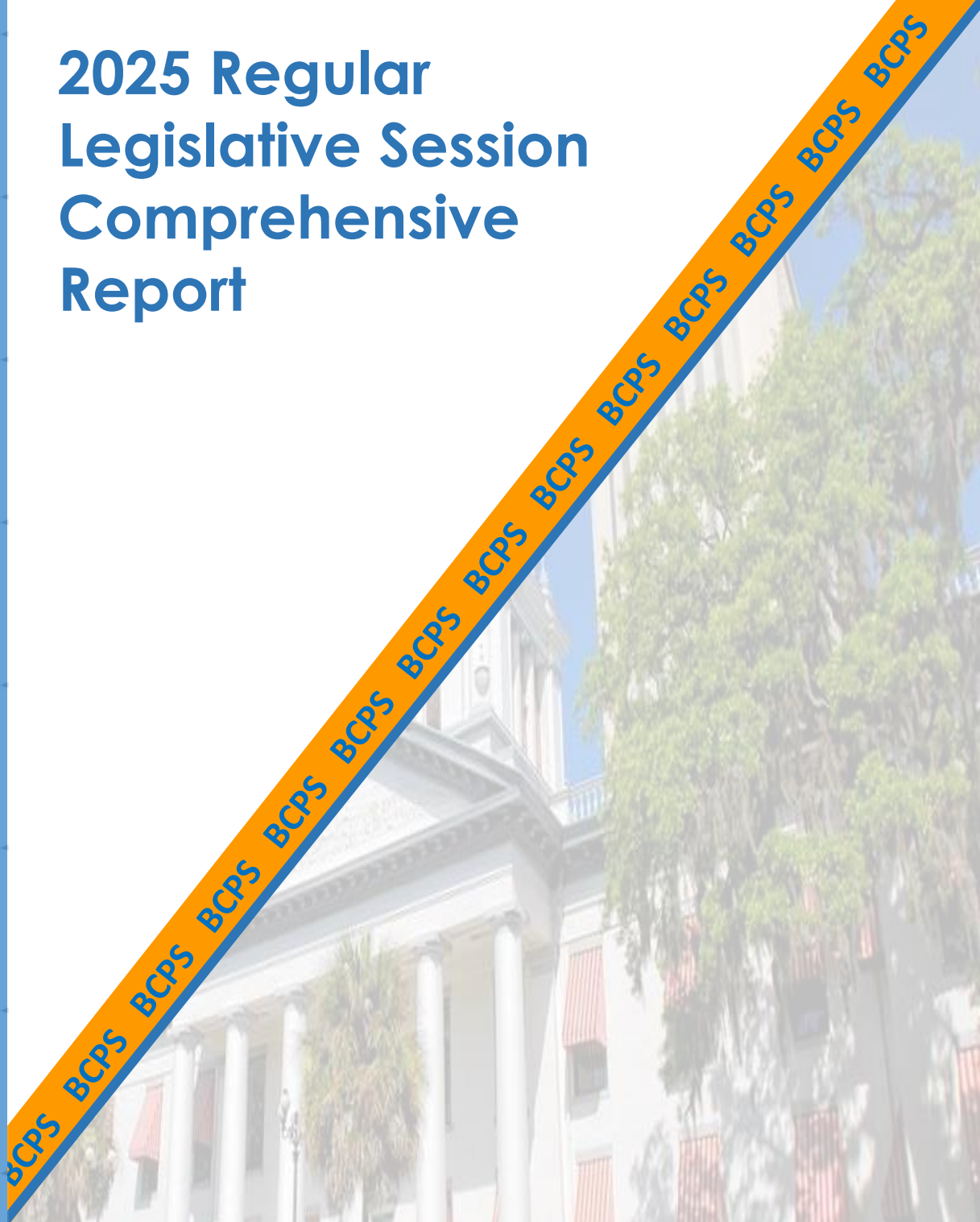


2025 Regular Legislative Session Comprehensive Report



JUNE 24, 2025

Established 1915



BROWARD
County Public Schools

*Summary And Analysis Of The Bill Are Provided By GrayRobinson And The
Southern Group*



The Florida Senate



FLORIDA HOUSE of REPRESENTATIVES

Please find below a **detailed** description of legislative actions taken during the sessions of the Florida Senate and Florida House of Representatives. The following 32 bills have been **enrolled**, meaning they have passed both legislative chambers in identical form and are now being prepared for presentation to the Governor for final approval or veto.

School Board Member Legislation

SB 268- Public Records/ Congressional Members and Public Officers.....	03
--	----

Declaration and Observances Legislation

HB 259- Special Observances.....	03
SB 356- Holocaust Remembrance Day.....	03
HB 249- Gulf of America.....	03
HB 1237- Human Trafficking Awareness	04
HB 477- Disability History And Awareness Instruction.....	04

Safety, Security, and Emergency Preparedness Legislation

HB 279- False Reporting.....	05
SB 1374- School District Reporting Requirement.....	05
SB 1470- School Safety.....	06
SB 1546- Background Screening of Athletic Coaches.....	07

Student Health Legislation

HB 597- Diabetes Management in Schools.....	08
SB 958- Type 1 Diabetes Early Detection Program.....	08
SB 1070- Electrocardiograms for Student Athletes.....	09
SB 1514- Anaphylaxis in Traditional Public and Public Charter Schools.....	09
HB 1607- Cardiac Emergencies.....	10

Student Mental Health Service and Compliance Legislation

HB 969- Reporting of Student Mental Health Outcomes.....	10
--	----

Exceptional Student Education Legislation

SB 112- Children with Development Disabilities.....	11
---	----

Academics Legislation

HB 681- Apprenticeship and Pre-apprenticeship Program Funding.....	11
SB 738- Child Care and Early Learning Providers.....	12
SB 1102- School Readiness Program.....	13
HB 1145- Workforce Education.....	14
SB 1402- Student Enrolled in Dropout Retrieval Program.....	14

Operations Legislation

HB 85- Hazardous Walking Conditions.....	15
SB 462- Transportation.....	15
SB 296- Middle/High School Start Times.....	16

Strategy and Innovation Legislation

HB 443- Education.....	17
SB 248- Student Participation in Interscholastic & Extracurricular Sports.....	18

Student Services and Certifications Legislation

HB 809- School Social Workers.....	18
------------------------------------	----

Facility Planning & Real Estate Legislation

SB 1080- Local Government Land Regulation.....	19
--	----

Education Legislation

HB 875- Educator Preparation.....	20
HB 1105- Education.....	22
HB 1255- Education.....	23

[PLEASE PROCEED TO THE NEXT PAGE]

SB 268- Public Records/ Congressional Members and Public Officers

The bill exempts from public records copying and inspection requirements the partial home addresses and telephone numbers of certain public officers (including Superintendents and School Board members), as well as their spouses and adult children; and the names, home addresses, telephone numbers, and dates of birth of their minor children, if any, as well as the names and locations of the school or day care facility said children attend. The exemption repeals on October 2, 2030, unless reviewed and saved by the Legislature.

