

2026182er

1  
2 An act relating to education; amending s. 1002.33,  
3 F.S.; providing that students may not be dismissed  
4 from certain charter schools based on academic  
5 performance; amending s. 1002.395, F.S.; adding a  
6 condition for Florida Tax Credit (FTC) scholarship  
7 reimbursements; requiring that certain FTC scholarship  
8 funds revert to the organization; amending s. 1002.42,  
9 F.S.; providing that certain private schools are  
10 considered a permitted use in certain zoning  
11 districts; authorizing certain private schools to  
12 operate in facilities that meet specified  
13 requirements; providing exceptions; requiring certain  
14 private schools operating in such facilities to meet  
15 specified Florida Fire Prevention Code standards;  
16 providing that completion of a specified evaluation  
17 system with certain ratings by specified persons  
18 constitutes evidence of compliance with the Florida  
19 Fire Prevention Code for such private schools;  
20 authorizing the State Fire Marshal to adopt rules;  
21 amending s. 1003.42, F.S.; requiring students in  
22 specified grades to receive instruction in cursive  
23 writing; providing requirements for such instruction;  
24 requiring students to demonstrate proficiency in  
25 cursive writing by the end of a specified grade;  
26 defining the term "proficiency in cursive writing";  
27 amending s. 1003.44, F.S.; requiring, subject to  
28 legislative appropriation, each district school board  
29 to adopt rules to require the display of portraits of

2026182er

30 George Washington and Abraham Lincoln at each public  
31 school in the district; requiring the Department of  
32 Education to select the portraits and make them  
33 available to each school district; creating s.  
34 1012.988, F.S.; establishing the School Teacher  
35 Training and Mentoring Program within the Department  
36 of Education; providing the purpose of the program;  
37 authorizing school districts and charter schools to  
38 place certain classroom teachers as teacher mentors in  
39 specified schools for specified purposes; providing  
40 requirements for teacher mentors and mentees;  
41 authorizing teacher mentors to receive a stipend;  
42 providing the time period for each mentor and mentee  
43 relationship through the program; providing  
44 limitations on the number of mentees teacher mentors  
45 may work with; providing department and teacher mentor  
46 responsibilities; authorizing the State Board of  
47 Education to adopt rules; amending s. 1011.62, F.S.;  
48 authorizing specified funds to be used for the School  
49 Teacher Training and Mentoring Program; providing an  
50 effective date.

51  
52 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

53  
54 Section 1. Paragraph (e) of subsection (10) of section  
55 1002.33, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

56 1002.33 Charter schools.—

57 (10) ELIGIBLE STUDENTS.—

58 (e) A charter school may limit the enrollment process only

2026182er

59 to target the following student populations:

60 1. Students within specific age groups or grade levels.

61 2. Students considered at risk of dropping out of school or  
62 academic failure. Such students shall include exceptional  
63 education students.

64 3. Students enrolling in a charter school-in-the-workplace  
65 or charter school-in-a-municipality established pursuant to  
66 subsection (15).

67 4. Students residing within a reasonable distance of the  
68 charter school, as described in paragraph (20)(c). Such students  
69 shall be subject to a random lottery and to the racial/ethnic  
70 balance provisions described in subparagraph (7)(a)8. or any  
71 federal provisions that require a school to achieve a  
72 racial/ethnic balance reflective of the community it serves or  
73 within the racial/ethnic range of other nearby public schools.

74 5. Students who meet reasonable academic, artistic, or  
75 other eligibility standards established by the charter school  
76 and included in the charter school application and charter or,  
77 in the case of existing charter schools, standards that are  
78 consistent with the school's mission and purpose. Such standards  
79 shall be in accordance with current state law and practice in  
80 public schools and may not discriminate against otherwise  
81 qualified individuals. A school that limits enrollment for such  
82 purposes must place a student on a progress monitoring plan for  
83 at least one semester before dismissing such student from the  
84 school. A student may not be dismissed based on academic  
85 performance while a school is implementing a school improvement  
86 plan pursuant to paragraph (9)(n) or corrective action plan  
87 pursuant to s. 1002.345.

2026182er

88           6. Students articulating from one charter school to another  
89 pursuant to an articulation agreement between the charter  
90 schools that has been approved by the sponsor.

