

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

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BILL #: CS/CS/HB 1255	COMPANION BILL: CS/CS/SB 1618 (Calatayud)
TITLE: Education	LINKED BILLS: None
SPONSOR(S): Trabulsy, Tramont	RELATED BILLS: CS/SB 1382 (Calatayud)
FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION: 100 Y's 0 N's	GOVERNOR'S ACTION: Approved

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:

The bill revises the definition of “economically disadvantaged” by replacing references to “federal poverty level” with “state median income” for families seeking School Readiness (SR) services. Various references to the SR waitlists are updated to require the tracking of children on waitlists by family income and priority. Additionally, the bill revises the required components of the school district reading instruction plan; requires private schools participating in scholarship programs to comply with new screening requirements; requires the financial literacy course to include postsecondary expenses; saves the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military from repeal; provides additional supports to military students and families related to the transfer of records and Bright Futures Scholarship Program eligibility; updates provisions related to the purchase of emergency opioid antagonists and the definition of opioid antagonist while providing liability protection for public school employees administering the opioid antagonists; removes restrictions on withdrawal and reenrollment in the Voluntary Prekindergarten program; requires school districts to provide additional notifications surrounding New Worlds programs; requires parental opt-in for corporal punishment; requires additional interventions for student discipline and authorizes extensions of expulsion periods based on the recommendations of a threat management team; updates provisions governing charter school facilities and private school facilities and how local governing agencies manage the approval of such facilities; authorizes the administration of the CLT10 to students in grade 10 and includes CLT scores in University preeminence standards; and renames the Hillsborough Community College to Hillsborough College.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:

The bill has a negative fiscal impact on state expenditures and an indeterminate fiscal impact on the private sector.

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ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill modifies the definition of “economically disadvantaged” used for determining eligibility in the [School Readiness \(SR\) program](#) and makes changes to implement the new definition and modifies tracking of children on waiting lists for SR services. Provisions governing the SR program are updated by:

- Revising the definition of “economically disadvantaged” by replacing “income that does not exceed 150 percent of the federal poverty level” with “income that does not exceed 55 percent of the state median income” for families seeking SR services.
- Modifying various references to the SR waitlists that require the tracking of children on waitlists by family income and priority.
- Modifying the data collected by the Department of Education (DOE) to reflect the change in definition related to income.
- Modifying the priorities for children from economically disadvantaged families by separating the first subsequent priority group into two groups based on income.
- Requiring estimates adopted by the Early Learning Programs Estimating Conference to consider county specific trends and changes. (Section [22](#), [23](#), [24](#), [25](#), and [26](#)).

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DATE: 6/2/2025

Two additional components are added to a [school district reading instruction plan](#) and the plans must be approved by the DOE. The first additional component specifies that intensive reading interventions must be delivered by instructional personnel who possess a micro-credential through the New Worlds Reading Initiative or are certified or endorsed in reading. Intensive reading interventions must also incorporate evidence-based strategies identified by the Just Read, Florida! Office. Instructional personnel possessing only the micro-credential must be supervised¹ by an individual certified or endorsed in reading. The second is to provide a description of how the district prioritizes the assignment of highly effective teachers to students in kindergarten through grade 2. (Section [29](#)).

Additionally, the parents of students identified as having a substantial deficiency in mathematics must be notified of their eligibility for the New Worlds Scholarship Accounts and the school district services provided by the New Worlds Tutoring Program. (Section [38](#)).

The administrator of the [New Worlds Tutoring Program](#) must consult with the Office of Mathematics and Sciences in the development of best practice guidelines for mathematics tutoring in alignment with state standards. Reporting deadlines for New Worlds Tutoring Program data are updated from July 1 to August 31, annually. (Section [40](#)).

Students providing tutoring under the RAISE High School Tutor Program, either paid or unpaid, may count the time spent tutoring toward meeting community service requirements for high school graduation and for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. (Section [39](#)).

The [background screening requirements](#) for private schools participating in an educational scholarship program are aligned with the screening requirements for public school employees. Employees and contracted personnel with direct contact with students as well as owners and operators must now be screened using the same standards as individuals seeking educator certification, a level 2 background check, through the Care Provider Background Screening Clearinghouse operated by the Agency for Health Care Administration. Disqualification pursuant to such a background screening will be based on the laws and rules in effect at the time of the application for employment, provided that the person is continually employed by the same school. (Sections [20](#) and [47](#)).

The term “[critical teacher shortage areas](#)” is amended to “high-demand teacher needs areas” throughout the education code. (Sections [10](#), [31](#), [45](#), and [46](#)).

All provisions related to the [Florida School for Competitive Academics](#) are repealed as the school never officially opened and the provisions at issue are unnecessary. (Sections [1](#), [4](#), [6](#), [7](#), [11](#), [16](#), [17](#), [18](#), [42](#), and [43](#)).

Effective upon the bill becoming law, the DOE is authorized to join or establish a national consortium to assist in the development and implementation of advanced courses aligned to the requirements for general education courses as part of [articulated accelerated mechanisms](#) for secondary students. (Section [36](#)).

Under the [Christa McAuliffe Ambassador for Education Program](#), a charter school consortia of at least 30-member schools and with an approved professional learning system may nominate teachers for Teacher of the Year and to serve as the Ambassador for Education. (Section [48](#)).

The [Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children](#) (Compact) is saved from repeal and the automatic repeal date is moved July 1, 2025, to July 1, 2028. To provide additional support to military families relocating to Florida, the DOE must develop and implement a training module relating to facilitating and expediting the transfer of a K-12 student’s education records from an out-of-state school. The training must be provided to all school districts and charter schools and must be made available to all employees working directly with military families. Additionally, the eligibility criteria for the [Bright Futures Scholarship Program](#) are expanded to include a student who graduated from a non-Florida school if the parent retired from military service within 12 months prior to the student’s graduation. (Section [9](#), [27](#), and [50](#)).

¹ The bill defines supervised to mean the ability to communicate by way of telecommunication with or physical presence of the certified or endorsed personnel for consultation and direction of the actions of the personnel with the micro-credential.

The Commissioner of Education (Commissioner) is no longer required to determine that [school advisory councils](#) include minority persons and persons of lower socioeconomic status to the maximum extent possible. (Section [12](#)).

The bill modifies provisions related to [opioid antagonists](#) and [corporal punishment](#) in schools. School district authority to purchase emergency opioid antagonists is expanded by allowing the purchase of any emergency opioid antagonist approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), rather than only naloxone. Similarly, for postsecondary institutions an emergency opioid antagonist is defined as any FDA-approved drug that blocks the effects of opioids and is used for opioid overdose treatment. Additionally, existing liability protections for staff members that administer opioid antagonists are expanded to cover all public school employees. Regarding corporal punishment, if a district school board has a policy authorizing corporal punishment, the policy must include a requirement for parental consent. The policy may specify that parent consent is provided for the entire school year or before each administration of corporal punishment. Charter schools must comply with the updated requirements for corporal punishment. (Section [14](#), [15](#), and [32](#)).

The 70 percent completion cap and the substantially completed limitation on withdrawal from and reenrollment in a [Voluntary Prekindergarten Program](#) (VPK) for good cause and extreme hardship, respectively, are removed. These changes allow a student to withdraw and reenroll regardless of how much of the program he or she completed while maintaining that the total funding for the student may not exceed one full-time equivalent student. (Section [21](#)).

The required curriculum for the mandatory [financial literacy](#) course is expanded to include instruction on the costs of postsecondary education, including cost of attendance, completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), scholarships and grants, and student loans. (Section [30](#)).

The new and revised [state academic standards](#) documents submitted to the SBE must only consist of academic standards and benchmarks. The Commissioner must submit all revised standards documents to the SBE for approval no later than July 1, 2026. By removing the benchmark clarifications statements, educators will have more flexibility in how they incorporate the standards into their instruction. (Section [28](#)).

Authorizes [state agencies to fill positions](#) with apprentices that have successfully completed their apprenticeship with that agency and revises the deadline for the annual [apprenticeship](#) report published by the DOE from September 1 to November 30. (Section [2](#) and [5](#)).

Amends the requirements for membership in the governing body for the [Independent Special District for Children's Services](#) for Miami-Dade County by removing one specified member and adding a member-at-large. Extends the term of appointment for members of that governing board from 2 to 3 years. (Section [3](#)).

A local government may not enforce any local building requirements or site-development restrictions on charter schools that are more stringent than those found in the State Requirements for Education Facilities of the Florida Building Code or are not uniformly imposed or enforced upon public schools. A local governing authority may not apply or enforce a condition against a charter school unless the condition is uniformly applied to other public schools within the jurisdiction of the local governing authority and the charter school is located on property that is the subject of a previously approved development order or development permit, and if such development order or development permit contains conditions applicable to the construction or operation of a public or private school, including, but not limited to:

- Limits on the number of students;
- Limits on the number of teachers;
- Limits on the number of classrooms;
- Limits on the hours of operation;
- Minimum outdoor recreation area; or
- Requirements to conform to a prior plan of development.

A local government may not require a charter school to obtain a special exemption or conditional use approval to be an allowable use under the local government's [land development code](#). (Section [15](#))

School principals, as part of their [duties relating to student discipline and school safety](#), must refer disobedient, disrespectful, violent, abusive, uncontrollable, or disruptive students to the school's child study team to schedule a meeting with the student's parent to identify potential remedies. If an initial meeting with the student's parent does not resolve the behavioral issues, the child study team shall implement the following:

- Frequent attempts by the school, including the student's teacher and a school administrator, at communicating with the student's family. The attempts may be made in writing or by telephone, but must be documented.
- A student evaluation for alternative education programs.
- Behavior contracts.

The child study team may, but is not required to, implement other interventions, including referral to other agencies for family services or a recommendation for filing a petition for a child in need of services. (Section [34](#)).

Under a school board adopted [zero-tolerance policy](#) and before the expiration of an expulsion period, the district school superintendent must determine, based upon the determination of the threat management team (TMT), whether the expulsion period should be extended and, if the expulsion period is extended, what educational services will be provided. A recommendation to extend the expulsion period must be provided to the student and his or her parents. (Section [35](#)).

School districts may offer the Classical Learning Test 10 (CLT10) exam as an alternative to the PSAT/SMSQT or the PreACT to all enrolled students in grade 10, under the [Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement](#). (Section [37](#)).