HB 259- Special Observances

This bill designates August 21 of each year as Fentanyl Awareness and Education Day to promote statewide awareness of the dangers associated with fentanyl use and the risk of overdose. The legislation encourages participation from state agencies, local governments, public schools, and other relevant entities in sponsoring educational events and outreach initiatives. These efforts aim to inform communities about the risks of fentanyl, available prevention resources, and broader issues related to substance use and abuse. The observance supports proactive engagement and education to help combat the growing opioid crisis.

SB 356- Holocaust Remembrance Day

This bill establishes Holocaust Remembrance Day to be observed annually on January 27. It requires the Governor to issue a proclamation each year recognizing the day, which may be commemorated in public schools, at the State Capitol, and in other locations as designated by the Governor. The bill also permits public schools to provide educational instruction on January 27—or an alternative appropriate date—focused on the historical impact and atrocities of the Holocaust, the dangers of anti-Semitism, and the positive contributions of the Jewish community to global society. The observance aims to promote historical awareness, tolerance, and cultural understanding among students and the broader public.

HB 249- Gulf of America

This bill mandates that all state agencies update official documents and communications by replacing the term “Gulf of Mexico” with “Gulf of America.” Beginning July 1, 2025, public and charter schools will be required to adopt and utilize instructional materials that reflect this terminology change. The legislation aims to standardize geographic references across state-supported institutions and educational resources.

HB 1237- Human Trafficking Awareness

This bill establishes mandatory human trafficking awareness training for personnel in all public schools, including charter schools. By December 1, 2025, the Department of Education (DOE) is required to identify a free training curriculum that may be delivered either in person or online. The training must cover key topics, including:

- The distinction between sex trafficking and labor trafficking,
- How to identify students who may be victims,
- The responsibilities of school employees in recognizing, reporting, and responding to suspected cases, and
- A clear protocol for reporting suspected human trafficking.

The bill mandates training for three categories of school personnel:

- Instructional personnel, such as teachers, counselors, social workers, career specialists, school psychologists, librarians, media and learning specialists, and paraprofessionals,
- School administrators, and
- Educational support employees, including doctors, nurses, secretaries, craft workers, and service workers.

The goal of this legislation is to equip school staff with the knowledge and tools necessary to recognize and respond effectively to potential human trafficking situations, thereby enhancing student safety and well-being.

HB 477- Disability History And Awareness Instruction

The bill, titled the "Evin B. Hartsell Act," enhances the current framework for disability history and awareness instruction in Florida's public schools. While school districts may continue to choose whether to offer this instruction during the first two weeks of October, the legislation establishes more structured and grade-specific content requirements for those that do. The goal is to provide age-appropriate education that fosters empathy, understanding, and inclusion among students at all grade levels.

Under the new guidelines, instruction must be tailored as follows:

- Kindergarten through Grade 3: Lessons should include discussions aimed at promoting kindness and respect, particularly regarding physical disabilities. Activities should be interactive and designed to engage young learners in understanding differences and discouraging bullying behavior.
- Grades 4 through 6: Students should receive foundational knowledge about autism spectrum disorder (ASD), helping them recognize its characteristics and better understand the experiences of peers who may be on the spectrum.
- Grades 7 through 9: Instruction should shift to focus on hearing impairments, including both the physiological aspects and the social implications, to build awareness and promote the inclusion of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- Grades 10 through 12: High school students should explore more complex topics such as learning and intellectual disabilities, including how these conditions may affect academic performance, social interactions, and post-secondary success.

In support of this initiative, the bill also authorizes the Florida Department of Education to collaborate with the Evin B. Hartsell Foundation in the development and refinement of instructional materials aligned with the act's objectives. This partnership aims to ensure that content is accurate, relevant, and informed by best practices in both education and disability advocacy.

This legislation provides an opportunity for school districts to reinforce their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion while educating students on the lived experiences of individuals with disabilities throughout their academic journey.

HB 279- False Reporting

This bill strengthens penalties for the misuse of the 911 emergency response system by amending section 365.172, F.S. It establishes that knowingly causing another person to access 911 to make a false alarm, false complaint, or report false information constitutes a first-degree misdemeanor.

The legislation further introduces elevated criminal penalties based on the consequences of misuse:

- A third-degree felony applies when the misuse results in great bodily harm, permanent disfigurement, or permanent disability.
- A second-degree felony applies when the misuse leads to a death as a proximate result of lawful emergency response conduct.

The bill also reduces the threshold for enhanced penalties, allowing a third-degree felony charge after two prior convictions, instead of four. Additionally, it eliminates the former enhanced penalty based on receiving emergency services exceeding \$100 in value.

Upon conviction, courts are required to order offenders to pay:

- The full costs of prosecution and investigation,
- Restitution to any victim who suffers injury or damage resulting from misuse, and
- Restitution to respond to public safety agencies for costs incurred during the emergency response.

This legislation aims to deter abuse of emergency services, ensure accountability, and protect the integrity of public safety systems.

SB 1374- School District Reporting Requirement

This bill significantly updates background screening, reporting, and self-reporting requirements for school employees and volunteers, while also expanding district responsibilities and compliance measures.

Key provisions include:

- **Policy for Temporary Removal:** District school boards must adopt a policy to temporarily remove instructional personnel from the classroom within 24 hours of notification of an arrest for a felony or any misdemeanor offense included in Level 2 background screening standards.
- **Expanded Law Enforcement Notifications:** Law enforcement agencies are now required to notify school districts not only of felony arrests but also misdemeanor arrests that fall under Level 2 screening criteria.
- **Expanded Self-Reporting Requirements:** Instructional and administrative personnel must self-report felony and applicable misdemeanor arrests within 48 hours. The bill clarifies that such self-reports are not considered admissions of guilt and are inadmissible in any legal or administrative proceedings.
- **Volunteer Screening Options:** Public and private schools participating in state scholarship programs are authorized to conduct background checks on volunteers through the Care Provider Background Screening Clearinghouse or request national criminal history checks via the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.
- **Handling of Sealed and Expunged Records:** School districts are required to manage sealed or expunged criminal records disclosed through self-reporting in accordance with existing state confidentiality laws.

