

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 Committee on Education

BILL: SB 468

INTRODUCER: Senator Stargel

SUBJECT: Voluntary Prekindergarten Education

DATE: March 31, 2017 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Benvenisty	Graf	ED	Favorable
2.	_____	_____	AED	_____
3.	_____	_____	AP	_____
4.	_____	_____	RC	_____

I. Summary:

SB 468 revises provisions related to the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) program and duties of the Just Read! Florida Office (Just Read! Florida). Specifically, the bill:

- Requires the Just Read, Florida! to train Voluntary Prekindergarten through grade 3 teachers, reading coaches, and school principals on effective research-based instructional strategies.
- Requires the Office of Early Learning (OEL) to determine eligibility for enrollment and reenrollment in the school year VPK program.
- Requires each early learning coalition (ELC) to coordinate with the OEL to assign student identification numbers to each student who enrolls in the program.
- Clarifies that the Department of Education (DOE) must adopt a single statewide kindergarten readiness screening that is a direct assessment of early literacy and numeracy skills.
- Requires private prekindergarten providers and public schools in the VPK program to provide parents with the results of the pre- and post- assessment within 10 days after the administering the assessment.
 - Requires the results of the pre- and post- assessments to be reported at the aggregate level, distributed to the respective ELCs and school districts, and displayed on the OEL’s website within 30 days after the administration of the assessment.
- Authorizes a child who is at risk of not attaining the performance standards specified in law to reenroll, at the request of the child’s parent, in one of the school-year programs offered by a provider that has met the adopted minimum readiness rate provided in law for the subsequent year.
- Provides for an appropriation of \$10 million dollars from the General Revenue Fund to the DOE for developing training for VPK through grade 3 teachers, reading coaches, and school principals.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2017.

II. Present Situation:

In 2004, the Legislature established the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) Program, a voluntary, free prekindergarten program offered to eligible four-year-old children in the year before admission to kindergarten.¹

Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program

Florida's Office of Early Learning (OEL) governs the day-to-day operations of the VPK program.² The OEL oversees early learning coalitions (ELCs) regarding child enrollment, attendance reporting, and reimbursement of VPK program providers and monitors VPK program providers for compliance with program requirements.³ The OEL administers the accountability requirements of the VPK program at the state level.⁴ The Florida Department of Education (DOE) is responsible for adopting and requiring each school district to administer a statewide kindergarten readiness screening within the first 30 days of each school year.⁵

Local oversight of the VPK program is provided by the early learning coalitions (ELC) and school districts.⁶ Each ELC is the single point of entry for VPK program registration and enrollment in the coalition's county or multi-county service area.⁷ Each ELC must coordinate with each school district in the coalition's service area to develop procedures for enrolling children in public school VPK programs.⁸ Local oversight of individual VPK programs is split, with the ELCs providing administration over programs delivered by the private prekindergarten providers and school districts administering the public school VPK programs.⁹

Child Eligibility and Enrollment

The OEL is responsible for determining eligibility criteria for VPK programs.¹⁰ A child is eligible if he or she is four years of age on or before September 1 of the school year during which he or she is enrolling and until the school year during which the child is eligible for admission or is admitted to kindergarten, whichever occurs first.¹¹

A child involved in a VPK program specified in law may withdraw from the VPK program for good cause¹² and reenroll, provided the child has not completed more than 70 percent of the authorized program hours or expended more than 70 percent of the authorized funds.¹³ A child that has not substantially completed any VPK Program can withdraw from the program due to an

¹ Section 1, ch 2004-484, L.O.F.; part V, ch. 1002, F.S.

² Sections 1001.213 and 1002.75, F.S.

³ Section 1002.75, F.S.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Sections 1002.69(1) and 1002.73, F.S.

⁶ Section 1002.53(4), F.S.

⁷ *Id.* at (4)(a).

⁸ *Id.* at (4)(c).

⁹ Sections 1002.55(1), 1002.61(1)(a)-(b) and 1002.63(1), F.S.

¹⁰ Section 1002.75(2)(a).

¹¹ Section 1002.53(2), F.S.

¹² Section 1002.71(4)(b), F.S.

¹³ *Id.* at (4)(a).

extreme hardship beyond the child's or parent's control, reenroll in one of the summer programs and be reported as a full-time equivalent student in the summer program.¹⁴

VPK Program Accountability

The OEL is required to develop and adopt performance standards for students enrolled in a VPK program.¹⁵ The performance standards must address the age-appropriate progress of students in the development of:¹⁶

- The capabilities, capacities, and skills required under Art. IX, s. 1(b), of the Florida Constitution;¹⁷ and
- Emergent literacy skills, including oral communication, knowledge of print and letters, phonemic awareness, and vocabulary and comprehension development.