A school district may use the revenue generated by their [discretionary millage levy](#) to pay for the cost of premiums associated with liability insurance. (Section [44](#)).

Revises the criteria under which nonpublic religious postsecondary educational institutions may operate without licensure from the [Commission for Independent Education](#) (Commission) by replacing the term "religious college" with "nonpublic religious postsecondary educational institution" and expands the number of affirmations required in the annual sworn affidavit from five to seven, to include:

- An explanation of the religious modifier, religious name, or religious symbol used in the institution's name.
- The titles and majors of every degree program offered by the institution as they appear on degrees and transcripts issued by the institution.

The Commission may request documentation from the institution demonstrating compliance with the affidavit requirements and the consumer protection standards. The institution is required to submit the requested documentation within 30 days after the request. The Commission must review affidavits in a public meeting and approve the affidavit unless the affidavit is facially invalid, is contradicted by the institution's public advertisements or by other evidence, or the institution fails to provide requested documentation.

Additionally, the Commission must revoke its approval, in a public meeting, if an institution previously received a written exemption and the institution fails to remain in compliance. If an affidavit is denied by the Commission, the Commission is authorized to act unless the institution applies for licensure, ceases operations in the state, or submits documentation showing it meets the requirements of the exemption.

Administrative oversight responsibility for eligible Effective Access to Student Education (EASE) Grant institutions is moved from the Commission to the DOE. Clarifies that institutions eligible for the EASE grant remain eligible for the Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) fund. (Sections [33](#) and [41](#))

Authorizes a private school located in a county with four incorporated municipalities² to [construct new facilities](#) on property that is:

² Florida League of Cities, *Florida Cities by County with form of Government & Population*, available at <https://www.floridaleagueofcities.com/docs/default-source/research-institute->

- Purchased or leased from a library, community service organization, museum, performing arts venue, theater, cinema, or church that is or was actively used as such within five years of any executed agreement with the private school;
- Owned by a Florida College System (FCS) institution or state university; or
- Recently used to house a school or licensed childcare facility.

The new facilities may be constructed under the property’s preexisting zoning and land use designations, without the need for rezoning, a special exception, a land use change, or compliance with mitigation requirements or conditions. The new facility must be used solely as a private school and comply with all applicable state and local health, safety, and welfare laws, codes, and rules, including those related to fire safety and building safety. (Section [19](#)).

Expands the standardized test options used to meet the academic and research excellence standards for the [preeminent state research universities program](#) by adding the Classical Learning Test (CLT) as an alternative to the SAT and ACT, requiring an average CLT score of 83 or higher on a 120-point scale for incoming freshmen. (Section [13](#))

Hillsborough Community College is renamed to Hillsborough College. (Section [8](#)).

Extends the time period between [master plan](#) reviews by university boards of trustees from 5 to 10 years. (Section [49](#)).

The bill was approved by the Governor on May 30, 2025, ch. 2025-110, L.O.F., and will become effective on July 1, 2025. (Section [51](#)).

FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:

STATE GOVERNMENT:

The annual fee that member states pay as dues to the Interstate Commission under the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children is at the rate of \$1.15 per dependent child of a military family eligible for transfer under the Compact. The House’s proposed Fiscal Year 2025-2026 General Appropriations Act includes \$45,187 in recurring funds from the General Revenue Fund to the DOE to pay for the membership dues.

The transition from 150 percent of the federal poverty level to 55 percent of the state median income will increase the number of eligible SR children who will qualify for SR services by an estimated 130,082 for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. The number of actual SR children served is based on the annual appropriation provided in the General Appropriations Act. Applying the current participation rate to the estimated number of new SR children based upon the change in the eligibility requirement, the estimated cost is \$127,334,270. Absent additional funds being appropriated, the number of SR children served is unlikely to increase, potentially resulting in a corresponding increase to an ELC’s SR waitlist.

The fiscal impact for expanding the Bright Futures Scholarship Program eligibility requirements for students who earn a high school diploma from a non-Florida school while living with a parent or guardian who, within 12 months before the student’s graduation, retired from military or public service assignment away from Florida, has an indeterminate fiscal impact.

PRIVATE SECTOR:

The bill requires that private schools participating in educational scholarship programs conduct background screening to the same standards and through the same mechanism as individuals seeking educator certification. As it is uncertain how these new requirements may impact the background screening polices already in place at participating private schools or how many employees, contractors, owners, or operators would need an additional

[reports/2020alphabycountywithgovtpopulation.pdf?sfvrsn=4009d6d5_0](#) (last visited May 5, 2025). There are three counties that have four municipalities: Bradford County, Clay County, and Sarasota County.

background screening to comply with the new standards, the bill will have an indeterminate, negative fiscal impact on private sector expenditures.

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

School Readiness Program

Florida's SR program offers low-income families financial assistance to facilitate access to high-quality childcare and early education for their children while parents work or participate in job training. The Division of Early Learning (DEL), under the DOE, administers the program at the state level while early learning coalitions (ELCs) administer the SR program at the county and regional levels. Funding comes from four sources including the Child Care and Development Block Grant, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Block Grant, the Social Services Block Grant, and the State of Florida.

The program's two main goals are to help families become financially self-sufficient and help each child from a qualifying family develop school readiness skills. The program gives children access to a quality early learning environment and supports parents with information about child development and family engagement. The quality environment of each SR provider is measured by the administration of a widely recognized tool that assesses the interactions between adults and children in the classroom.

In Fiscal Year 2023-2024, there were 212,062 children participating in the SR program at 6,889 early learning providers. Total expenditures were \$990 million, which included \$36 million in administrative expenses, \$59 million in non-direct services expenditures, and \$80 million in quality expenditures.³

School Readiness Eligibility and Priorities

Current law defines "economically disadvantaged" as having a family income that does not exceed 150 percent of the federal poverty level and includes being a child of a working migratory family as defined by 34 C.F.R. s. 200.81(d) or (f) or an agricultural worker who is employed by more than one agricultural employer during the course of a year, and whose income varies according to weather conditions and market stability.⁴ The definition is used to determine eligibility for and priority status in the SR program.

According to the 2023 Poverty Guidelines Computations from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, for a family of three the federal poverty level was \$24,860 per year. Meaning a family of three would need to earn \$37,290 or less per year to not exceed the 150 percent threshold for "economically disadvantaged."⁵ For comparison, the 2023 State Median Income (SMI) for Florida was \$71,771, meaning a family would need to earn \$39,474.05 or less to not exceed 55 percent of the state median income.⁶

Each ELC is required to give priority to receive services under the SR program as follows:

- Children under the age of 13 from a family that includes a parent who is receiving temporary cash assistance and is subject to the federal work requirements or a parent who has an Intensive Service Account or an Individual Training Account.
- An at-risk child younger than nine years of age.
- Subsequent priority is given based on the ELC's local priorities to children who meet the following criteria:

³ Florida Department of Education, *Division of Early Learning 2023-2024 Annual Report (2024)*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/file/20628/2324-DEL-AnnualReport.pdf>.

⁴ Section [1002.81\(6\), F.S.](#)

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2023 Poverty Guidelines Computations, <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines/prior-hhs-poverty-guidelines-federal-register-references/2023-poverty-guidelines-computations> (last visited May 6, 2025).

⁶ Florida Department of Health, 2023 Median Household Income, <https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsDashboards/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=NonVitalIndGrp.Dataviewer&cid=0293> (last visited May 6, 2025).

- A child from birth to the beginning of the school year for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten in a public school who is from a working family that is economically disadvantaged.
- A child of a parent who transitions from the work program into employment from birth to the beginning of the school year for which the child is eligible for admission to kindergarten.
- An at-risk child who is at least nine years of age but younger than 13 years of age, however an at-risk child whose sibling is enrolled in the SR program within a specific eligibility priority category shall be given priority over other children who are eligible.
- A child who is younger than 13 years of age from a working family that is economically disadvantaged.
- A child of a parent who transitions from the work program into employment who is younger than 13 years of age.
- A child who has special needs and has been determined eligible as a student with a disability who has a current individual education plan (IEP) with a Florida school district and is not younger than three years of age.
- A child who otherwise meets one of the first two eligibility criteria but who is also enrolled concurrently in the federal Head Start Program and the VPK.⁷

School Readiness Waitlists

During Fiscal Year 2023-2024 there were 117,981 SR enrollments of children aged birth to four years of age compared to an estimated population of 357,199 children aged birth to four years of age from families below 150 percent of the federal poverty level, meaning statewide only 33 percent of children below this threshold were served by the SR program. The percentages varied by ELC from a low of 19 percent of children served by the Santa Rosa ELC to a high of 48 percent served by the ELC of the Big Bend.⁸

Since not all eligible children are served by the SR program, there are waitlists to organize those waiting for services. Florida law requires that the “single point of entry” system where families apply for services for both SR and the VPK programs utilize a uniform waitlist to track eligible children waiting for enrollment into the SR program.⁹ The DOE is required to adopt specific program support services that include a single point of entry and a uniform waitlist for the SR program.¹⁰

Each ELC is required to establish a uniform waitlist to track eligible children waiting for enrollment in the SR program.¹¹ The State Board of Education (SBE) has adopted a rule to provide guidelines to the ELCs on the development of waitlists for families seeking services. The adopted rules provide guidance for the following:

- Definitions of terms.
- Prequalifying questions and applications for services.
- Eligibility screening.
- Waitlist management.
- Reapplication for services after removal from waitlist.¹²

As part of each ELC’s SR program plan, the ELC is required to include in its plan procedures for implementing the requirement for a uniform waitlist for SR services.¹³ Additionally ELCs are required to collect and report to the DOE with data about SR program delivery to include data about:

- Progress in reducing the number of children on waitlists.
- The percentage of children served as compared to the number of administrative staff and overhead.
- The percentage of children served compared to the number of children under the age of five from families below 150 percent of the federal poverty level.

⁷ Section [1002.87\(1\), F.S.](#)

⁸ Florida Department of Education, *Division of Early Learning 2023-2024 Annual Report (2024)*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/file/20628/2324-DEL-AnnualReport.pdf>.

⁹ Section [1002.81\(13\), F.S.](#)

¹⁰ Section [1002.82\(2\)\(f\), F.S.](#)

¹¹ Section [1002.84\(2\), F.S.](#)

¹² Rule 6A-4.300, F.A.C.