This legislation strengthens school safety protocols by improving transparency, ensuring prompt action following arrests, and expanding background check options for both staff and volunteers.

SB 1470- School Safety



This comprehensive bill significantly expands and refines Florida's school safety framework, with major changes to the Chris Hixon, Coach Aaron Feis, and Coach Scott Beigel School Guardian Program, security personnel training and oversight, physical security requirements, and emergency response protocols.

The bill strengthens the alignment between school security guards and school guardians by requiring that all training—both initial and ongoing—be conducted or approved by a sheriff. It mandates pre-training background screenings, psychological evaluations, and drug testing for participants. Sheriffs are required to maintain comprehensive records of training, certification, and firearm qualification. The bill prohibits waivers of training or screening costs for private security agencies and authorizes sheriffs to train individuals legally permitted to carry concealed firearms, including those under permitless carry provisions. Additionally, eligibility for participation in the school guardian program is extended to childcare facilities, aligning them with private schools.

To enhance transparency and accountability, the bill expands reporting requirements by aligning standards for school security guards with those for school guardians. Security agencies, alongside schools and sheriffs, must report employment and separation data to the Florida Department of

Law Enforcement (FDLE). FDLE is directed to maintain a consolidated statewide database that tracks guardians and security guards, including certification status, firearm discharges, and reported misconduct.

The bill refines campus and door security protocols by applying locked campus and access measures from 30 minutes before until 30 minutes after the school day. It permits doors and gates to remain unlocked if a locked barrier separates them from student areas and provides documented exemptions for career and technical education spaces where locked doors pose safety risks, as well as common areas like cafeterias and media centers during non-instructional times. Furthermore, it mandates school safety training for substitute teachers prior to their first day of teaching.

During active assailant incidents, the bill authorizes the use of temporary door locking devices that allow one-step egress from inside without a key, ingress from outside with a key or credential, compliance with the Florida Fire Prevention Code, and integration into the school's active assailant response plan.

Subject to funding, the Florida Department of Education must create a centralized panic alert and digital campus mapping system. Public and charter schools are required to connect to this system to facilitate real-time emergency coordination with law enforcement and first responders.

The bill codifies the Office of Safe Schools' (OSS) authority over behavioral threat assessment and management, including oversight of the statewide threat management process and the Florida-specific threat assessment tool. It authorizes the State Board of Education to establish rules governing data access within the threat management portal.

Lastly, the OSS is tasked with convening a multidisciplinary stakeholder workgroup—comprising law enforcement, educators, mental health professionals, and safety experts—to develop recommendations for the Florida Institute of School Safety. A formal report from this workgroup is due to the Governor and Legislature by January 1, 2026.

Overall, this legislation represents a comprehensive enhancement of Florida's school safety infrastructure, emphasizing improved coordination, rigorous training, increased accountability, and heightened preparedness.

SB 1546- Background Screening of Athletic Coaches

The bill amends section 943.0438, F.S., to extend the implementation deadline for the requirement that current and prospective athletic coaches undergo a Level II background screening. Originally set to take effect on January 1, 2025, the compliance date is now postponed to July 1, 2026. This extension provides additional time for schools, athletic associations, and related organizations to align their hiring and screening processes with the updated statutory requirements.

HB 597- Diabetes Management in Schools

Chapter 2025-15, L.O.F., authorizes school districts and public schools to acquire and maintain a supply of undesignated glucagon to support students with diabetes. The legislation requires that glucagon be stored securely but remains immediately accessible to authorized personnel for timely administration.

School districts and schools are empowered to:

- Enter agreements with manufacturers or suppliers to obtain glucagon free of charge, at fair market value, or at a reduced price,
- Accept donated or transferred glucagon that meets specified standards, and
- Seek monetary donations or apply for grants to fund glucagon purchases.

The bill authorizes county health departments to issue glucagon prescriptions in the name of the school district or public school and permits licensed health care practitioners to prescribe glucagon accordingly. Licensed pharmacists are authorized to dispense glucagon under these provisions. Participating schools must make glucagon available for administration as directed in a student's diabetes medical management plan or by a health care practitioner. Following administration, employees are required to call for emergency assistance and notify the students' parents or guardians.

The bill provides civil and criminal immunity protections to individuals and entities who appropriately administer glucagon in good faith. The State Board of Education is tasked with adopting rules to guide the implementation of these requirements, ensuring consistency and safety across all participating schools.

SB 958- Type 1 Diabetes Early Detection Program

This bill mandates the Department of Health (DOH), in partnership with school districts statewide, to develop and disseminate informational materials on Type 1 diabetes targeted at parents and guardians of students. Within 90 days after July 1, 2025, the DOH must create educational resources focused on the early detection of Type 1 diabetes and make them available on its website. These materials will be accessible to every early learning coalition, school district, and charter school throughout the state.

Additionally, the DOH is required to establish a standardized notification process for early learning coalitions, school districts, and charter schools to inform parents and guardians of voluntary prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first-grade students about the availability of these materials. Notifications must be issued by September 30, 2025, and annually thereafter.

The informational materials will include, at a minimum:

- An overview and description of Type 1 diabetes,
- Identification of risk factors and warning signs associated with the condition,
- Explanation of the screening process for early detection using a blood autoantibody test,
- Recommendations for further medical evaluation for students exhibiting warning signs or positive screening results.

This initiative aims to enhance early awareness and detection of Type 1 diabetes among young children, facilitating timely intervention and improved health outcomes.

SB 1070- Electrocardiograms for Student Athletes

The bill, titled the “Second Chance Act,” mandates that beginning with the 2026-2027 school year, all students must undergo an electrocardiogram (EKG) screening prior to participating or seeking to participate in interscholastic athletic competitions for the first time. The screening must adhere to standards set by the Florida High School Athletic Association’s (FHSAA) Sports Medicine Advisory Committee. Students who have had an EKG within the two years prior to the 2026-2027 school year may use those results to fulfill this requirement.

The FHSAA is required to adopt bylaws preventing student participation if an abnormal EKG is detected, until the student provides written medical clearance from an authorized health professional.