Florida law requires the DOE to adopt a statewide kindergarten screening (screening) that assesses the readiness of each student for kindergarten based upon the performance standards¹⁸ adopted for the VPK program.¹⁹ The screening must be administered to each kindergarten student in a school district within the first 30 school days of each school year.²⁰ Data from the screening is used to calculate the VPK provider kindergarten readiness rate.²¹

The OEL annually calculates each public school's or private provider's kindergarten readiness rate based on the percentage of students who have met all state readiness measures and student learning gains, as determined by the results of the pre- and post-assessments during at least two years.²² Currently, the instrument is a developmental screening tool based on the Work Sampling System (WSS).²³ A subset of WSS performance indicators is provided in five domains: Personal and Social Development; Language and Literacy; Mathematical Thinking; Scientific Thinking; and Physical Development, Health, and Safety.²⁴

Additionally, each VPK program private prekindergarten provider and public school must administer an evidence-based pre- and post-assessment approved by the State Board of Education, which must be valid, reliable, developmentally appropriate, and designed to measure

¹⁴ Section 1002.71(4)(b), F.S.

¹⁵ Section 1002.67(1)(a), F.S.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ An early childhood development and education program means an organized program designed to address and enhance each child's ability to make age appropriate progress in an appropriate range of settings in the development of language and cognitive capabilities and emotional, social, regulatory and moral capacities through education in basic skills and such other skills as the Legislature may determine to be appropriate.. Art. IX, s. X, Fla. Const.

¹⁸ Section 1002.67(1), F.S.

¹⁹ Section 1002.69(1), F.S.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.* at (5).

²² *Id.* at (4) – (5).

²³ Email, Florida Department of Education (March 30, 2017).

²⁴ Florida's Office of Early Learning, *VPK Prekindergarten Readiness Rate Resources for Parents*, <https://vpk.fldoe.org/InfoPages/ParentInfo.aspx> (last visited March 31, 2017); Florida's Office of Early Learning, *Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS)*, http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/providers/provider_resources/florida_kindergarten_readiness_screener.aspx (last visited March 31, 2017).

student progress on a variety of domains, including, but not limited to, early literacy and language.²⁵

Just Read, Florida! Office

In 2006, the Legislature created the Just Read, Florida! Office (Office) within the DOE to oversee implementation of the statewide public school reading requirements.²⁶ The Office is required to, among other things:²⁷

- Provide technical assistance to school districts in the development and implementation of district plans for use of the research-based reading allocation.²⁸
- Review, evaluate, and provide technical assistance to school districts' implementation of the K-12 comprehensive reading plan.
- Work with the Florida Center for Reading Research²⁹ to provide information on research-based reading programs and effective reading in the content area strategies.
- Train kindergarten through grade 12 teachers and school principals on effective content-area-specific reading strategies.

Florida law requires DOE to monitor and track the implementation of each district's K-12 comprehensive reading plan and report its findings annually to the Legislature by February 1.³⁰

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

SB 468 revises provisions related to the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education (VPK) program and duties of the Just Read! Florida Office (Just Read! Florida). Specifically, the bill:

- Requires the Just Read, Florida! to train Voluntary Prekindergarten through grade 3 teachers, reading coaches, and school principals on effective research-based instructional strategies.
- Requires the Office of Early Learning (OEL) to determine eligibility for enrollment and reenrollment in the school year VPK program.
- Requires each early learning coalition (ELC) to coordinate with the OEL to assign student identification numbers to each student who enrolls in the program.
- Clarifies that the Department of Education must adopt a single statewide kindergarten readiness screening that is a direct assessment of early literacy and numeracy skills.

²⁵ Section 1002.67(1)(a), F.S. The OEL must periodically review and revise the performance standards for the statewide kindergarten screening and align the standards to those established by the State Board of Education for student performance on statewide, standardized assessments. *Id.* at (1)(b).

²⁶ Section 8, ch. 2006-74, L.O.F., *codified as s.* 1001.215, F.S.

²⁷ Section 1001.215, F.S.

²⁸ Each school district is required to annually submit a K-12 comprehensive reading plan for the specific use of the research-based reading instruction allocation. The reading plans are submitted to and approved by the Just Read, Florida! Office. Section 1011.62(9)(d), F.S. The requirements for the reading plans are set forth in rule by the State Board of Education. Rule 6A-6.053, F.A.C.