¹³ Section [1002.85\(2\), F.S.](#)

- Provider payment processes and fraud intervention.
- Child attendance and stability.
- Use of Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) services.
- Child outcomes related to school readiness.¹⁴

School Readiness Funding

Each ELC is required to establish a parent sliding fee scale that provides for a parent copayment that is not a barrier to families receiving SR program services. Coalitions may waive copayments for at-risk children or temporarily waive the copayment for children whose family income is at or below the federal poverty level. Coalitions may also waive copayments for a child whose family experiences a natural disaster or an event that limits the parent’s ability to pay including:

- Incarceration;
- Placement in residential treatment;
- Becoming homeless;
- An emergency situation such as a household fire or burglary; or
- While the parent is participating in parenting classes or participating in an Early Head Start program or Head Start program.

A parent may not transfer SR program services to another SR program provider until the parent has submitted documentation from the current provider to the ELC stating that the parent has satisfactorily fulfilled the copayment obligation.¹⁵

Each ELC is required to distribute the SR program funds as allocated in the General Appropriations Act (GAA) to the eligible providers. All instructions to early learning coalitions for distributing the SR program funds to eligible providers come from the DOE in accordance with the policies of the Legislature.¹⁶

Costs for the SR program must be kept to the minimum necessary for the efficient and effective administration of the SR program with the highest priority of expenditure being direct services for eligible children. No more than five percent of the funds allocated in the GAA may be used for administrative costs and no more than 22 percent of the funds allocated may be used in any fiscal year for any combination of administrative costs, quality activities, and nondirect services.¹⁷

Critical Teacher Shortage Areas

Critical teacher shortage areas are high-need content areas and high-priority location areas identified by the SBE. The SBE must adopt rules to annually identify critical teacher shortage areas and must consider current and emerging educational requirements and workforce demands in determining critical teacher shortage areas. School grade levels may also be designated critical teacher shortage areas. Individual district school boards may identify and submit other critical teacher shortage areas. Such submissions must be aligned to current and emerging educational requirements and workforce demands in order to be approved by the SBE. High-priority location areas must be in high-density, low-economic urban schools; low-density, low-economic rural schools; and schools that earned a grade of “F” or three consecutive grades of “D”. The SBE must develop strategies to address critical teacher shortage areas.¹⁸

Florida School for Competitive Academics

Established in statute in 2023, the Florida School for Competitive Academics (FSCA) in Alachua County was envisioned as a state-supported public school for grades 6 through 12 students. The FSCA was intended to provide rigorous academic curriculum, and to prepare students for regional, state, and national academic competitions in all areas of study, such as, STEM. The mission of the FSCA was to provide students who meet selective admissions requirements an environment that will foster high academic engagement and advanced understanding of subject

¹⁴ Section [1002.85\(5\), F.S.](#)

¹⁵ Section [1002.84\(9\), F.S.](#)

¹⁶ Section [1002.84\(17\), F.S.](#)

¹⁷ Section [1002.89\(4\), F.S.](#)

¹⁸ Section [1012.07, F.S.](#)

areas, develop productive work habits, build resiliency, connect students with industry leaders, and promote civic leadership.¹⁹ However, the FSCA never officially opened.

Background Screening of Individuals at Schools

Individuals who work in or provide services to school districts, charter schools, alternative schools, and private schools participating in state school choice scholarship programs must undergo a fingerprint-based background screening before being permitted access to school grounds.²⁰ The individuals who must undergo background screening fall under three personnel classifications: instructional and noninstructional personnel;²¹ noninstructional school district employees and contracted personnel;²² and noninstructional contractors.²³ Candidates for educator certification must also undergo background screening.²⁴

The background screening requirements for each personnel classification vary depending upon the individual's duties, whether or not the individual is a school district employee, and the degree of contact the individual has with students.²⁵ Because they are more likely to have direct contact with students, candidates for educator certification, instructional and noninstructional personnel, and noninstructional school district employees and contracted personnel must be screened against level 2²⁶ screening standards.²⁷ Athletic coaches employed by public schools must be certified by the DOE and are subject to the same background screening standards as other individuals seeking certification.²⁸ In contrast, noninstructional contractors, individuals who are not school district employees and have no direct contact with students, are screened against a statutory list of 12 disqualifying offenses.²⁹ These background screenings are conducted through the Clearinghouse.³⁰

Required Instruction Topics

Florida law requires that public school students in grades K-12 receive instruction on specific subjects including, among other items, historical time periods, comprehensive health education, and government.³¹ Instructional personnel are required to teach these subjects efficiently and faithfully, using historically accurate books and materials, following prescribed courses and approved methods of instruction.³² Unless otherwise specified, the law generally does not prescribe grade level, instructional hours, or instructional materials requirements for these topics. School districts are required to report, annually each summer, to the DOE on how instruction was provided during the previous school year for certain required subjects.³³

Current law requires students to take a one-half credit course in personal financial literacy that must include instruction in all of the following:

- Types of bank accounts offered, opening and managing a bank account, and assessing the quality of a depository institution's services.

¹⁹ Section [1002.351, F.S.](#)

²⁰ Sections [1002.421](#), [1012.32\(2\)](#), [1012.465\(2\)](#), and [1012.467\(2\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

²¹ Instructional and noninstructional personnel are individuals who are hired or contracted to fill positions that require direct contact with students in any public school. Section [1012.32\(2\), F.S.](#)

²² Noninstructional school district employees and contracted personnel are individuals who are permitted access to school grounds when students are present; who have direct contact with students; or who have access to, or control of, school funds. Section [1012.465\(1\), F.S.](#)

²³ Noninstructional contractors are vendors or contractors who are not school district employees, are permitted access to school grounds when students are present, and have little or no direct contact with students. Section [1012.467\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

²⁴ Sections [1012.315](#), [1012.32\(2\)\(a\)](#), and [1012.56\(10\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

²⁵ See ss. [1012.32\(2\)](#), [1012.465\(2\)](#), and [1012.467\(2\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

²⁶ Level 2 background screening includes, but is not limited to, fingerprinting for statewide criminal history records checks through the FDLE and national criminal history checks through the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and may include local criminal records checks through local law enforcement agencies. Section [435.04, F.S.](#)

²⁷ Sections [1012.315](#), [1012.32](#), and [1012.465, F.S.](#)

²⁸ Section [1012.55\(2\), F.S.](#) See also [s. 1012.56, F.S.](#); r. 6A-4.004(4), F.A.C.

²⁹ See [s. 1012.467\(2\)\(b\), F.S.](#) The law references eight specific offenses plus crimes involving lewd and lascivious behavior in ch. 800, F.S., which include four such offenses. *Id.*

³⁰ Section [1012.315, F.S.](#)

³¹ Section [1003.42, F.S.](#)

³² Section [1003.42\(2\), F.S.](#)

³³ *Id.*

- Balancing a checkbook.
- Basic principles of money management, such as spending, credit, credit scores, and managing debt, including retail and credit card debt.
- Completing a loan application.
- Receiving an inheritance and related implications.
- Basic principles of personal insurance policies.
- Computing federal income taxes.
- Local tax assessments.
- Computing interest rates by various mechanisms.
- Simple contracts.
- Contesting an incorrect billing statement.
- Types of savings and investments.
- State and federal laws concerning finance.³⁴

Comprehensive System of Reading Intervention

Each school district is required to implement a system of comprehensive reading instruction for students enrolled in prekindergarten through grade 12 and certain students who exhibit a substantial deficiency in early literacy.³⁵ Students with a substantial deficiency are defined as:³⁶

- A VPK student in early literacy skills who scores below the tenth (10th) percentile or is unable to complete the practice items at the middle or end of the year test administration of the coordinated screening and progress monitoring system.
- A kindergarten through grade 3 student in reading if:
 - The student is identified as in need of Tier 3 interventions.³⁷
 - For kindergarten, the student scores below the tenth (10th) percentile or is unable to complete the practice items on the designated grade-level assessment at the beginning, middle, or end of the year test administration of the coordinated screening and progress monitoring system.
 - For grades 1 and 2, the student scores below the tenth (10th) percentile or is unable to complete the practice items on the designated grade-level assessment for the specified test administration of the coordinated screening and progress monitoring system.
 - For grade 3, the student scores below the twentieth (20th) percentile at the beginning or middle of the year test administration of the coordinated screening and progress monitoring system.
 - A student in grade 3 scores a Level 1 on the end-of-year statewide, standardized English Language Arts (ELA) assessment.

The comprehensive reading instruction plan may include all district schools, including charter schools, unless a charter school elects to submit a plan independently from the school district.³⁸ The plan may include the following components:³⁹

- Additional time per day of evidence-based intensive reading instruction for kindergarten through grade 12 students, which may be delivered during or outside of the regular school day.
- Highly qualified reading coaches, who must be endorsed in reading, to specifically support classroom teachers in making instructional decisions based on progress monitoring data and improve classroom teacher delivery of effective reading instruction, reading intervention, and reading in the content areas based on student need.
- Professional learning to help instructional personnel and certified prekindergarten teachers funded in the Florida Education Finance Program earn a certification, a credential, an endorsement, or an advanced degree in scientifically researched and evidence-based reading instruction.

³⁴ Section [1003.4282\(3\)\(5\), F.S.](#)

³⁵ Section [1003.4201, F.S.](#)

³⁶ Rule 6A-6.053, F.A.C.

³⁷ Intensive, Individualized Instruction/Interventions (Tier 3): provides explicit, systematic, individualized instruction based on student need, one-on-one or very small group instruction with more guided practice, immediate corrective feedback, and frequent progress monitoring; and occurs in addition to core instruction and Tier 2 interventions.

³⁸ Section [1003.4201\(1\), F.S.](#)

³⁹ Section [1003.4201\(2\), F.S.](#)

- Summer reading camps, using only classroom teachers or other district personnel who possess a micro-credential⁴⁰ in reading or are certified or endorsed in reading consistent for all students in kindergarten through grade 5 exhibiting a reading deficiency as determined by district and state assessments.
- Incentives for instructional personnel and certified prekindergarten teachers funded in the Florida Education Finance Program who possess a reading certification or endorsement or micro-credential and provide educational support to improve student literacy.
- Tutoring in reading.