To facilitate access, each school district must actively seek public and private partnerships to offer low-cost EKG screenings to students. Students residing in counties where districts cannot secure EKGs for less than \$50 per student will be exempt from this requirement.

The bill allows exceptions to the EKG mandate under the following conditions:

- Written parental objection on religious grounds,
- Medical exemption provided by a licensed physician, and
- Inability of the school district to secure affordable EKG services.

Additionally, the bill permits qualified practitioners holding equivalent licensures from other states, who are in good standing, to conduct the required EKG screenings. This legislation is designed to improve early detection of cardiac issues among student athletes, promoting their health and safety during competitive sports participation.

SB 1514- Anaphylaxis in Traditional Public and Public Charter Schools

This bill mandates that district school boards and charter school governing boards ensure that a student-specific emergency action plan for anaphylaxis is actively always maintained and readily accessible for each student in kindergarten through grade eight. This includes when students are participating in extracurricular activities, athletics, school dances, and contracted before- and after-school programs on campus.

Additionally, the bill requires schools serving these grade levels to provide comprehensive training to an adequate number of school personnel and contracted staff on both preventing and responding to allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis. The training must cover how to recognize the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis and the proper administration of an FDA-approved epinephrine delivery device with a premeasured, weight-appropriate dose.

To support consistent implementation, the State Board of Education, in consultation with the Department of Health, is tasked with adopting rules by October 1, 2025, which will include identification of an approved training curriculum.

This legislation strengthens student safety by ensuring preparedness and swift response to potentially life-threatening allergic reactions in school settings.

HB 1607- Cardiac Emergencies

This bill requires school districts to provide basic first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training to all students twice during their education—once in middle school and once in high school—through physical education or health classes. The training must include hands-on CPR practice and instruction on the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED).

The legislation establishes the Plan for Urgent Life-Saving Emergencies (PULSE), a district-level protocol designed to guide school personnel in responding effectively to sudden cardiac arrest and similar emergencies. The PULSE plan must incorporate evidence-based practices, align with recommendations from the American Heart Association, and integrate seamlessly with local emergency response systems.

By July 1, 2027, every public school, including charter schools, is required to have at least one operational AED on campus, placed in a clearly marked and publicly accessible location. Schools must maintain AEDs in accordance with manufacturer guidelines, keep thorough maintenance records, register AED locations with the local emergency medical services medical director, and ensure staff are appropriately trained in CPR and AED use. The bill specifies that compliance with Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) AED rules alone does not fulfill these broader school requirements.

Finally, the bill offers civil liability protections for school employees and volunteers acting in good faith during emergencies under the Good Samaritan Act and the Cardiac Arrest Survival Act, encouraging prompt and confident life-saving actions.

HB 969- Reporting of Student Mental Health Outcomes

This bill mandates that the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA), in collaboration with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Department of Education (DOE), the Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, and other relevant stakeholders, conduct a comprehensive evaluation of school district student mental health services and support. The evaluation will also assess districts' compliance with existing statutory requirements related to mental health.

To facilitate this process, the bill requires the DOE, along with school district threat management coordinators and mental health coordinators, to provide OPPAGA with specific data and

information necessary for accurate reporting and thorough evaluation. This initiative aims to enhance the effectiveness, accountability, and quality of mental health support available to students statewide.

SB 112- Children with Development Disabilities

This bill enhances state efforts to support children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and other developmental disabilities through improved early intervention, school readiness services, specialized educational options, and professional training initiatives. It codifies new responsibilities for the University of Florida Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment (UF CAN), establishes targeted grant programs, and expands eligibility for Florida's Early Steps Program.

A key provision is the creation of the Early Steps Extended Option, allowing eligible children to receive Early Steps services until the school year following their fourth birthday. To qualify, children must meet specific eligibility criteria, with coordination required between Early Steps offices and school districts to ensure smooth transitions. The Department of Health (DOH) will seek federal approval but may implement the program using state funds independently.

The bill allocates recurring and nonrecurring funding to support program implementation, including new full-time positions at DOH.

Additionally, the bill establishes two grant programs administered by UF CAN:

Autism Charter School Startup Grants to assist in developing or expanding charter and laboratory schools exclusively serving students with autism, prioritizing rural and underserved areas.



Specialized Summer Program Grants to support inclusive summer services for children with autism and significant cognitive or behavioral needs, funding programs that provide comprehensive, structured summer activities and therapies.

Together, these initiatives aim to strengthen the continuum of care and educational opportunities for children with autism and related developmental challenges statewide.

HB 681- Apprenticeship and Pre-apprenticeship Program Funding

The bill introduces significant modifications to enhance transparency, financial accountability, and governance in the administration of registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. It establishes clearer requirements for partnerships between local educational agencies (LEAs) and program providers, updates reporting timelines and content, and improves public accessibility to workforce education funding data.

Key provisions include:

- **Uniform Standards and Partnership Agreements-** The Department of Education (DOE) is mandated to establish uniform minimum standards and policies governing apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs. These standards are designed to promote equitable and transparent funding arrangements between LEAs and program partners. Partnership agreements must explicitly outline each party's responsibilities and define the funding split based on the services provided. Notably, if the LEA's involvement is limited to administrative functions, its share of funding is capped at 10%.
- **Standardized Contract Template-** DOE is required to develop and provide a standardized model contract template for LEA-program partnerships. This template will address critical elements such as roles, funding terms, legal compliance, and reporting obligations to ensure consistency and legal adherence across all agreements.
- **Enhanced Reporting Requirements-** The bill revises the content and deadlines for DOE's annual apprenticeship and preapprenticeship report, shifting the publication deadline from September 1 to November 30. Expanded reporting will include detailed expenditure summaries delineating both LEA and program responsibilities and costs. Additionally, reports must now disclose the total funds received by each training provider, program, and occupation. Administrative cost reporting is augmented to include the total personnel hours dedicated to program administration.
- **Funding Transparency Tool-** To increase public accessibility to financial data, DOE is directed to develop and launch an online funding transparency tool by July 1, 2026. This tool will offer searchable historical funding data for the previous three fiscal years, categorized by funding sources, school district, and Florida College System institutions.
- **District Workforce Education Funding Steering Committee Enhancements-** The bill strengthens governance by imposing new procedural requirements on District Workforce Funding Steering Committee meetings, including mandatory public notice, opportunities for public comment, publication of workpapers, and allowance for remote participation. Furthermore, the timeline for submitting the funding model to the Legislature is adjusted to at least two months prior to the start of the legislative session, advancing from the previous March 1 deadline.

