

FCIS 2019 Legislative Report

by Brenda Dickinson

The Gardiner Scholarship

(SB 2500, the Appropriations Bill, had not reached the Governor's desk as of 5/28/19.)

- \$23 million new money totaling \$147.9 million
- Covers the waiting list of about 1900 new students, bringing the total of students served to more than 14,000.

Bright Futures Scholarships

(HB 190 had not reached the Governor's desk as of 5/28/19)

HB 190 made the following changes to the Bright Futures Scholarship program.

- Language was added to ensure that a student who receives a high school diploma from a Florida private school operating pursuant to s.1002.42 FS, and who meets all the other requirements is eligible to receive an award.

Note: The current law does not specifically include private school students although those students have been awarded scholarships since the program inception.
- Students that graduate midyear must apply no later than December 31 of the student's graduation year in order to receive an award for the current academic year.
- Students who apply and meet eligibility requirements to receive an award by high school graduation, but do not immediately accept the award, may reapply for up to 5 years after high school graduation. The reapplication period was increased from 2 years to 5 years.
- Students who enlist in the military, but do not immediately accept the award, may reapply for the award, and the reapplication period of 5 years begins upon the date of separation from active duty.
- Students who cannot accept the initial reward immediately after graduation due to a religious or service obligation lasting at least 18 months and begin that service within 1 year after completion of high school graduation, may reapply for the award, and the reapplication period begins upon the completion of the obligation.
- The SAT and the ACT score requirements will remain the same for the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school year. However, in the 2020-21 school year and thereafter, the SAT and ACT scores will be set by the FLDOE based on the previous year cohort scores of no lower than the 89th national percentile for the Academic

Scholarship and no lower than the 75th national percentile for the Medallion Scholarship.

- Each year the FLDOE will publish any changes to the score requirements which will apply to students graduating in the next 2 years.

Early Learning (HB 1027 had not reached the Governor's desk as of 5/28/19.)

HB 1027 requires the Office of Early Learning to develop professional development training and course standards for school readiness program providers. These standards and courses must, to the greatest extent possible, align with the credentials and certifications for K-12 teachers, reading coaches and principals. The OEL must identify both formal and informal early learning pathways with stackable credentials and certifications that allow early learning teachers to access specialized professional development.

VPK

There was no increase in funding for VPK.

School Safety

(SB 2500, the Appropriations bill had not reached the Governor's desk as of 5/28/19.)

HB 7030 - Implementation of Legislative Recommendations of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission did not include funds to harden any private schools. An appropriation was included in SB 2500 to provide \$2,500,000 to harden Jewish Day Schools.

New Course Requirements

(HB 7071 had not reached the Governor's desk as of 5/28/19)

HB 7071 requires public middle school students to take one course in career and education planning in grades 6, 7, or 8. Private school students have the opportunity to take this course through the Florida Virtual School (FLVS) and learn about all the resources available to them.

One resource that students in Florida may use to learn about different careers, assess their strengths, interest and abilities, and learn about current and future needed occupations is FloridaShines.org which is Florida's Student Hub of Innovative Educational Services. It includes many resources and information about future careers for those going to college and those who may want to pursue other pathways to employment.

HB 7071 also requires District School Boards to incorporate the career and technical pathway in the student's progression plan for graduation as part of a new standard high diploma school.

HB 7071 also creates a new high school diploma which requires students who are interested in pursuing a career and technical pathway toward high school graduation to:

- (1) Complete the required 18 hours for a standard high school diploma,
- (2) earn 2 credits in career and technical education which result in a program completion or an industry certification and
- (3) complete 2 credits in work-based learning programs.

HB 7071 also allows public schools students to:

- substitute a computer science credit for either a math or science credit after completing the required Algebra 1 and Biology 1.
- satisfy 2 credits in math if they earn an industry certificate in 3D rapid prototype printing.

Dual Enrollment (HB 189 - Dual Enrollment died in the Senate.)

Background

Prior to the 2012 Legislative Session, dual enrollment was free to all students in the State. However, the Legislature had been trying for years to find a way to eliminate the double funding of public school students. The solution they came up with was to limit the funding for public school students to 1 FTE per student. In 2012, the legislation changed the law to require the school districts to pay tuition for public school students who participated in dual enrollment. We were assured that the language in the bill would not affect private school students. In fact, the language was silent on private school students, but, the FLDOE found a loophole. In their Q&A following that Session, the FLDOE stated that the law did not require state colleges to charge private schools, but they could address that issue in their Articulation Agreement with private schools. The law states that no student can be charged for the dual enrollment tuition, but it does not say that their private school cannot be charged. Many state colleges continued to allow private school students to continue taking the courses free of charge, but over the last 7 years most of the state colleges now require private schools to pay the tuition for their students or the college will not establish an Articulation Agreement with the private school.

FCIS has tried every Session since to get a phrase in the law which says the private school cannot be charged. The FAANS legislative committee worked together this year, and HB 189, which would have provided equal access for private school students and would have even provided free instructional materials for private school students, passed the House, but was referred to Committees in the Senate where it died. It was such a disappointment because for another year, private school students are being denied access to, not only dual enrollment, but also to career dual enrollment which

would provide access to students who could begin on a career pathway in high school. Very few if any private schools can afford to provide courses that lead to an industry certification. Thus, the students who choose a private school education are being denied an opportunity afforded to other students in this State.

SB 7070 makes changes to scholarship programs. (Signed into law 5/9/19)

Family Empowerment

The "Family Empowerment Scholarship Program" is a new school choice option established to provide children of families in this state which have limited financial resources with educational options to achieve success in their education. This program, unlike the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program, will be funded directly from general revenue and will depend on the grade level and school district in which the student resides.

- The student is eligible for the Family Empowerment Scholarship if the student is on the direct certification list, the student's household income level does not exceed 300% of the federal poverty level, or the student is in foster care or out-of-home placement.
- The student must be entering kindergarten or have spent the prior year in a Florida public school in order to be eligible.
- Priority will be given to students whose household income levels do not exceed 185 % of the federal poverty level or who are in foster care or out-of-home care.
- The Scholarship will equal 95% of the full-time equivalent for a student in the basic program plus a full-time equivalent share of funds for all categorical programs, except for ESE guaranteed allocations. It is designed to allow public funds to follow the child.
- The amount of the scholarship will be the calculated amount or the amount of the private school's tuition and fees, whichever is less.
- The scholarship will provide for up to 18,000 students annually on a first-come, first-served basis beginning with the 2019-2020 school year.
- The program may annually increase by .25% of the state's total public school or the student enrollment.

This program will most likely be challenged in court.

Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program

- Allows a student who initially qualified for a scholarship based on income eligibility prior to 2019-2020 to remain eligible until the student graduates or attains the age of 21 or the student's household income level exceeds 260% of the federal poverty level, whichever occurs first.
- Changes the funding for students entering the program in the 2019-2020 school year to equal 95% of the full-time equivalent for a student in the basic program

plus a full-time equivalent share of funds for all categorical programs, except for ESE guaranteed allocations. For students currently enrolled in the program the funding remains the same by grade level.

- The bill also allows up to 50 percent of unused Hope Scholarship Program funds in a previous year to be redirected for funding FTC scholarships.

Mandatory Reporting for Child Abuse

(SB 318 was signed into law on May 23, 2019.)

SB 318 expands the public records exemption to further protect any person reporting child abuse or neglect. As a result of SB 318, the law now excludes, in addition to the name of the reporter, “any other identifying information with respect to” the reporter from being released to the public.

The above information can be released to certain employees, authorized agents or governmental agencies of the State.