Reading Achievement Initiative for Scholastic Excellence Act

In 2021, the Florida Legislature established the Reading Achievement Initiative for Scholastic Excellence (RAISE) program within the DOE.⁴¹ The RAISE program provides instructional supports to school districts, school administrators, and instructional personnel in implementing evidence-based reading instruction and interventions in order to improve student reading achievement.⁴²

Under the RAISE program, the DOE must establish 20 literacy support regions and regional support teams in Florida to assist schools in improving low reading scores.⁴³ Eligible schools include:⁴⁴

- Schools serving students in kindergarten through grade 5 where 50 percent of the students score below a Level 3 on the statewide, standardized ELA assessment for any grade level.
- Schools where 50 percent or more of students in kindergarten through grade 3 are not on track to pass the grade 3 ELA assessment based on data from the coordinated screening and progress monitoring system.

As part of the RAISE program, the DOE must establish a tutoring program and develop training to prepare eligible high school students to tutor students in kindergarten through grade 3.⁴⁵ If high school students serve as a tutor in the RAISE program, they:⁴⁶

- May earn up to three elective credits for high school graduation based on the verified number of hours the student spends tutoring under the program.
- May use unpaid hours devoted to tutoring toward meeting community service requirements for high school graduation and community service requirements for participation in the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.

New Worlds Tutoring Program

The New Worlds Tutoring Program (tutoring program) was established in 2024 to support school districts and schools in improving student achievement in reading and mathematics. The tutoring program must:⁴⁷

- Provide best practice science of reading guidelines for districts in consultation with the Just Read, Florida! Office.
- Provide best practice guidelines for mathematics tutoring in alignment with Florida's Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.) Standards for mathematics.
- Establish minimum standards that each school district must meet to participate in the program. The minimum standards must address:
 - Appropriate group sizes for tutoring sessions.
 - The frequency and duration of tutoring sessions.
 - Minimum staffing qualifications for tutors.
 - The use of ongoing, informal and formal assessments to target instructional interventions.

⁴⁰ To earn an early literacy micro-credential a teacher must demonstrate competency in diagnosing literacy difficulties and determining the appropriate range of literacy interventions based upon the age and literacy deficiency of the student and how to use evidence-based instructional and intervention practices grounded in the science of reading, including strategies identified by the Just Read, Florida! Office.

⁴¹ Section [1008.365, F.S.](#)

⁴² Section [1008.365\(2\), F.S.](#)

⁴³ Section [1008.365\(3\), F.S.](#)

⁴⁴ Section [1008.365\(4\), F.S.](#)

⁴⁵ Section [1008.365\(8\), F.S.](#)

⁴⁶ Section [1008.365\(8\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

⁴⁷ Section [1008.366, F.S.](#)

- Prioritization strategies for tutoring students.
- Provide access during the school day to additional literacy or mathematics support through evidence-based automated literacy tutoring software that provides each student with real-time interventions that are based in science of reading principles or mathematics instructional best practices and individually tailored to the needs and ability of each student. The bill provides that access must be provided to students in kindergarten through grade 5 enrolled in a public school who have a substantial deficiency in reading or mathematics.
- Award grants to school districts that may be used for stipends for in-person tutoring during the school day, before and after school, or during a summer program. At a minimum, in-person tutoring may be provided to kindergarten through grade 5 students enrolled in a public school who have a substantial deficiency in reading or mathematics.
- Provide technical assistance and professional learning to school districts, including:
 - Advising district staff on tutoring program design and intervention selection upon request.
 - Assisting districts in reviewing tutoring programs, professional learning programs, curriculum, and resources to ensure that they adhere to the science of reading or best practices in mathematics.
 - Providing professional learning to district staff to build their knowledge and skills around the science of reading or best practices in mathematics.

Articulated Accelerated Mechanisms

High school students in Florida have a variety of avenues by which they can earn college credit. These opportunities, known as articulated acceleration mechanisms, shorten the time necessary for a student to complete the requirements for a high school diploma and a postsecondary degree. These mechanisms also allow Florida schools to increase the depth of study in a particular subject and expand available curricular options.⁴⁸

Programs that provide high school students with the opportunity to earn college credit include, but are not limited to, dual enrollment and early admission, credit by examination, advanced placement, the International Baccalaureate (IB) Program, and the Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) Program. Credit earned through the Florida Virtual School also provides additional opportunities for early graduation and acceleration.⁴⁹

The DOE annually identifies and publishes the minimum scores, maximum credit, and course or courses for which credit is to be awarded for each College Level Examination Program (CLEP) subject examination, College Board Advanced Placement Program examination, AICE examination, IB examination, Excelsior College subject examination, Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) subject standardized test, and Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT). In addition, the DOE also identifies courses in the general education core curriculum of each state university and FCS institution for which credit is to be granted.⁵⁰ The DOE is also authorized to partner with an independent third-party testing or assessment organization to develop assessments that measure competencies consistent with general education core courses.⁵¹

Christa McAuliffe Ambassador for Education Program

The Christa McAuliffe Ambassador for Education Program was created in 1986⁵² to recognize that Florida continues to face teacher shortages, and that fewer young people consider teaching as a career. The Christa McAuliffe Ambassador for Education Program was established to provide salary, travel, and other related expenses annually for an outstanding Florida teacher (Teacher of the Year) to promote the positive aspects of teaching as a career. The goals of the program are to:⁵³

- Enhance the stature of teachers and the teaching profession.
- Promote the importance of quality education and teaching for our future.
- Inspire and attract talented people to become teachers.

⁴⁸ Section [1007.27\(1\), F.S.](#)

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ Section [1007.27\(2\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

⁵¹ Section [1007.27\(2\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

⁵² Chapter 1986-156, L.O.F.

⁵³ Section [1012.77\(2\), F.S.](#)

- Provide information regarding Florida’s scholarship and loan programs related to teaching.
- Promote the teaching profession within community and business groups.
- Provide information to retired military personnel and other individuals who might consider teaching as a second career.
- Work with and represent the DOE, as needed.
- Work with and encourage the efforts of school and district teachers of the year.
- Support the activities of the Florida Future Educator of America Program.
- Represent Florida teachers at business, trade, education, and other conferences and meetings.
- Promote the teaching profession in other ways related to the teaching responsibilities, background experiences, and aspirations of the Ambassador for Education.

The Teacher of the Year is required to serve as the Ambassador for Education for a year. Applications and selection criteria are distributed annually by the DOE to all school districts. The Commissioner is required to establish a selection committee which assures representation from teacher organizations, administrators, and parents to select the Teacher of the Year and Ambassador for Education from among the school district teachers of the year.⁵⁴

Florida’s Voluntary Prekindergarten Program

The VPK program prepares children for success in school and in life. Implemented in 2005, VPK is a free education program available to all four-year-old children residing in the state.⁵⁵ Each child who resides in Florida who attains the age of four years on or before September 1 of the school year is eligible for the VPK program during either that school year or the following school year. Parents of four-year-old children with birthdays from February 2 through September 1 may wait to enroll their child the following year when they are five.⁵⁶ The child remains eligible until the child is admitted to kindergarten, or unless the child has attained the age of 6 years by February 1 of any school year.⁵⁷ In 2023-2024, there were 155,275 children enrolled with 6,247 providers in Florida’s VPK program.⁵⁸

Parents of each child eligible for a VPK program in Florida may enroll their child in one of the following programs:⁵⁹

- A school-year prekindergarten program delivered by an approved private prekindergarten provider.
- A school-year prekindergarten program delivered by a public school.
- A summer prekindergarten program delivered by a public school or private prekindergarten provider.
- A specialized instructional services program for children who have disabilities, if the child has been evaluated and determined as eligible and has a current individual educational plan developed by the local school board.

Funding for Florida’s VPK Program

A full-time equivalent student in the VPK program is calculated as follows:⁶⁰

- For a student in a school-year prekindergarten program delivered by a private prekindergarten provider: 540 instructional hours.
- For a student in a school-year prekindergarten program delivered by a public school: 540 instructional hours.
- For a student in a summer prekindergarten program delivered by a public school or private prekindergarten provider: 300 instructional hours.

A child who, for any of the prekindergarten programs, has not completed more than 70 percent of the hours authorized to be reported for funding may withdraw from the program for good cause and reenroll in one of the

⁵⁴ Section [1012.77\(3\), F.S.](#)

⁵⁵ Art. IX, s. 1., Fla. Const.

⁵⁶ Florida Department of Education, *Division of Early Learning, Annual Report 2023-2024*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/file/20628/2324-DEL-AnnualReport.pdf> (last visited May 6, 2025).

⁵⁷ Section [1002.53\(2\), F.S.](#)

⁵⁸ Florida Department of Education, *Division of Early Learning, Annual Report 2023-2024*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/file/20628/2324-DEL-AnnualReport.pdf> (last visited May 6, 2025).

⁵⁹ Section [1002.53\(3\), F.S.](#)

⁶⁰ Section [1002.71\(2\), F.S.](#)

programs. The total funding for a child who reenrolls in one of the programs for good cause may not exceed one full-time equivalent student.⁶¹ A child who has not substantially completed any of the prekindergarten programs may withdraw from the program due to an extreme hardship that is beyond the child's or parent's control, reenroll in one of the summer programs, and be reported for funding purposes as a full-time equivalent student in the summer program.⁶²

State Academic Standards

Florida's state academic standards establish the core content of the curricula to be taught and specify the core content knowledge and skills that K-12 public school students are expected to acquire. Standards must be rigorous and relevant and provide for the logical, sequential progression of core curricular content that incrementally increases a student's core content knowledge and skills over time.⁶³

The Commissioner is required to develop and submit proposed revisions to the standards for review and comment by Florida educators, school administrators, representatives of the FCS institutions and state universities who have expertise in the content knowledge and skills necessary to prepare a student for postsecondary education and careers, a representative from the Department of Commerce, business and industry leaders for in-demand careers, and the public.⁶⁴ The state academic standards are required to meet the following requirements:⁶⁵

- ELA standards are required to establish specific curricular content for, at a minimum, reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language.
- Science standards are required to establish specific curricular content for, at a minimum, the nature of science, earth and space science, physical science, and life science.
- Mathematics standards are required to establish specific curricular content for, at a minimum, algebra, geometry, statistics and probability, number and quantity, functions, and modeling.
- Social Studies standards are required to establish specific curricular content for, at a minimum, geography, United States and world history, government, civics, humanities, economics, and financial literacy.
- Visual and performing arts, physical education, health, and foreign language standards are required to establish specific curricular content and include distinct grade-level expectations for the core content knowledge.