These changes collectively aim to foster greater accountability, transparency, and collaboration in the management of apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, ensuring effective use of workforce education funds and enhancing public trust in these vital initiatives.

SB 738- Child Care and Early Learning Providers

The bill modernizes and revises several key aspects of childcare facility licensure, personnel training, inspection procedures, and enforcement to enhance safety while streamlining regulatory processes. It authorizes the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to establish a three-level violation classification system focused on child health and safety, with Class Three violations being the least serious and only applicable if the same incident occurs at least three times within two years. Inspection and licensure renewal standards are updated to reflect these new classifications, requiring facilities to demonstrate at least two consecutive years of licensure and

successful completion of two full onsite renewal inspections within the past two years, without unresolved violations or complaints.

The bill also mandates faster background check reporting, requiring DCF to provide criminal history results to childcare facilities within three business days to expedite hiring and compliance. Several prior parent notification requirements are eliminated, including mandates for facilities to provide pagers during drop-in care, informing parents about influenza risks and dangers of leaving children unattended in vehicles, and implementing abuse prevention programs.

Personnel training requirements are revised to include at least one staff member trained in CPR through in-person instruction, with DCF required to make minimum training coursework available online. To address delays in background screening, a 45-day provisional hire status is introduced, allowing current or prospective staff to work under direct supervision by fully screened and trained personnel while awaiting results.

Local licensing authorities must annually affirm their decision to license childcare facilities by a majority vote of the county commission to maintain their designation. The bill exempts certain childcare facilities certified by the U.S. Department of Defense or U.S. Coast Guard from state licensure in specific cases and excludes preschools from special municipal assessments. Additionally, some childcare providers serving eligible populations are exempt from licensing requirements except for personnel screening, and DCF is no longer required to develop specialized care standards for facilities serving mildly ill children.

Overall, these reforms aim to balance enhanced child safety with increased regulatory efficiency and greater operational flexibility for childcare providers.

SB 1102- School Readiness Program

Expanded Eligibility Documentation- The bill broadens who can determine and document a child's special needs for eligibility in the School Readiness (SR) program. Besides an Individual Education Plan (IEP), eligibility can now be based on:

- An Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP)
- A diagnosis of a special need
- A written determination from specified medical professionals

Enhanced Provider Funding Criteria- SR providers may qualify for additional funding through the special needs' differential rating by meeting:

- The minimum program assessment score required for SR contracting
- Completion of targeted training focused on serving children with special needs within a defined timeframe
- Ongoing relevant training to maintain eligibility for the differential

These changes aim to improve access to early childhood education for children with special needs and incentive provider expertise in supporting this population.

HB 1145- Workforce Education

The Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant Program has been expanded to allow charter schools to directly apply for and receive funding. This change enables charter schools to independently propose and implement new or expanded career and technical education programs that lead to industry certifications listed on the CAPE Industry Certification Funding List.

Modifications to the Money-back Guarantee Program include an expansion of the program that requires school districts and Florida College System (FCS) institutions to refund tuition to students who do not secure employment within six months of completing qualifying workforce programs. The number of qualifying programs is set to increase from three to six by July 1, 2026. Enrollment in designated programs automatically includes students in the Money-back Guarantee Program. Institutions are permitted to set eligibility criteria for reimbursement, but any work search and internship requirements must not exceed those established under Florida's reemployment assistance law (s. 443.091, F.S.). Additionally, school districts and FCS institutions must report their eligibility criteria annually to the State Board of Education. The Department of Education is also required to include both performance outcomes and the eligibility criteria used by each school district and FCS institution for tuition reimbursement in its annual report.

SB 1402- Student Enrolled in Dropout Retrieval Program

The bill provides Virtual Instruction Program (VIP) providers with greater flexibility in how their performance is evaluated by allowing them to choose to receive a school improvement rating instead of a traditional school grade for each school district with which they have a contract. This school improvement rating is designed to more accurately reflect the performance of VIP providers by basing it on the assessment scores of all students served by the VIP within the specific school district. This approach recognizes the unique nature of virtual instruction and aims to provide a more nuanced evaluation than the standard grading system.



Furthermore, the bill specifically exempts VIP providers that operate exclusively as dropout retrieval programs from the requirement to receive a traditional district school grade. Dropout retrieval programs serve a distinct student population, those who have officially withdrawn from high school before graduating and were not actively engaged in the education system at the time they enrolled in the program. For these programs, the bill requires them to choose either a school improvement rating or a traditional school grade, thereby giving them flexibility in how their effectiveness is measured.

By defining dropout retrieval programs in this way, the bill acknowledges the unique challenges these programs face in re-engaging students who have previously left the educational system. This

tailored approach to evaluation aims to support these programs in their mission to help students return to school and successfully complete their education, while providing a fair and meaningful method of accountability. Overall, the bill's provisions seek to enhance transparency and improve the assessment of virtual education options, while accommodating the diverse needs of different types of programs and student populations.

HB 85- Hazardous Walking Conditions

The bill expands access to workforce education grant funding and makes significant modifications to the Money-back Guarantee Program to improve accountability and support student success in career and technical education. One of the key provisions authorizes charter schools to directly apply for and receive funding through the Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant Program. This change enables charter schools to independently propose and implement new or expanded career and technical education programs that lead to industry-recognized certifications listed on the CAPE Industry Certification Funding List. This increases the number of educational institutions that can develop specialized training programs to meet workforce demands and helps promote innovation in technical education.

In addition, the bill expands the existing Money-back Guarantee Program, which requires school districts and Florida College System (FCS) institutions to refund tuition to students who are unable to secure employment within six months of completing a qualifying workforce program. To strengthen this program, the bill raises the minimum number of required participating programs from three to six by July 1, 2026, and mandates that participating institutions notify the State Board of Education of the selected programs. The bill also clarifies that enrollment in one of the designated programs automatically enrolls the student in the Money-back Guarantee Program, ensuring broad awareness and participation.

