

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: CS/SB 1718

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

SUBJECT: Parent Empowerment in Education

DATE: January 24, 2012 **REVISED:** _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Brown	deMarsh-Mathues	ED	Fav/CS
2.	_____	_____	BC	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

Please see Section VIII. for Additional Information:

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|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| A. COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE..... | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Statement of Substantial Changes |
| B. AMENDMENTS..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | Technical amendments were recommended |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | Amendments were recommended |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | Significant amendments were recommended |

I. Summary:

This bill creates the Parent Empowerment Act to expand the list of rights provided to K-12 students and parents.

School districts are required to notify parents that they may, through petition process, select and submit to the district school board a new school turnaround option when a school subject to an existing turnaround option has failed to improve. Safeguards are included to provide majority vote, require public meetings, and authorize signature verification.

In cases where a school district fails to adopt a petition selection, it still must submit the petition option, along with its own, to the State Board of Education (SBE). The SBE makes the final determination.

School districts are also required to notify parents that classroom teachers assigned to their children have received poor performance ratings. Upon request, parents would also have the right to receive actual performance evaluations of any classroom personnel involved in their child's education.

This bill makes available an option of virtual instruction by an “effective” or “highly effective” instructor for a student assigned to a classroom teacher whom:

- Is teaching out-of-field; or
- Has received poor performance evaluations, defined as two consecutive annual performance evaluation ratings of unsatisfactory, two annual performance evaluation ratings of unsatisfactory within a 3-year period, or three consecutive annual performance evaluation ratings of needs improvement or a combination of needs improvement and unsatisfactory.

Annual notice must be provided to parents when a child is assigned to an out-of-field classroom teacher, and that virtual instruction is available.

This bill substantially amends sections 1001.10, 1002.20, 1002.32, 1008.33, 1012.2315, creates section 1003.07, and repeals section 1012.42 of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Differentiated Accountability

Differentiated accountability is the system used by Florida to meet conditions for participation in the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act¹ that requires states to hold public schools and school districts accountable for making adequate yearly progress toward meeting state proficiency goals. Schools are categorized based upon the school’s grade² and the level and rate of change in student performance in reading and mathematics, disaggregated into student subgroups.³

The law requires the Department of Education (DOE) to provide the most intensive intervention strategies to the lowest performing schools, which are defined as schools that have received:⁴

- An “F” grade in the most recent school year and 4 of the 6 years prior; or
- A “D” or “F” grade in the most recent school year and with three out of four of these criteria:
 - A percentage increase of students who are not reading proficient in comparison to measurements taken 5 years ago;
 - A percentage increase of students not mathematics proficient in comparison to measurements taken 5 years ago;
 - A threshold of at least 65 percent of students whom are not reading proficient; or
 - A threshold of at least 65 percent of students whom are not mathematics proficient.

¹ 20 U.S.C. ss. 6301 et seq.

² s. 1008.34, F.S., requires school grades: “A,” making excellent progress, “B,” making above average progress, “C,” making satisfactory progress, “D,” making less than satisfactory progress, or “F,” failing to make adequate progress.

³ ch. 2009-144, codified in s. 1008.33, F.S. Six categories, beginning with the highest performing, comprise the differentiated accountability system: Schools Not Required to Participate in Differentiated Accountability Strategies, Prevent I, Correct I, Prevent II, Correct II, and Intervene. See Rule 6A-1.099811, F.A.C.

⁴ s. 1008.33(4)(b), F.S.

Florida law requires school districts to submit a school improvement plan in the school year after a school has ranked in the lowest-performing category, to the State Board of Education. The plan must include one of the following options:⁵

- Conversion of the school to a district-managed turnaround school, including implementing a Commissioner of Education-approved turnaround plan that becomes the school's improvement plan;
- Reassignment of students to another school with progress monitoring of each reassigned student;
- Closure of the school with reopening as a charter school with a governing board that has proven effectiveness; or
- Contracting with an outside entity that has a proven record of effectiveness to operate the school.

Teacher Assignments

In 2009, the Florida Legislature enacted legislation to address the quality of teachers assigned to the lowest performing schools.⁶ School districts may not assign a higher percentage than the school district average of temporarily certified teachers, teachers in need of improvement, or out-of-field teachers to these schools.

District school boards are required to adopt and implement plans to help teachers teaching out-of-field, and to require participation in a certification or staff development program, with priority consideration given regarding professional development. Written notification is to be provided to parents of the students.