Florida uses a unique coding scheme that is defined by five-character positions in alphanumeric code: the subject, grade level, strand, standard and benchmark. The strand is a focal group of related standards, standards are overarching criteria for the grade level or grade band, and the benchmark is a specific expectation for the grade level or grade band that falls within the standard.⁶⁶

Within the approved state academic standards documents, the DOE includes clarifications that are added to standards to guide teachers in the integration of those standards within instruction. For example, in the Computational Thinking and Reasoning Standards for the Computer Science Standards, there are seven standards, and each of the seven standards has a clarification for how that standard should be integrated into instruction.⁶⁷

District and School Advisory Councils

Each district school board must establish an advisory council for each school in the district and develop procedures for the election and appointment of advisory council members. The school advisory council is the sole body responsible for final decision-making at the school relating to the implementation of school improvement and education accountability.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Section [1002.71\(4\), F.S.](#)

⁶² *Id.*

⁶³ Section [1003.41\(1\), F.S.](#)

⁶⁴ Section [1003.41\(3\), F.S.](#)

⁶⁵ Section [1003.41\(2\), F.S.](#)

⁶⁶ Florida Department of Education, Florida's State Academic Standards Computer Science 2024 (2024), available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/20758/urlt/7-3.pdf> (last visited May 6, 2025).

⁶⁷ *Id.*

⁶⁸ Section [1001.452\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

The advisory councils must consist of the principal and an appropriately balanced number of teachers,⁶⁹ education support employees,⁷⁰ students, parents, and other business and community citizens who are representative of the ethnic, racial, and economic community served by the school. Career center and high school advisory councils must include students, and middle and junior high school advisory councils may include students. School advisory councils of career centers and adult education centers are not required to include parents as members. Council members representing teachers, education support employees, students, and parents must be elected by their respective peer groups at the school in a fair and equitable manner.⁷¹

The district school board must review the membership composition of each advisory council. If the district school board determines that the membership elected by the school is not representative of the ethnic, racial, and economic community served by the school, the district school board must appoint additional members to achieve proper representation. The Commissioner must determine if schools have maximized their efforts to include minority persons and persons of lower socioeconomic status on their advisory council.⁷²

Opioid Antagonists

In 2022, public schools were authorized to purchase a supply of the opioid antagonist, naloxone, from an approved wholesale distributor, in the event of a student opioid overdose.⁷³ School districts are required to maintain the naloxone in a secure location and the school district employee who administers the opioid antagonist in compliance with state law is immune from civil liability.

Opioid receptor antagonists block one or more of the opioid receptors in the central or peripheral nervous system. The two most commonly used centrally-acting opioid receptor antagonists are naloxone and naltrexone. Naloxone comes in intravenous, intramuscular, and intranasal formulations and is FDA-approved for the use in an opioid overdose and the reversal of respiratory depression associated with opioid use. Naltrexone is available in both oral and long-acting injectable formulations and is FDA-approved for the treatment of opioid and/or alcohol maintenance treatment. The most commonly used peripheral opioid receptor antagonist is methylnaltrexone, which is a potent competitive antagonist acting at the digestive tract and is also FDA-approved for the treatment of opioid-induced constipation.⁷⁴

Each FCS institution and state university must maintain a supply of emergency opioid antagonists,⁷⁵ such as naloxone hydrochloride or any similarly acting drug approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA), in every residence hall or dormitory it owns or operates. These emergency opioid antagonists must be placed in clearly marked locations within each residence hall or dormitory and must be easily accessible to campus law enforcement officers trained in their administration. Public and private partnerships are encouraged to cover the costs associated with purchasing and placing these emergency opioid antagonists.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ Section [1001.452\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#) (flush left provision at the end of the paragraph). For the purposes of school advisory councils and district advisory councils, the term “teacher” includes classroom teachers, certified student services personnel, and media specialists.

⁷⁰ *Id.* For the purposes of school advisory councils and district advisory councils, “education support employee” means any person employed by a school who is not defined as instructional or administrative personnel and whose duties require 20 or more hours in each normal working week.

⁷¹ Section [1001.452\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

⁷² *Id.* (flush left provision at the end of the paragraph).

⁷³ Chapter 2022-28, L.O.F. A wholesale distributor means a person, other than a manufacturer, a manufacturer’s co-licensed partner, a third-party logistics provider, or a repackager, who is engaged in wholesale distribution.

⁷⁴ *Opioid Antagonists*, Theriot, Jonathan, et. al., (last updated July 23, 2023), available at

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK537079/#:~:text=3%5D%5B%5D-.The%20two%20most%20commonly%20used%20centrally%20acting%20opioid%20receptor%20antagonists,depression%20associated%20with%20opioid%20use> (last visited May 6, 2025).

⁷⁵ Section [1004.0971\(1\)\(b\), F.S.](#), defines an “emergency opioid antagonist” as naloxone hydrochloride or any similarly acting drug that blocks the effects of opioids administered from outside the body and that is approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of an opioid overdose.

⁷⁶ Section [1004.0971, F.S.](#)

Campus law enforcement officers who are trained and administer or attempt to administer an emergency opioid antagonist in compliance with applicable laws, as well as the institution that employs such officers, are immune from civil or criminal liability.⁷⁷

Corporal Punishment

District school boards have the option of administering corporal punishment and must establish a policy authorizing the use of corporal punishment as a form of discipline, which must be reviewed every three years. The district school board is required to take public testimony in establishing or reviewing the policy authorizing corporal punishment.⁷⁸ If the school board has a corporal punishment policy, it must provide that:⁷⁹

- The use of corporal punishment must be approved by the principal before it is used, but approval is not necessary for each specific instance in which it is used. The principal is required to prepare guidelines for administering such punishment that must identify the types of punishable offenses, the conditions under which the punishment is administered, and the specific personnel on the school staff authorized to administer the punishment.
- A teacher or principal may administer corporal punishment only in the presence of another adult who is informed beforehand, and in the student's presence, of the reason for the punishment.
- A teacher or principal who has administered corporal punishment shall, upon request, provide the student's parent with a written explanation of the reason for the punishment and the name of the other adult who was present.

In the 2023-2024 school year, there were 516 incidents of corporal punishment in 17 school districts.⁸⁰

Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children

Children in active-duty military families face unique educational challenges. A military child changes schools on average three times more often than a non-military child.⁸¹ Frequent moves may cause students to miss out on extracurricular activities and face obstacles in meeting requirements to graduate.⁸² A military child experiences stress from gaps in education, difficulty in stopping and starting friendships, and repeated required adjustment to a new school setting.⁸³ Deployment of a family member exacerbates stress.⁸⁴

To provide transitioning military children greater educational stability and uniformity, in 2006, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), in concert with the Council of State Governments established the Compact.⁸⁵ The Compact only applies to public schools or to DoD Education Activity Schools.⁸⁶

States join the Compact by enacting it into law, which Florida did in 2008.⁸⁷ Before the compact could go into effect, at least 10 states had to sign on.⁸⁸ This occurred in July 2008, when Delaware became the tenth state to adopt the Compact.⁸⁹ Currently, all 50 states and the District of Columbia are members of the Compact.⁹⁰

⁷⁷ Section [1004.0971\(5\), F.S.](#)

⁷⁸ Section [1002.20\(4\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

⁷⁹ Section [1003.32\(1\)\(k\), F.S.](#)

⁸⁰ Florida Department of Education, *Discipline Data, 2023-24*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/file/18612/2324DisciplineReport.xlsx> (last visited May 6, 2025).

⁸¹ U.S. Dep't of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA). *The Military Interstate Compact*, <https://www.dodea.edu/education/partnership-and-resources/military-interstate-compact> (last visited May 6, 2025).

⁸² *Id.*

⁸³ Neil, Lori, U.S. Dep't of Education, *The Unique Needs of Students from Military Families*, available at <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1230690.pdf> (last visited May 6, 2025).

⁸⁴ *Id.*

⁸⁵ Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission, *Background*, <https://mic3.net/background/> (last visited May 6, 2025).

⁸⁶ Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission, *Frequently Asked Questions*, available at https://mic3.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/FAQ-Final-Updates-2023_FINAL_2023.08.16.pdf (last visited May 6, 2025).

⁸⁷ Chapter 2008-225, L.O.F.

⁸⁸ U.S. Army, *Delaware Becomes the 10th State to Ratify Military Education Compact*, (July 17, 2008), <https://www.army.mil/article-amp/10975> (last visited May 6, 2025).

⁸⁹ *Id.*

⁹⁰ Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission, *Interactive Map*, <http://www.mic3.net/interactive-map.html> (last visited May 6, 2025).

The Compact applies to students who are children of:

- Active duty members of the uniformed services,⁹¹ including members of the National Guard and Reserve on active duty orders;
- Members or veterans of the uniformed services who are medically discharged or retired for a period of one year; and
- Members of the uniformed services who die on active duty, for a period of one year following death.⁹²

Excluded from the Compact are children of DoD personnel or federal agency civilians and contract employees not on active duty.⁹³

The Compact accommodates military children in the following areas:

- Eligibility, including authorizing continued enrollment in the current school and reasonable accommodation for extracurricular participation;
- Enrollment, including in the production of education records, timing of immunizations, and flexibility in the entrance age of the child;
- Placement, including in accommodating original course and program placement, maintaining the same special education services as in the transferred school district, placement flexibility such as a waiver of prerequisites if similar coursework was already completed, and flexibility in absences due to family time with a deployed parent; and
- Graduation, including course waivers if similar coursework is already completed at another school, accepting exit exams from a sending state, and accepting a diploma from a sending school for a transfer during senior year so that a student may graduate on time.⁹⁴

Review of Compact Rule Adoption

Since its enactment in 2008,⁹⁵ Florida's Compact legislation has included a repeal provision that requires automatic repeal of the Compact after a period of time, unless reauthorized by the Legislature.⁹⁶ The repeal provision allows the Legislature to periodically review Compact rules and determine whether it agrees with any new rules or rule amendments adopted during the intervening period.