While institutions are allowed to set specific eligibility criteria for tuition reimbursement, the bill stipulates that any work search or internship requirements must not exceed those outlined for reemployment assistance under section 443.091, Florida Statutes. This ensures fairness and accessibility in program requirements. Furthermore, the bill mandates that all school districts and FCS institutions report their eligibility criteria to the State Board of Education on an annual basis. To improve oversight and transparency, the bill also expands the Department of Education's (DOE) annual reporting requirements. The DOE must now include in its reports not only the performance outcomes of each participating program but also the specific eligibility criteria used by each school district and FCS institution when determining a student's qualification for tuition reimbursement. Together, these changes aim to enhance the effectiveness and accountability of workforce training programs, promote employment outcomes for graduates, and ensure that public funds are used responsibly and equitably.

SB 462- Transportation

Senate Bill 462 introduces a new administrative hearing process as an alternative to traditional court proceedings for individuals contesting school bus safety violations. Under this bill, violators

are given a 60-day window from the date of the notice of violation to request a hearing with either the appropriate school district or county. This option allows individuals to avoid the financial and procedural burdens associated with court-related fees and the issuance of a uniform traffic citation, streamlining the resolution process while maintaining due process.

To support this new framework, SB 462 outlines requirements for the appointment of local hearing officers. School districts are permitted to appoint a hearing officer who must be a licensed attorney in good standing with The Florida Bar for at least the previous five years. Alternatively, counties that have entered into interlocal agreements with school districts and law enforcement agencies may designate existing qualified staff to serve as hearing officers through a formal resolution.

The hearing process is designed to be accessible and flexible, allowing for proceedings to take place either in person or virtually. Petitioners will be notified of the hearing via first-class mail and retain the option to reschedule the hearing or cancel it by paying the civil penalty in advance. During the hearing, testimony is given under oath, and evidence—such as images or video footage captured by the school bus infraction detection system—may be presented. The hearing officer's decision is based on a "preponderance of the evidence" standard, and if the violation is upheld, the individual must pay a civil penalty of at least \$200 plus any related administrative costs.

Should a petitioner wish to contest the outcome further, they may appeal the final administrative order following the procedures set forth in Florida Statutes § 162.11. To facilitate the transition to this new system, the bill allows any unresolved contested violations not heard by July 1, 2025, to be heard under the new process within one year after that date.

In terms of financial impact, SB 462 stipulates that civil penalties collected from upheld violations must be remitted monthly to the respective school district. These funds are earmarked specifically for covering the administrative and operational costs of the hearing process and for supporting school transportation safety initiatives, in accordance with Florida Statutes § 316.173(8).

The bill also introduces a grant funding opportunity through the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), which is authorized to allocate up to \$5 million annually from fiscal year 2025–2026 through 2029–2030. This grant program is designed to benefit state colleges and school districts, with priority given to rural communities. Eligible uses of these funds include the acquisition of equipment simulators with original manufacturer controls, instructional aids, and elective courses in heavy civil construction. These courses may include certification opportunities such as the OSHA 10-hour safety course and equipment simulator certification, helping to expand workforce readiness and safety training in the transportation and construction sectors.

SB 296- Middle/High School Start Times

The bill modifies the upcoming requirement for later school start times by providing school districts and charter schools with a compliance reporting option instead of enforcing immediate penalties. Specifically, beginning July 1, 2026, middle schools are prohibited from starting the instructional day before 8:00 a.m., and high schools are prohibited from starting before 8:30 a.m. However, rather than mandating strict enforcement, the bill allows district school boards to be

considered in compliance if they submit a prescribed report to the Department of Education by June 1, 2026.

This report must include the actual school start times, the strategies that were considered to meet the new requirements, an analysis of financial impacts, and any unintended consequences associated with the change. Charter schools are also permitted to utilize this compliance pathway by filing the same report, with an exemption granted to charter schools-in-the-workplace. This approach acknowledges the logistical and financial challenges of adjusting school schedules while still encouraging alignment with research-based recommendations for later school start times to benefit student health and academic performance.

HB 443- Education

House Bill 443 introduces several significant updates related to charter schools, lab schools, student conduct, enrollment, and student athletics, with the overall goal of enhancing operational flexibility, ensuring equity, and expanding access to educational and extracurricular opportunities. The bill formally defines charter schools as public facilities for the purposes of local government concurrency, streamlining their treatment in land use and infrastructure planning. It also permits lab schools to use discretionary capital outlay funds for the acquisition, construction, renovation, or leasing of real property and related improvements, as long as the spending does not exceed the property's independently appraised value. This provides lab schools with greater flexibility in managing their capital investments.

To improve fairness and transparency, the bill prohibits charter school sponsors from imposing reporting or auditing deadlines on charter schools that are earlier than the deadlines the sponsors follow themselves. Additionally, it empowers charter schools to adopt their own student codes of conduct, provided they meet or exceed the behavioral standards established by the school district in which they are located.

HB 443 supports enrollment flexibility by allowing eligible charter schools to exceed established enrollment caps if their facilities can accommodate the increase, if sponsors receive timely notification. It also guarantees charter schools and their contractor's access to data systems maintained by their sponsor and the Florida Department of Education, unless access is restricted by law. To prevent conflicts of interest, the bill bars individuals who are affiliated with a school's landlord from serving on the school's governing board.

The bill enhances the options available to high-performing charter schools by allowing them to assume the charter of another school within the same district, creating an avenue for consolidation or turnaround efforts. It also expands enrollment preferences by permitting students who attend a Pre-K program offered by a charter school to receive priority for kindergarten admission at that school.

Finally, the bill increases access to interscholastic athletics by allowing full-time virtual instruction students to participate in sports at any public or private school in their district, if they meet

eligibility criteria. This provision ensures that virtual students are not excluded from valuable extracurricular opportunities that contribute to their social development and physical well-being.

SB 248- Student Participation in Interscholastic & Extracurricular Sports

Senate Bill 248 significantly expands access to interscholastic and interscholastic sports and extracurricular activities for students in home education and private school programs. The legislation aims to ensure broader participation in Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA)-governed programs while increasing transparency in eligibility decisions and appeals. One of the key provisions of SB 248 is the clarification that a school's sport or activity must meet the designation requirements outlined in section 1006.205(3)(a), Florida Statutes. This provision ensures consistency in how sports and activities are categorized across institutions, reducing ambiguity in participation eligibility.

For home education students, the bill grants the right to participate in interscholastic athletics at any public school within their resident school district, provided they meet the same eligibility requirements as full-time public-school students. This provision offers families greater flexibility and access to athletic opportunities that may not be otherwise available through their home education programs.

