The Service-Learning Youth Council courses most used for a 50-minute period at the middle school level are: 1400300 Peer Counseling I; 1400310 Peer Counseling II; 1400320 Peer Counseling III; 1400330 Peer Counseling IV.⁸

Effects of Proposed Changes

The bill creates section 1003.497, Florida Statutes, to encourage service-learning in the public school system.

Service-learning is a student-centered, research-based teaching and learning strategy that engages students in meaningful service activities in their community and school. Service-learning activities are directly tied to academic curricula, standards, and course, district, or state assessments. These activities foster academic achievement, character development, civic engagement, and career exploration and enable students to apply curriculum content, skills, and behaviors taught in the classroom.

The bill requires the Department of Education to:

- Encourage school districts to initiate, adopt, expand, and institutionalize service-learning programs, activities, and policies in kindergarten through grade 12.
- Provide assistance to any school district that elects to implement service-learning programs, activities, or policies in locating, leveraging, and utilizing available or alternative financial resources that will assist school districts or teachers desiring to receive training and other resources to develop and administer service-learning programs or activities.
- Develop and adopt elective service-learning courses for inclusion in middle and high school course code directories.

According to the DOE, Florida's Learn & Serve program is currently designated to work with practitioners to develop courses for the inclusion of service-learning components in the middle and high school curriculum. DOE would be able to provide training and technical assistance to district staff from federal title and other grant programs on ways that service learning can contribute to the mission and goals of those programs. Also, the DOE can add language that supports the use of the service-learning strategy into its RFPs and RFAs, which has been done in a couple of programs. Additionally, teachers in districts who require training on implementing service-learning could attend trainings provided by Florida Learn & Serve staff or district level service learning coordinators.⁹

The bill encourages school districts to:

- Include kindergarten through grade 12 service-learning programs and activities in proposals they submit to the DOE under federal entitlement grants and competitive state and federal grants administered through the DOE.
- Provide support for the use of service-learning at any grade level as an instructional strategy to address appropriate areas of state education standards for student knowledge and performance.

⁸ Id.

⁹ Id.

- Include service-learning as part of any course or activity required for high school graduation.
- Accept service-learning activities and hours in requirements for academic awards, especially those that currently include community service as a criterion or selection factor.

The bill authorizes the hours that high school students devote to course-based service-learning activities to count toward high school graduation community service requirements. Currently, some districts do not count or accept course-based service-learning hours, either because the students are not volunteering on their own time or because the activity is not considered to be community service because it is part of a class requirement.¹⁰ If a school district allows these activities to count towards the graduation requirements, there will be more opportunities available for students to meet the graduation community service requirements.

The bill authorizes the hours that high school students devote to course-based service-learning activities to count toward the community service requirements for participation in the Florida Bright Futures Program.¹¹ In addition to meeting the general eligibility criteria for a Bright Futures Award, a student must also perform 75 hours of community service work, approved by the district school board or the administrators of a nonpublic school, to be considered for an Academic Scholars¹² award. If a district school board allows these activities to count towards the community service requirements for the Bright Futures Award, it is possible that more students will be able to meet the community service requirements needed for the award eligibility.

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Creates s. 1003.497, F.S., relating to service-learning in the public school system; requiring the Department of Education to encourage districts to initiate, adopt, expand, and institutionalize service-learning programs, activities, and policies; defining service-learning; requiring the department to provide assistance to districts; requiring development and adoption of course programs; authorizing service-learning activities to count toward high school graduation or academic awards requirements; and encouraging districts to include service-learning as part of courses or activities required for high school graduation or receipt of academic awards.

Section 2. Provides for an effective date.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

The bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

¹⁰ Id.

¹¹ Section 1009.531, F.S., provides that a student must meet the following general criteria to be considered for an award under the Bright Futures Scholarship Program: be a Florida resident; earn a Florida high school diploma, or the equivalent; enroll in an eligible Florida postsecondary education institution for at least 6 credit hours per semester; not have been found guilty of, or entered a plea of nolo contendere to, a felony charge; apply for the scholarship by high school graduation, and commence using the award within 3 years of graduation.

¹² Section 1009.534, F.S., provides that students must also meet the following requirements: achieve a 3.5 weighted GPA using the 15 college preparatory credits; score the minimum on the SAT or ACT; and perform 75 hours of community service work

The bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state government expenditures.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

The bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on local government revenues.

2. Expenditures:

The bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on local government expenditures.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

The Independent Sector has placed the national value of this service at \$18.77 per hour, which means the high school students alone are providing service worth \$18 million. If this service were only valued at the level of the current minimum wage, the service would still be worth over \$6 million.¹³

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

The bill does not appear to have a fiscal impact on state or local government because the bill does not require the implementation of service-learning programs in K-12. DOE estimates that current resources from the Florida's Learn & Serve program can be used to absorb any costs through current and future grant funding.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

The bill does not appear to require a city or county to expend funds or take any action requiring the expenditure of funds. The bill does not appear to reduce the authority that municipalities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate. The bill does not appear to reduce the percentage of state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

¹³ Florida Department of Education. *Analysis for HB 659 on Service Learning in the Public School System for the 2008 Legislative Session.*

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

D. STATEMENT OF THE SPONSOR

No statement submitted.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COUNCIL SUBSTITUTE CHANGES