The Legislature last reauthorized the Compact and its implementing provisions during the 2022 Regular Session⁹⁷ and provided for repeal of the Compact and its implementing provisions on July 1, 2025, unless reviewed and saved from repeal by the Legislature by that date.⁹⁸

Assistance to Transitioning Students from Military Families

School-aged dependents of military personnel, or military students, are faced with numerous transitions during their formative years and moves during the high school years provide special challenges to learning and future achievement. Recognizing the challenges faced by military students and the importance of military families to our community and economy, current law requires the DOE to assist the transition of these students by improving the timely transfer of records, developing systems to ease student transition during the first 2 weeks of enrollment, promoting practices which foster access to extracurricular programs, establishing procedures to lessen the adverse impact of moves from the end of the junior year as well as before and during the senior year, encouraging or continuing partnerships between the military base and the school system, providing services for transitioning

⁹¹ "Uniformed services" means the Army, Navy, Air Force, Space Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, as well as the Commissioned Corps of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Public Health Services. See Article II, s. R of the Compact, [s. 1000.36, F.S.](#)

⁹² Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission, *supra* note 91. Also see Article III, s. A. of the Compact, [s. 1000.36, F.S.](#)

⁹³ Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission, *supra* note 91. Also see Article III, s. C. of the Compact, [s. 1000.36, F.S.](#)

⁹⁴ Dep't of Defense Education Activity, *The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children, Fact Sheet for Service Providers*, available at <https://dodea.widen.net/s/5fzm2hhlxc/interstatecompacttoolkit-ooreview-15june2015>.

⁹⁵ Chapter 2008-225, L.O.F.

⁹⁶ See ch. 2008-225, s. 5, ch. 2010-52, s. 3, ch. 2013-20, s. 2, ch. 2016-34, s. 2, ch. 2019-7, s. 1, and, ch. 2022-182, s. 2, L.O.F.

⁹⁷ Chapter 2022-182, s. 2, L.O.F. See [s. 1000.40, F.S.](#)

⁹⁸ Chapter 2022-182, s. 2, L.O.F. See [s. 1000.40, F.S.](#)

students when applying to and finding funding for postsecondary study, and providing other assistance as identified by department, school, and military personnel.⁹⁹ Additionally, the DOE must facilitate the development and implementation of memoranda of agreement between school districts and military installations which address strategies for assisting students who are the children of active duty military personnel in the transition to Florida schools.¹⁰⁰

Special Taxing Districts for Children’s Services

In 1986, the Legislature authorized Florida counties to create children’s services councils as countywide special districts to fund children’s services. Counties may create independent special districts, for which the county governing body must seek voter approval to levy annual ad valorem property taxes, or dependent special districts, which are supported by appropriations and are authorized to accept grants and donations from public and private sources.¹⁰¹

Children’s services councils may exercise the following powers and functions:

- Provide preventive, developmental, treatment, rehabilitative, and other services for children;
- Provide funds to other agencies that operate for the benefit of children, with the exception of the public school system;
- Collect data and conduct research to determine the needs of the children in the county;
- Coordinate with providers of children’s services to prevent duplication of services; and
- Lease or buy necessary real estate, equipment and personal property.¹⁰²

Ten counties currently have children’s services councils organized as special districts: Alachua, Broward, Escambia, Hillsborough, Leon, Martin, Miami-Dade, Okeechobee, Palm Beach, and St. Lucie.¹⁰³

Charter School Facilities

All charter schools in Florida are tuition-free public schools within the state’s public education system.¹⁰⁴ One of the guiding principles of charter schools is to “meet high standards of student achievement while providing parents flexibility to choose among diverse educational opportunities within the state’s public school system.”¹⁰⁵ Charter schools operate under a performance contract with a sponsor.¹⁰⁶ This performance contract is known as a “charter.”¹⁰⁷

Charter school facilities, except for conversion charter schools,¹⁰⁸ are not required to comply with the State Requirements for Educational Facilities of the Florida Building Code (SREF).¹⁰⁹ Instead, charter schools are subject to the general provisions of the Florida Building Code, including any amendments adopted by local governments.¹¹⁰ Local governments are prohibited, however, from adopting or imposing any local building requirements or site-development restrictions, such as parking and site-size criteria, student enrollment, and occupant load, that are more stringent than the SREF if those matters are addressed therein.¹¹¹ Local governments must treat charter schools equitably in requirements imposed upon traditional public schools, including any requirements entered into via interlocal agreement.

⁹⁹ Section [1003.05\(1\), F.S.](#)

¹⁰⁰ Section [1003.05\(2\), F.S.](#)

¹⁰¹ Chapter 86-197, L.O.F.; s. [125.901\(1\) and \(7\), F.S.](#)

¹⁰² Section [125.901\(2\), F.S.](#)

¹⁰³ Florida Department of Commerce, Division of Community Development, *Official List of Special Districts Online*, available at: <https://specialdistrictreports.floridajobs.org/OfficialList/CustomList> (last accessed Apr. 17, 2025). (In option 7, select “Children’s Services” and then click “Download Report”).

¹⁰⁴ Section [1002.33\(1\), F.S.](#)

¹⁰⁵ Section [1002.33\(2\)\(a\)1., F.S.](#)

¹⁰⁶ Section [1002.33\(1\), \(7\), and \(9\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

¹⁰⁷ Section [1002.33\(7\) and \(9\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

¹⁰⁸ Conversion charter schools are charter schools formed by a process that converts an existing traditional public school.

[Section 1002.33\(3\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

¹⁰⁹ Section [1002.33\(18\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

¹¹⁰ See [s. 553.73, F.S.](#)

¹¹¹ Section [1002.33\(18\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

Charter schools may not be subject to any land use regulation requiring a comprehensive plan amendment, development order, or development permit that would not be required for a public school in the same location.¹¹² A variety of facilities may provide space within their facilities to charter schools.¹¹³ Charter schools may be housed in certain types of facilities under the existing zoning and land use designations for those facilities without the need to obtain a special exception, rezoning, or a land use change.¹¹⁴

Land Development Regulations

Comprehensive plans are implemented via land development regulations. Each county and municipality must adopt and enforce land development regulations, such as zoning, that are consistent with and implement their adopted comprehensive plan.¹¹⁵ Local governments are encouraged to use innovative land development regulations such as the transfer of development rights, incentive and inclusionary zoning, planned unit development, impact fees, and performance zoning.¹¹⁶ All land development regulations adopted by a local government are compiled into a single land development code for the jurisdiction.¹¹⁷

All local government land development regulations must be consistent with the local comprehensive plan.¹¹⁸ Additionally, all public and private development must be consistent with the local comprehensive plan.¹¹⁹

Duties of school principal relating to student discipline and school safety

Florida law provides an extensive description of the roles, duties, and authority of each personnel classification charged with maintaining a safe and orderly school environment and enforcing disciplinary violations.¹²⁰ Each district school superintendent must, among other things, recommend to the district school board plans for promoting the welfare of students, including attendance, discipline, health and safety, and other matters. Each superintendent must fully support the disciplinary authority of school principals, classroom teachers, and school bus drivers.¹²¹

Generally speaking, the law provides that each classroom teacher “shall have such authority for the control and discipline of students as may be assigned to him or her by the principal” Consistent with the school district’s code of student conduct, classroom teachers have authority to, among other things, establish classroom rules of conduct; establish and implement consequences for infractions; and remove disobedient, disorderly, or violent students from the classroom.¹²²

Each school principal must, among other things, develop policies for delegating responsibility for the control and direction of students to classroom teachers, other instructional staff, and school bus drivers. Each school principal must fully support the authority of such personnel to remove disobedient, disrespectful, violent, abusive, uncontrollable, or disruptive students from the classroom and the school bus. The principal must give full consideration to disciplinary recommendations made by such personnel when making disciplinary referrals.¹²³

¹¹² *Id.*

¹¹³ Section [1002.33\(18\)\(c\), F.S.](#) Those facilities include any library, community service, museum, performing arts, theater, cinema, or church facility; any facility or land owned by a FCS institution or university; any similar public institutional facilities; and any facility recently used to house a school or child care facility licensed under [s. 402.305, F.S.](#)

¹¹⁴ Section [1002.33\(18\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

¹¹⁵ Section [163.3202, F.S.](#)

¹¹⁶ Section [163.3202\(3\), F.S.](#)

¹¹⁷ *Id.*

¹¹⁸ Section [163.3194\(1\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

¹¹⁹ See ss. [163.3161\(6\)](#) and [163.3194\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

¹²⁰ See ss. [1003.32](#) (classroom teachers and school principals), [1006.08](#) (superintendents), [1006.09](#) (school principals), and [1006.10, F.S.](#) (school bus drivers).

¹²¹ Section [1006.08\(1\), F.S.](#)

¹²² Section [1003.32\(1\), F.S.](#)

¹²³ Section [1006.09\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

Each school principal may suspend a student from school pursuant to school board rules.¹²⁴ A school principal may recommend the expulsion of a student to the superintendent who, in turn, may recommend such expulsion to the school board.¹²⁵ A student may be suspended for criminal offenses that occurred off of school property only following a showing that the offense has an adverse impact on the education program, discipline, or welfare in the school in which the student is enrolled.¹²⁶

Zero-Tolerance Policies in Florida Schools

Each school board must adopt a zero-tolerance policy that:¹²⁷

- Identifies acts that are required to be reported in the SESIR.
- Defines acts that pose a threat to school safety.
- Defines petty acts of misconduct which are not a threat to school safety and do not require consultation with law enforcement.
- Minimizes the victimization of students, staff, or volunteers, including taking all steps necessary to protect the victim of any violent crime from any further victimization.
- Establishes a procedure that provides each student with the opportunity for a review of the disciplinary action imposed.
- Requires the TMT to consult with law enforcement when a student exhibits a pattern of behavior, based upon previous acts or the severity of an act, which would pose a threat to school safety.

Additionally, each school board's zero tolerance policy must:

- Provide that any student found to have committed crimes upon any elected official or school district employee must be expelled or placed in an alternative school setting or other program, as appropriate.¹²⁸
- Prohibit students found to have committed certain felony offenses against another student from attending the same school or riding on the same school bus as a victim or a victim's sibling.¹²⁹

Zero-tolerance policies may not be rigorously applied to petty acts of misconduct. A TMT may use alternatives to expulsion or referral to law enforcement agencies, such as restitution, civil citation, teen court, neighborhood restorative justice or similar programs, unless the use of such alternatives will pose a threat to school safety.¹³⁰

School boards have discretion to provide continuing educational services to an expelled student in an alternative educational setting. A district school superintendent may consider the one-year expulsion requirement on a case-by-case basis and request that the school board modify the requirement by assigning the student to a disciplinary program or second chance school if it determines such modification is in the best interest of the student and the school system.¹³¹

The Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement

In 2004, the Legislature passed the Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement (partnership) Act¹³² recognizing the importance of not only access to college but also success in college for all students. The intent of the partnership was to ensure that every student enrolled in a public secondary school has access to high-quality, rigorous academics, with a particular focus on access to advanced courses, with a particular focus on minority students and students who are underrepresented in postsecondary education.¹³³ The DOE may contract for operation of the partnership.¹³⁴

¹²⁴ Section [1006.09\(1\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

¹²⁵ Sections [1006.08\(1\)](#) and [1006.09\(1\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

¹²⁶ Section [1006.09\(2\), F.S.](#)

¹²⁷ Section [1006.13\(2\), F.S.](#)

¹²⁸ Section [1006.13\(5\), F.S.](#)

¹²⁹ Section [1006.13\(6\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

¹³⁰ Section [1006.13\(1\) and \(8\), F.S.](#)

¹³¹ Section [1006.13\(3\), F.S.](#) (flush left provisions at end of subsection).