The bill also expands opportunities for private school students. Previously, these students were allowed to participate in FHSAA sports at other schools only if their private school did not offer the sport and if the school's enrollment was below a certain threshold. SB 248 removes this enrollment-size restriction, enabling any private school student—regardless of school size—to participate in FHSAA sports at a member school when the sport is not offered at their own school. This levels the playing field and ensures that all private school students have fair access to interscholastic athletics.

In addition to expanding participation, SB 248 mandates greater transparency from the FHSAA. It requires the association to publish its appeal decisions online in a searchable format, ensuring public access to eligibility rulings and disciplinary actions, while remaining compliant with applicable privacy laws. This transparency measure is intended to build trust in the FHSAA's decision-making process and provide families with a clearer understanding of precedent and procedures.

Overall, SB 248 removes previous participation barriers and promotes inclusivity in student athletics, while simultaneously improving accountability and public access to key administrative decisions.

HB 809- School Social Workers

House Bill 809 introduces a targeted exemption for school social workers within Florida's educator certification requirements. Specifically, the bill amends section 1012.55, Florida Statutes, by creating a new subsection that exempts individuals employed as school social workers from having

to demonstrate mastery of general and subject area knowledge—typically required for instructional personnel certification.

Under current law, most certified educators in Florida must pass examinations or meet specific qualifications to demonstrate competency in general and subject area knowledge. HB 809 recognizes the distinct professional qualifications of school social workers—who often hold advanced degrees and licenses in social work, rather than traditional teacher training—and removes these examination-based certification hurdles for this group.

By streamlining the credentialing process, the bill is designed to reduce barriers to entry and help school districts more easily recruit and retain qualified social workers. This is especially relevant given the growing demand for mental health and support services in schools and the importance of integrating specialized professionals into educational settings.

In effect, HB 809 prioritizes the practical experience and professional licensure of social workers over standardized testing for knowledge that may not align with their specialized role. This legislative change may lead to a broader pool of candidates for school social work positions and promote the expansion of student support services across Florida’s K–12 system.

SB 1080- Local Government Land Regulation

The bill introduces several reforms to local government land use and development processes, aiming to enhance transparency, efficiency, and accountability in zoning, permitting, and fee practices.

The bill mandates local governments to clearly outline in writing the minimum required information for applications related to zoning approvals, rezonings, subdivisions, certifications, special exceptions, and variances. This information must be publicly accessible—posted on the government’s website, available for inspection, and provided during pre-application meetings—ensuring greater clarity and accessibility for applicants.

Additionally, the bill modifies procedures related to comprehensive plan amendments. If such an amendment is not approved at the second required public hearing, it must be approved within 180 days to remain active. If not acted upon within that timeframe, the amendment is considered withdrawn. This provision introduces predictability and discourages undue delays in the plan adoption process.

The bill establishes concrete deadlines for local governments when reviewing development permits and order applications. Upon receipt, the local government must confirm receipt within five business days. Within 30 days, they must notify the applicant whether the submission is complete or highlight deficiencies. Once deemed complete, the local government has 120 days to issue a decision, or 180 days if the application necessitates a quasi-judicial or public hearing. Failure to meet these deadlines will require the local government to issue specified refunds to the applicant, creating accountability mechanisms for processing delays.

The bill strengthens restrictions on local government authority to raise impact fees. Currently, increases may be phased in unless "extraordinary circumstances" are proven through a study and approved by a two-thirds vote. The bill eliminates this exception if no increase has occurred in the past five years and increases the required vote threshold for any such fee increase to a unanimous vote. Any approved increase must be phased in over two to four equal annual increments, providing predictability and easing the financial burden on developers. These provisions take effect January 1, 2026.

Additionally, school district impact fee alternatives must meet concurrency tests before being imposed. This ensures that alternative fees are aligned with the infrastructure and capacity demands they are intended to address.

The bill broadens the permissible use of revenues generated from building code fees and fines. These funds may now also be used for administering, processing, and enforcing activities related to obtaining or finalizing building permits. This flexibility could enhance staffing, inspection capacity, and administrative efficiency within local building departments.

Overall, this legislation represents a significant effort to streamline and standardize local development review processes, enhance transparency in land use approvals, and impose greater fiscal discipline on impact fee practices. These changes are likely to benefit developers and applicants by reducing regulatory uncertainty and delays, while also ensuring that local governments remain responsive and transparent in their operations.

HB 875- Educator Preparation

House Bill 875 significantly restructures Florida's education preparation and certification systems, introducing new standards, flexibility, and alternative pathways aimed at strengthening teacher readiness and addressing staffing shortages. The bill outlines both short-term changes and long-term implementation goals focused on improving the quality and accessibility of teacher preparation programs statewide.

The bill directs the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) to convene a workgroup to revise the *Florida Educator Accomplished Practices* (FEAPs) by 2026. These practices serve as the foundational standards for teacher effectiveness in Florida. Once revised, the department must begin development of a new *Florida Teacher Excellence Examination* aligned with the updated standards by January 1, 2027. This step marks a comprehensive modernization of teacher evaluation and certification benchmarks in Florida.

To make educator preparation more accessible, particularly for experienced professionals, the bill reduces the internship requirement for post-secondary school counseling students from 600 hours to 300 hours, provided the candidate has been a full-time teacher for five years and has received a

“highly effective” rating for the past three years. It also mandates FDOE to offer broader flexibility in meeting internship requirements.

The bill authorizes school districts to hire part-time, non-degreed teachers in fine and performing arts—helping to address talent gaps in these subject areas—while setting minimum qualifications to maintain instructional quality.

By August 1, 2027, all teacher preparation programs must implement a new *uniform core curriculum* aligned with the revised FEAPs. This initiative is intended to ensure consistency, rigor, and relevance across institutions that train Florida educators.

Subject to funding, the bill creates the *Florida Center for Teaching Excellence* at Miami Dade College. This center will serve as a statewide hub for evidence-based training, model clinical teaching experiences, and a coordinated network of teacher mentors, reflecting a significant investment in long-term educator support and development.

HB 875 establishes the CERT Program as an *alternative pathway* to professional certification. This mentorship-based, on-the-job training model includes performance assessments and is designed to prepare new teachers outside of traditional coursework. Starting July 1, 2029, completion of CERT may fulfill the requirement for demonstrating *Mastery of Professional Preparation*.