91           7. Students living in a development, or students whose  
92 parent or legal guardian maintains a physical or permanent  
93 employment presence within the development, in which a  
94 developer, including any affiliated business entity or  
95 charitable foundation, contributes to the formation,  
96 acquisition, construction, or operation of one or more charter  
97 schools or charter school facilities and related property in an  
98 amount equal to or having a total appraised value of at least \$5  
99 million to be used as charter schools to mitigate the  
100 educational impact created by the development of new residential  
101 dwelling units. Students living in the development are entitled  
102 to 50 percent of the student stations in the charter schools.  
103 The students who are eligible for enrollment are subject to a  
104 random lottery, the racial/ethnic balance provisions, or any  
105 federal provisions, as described in subparagraph 4. The  
106 remainder of the student stations must be filled in accordance  
107 with subparagraph 4.

108           8. Students whose parent or legal guardian is employed  
109 within a reasonable distance of the charter school, as described  
110 in paragraph (20) (c). The students who are eligible for  
111 enrollment are subject to a random lottery.

112           Section 2. Paragraphs (g) and (h) of subsection (11) of  
113 section 1002.395, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

114           1002.395 Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program.—

115           (11) SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT AND PAYMENT.—

116           (g) Reimbursements for program expenditures may continue

2026182er

117 until the account balance is expended or the scholarship account  
118 is closed ~~remaining funds have reverted to the state.~~

119 (h)1. A student's scholarship account must be closed and  
120 any remaining funds must ~~shall~~ revert to the organization ~~state~~  
121 after:

122 a.1. Denial or revocation of program eligibility by the  
123 commissioner for fraud or abuse, including, but not limited to,  
124 the student or student's parent accepting any payment, refund,  
125 or rebate, in any manner, from a provider of any services  
126 received pursuant to paragraph (6) (d);

127 b.2. Two consecutive fiscal years in which an account has  
128 been inactive; or

129 c.3. The student remains unenrolled in an eligible private  
130 school for 30 days while receiving a scholarship that requires  
131 full-time enrollment.

132 2. All funds that revert to the organization must be  
133 separately accounted for and used to fund scholarships in the  
134 fiscal year the reversion occurs. Any funds remaining at the end  
135 of the fiscal year may be carried forward to the following  
136 fiscal year and must be fully expended for annual or partial-  
137 year scholarships in the following fiscal year.

138 3. By July 1 of each year, an organization must report to  
139 the Department of Education the total number of scholarship  
140 accounts that were closed during the prior fiscal year and the  
141 amount of funds that reverted to the organization.

142 Section 3. Subsection (19) of section 1002.42, Florida  
143 Statutes, is amended to read:

144 1002.42 Private schools.—

145 (19) FACILITIES AND LAND USE.—

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146 (a) A private school may use facilities on property owned  
147 or leased by a library, community service organization, museum,  
148 performing arts venue, theater, cinema, or church facility under  
149 s. 170.201, which is or was actively used as such within 5 years  
150 of any executed agreement with a private school to use the  
151 facilities; any facility or land owned by a Florida College  
152 System institution or university; any similar public  
153 institutional facilities; and any facility recently used to  
154 house a school or child care facility licensed under s. 402.305,  
155 under any such facility's preexisting zoning and land use  
156 designations without rezoning or obtaining a special exception  
157 or a land use change, and without complying with any mitigation  
158 requirements or conditions. The facility must be located on  
159 property used solely for purposes described in this paragraph,  
160 and must meet applicable state and local health, safety, and  
161 welfare laws, codes, and rules, including firesafety and  
162 building safety.

163 (b) A private school may use facilities on property  
164 purchased from a library, community service organization,  
165 museum, performing arts venue, theater, cinema, or church  
166 facility under s. 170.201, which is actively or was actively  
167 used as such within 5 years of any executed agreement with a  
168 private school to purchase the facilities; any facility or land  
169 owned by a Florida College System institution or university; any  
170 similar public institutional facilities; and any facility  
171 recently used to house a school or child care facility licensed  
172 under s. 402.305, under any such facility's preexisting zoning  
173 and land use designations without obtaining a special exception,  
174 rezoning, or a land use change, and without complying with any

2026182er

175 mitigation requirements or conditions. The facility must be  
176 located on property used solely for purposes described in this  
177 paragraph, and must meet applicable state and local health,  
178 safety, and welfare laws, codes, and rules, including firesafety  
179 and building safety.

180 (c) A private school located in a county with four  
181 incorporated municipalities may construct new facilities, which  
182 may be temporary or permanent, on property purchased from or  
183 owned or leased by a library, community service organization,  
184 museum, performing arts venue, theater, cinema, or church under  
185 s. 170.201, which is or was actively used as such within 5 years  
186 of any executed agreement with a private school; any land owned  
187 by a Florida College System institution or state university; and  
188 any land recently used to house a school or child care facility  
189 licensed under s. 402.305, under its preexisting zoning and land  
190 use designations without rezoning or obtaining a special  
191 exception or a land use change, and without complying with any  
192 mitigation requirements or conditions. Any new facility must be  
193 located on property used solely for purposes described in this  
194 paragraph, and must meet applicable state and local health,  
195 safety, and welfare laws, codes, and rules, including firesafety  
196 and building safety.