¹³² Ch. 2004-63, L.O.F.

¹³³ Section [1007.35\(2\)\(b\), F.S.](#); See Florida Department of Education, *Annual Evaluation Report for Florida Partnership 2021-2022* (September 2022), available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/19912/urlt/FLPAER2122.pdf>.

¹³⁴ Section [1007.35\(3\), F.S.](#)

In order to prepare, inspire and connect students to postsecondary success and opportunity, public high schools must provide for the administration of the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), or the PreACT to all enrolled 10th grade students. However, a written notice must be provided to each parent which must include the opportunity to exempt his or her child from taking the PSAT/NMSQT or the PreACT.¹³⁵ Test results from these assessments are used by certified school counselors to identify students who are prepared or who need additional work to be prepared to enroll and be successful in AP courses or other advanced high school courses.

School Board Discretionary Millage Levy

Each district school board is authorized to levy 1.5 mills against the taxable value for public school purposes to fund specific needs as identified in law, including, for example:¹³⁶

- New construction, remodeling projects, sites and site improvement or expansion to new sites, existing sites, auxiliary facilities, athletic facilities, or ancillary facilities.
- Payments for educational facilities and sites due under a lease-purchase agreement.
- Payment of costs of leasing relocatable educational facilities, of renting or leasing educational facilities and sites, or of renting or leasing buildings or space within existing buildings.

In addition, a district school board may expend up to \$200 per unweighted FTE student from the revenue generated by the millage levy to fund expenses for:¹³⁷

- The purchase, lease-purchase, or lease of driver's education vehicles; motor vehicles used for the maintenance or operation of plants and equipment; security vehicles; or vehicles used in storing or distributing materials and equipment.
- Payment of the cost of premiums property and casualty insurance necessary to insure school district educational and ancillary plants.¹³⁸

Private School Facilities

A private school is a nonpublic school defined as an individual, association, copartnership, or corporation, or department, division, or section of such organizations, that designates itself as an educational center that includes kindergarten through grade 12 or higher.¹³⁹ A private school that participates in the scholarship program must also:

- Comply with 42 U.S.C. s. 2000d which prohibits excluding a person from participating in federally assisted programs on the grounds of race, color, or national origin.
- Notify the DOE of its intent to participate in the scholarship program.
- Notify the DOE of any changes in the school's name, director, mailing address, or physical location within 15 days of change.
- Provide to the DOE or the scholarship funding organization (SFO) all required documentation for student registration and payment.
- Provide to the SFO the school's fee schedule.
- Annually complete and submit to the DOE a notarized scholarship compliance statement verifying compliance with the background screening requirements.
- Demonstrate fiscal soundness in accordance with statutory requirements.
- Meet applicable state and local health, safety, and welfare laws, codes, and rules.
- Employ or contract with teachers that meet specified requirements.
- Maintain a physical location in the state at which each student has regular and direct contact with teachers.
- Provide to parents information regarding the school's programs, services, classroom teacher qualifications, and a statement that a private school student with a disability does not have a right to all of the services

¹³⁵ Section [1007.35\(4\) and \(5\), F.S.](#) Public school districts must choose either the PSAT/NMSQT or the PreACT for districtwide administration. Funding for the PSAT/NMSQT or the PreACT for all 10th grade students is contingent upon annual funding in the General Appropriations Act. *Id.*

¹³⁶ Section [1011.71\(2\), F.S.](#)

¹³⁷ Section [1011.71\(5\), F.S.](#)

¹³⁸ The casualty insurance authorized is burglary and theft, glass, boiler and machinery, leakage and fire extinguisher equipment, and elevator. Section [624.605\(1\)\(d\), \(f\), \(g\), \(h\), and \(m\), F.S.](#)

¹³⁹ Section [1002.01\(3\), F.S.](#)

that the student would receive if enrolled in a public school under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

- Provide the parent, at least on a quarterly basis, a written report of the student's progress.
- Cooperate with a parent who wants a student to participate in Florida's statewide standardized assessments.
- Adopt policies establishing standards of ethical conduct for educational support employees, instructional personnel, and school administrators.
- Not to be owned or operated by a person or an entity domiciled in, owned by, or in any way controlled by a foreign country of concern or foreign principal, as identified in law.¹⁴⁰

Private schools that participate in a state scholarship program must, complete a Scholarship Program Compliance form, which includes the following questions related to the school facility:

- Does the school facility meet the prescribed minimum requirements and standards of sanitation and safety for K-12 private schools, with current Florida law?
- If the school facility possesses a well, is it licensed or permitted pursuant to the Florida Safe Drinking Water Act?
- If the school facility stores, prepares, or serves food to students, does the school possess a current, food service establishment sanitation certificate in accordance with Florida law?
- If the school facility is located in a non-exempt county, does the school possess a current and acceptable Mandatory Measurements Nonresidential Radon Measurement Report in accordance with current Florida Law?
- Does the school facility possess a current, violation free or satisfactory Fire Code inspection and compliance report in accordance with current Florida law and county and/or municipal ordinance?¹⁴¹

After a new private school applies to participate in a state scholarship program, the DOE schedules and conducts a site visit at the school's physical location. A private school is ineligible to receive scholarship payments until a satisfactory site visit has been conducted by the DOE.¹⁴²

A private school may use facilities on property that is owned or leased by, or purchased from a library, community service organization, museum, performing arts venue, theatre, cinema, or church facility¹⁴³, which is or was actively used as such within five years of any executed agreement with a private school to use the facilities; any facility or land owned by a FCS institution or university; any similar public institutional facilities; and any facility recently used to house a school or child care facility,¹⁴⁴ under any such facility's preexisting zoning and land use designations without rezoning or obtaining a special exception or a land use change, and without complying with any mitigation requirements or conditions.¹⁴⁵

The facility must be located on property used solely as one of the designated facilities and meet applicable state and local health, safety, and welfare laws, codes, and rules, including fire safety and building safety.¹⁴⁶

The Commission for Independent Education

The Commission was established in 2001 and is responsible for matters relating to nonpublic postsecondary educational institutions. The commission's functions include consumer protection, program improvements, institutional policies and administration, data management, and the licensure of independent schools, colleges, and universities.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁰ Section [1002.421\(1\), F.S.](#); see also Rule 6A-6.03315, F.A.C.

¹⁴¹ Rule 6A-6.03315, F.A.C.

¹⁴² Rule 6A-6.03315, F.A.C.

¹⁴³ Section [170.201\(2\), F.S.](#) defines a "religious institution" as any church, synagogue, or other established physical place for worship at which nonprofit religious services and activities are regularly conducted and carried on.

¹⁴⁴ Section [402.305, F.S.](#) provides for the licensing requirements for child care facilities.

¹⁴⁵ Section [1002.40\(19\), F.S.](#)

¹⁴⁶ *Id.*

¹⁴⁷ Section [1005.21, F.S.](#), and Florida Department of Education, *Commission for Independent Education*, <https://www.fldoe.org/policy/cie/> (last visited May 6, 2025).

Licensure of Nonpublic Postsecondary Educational Institutions

Each college or school operating within the state must obtain licensure from the Commission unless the institution is not under the commission's purview or jurisdiction as provided in law.¹⁴⁸ The Commission has developed 12 standards by which to evaluate institutions for licensure. Standards include administrative organization, academic programs, admissions requirements, finances, faculty, library resources, facilities, student services and advertising.¹⁴⁹

Provisional Licensure is the first level of licensure obtained by an applicant and allows the institution to advertise, recruit students, accept fees and tuition from students, and hold classes. Provisional Licensure is granted when the Commission has determined that an applicant is in substantial compliance with the standards for licensure. A Provisional License is typically granted for one year. The process to obtain Provisional Licensure for a new applicant normally takes six to twelve months.¹⁵⁰ A provisional license may include conditions required by the Commission and all conditions must be met before the institution may receive a different licensure status.¹⁵¹

Annual Licensure is typically the second level of licensure obtained by an institution holding a Provisional License, or seeking renewal of an Annual License, when the Commission has determined that an institution is in full compliance with the standards for licensure. An institution may continue to hold an Annual License as long as the institution remains in full compliance with the standards for licensure, does not undergo a substantive change, or meets the requirements and applies for a License by Means of Accreditation. An Annual License is typically granted for one year. Prior to the granting of an initial Annual License, a satisfactory on-site visit must occur. The process to obtain an initial Annual License or renewal of an Annual License normally takes three months from receipt of the Application for Annual License.

Institutions that hold an Annual License may add new degrees, programs, or majors to their offerings or alter any licensed program by more than 20 percent since their last review, change the title of a program or the credential awarded, or discontinue a program upon approval by the Commission.¹⁵²

Religious Institutions

The Commission does not have jurisdiction or purview over all nonpublic postsecondary educational institutions. Certain postsecondary educational institutions are exempt from licensure and jurisdiction under the commission.¹⁵³

Religious institutions are not under the jurisdiction or purview of the Commission and are not required to obtain licensure. A religious college may operate without governmental oversight if the college annually verifies by sworn affidavit to the Commission that:

- The name of the institution includes a religious modifier or the name of a religious patriarch, saint, person, or symbol of the church.
- The institution offers only educational programs that prepare students for religious vocations as ministers, professionals, or laypersons in the categories of ministry, counseling, theology, education, administration, music, fine arts, media communications, or social work.
- The titles of degrees issued by the institution cannot be confused with secular degree titles. For this purpose, each degree title must include a religious modifier that immediately precedes, or is included within, any of the following degrees: Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Master of Arts, Master of Science, Doctor of Philosophy, and Doctor of Education. The religious

¹⁴⁸ Sections 1005.31(1) and [1005.06, F.S.](#)

¹⁴⁹ Section [1005.31\(2\), F.S.](#) and Rule 6E-2.004, F.A.C.