Performance Evaluations

The evaluation system for instructional personnel and school-based administrators must differentiate among four levels: highly effective; effective; needs improvement or, for instructional personnel in the first three years of employment who need improvement, developing; and unsatisfactory.⁷

Current law requires the DOE to annually publish online performance rating data, to constitute the percentage of classroom teachers, instructional personnel and school administrators receiving each performance rating aggregated by district and school.⁸

Also, school districts are required to annually report ratings to those parents whose children are assigned to a classroom teacher or school administrator who has received two consecutive annual performance reevaluation ratings of unsatisfactory; two annual performance evaluation ratings of unsatisfactory within three years; or three consecutive annual performance evaluation ratings of needs improvement or a combination of needs improvement and unsatisfactory.⁹

⁵ s. 1008.33(5)(a), F.S.

⁶ Ch. 2009-144, L.O.F., codified in section 1012.2315, F.S. Prior to this change, the provision only applied to schools designated as "D" or "F" schools. The lowest performing schools are defined in section 1008.33, F.S.

⁷ Ch. 2011-1, L.O.F., codified in s. 1012.34(2)(e), F.S.

⁸ s. 1002.2315(5)(a), F.S.

⁹ s. 1012.2315(5)(b), F.S.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Parents would be authorized, through a petition, to implement a second school improvement option, provided that a sufficient percentage of parents support the petition. This expands current law which is school district-directed regarding determination of the plan option. Still, school districts would retain authority to select the initial turnaround option.

The petition process would involve the following:

- A school district is required to annually notify, in writing, parents of eligible students when a school has failed to improve performance while under an existing turnaround option, and that they have the option, through petition, to submit a different choice;
- Although a petition choice is non-binding on the district school board, the district school board must submit the option, along with its own choice, to the SBE, which would make the final determination;
- Provisions are included requiring majority vote (indicating greater than one-half of eligible parents), ensuring a public meeting and authorizing verification of signatures.
- Petition votes are authorized at the rate of one parent per eligible student, defined as a student actually enrolled in the school or a student who will be attending the school in the following year; and
- Regarding a timeline, parental notice must be provided within 30 calendar days after the DOE notifies the school district that a different remedy must be implemented, with implementation of the second option to begin the following school year.

The bill requires the SBE to adopt rules to establish standards for verifying petition signatures. However, districts are not required to verify signatures. For students being taught by an out-of-field teacher, virtual instruction would be available from an in-field teacher. For students currently instructed by personnel receiving poor performance evaluation ratings, virtual instruction would be available from effective or highly effective teachers.

The provisions in the bill regarding assistance to out-of-field teachers are similar to those in current law. The bill would additionally require that the district school board implement assistance plans by rule, and that the notice inform the parent that a certified in-field teacher is available through virtual instruction.

This bill requires schools to provide students who have been taught by a teacher who received a “needs improvement” or “unsatisfactory” rating to receive instruction from a teacher with a higher rating the following year.

This bill provides parents the right to receive performance evaluations of each classroom teacher assigned to the student, pursuant to s. 1012.31, F.S., which already provides that public school employee files are public records. However, current law also makes confidential and exempt employee evaluations until the end of the school year after the school year covered in the evaluation. This bill appears to move up the date of release of the document for those employees who are classroom teachers assigned to the children of the requesting parent. This would provide the parent with more timely access to the evaluation.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

This bill increases educational options for parents and students.

C. Government Sector Impact:

There may be some costs associated with the notice requirements in the bill.

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.)

CS by the Committee on Pre-K – 12 on January 24, 2012:

This bill:

- Provides that authority for parents to initiate the petition process is triggered only after a school has failed to improve performance under a school turnaround option;
- Requires specific notice by the school district to parents of eligible students that the school has been unable to improve performance under a school turnaround option, and that parents may petition a different option;

- Limits signatures to one parent per eligible student and defines the term “eligible student;”
- Requires the SBE to adopt standards for signature verification;
- Authorizes, but does not require, the district school board to adopt the petition-directed turnaround option and provides that where the district school board rejects the petition selection, that both choices are to be submitted to the SBE;
- Details the rule adoption required of the SBE;
- Provides that when students instructed in the classroom by out-of-field instructors opt for in-field virtual instruction, the instructors must have annual performance ratings of at least the level of “effective;” and
- Clarifies that the prohibition on a student being taught in two consecutive years by instructors with poor performance evaluation ratings in the same subject area refer only to classroom teaching.

B. Amendments:

None.