197 (d) A private school enrolling 150 or fewer students, or  
198 located within the unincorporated area of a county as defined in  
199 s. 125.011, shall be considered a permitted use and occupancy in  
200 a commercial or mixed-use zoning district within a county or  
201 municipality without rezoning or obtaining a special exception  
202 or a land use change, and without complying with any mitigation  
203 requirements, conditions, performance standards, ordinances,

2026182er

204 rules, codes, or policies, except that a county or municipality  
205 may require proportionate mitigation measures necessary to  
206 mitigate vehicular traffic and pedestrian safety.

207 1. The vehicular traffic and pedestrian safety mitigation  
208 measures required by a county or municipality pursuant to this  
209 subsection shall be limited to those impacts reasonably and  
210 directly attributable to the operation of the private school at  
211 the site and shall be no greater in cost or scope than what is  
212 required of all other uses, education or otherwise, within the  
213 same zoning district.

214 2. The private school subject to vehicular traffic and  
215 pedestrian safety mitigation measures may, in lieu of complying  
216 with such mitigation measures, provide a traffic study that  
217 demonstrates the school will not have disproportionate impact on  
218 vehicular traffic or pedestrian safety compared to other  
219 allowable uses within the same zoning district.

220 (e) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a private  
221 school enrolling 150 or fewer students may operate in a facility  
222 that is an existing assembly, day care, mercantile, or business  
223 occupancy, as defined in the Florida Fire Prevention Code. A  
224 private school operating in such a facility must meet the  
225 standards for existing educational occupancy requirements under  
226 the Florida Fire Prevention Code, adopted by the State Fire  
227 Marshal. Completion of the fire safety evaluation system for  
228 educational occupancies in the National Fire Protection  
229 Association, Life Safety Code, NFPA 101A: Guide on Alternative  
230 Approaches to Life Safety, adopted by the State Fire Marshal, by  
231 a registered design professional licensed under chapter 471 or  
232 chapter 481, with a determination of achieving at a minimum an

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233 "at least equivalent" conclusion, is considered evidence of  
234 compliance with the Florida Fire Prevention Code. The State Fire  
235 Marshal may adopt rules to implement this paragraph.

236 Section 4. Paragraph (w) is added to subsection (2) of  
237 section 1003.42, Florida Statutes, to read:

238 1003.42 Required instruction.—

239 (2) Members of the instructional staff of the public  
240 schools, subject to the rules of the State Board of Education  
241 and the district school board, shall teach efficiently and  
242 faithfully, using the books and materials required that meet the  
243 highest standards for professionalism and historical accuracy,  
244 following the prescribed courses of study, and employing  
245 approved methods of instruction, the following:

246 (w)1. For students in grades 3 through 5, the study of  
247 cursive writing and the development of the skills necessary for  
248 legible cursive writing, including:

249 a. Letter formation.

250 b. Proper spacing and alignment.

251 c. Practice in writing complete words and sentences in  
252 cursive.

253 2. By the end of grade 5, each student must demonstrate  
254 proficiency in cursive writing. For purposes of this  
255 subparagraph, the term "proficiency in cursive writing" means  
256 all of the following:

257 a. The ability to write uppercase and lowercase letters of  
258 the alphabet in cursive writing.

259 b. Writing words and sentences in cursive legibly and  
260 maintaining proper spacing and alignment.

261 c. The ability to read and apply cursive writing in a

2026182er

262 manner that supports literacy development, including writing  
263 essays and assignments in cursive writing in accordance with  
264 state academic standards.

265  
266 The State Board of Education is encouraged to adopt standards  
267 and pursue assessment of the requirements of this subsection.  
268 Instructional programming that incorporates the values of the  
269 recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor and that is  
270 offered as part of a social studies, English Language Arts, or  
271 other schoolwide character building and veteran awareness  
272 initiative meets the requirements of paragraph (u).

273 Section 5. Subsection (4) of section 1003.44, Florida  
274 Statutes, is amended to read:

275 1003.44 Patriotic programs; rules.—

276 (4) Each district school board shall adopt rules to  
277 require: ~~in all of the schools of the district and in each~~  
278 ~~building used by the district school board,~~

279 (a) The display of the state motto, "In God We Trust,"  
280 designated under s. 15.0301, in a conspicuous place at each  
281 public school in the district and in each building used by the  
282 district school board.