¹⁵⁰ Florida Department of Education, *2022-2023 Commission for Independent Education Annual Report (2024)*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7748/urlt/2223annualreport.pdf> at 14 (last visited May 6, 2025).

¹⁵¹ Section [1005.31\(5\), F.S.](#)

¹⁵² Florida Department of Education, *2022-2023 Commission for Independent Education Annual Report (2024)*, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7748/urlt/2223annualreport.pdf> at 20 (last visited May 6, 2025).

¹⁵³ Section [1005.06, F.S.](#) These include public colleges and universities; institutions that are otherwise licensed, such as dental schools, midwifery schools, or real estate schools; institutions eligible for the Effective Access for Student Education tuition assistance program; continuing education programs; and religious institutions.

modifier must be placed on the title line of the degree, on the transcript, and whenever the title of the degree appears in official school documents or publications.

- The duration of all degree programs offered by the institution is consistent with the standards of the commission.
- The institution’s consumer practices are consistent with those specified in law.¹⁵⁴

The Commission may provide such a religious institution with a letter stating that the institution has met the requirements specified in law and is not subject to government oversight.

Preeminent State Research Universities Program

The preeminent state research universities program is a collaborative partnership between the Board of Governors (BOG) and the Legislature to raise the academic and research preeminence of the highest performing state research universities in Florida.¹⁵⁵ A state university that meets 12 of the 13 academic and research excellent standards specified in law is designated a “preeminent state research university.”¹⁵⁶ Currently, the University of Florida, Florida State University, University of South Florida, and Florida International University are designated as preeminent state research universities.¹⁵⁷

The following are the academic and research excellence standards established for the preeminent state research universities program that must be reported annually in the BOG Accountability Plan:

- An average weighted grade point average (GPA) of 4.0 or higher and an average SAT score of 1200 or higher or an average ACT score of 25 or higher for fall semester incoming freshmen.
- A top-50 ranking on at least two well-known national public university rankings, such as U.S. News & World Report.
- A 90% or higher freshman retention rate for full-time, first-time-in-college students.
- A 60% or higher four-year graduation rate for full-time, first-time-in-college students.
- At least six faculty members who are members of a national academy.
- Total annual research expenditures of \$200 million or more, including federal research funding.
- Annual research expenditures in diversified nonmedical sciences of \$150 million or more.
- A top-100 national ranking for research expenditures in five or more STEM fields.
- At least 100 patents awarded by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office over the most recent three-year period.
- 400 or more doctoral degrees awarded annually, including professional doctoral degrees in medical and health care disciplines.
- 200 or more postdoctoral appointees annually.
- An endowment of \$500 million or more.
- Total annual STEM-related research expenditures of \$50 million or more, including federal research funding.¹⁵⁸

Apprenticeship and Preapprenticeship in Florida

In Florida, the DOE is authorized to implement and oversee apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs.¹⁵⁹

The DOE is charged with establishing uniform minimum standards and policies governing apprenticeship programs and agreements.¹⁶⁰ Florida’s Registered Apprenticeship programs require five core components:

¹⁵⁴ Section [1005.06\(1\), F.S.](#) and Rule 6E-5.001, F.A.C.

¹⁵⁵ Section [1001.7065\(1\), F.S.](#)

¹⁵⁶ Section [1001.7065\(3\), F.S.](#)

¹⁵⁷ Board of Governors, State University System of Florida, *Accountability Propels State University System of Florida to New Heights*, <https://www.flbog.edu/2024/07/01/accountability-propels-state-university-system-of-florida-to-new-heights/> (last visited May 6, 2025).

¹⁵⁸ Section [1001.7065\(2\), F.S.](#)

¹⁵⁹ Section [446.041, F.S.](#); See also Florida Department of Education, *What is Registered Apprenticeship*, <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/apprenticeship-programs/what-is-apprenticeship.stml> (last visited May 6, 2025).

¹⁶⁰ Section [446.032\(1\), F.S.](#)

business involvement; structured on-the-job training; related technical instruction; rewards for skill gains; and a nationally recognized credential upon completion.¹⁶¹

To be eligible for an apprenticeship, a person must be at least 16 years of age;¹⁶² however, individuals must usually be 18 to be an apprentice in hazardous occupations.¹⁶³ Admission requirements relating to education, physical ability, work experience, and other criteria vary based on the program's training needs.¹⁶⁴

A preapprenticeship program is an organized course of instruction designed to prepare a person 16 years of age or older to become an apprentice.¹⁶⁵ The program must be registered with the DOE and sponsored by a registered apprenticeship program.¹⁶⁶ The program's purpose is to provide training that will enable students, upon completion, to obtain entrance into a registered apprenticeship program.¹⁶⁷

The DOE must publish, annually by September 1, a report on apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs on its website.¹⁶⁸ The report must include, at a minimum, the following:

- A list of registered apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs, by local educational agency¹⁶⁹ and training sponsor.¹⁷⁰
- A detailed summary of each local educational agency's expenditure of funds for apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs, to include:
 - The total amount of funding received for apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs.
 - The total number of funds allocated to each trade or occupation.
 - The total amount of funds expended for administrative costs per trade or occupation.
 - The total amount of funds expended for instructional costs per trade and occupation.
 - The number of apprentices and preapprentices per trade and occupation.
- The percent of apprentices and preapprentices who complete their respective programs in the appropriate timeframe.
- Information and resources related to applications for new apprenticeship programs and technical assistance and requirements for potential applicants.
- Documentation of activities conducted by the DOE to promote apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs through public engagement, community-based partnerships, and other initiatives.
- Retention and completion rates of participants disaggregated by training provider, program, and occupation.
- Wage progression of participants as demonstrated by starting, exit, and post-apprenticeship wages at 1 and 5 years after participants exit the program.¹⁷¹

State Agency Recruitment

Recruiting for state employment must be planned and carried out in a manner that assures open competition based upon current and projected employing agency needs, taking into consideration the number and types of positions to be filled and the labor market conditions. Recruiting efforts to fill current or projected vacancies must be carried out in the sound discretion of the agency head and must seek efficiency in advertising. Recruitment may

¹⁶¹ Florida Department of Education, *Florida's Annual Apprenticeship and Preapprenticeship Report: Program Year 2023-2024*, at 9-10, available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/9904/urlt/2024ApprenticeFL-Annual.pdf>.

¹⁶² Section [446.021\(2\)](#), F.S.

¹⁶³ United States Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Child Labor Fact Sheets and FAQs, *Child Labor Provisions of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) for Nonagricultural Occupations* (Dec. 2016), available at <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WHD/legacy/files/whdfs43.pdf>.

¹⁶⁴ Florida Department of Education, *What is Registered Apprenticeship*, <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/apprenticeship-programs/what-is-apprenticeship.stml> (last visited May 6, 2025).

¹⁶⁵ Section [446.021\(5\)](#), F.S.

¹⁶⁶ *Id.*

¹⁶⁷ Rule [6A-23.010\(1\)](#), F.A.C.

¹⁶⁸ Section [446.032\(2\)](#), F.S.

¹⁶⁹ Section [1004.02\(18\)](#), F.S. "Local educational agency" means a FCS institution or school district.

¹⁷⁰ Section [1004.02\(19\)](#), F.S. "Local sponsor" means a district school board, FCS institution board of trustees, public library, other public entity, or private nonprofit entity, or any combination of these entities, that provides adult literacy instruction.

¹⁷¹ Section [446.032\(2\)\(a\)-\(f\)](#), F.S.

be assisted by a contracted vendor responsible for maintenance of the state employer's personnel data. All recruitment literature involving state position vacancies must contain the phrase "An Equal Opportunity Employer/Affirmative Action Employer."¹⁷²

University Campus Master Plans

Each university board of trustees is required to prepare and adopt a campus master plan for the university and maintain a copy of the plan on the university's website. The master plan must identify general land uses and address the need for and plans for provision of roads, parking public transportation, solid waste, drainage, sewer, potable water, and recreation and open space during the coming 10 to 20 years. The plans contain certain elements and address the compatibility with the surrounding community. These master plans must be updated every 5 years.¹⁷³

Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program

The Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program is a lottery-funded scholarship program for Florida high school graduates who merit high academic achievement and enroll in a degree, certificate, or applied technology program at an eligible Florida public or private postsecondary education institution.¹⁷⁴ Since the 1997-1998 academic year, the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program has disbursed approximately \$9.2 billion for over 3.3 million students to attend an eligible postsecondary institution in this state.¹⁷⁵

Florida high school students who wish to qualify for a Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program award must meet the following initial eligibility requirements:

- Be a Florida resident for at least one year preceding an award.
- Earn a standard Florida high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma unless:
 - The student completes a home education program.
 - The student earns a high school diploma from a non-Florida school while living with a parent or guardian who is on military or public service assignment away from Florida; or
 - The student earns a high school diploma from an eligible Florida private school.
- Be accepted by and enroll in an eligible Florida public or independent postsecondary education institution.
- Be enrolled for at least six semester credit hours or the equivalent in quarter hours or clock hours.
- Not have been found guilty of, or entered a plea of nolo contendere to, a felony charge, unless the student has been granted clemency.
- Apply for a scholarship by high school graduation, or by December 31 for mid-year graduates.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Section 110.211, F.S.

¹⁷³ Section [1013.30, F.S.](#)

¹⁷⁴ Section [1009.53\(1\), F.S.](#)

¹⁷⁵ Florida Department of Education, *Florida Bright Futures Student Counts and Total Costs (2024)*, available at <https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/PDF/PSI/BFReportsA.pdf> (last visited May 6, 2025).

¹⁷⁶ Section [1009.531\(1\), F.S.](#)

RECENT LEGISLATION:

YEAR	BILL #	HOUSE SPONSOR(S)	SENATE SPONSOR	OTHER INFORMATION
2023	HB 5101	Tomkow	Hooper	Became law on July 1, 2023.
2023	CS/SB 676	Trabulsy	Grall	Became law on July 1, 2024, except as otherwise provided.
2022	CS/SB 430	Altman	Wright	Became law on June 9, 2022.
2022	CS/SB 544	Caruso	Boyd	Became law on July 1, 2022.
2022	SB 1054	Busatta	Hutson	Became law on July 1, 2022.
2021	CS/HB 7011	Aloupis	Rodriguez	Became law on July 1, 2021.