²⁹ The Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) was created at the Florida State University and includes two outreach centers, one at a Florida College System institution in central Florida and one at a south Florida state university. Section 1004.645, F.S. The FCRR conducts basic research on reading, reading growth, reading assessment, and reading instruction; disseminates information about research-based practices related to literacy instruction and assessment; conducts applied research; and provides technical assistance to Florida's schools and the Just Read, Florida! Office. *See* Florida State University, Florida Center for Reading Instruction, *The Center's Four Part Mission*, <http://www.fcrr.org/> (last visited March 31, 2017).

³⁰ Section 1011.62(9)(d), F.S.

- Requires private prekindergarten providers and public schools in the VPK program to provide parents with the results of the pre- and post- assessment within 10 days after the administering the assessment.
 - Requires the results of the pre- and post- assessments to be reported at the aggregate level, distributed to the respective ELCs and school districts, and displayed on the OEL's website within 30 days after the administration of the assessment.
- Authorizes a child who is at risk of not attaining the performance standards specified in law to reenroll, at the request of the child's parent, in one of the school-year programs offered by a provider that has met the adopted minimum readiness rate provided in law for the subsequent year.
- Provides for an appropriation of \$10 million dollars from the General Revenue Fund to the DOE for developing training for VPK through grade 3 teachers, reading coaches, and school principals.

Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program

The bill authorizes the OEL to determine the eligibility criteria for reenrollment in the school year VPK Education Program. Additionally, the bill requires each ELC to coordinate with the OEL to assign student identification numbers to each VPK student.

The bill requires the statewide kindergarten screening to be a single instrument that emphasizes and directly assesses early literacy and numeracy skills. A single screening instrument may provide greater consistency across the state in assessing the kindergarten readiness rate and greater accountability for VPK programs.

The bill requires that each public and private school in the VPK Education Program provide parents the results of the pre- and post-assessments, including any resources that might be helpful to their students, within 10 days after administration of the assessment. Accordingly, parents may be able to provide instructional support at home to improve student performance outcomes.

The bill requires the results must be reported at the aggregate level, distributed to the respective ELC and districts and be available on the office's website 30 days after administering the assessment. This may result in greater transparency in identifying successful VPK programs.

Just Read, Florida! Office

The bill requires Just Read! Florida to train VPK through grade 3 teachers and reading coaches on:

- Effective research-based reading and intervention strategies;
- Integrating content-rich texts from other core subject areas into the reading instruction;
- Implementing evidence-based reading instruction and intervention programs developed by the office and the Florida Center for Reading Research which must provide an explicit, systematic and sequential teaching approach; and
- Implementing technology tools to improve student reading performance.

Accordingly, the bill appears to be placing a greater emphasis on early reading instruction and intervention.

Additionally, the bill requires the Just Read! Florida to:

- Collaborate with the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) to develop the reading strategy training;
- Consistently deliver the training in an appropriate format;
- Develop reading strategies for secondary teachers for all content areas in the grade 4-12 curriculum;
- Identify evidence-based reading instructional and intervention programs that incorporate explicit, systematic and sequential approaches to teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and text comprehension and incorporate decodable or phonetic text instructional strategies with the FCRR; and
- Work with the FCRR to develop and provide access to sequenced curriculum programming, instructional practices and resources that help elementary schools use state-adopted content to increase students' knowledge and reading skills.

Accordingly, statewide reading strategy training may increase the likelihood that all teachers throughout the state are utilizing effective, evidence-based practices for reading instruction and intervention.

The bill also changes the date the DOE must report its findings annually to the Legislature from February 1 to December 1, and clarifies that the report must include findings from the previous school year.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2017.

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:

According to the Florida Department of Education, Early learning coalitions and private VPK program providers may incur additional costs associated with training program delivery, distribution of pre- and post- assessment reports to parents, and issuing or tracking unique student identifiers.³¹ Associated costs are indeterminable at this time.³²

C. Government Sector Impact:

SB 468 provides an appropriation of \$10 million dollars from the General Revenue Fund to the DOE for the development and training of VPK through grade 3 teachers, reading coaches and school principals on research-based reading instructional strategies and interventions for the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 1001.215, 1002.53, 1002.67, 1002.69, 1002.71, and 1011.62.

IX. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

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

None.

B. Amendments:

None.

This Senate Bill Analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's introducer or the Florida Senate.

³¹ Florida Department of Education, *2017 Agency Legislative Bill Analysis for SB 468* (March 17, 2017), at 7.

³² *Id.*