283 (b) Subject to legislative appropriation, the display of  
284 portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in a  
285 conspicuous place at each public school in the district. The  
286 Department of Education shall select the portraits and make them  
287 available to each school district.

288 Section 6. Section 1012.988, Florida Statutes, is created  
289 to read:

290 1012.988 School Teacher Training and Mentoring Program.—

2026182er

291 (1) The School Teacher Training and Mentoring Program is  
292 established within the Department of Education. The purpose of  
293 the program is to increase the effectiveness and involvement of  
294 classroom teachers and improve student achievement, classroom  
295 management, and excellence in the state's public schools.

296 (2) (a) School districts and charter schools may place  
297 retired classroom teachers or current classroom teachers in  
298 schools earning a grade of "D" or "F" to act as teacher mentors  
299 to:

300 1. New classroom teachers;

301 2. Classroom teachers who are rated as needs improvement,  
302 developing, or unsatisfactory on the prior year's performance  
303 evaluation under s. 1012.34; or

304 3. Classroom teachers identified by the school  
305 administrator as struggling with behavior management within the  
306 classroom.

307 (b) Each teacher mentor selected by the school district,  
308 charter school, or charter management organization must have:

309 1. At least 3 years of teaching experience in  
310 prekindergarten through grade 12.

311 2. Earned a highly effective rating on his or her most  
312 recent performance evaluation under s. 1012.34.

313 (c) Each teacher mentor may receive a stipend of up to  
314 \$3,000.

315 (d) Each mentor and mentee relationship through the program  
316 shall be for one grading period.

317 (e)1. A retired classroom teacher serving as a teacher  
318 mentor may not have more than five mentees at a time.

319 2. A classroom teacher serving as a teacher mentor may not

2026182er

320 have more than one mentee at a time.

321 (3) The Department of Education shall establish program  
322 standards and a standard contract template for the teacher  
323 mentor and mentee which outlines the responsibilities of each  
324 person and establishes the framework and goals of the program.

325 (4) Each teacher mentor must:

326 (a) Present significant historical events with accuracy and  
327 integrity, grounded in verifiable evidence and scholarly rigor.

328 (b) If a curriculum is used, use a curriculum that affirms  
329 the principles of fairness and equal opportunity reflected in  
330 the Florida Educational Equity Act and encourages respectful  
331 dialogue across diverse perspectives.

332 (c) Maintain confidentiality, unless prohibited by law.

333 (d) Not have a personal agenda other than assisting his or  
334 her mentee in developing and reaching the mentee's goals.

335 (e) Help his or her mentee in developing skills and  
336 expertise, including drawing upon the teacher mentor's own  
337 personal experiences.

338 (5) The State Board of Education may adopt rules to  
339 administer this section.

340 Section 7. Paragraph (a) of subsection (7) of section  
341 1011.62, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

342 1011.62 Funds for operation of schools.—If the annual  
343 allocation from the Florida Education Finance Program to each  
344 district for operation of schools is not determined in the  
345 annual appropriations act or the substantive bill implementing  
346 the annual appropriations act, it shall be determined as  
347 follows:

348 (7) EDUCATIONAL ENRICHMENT ALLOCATION.—

2026182er

349 (a) The educational enrichment allocation is created to  
350 assist school districts in providing educational enrichment  
351 activities and services that support and increase the academic  
352 achievement of students in grades kindergarten through 12.  
353 Educational enrichment activities and services may be provided  
354 in a manner and at any time during or beyond the regular 180-day  
355 term identified by the school district as being the most  
356 effective and efficient way to best help the student progress  
357 from grade to grade and graduate from high school. Funds from  
358 the educational enrichment allocation may be used for the School  
359 Teacher Training and Mentoring Program under s. 1012.988 if  
360 funds are available. For fiscal year 2023-2024, the educational  
361 enrichment allocation shall consist of a base amount as  
362 specified in the General Appropriations Act. Beginning in fiscal  
363 year 2024-2025, the educational enrichment allocation shall  
364 consist of the base amount that includes a workload adjustment  
365 based on changes in the unweighted full-time equivalent  
366 membership. Beginning in fiscal year 2025-2026, and each year  
367 thereafter, the statewide average base amount as specified in  
368 the General Appropriations Act shall be used for any new  
369 educational entity funded in the Florida Education Finance  
370 Program.

371 Section 8. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.