The bill loosens restrictions on who may serve as a mentor in teacher apprenticeship programs by allowing any professional certificate holder to mentor. It also permits clinical educators to be assigned to teachers with temporary certification. Further, beginning July 1, 2029, mentors and clinical educators working with early-grade teachers (K–3) or reading-focused candidates must possess a reading endorsement or certification to ensure specialized literacy support.

HB 875 eliminates the general knowledge test requirement for teacher certification starting in 2029. Instead, candidates must complete an *Introduction to Education* course and a course in *classroom management and high-impact teaching strategies*—aligned with the new uniform core curriculum. This shift emphasizes practical skill development over standardized testing.

HB 875 represents a comprehensive transformation of Florida’s educational pipeline. By revising core standards, introducing flexible certification routes, and investing in mentorship and teacher support structures, the bill aims to raise instructional quality while expanding the pool of qualified teachers. The long implementation timeline allows institutions and candidates time to adjust, while also signaling the state's commitment to a forward-looking, results-based educator workforce strategy.



HB 1105- Education

House Bill 1105 is a comprehensive education reform measure that introduces significant changes across governance, charter school operations, student conduct, curriculum, graduation requirements, and workforce development. The bill relocates the Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys from the Department of Legal Affairs to Florida Memorial University, transferring responsibilities such as staffing, meeting approvals, quorum requirements, and reimbursements to the university. It mandates that surtax revenues shared with school districts through interlocal agreements must also be proportionately shared with eligible charter schools, with any unencumbered funds reverting to the sponsor if a charter is not renewed or is terminated. This applies to voter-approved levies enacted on or after July 1, 2025.

The bill strengthens protections against school trespassing by defining “school bus” and allowing posted signs or verbal warnings from officials to constitute sufficient notice for immediate arrest and prosecution. It authorizes warrantless arrests for trespassing on school buses and grounds. Charter school policies are revised to facilitate conversion charter schools, including “job engine” charters meant to attract businesses. Voting for conversion is limited to parents, and colleges, universities, and municipalities are permitted as sponsors or applicants. Municipalities must negotiate lease or rental terms for converted facilities and may grant enrollment preference to children of employees at associated job-producing entities. Sponsors must also use a standard monitoring tool for oversight of charter schools.

The bill eliminates the authority to issue certificates of completion and directs the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) to develop an alternative graduation pathways document for non-diploma students. For students with disabilities who have declared intent to pursue a certificate of completion, their Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be reviewed annually to reassess diploma eligibility. Additionally, the bill mandates the development of applied, equivalent, and integrated academic courses and includes AICE courses among those qualifying for the Seal of Fine Arts. It allows two years of marching band to satisfy physical education or performing arts graduation requirements and requires schools to provide students with information on state-approved internships as part of course counseling materials.

HB 1105 enhances postsecondary access by permitting state colleges to enroll students who have completed coursework but failed required exams. It also revises dual enrollment agreements to specify transportation responsibilities and ensure schedules maximize student access and participation. Discretionary millage levy funds may now be used to cover liability insurance expenses. Beginning with the class of 2025–26, students earning the AP Capstone designation qualify for the Bright Futures Academic Scholars Award, and the volunteer hour requirement for Gold Seal and CAPE Scholars increases to 75.

The bill directs FDOE to establish mathematics endorsement competencies by August 1, 2026, and implements a ban on wireless communication devices use during the school day for elementary and middle school students. High schools must designate specific areas for phone use. Additionally, the Commissioner of Education must partner with select districts that already ban cell phone use or plan to do so starting in 2025–26 and report the policy’s impact on student achievement and behavior to legislative leaders by December 1, 2026.

Finally, the bill prioritizes applications from job engine charter schools for Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grants and requires FDOE to implement a workforce credentialing program for students with autism or those on modified curriculum pathways by January 31, 2026. Through these provisions, HB 1105 aims to enhance equity, accountability, and innovation across Florida's education system.

HB 1255- Education

House Bill 1255 makes several important updates and changes to Florida's education statutes. It removes all statutory references to the Florida School for Competitive Academics and renames "critical teacher shortage areas" as "high-demand teacher needs areas." The bill revises background screening requirements for certain private school personnel by aligning fingerprinting rules with those for public school teachers and moving private school screening to the ACHA clearinghouse. It removes the Commissioner of Education's authority to determine if schools have maximized efforts to include minority and low socioeconomic status individuals on School Advisory Committees (SAC) and District Advisory Committees (DAC).

The bill updates admissions standards for preeminent state universities by including a minimum average Classical Learning Test (CLT) score of 83 on a 120-point scale for incoming freshmen. It broadens the definition and requirements for emergency opioid antagonists in schools beyond naloxone to better address safety needs in K-12 and postsecondary settings.

Charter school policies on corporal punishment must now explicitly require parent permission, and local authorities are prohibited from imposing operational requirements on charter schools that are not uniformly applied to public schools within the same jurisdiction. Regarding early childhood education, the bill removes restrictions that previously limited families' use of a full VPK voucher when transferring providers, allowing families to use the full voucher regardless of attendance percentage.

The definition of "economically disadvantaged" for the School Readiness (SR) program is changed from families earning no more than 150% of the federal poverty level to those earning 55% or less of the state median income. Uniform waitlists for SR programs must track children based on household income and priorities established in state law. Additionally, data used for the Early Learning Program Estimating Conference must consider historical trends and county population changes.

The bill requires that any new or revised academic standards submitted to the State Board of Education contain only academic standards and benchmarks, with the Commissioner revising all current standards accordingly by January 1, 2026. District reading plans must include provisions ensuring that intensive reading interventions are delivered by personnel with reading micro-credentials or certification/endorsement, incorporate evidence-based strategies from the Just Read, Florida! Office, and describe how districts prioritize highly effective teachers in grades K–2.

Financial literacy courses are now required to include information on higher education costs and FAFSA completion. School principals must refer certain problematic students to child study teams

for parent meetings to identify remedies, and if issues are unresolved, specified strategies must be implemented. The Superintendent must determine, before an expulsion period expires, whether it should be extended based on threat management team recommendations and specify any educational services provided during extended expulsions.

Parents must be informed about student eligibility for New World Scholarship accounts and the district's New Worlds Tutoring Program for students with math deficiencies. Hour's high school students spend tutoring under the RAISE program can count toward Bright Futures community service requirements. Finally, the bill allows school districts to use discretionary millage levy funds to pay for liability insurance. Overall, HB 1255 updates multiple aspects of education policy to enhance oversight, equity, safety, and student support in Florida schools.

