

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based only on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Date: February 4, 1998 Revised: _____

Subject: School Districts/Academic Enrichment

	<u>Analyst</u>	<u>Staff Director</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Action</u>
1.	<u>White</u>	<u>O'Farrell</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Favorable/CS</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>WM</u>	<u>Withdrawn</u>
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

This bill would prevent school districts from receiving state funding for a student in the dropout prevention category unless the student demonstrated some level of academic improvement after each year of being served in the program. The requirement applies only to the category of dropout prevention programs called educational alternatives, not to the other four categories.

This bill creates a new section of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

The 1986 Legislature created the Dropout Prevention Act, s. 230.2316, F.S. Through that program, a student generates "weighted" state funding for the school district—that is, the base student allocation is multiplied by a program weight determined annually in the Appropriations Act. The weighted factor in 1997-1998 is 1.438, compared to a grade 9-12 factor of 1.169 times the base student allocation of \$3034.96. In money, a full-time-equivalent student in a dropout prevention program would generate \$816.40 more in state funding than a regular high school student.

Dropout prevention programs are divided up into five categories or program types: disciplinary, student services, substance abuse, teenage parent, and educational alternatives. Educational alternatives are the most common and report the most students -- 56 percent of all students in dropout prevention programs in 1995-1996 were in educational alternatives. That type of program is for students who are unmotivated or unsuccessful in the "traditional" school setting. School districts may place students in these programs for a number of reasons, including retention in the same grade, many absences from school, failing grades, or low achievement test scores.

Since the goal of dropout prevention is to keep students in school, some programs have received criticism because of the perception that the academic improvement of students is not high enough on the priority list. It was partly that perception that led the 1997 Legislature to mandate a performance-based funding method for educational alternatives for grades 9-12. Instead of distributing the weighted funding based on the number of full-time-equivalent students served, the state will distribute it based on performance. The weighted funding generated about \$25.4 million statewide in 1996-1997. This amount will be distributed to the school districts based on a formula that awards points (or takes away points) for six performance criteria. The performance criteria are the school status and the academic performance of students in the educational alternatives category. The school status is either graduating, remaining enrolled, or dropping out; the performance measures are scoring 3 or above on the state writing test and passing the state graduation test.

In 1996-1997, the total number of students in educational alternatives programs in grades 9-12 was 27,779.74 full-time-equivalent students. In 1995-1996, the number of students (headcount, not FTE) in all grade levels of educational alternatives was 143,149. Of those, 66,136 were in grades 4-8 and 77,013 were in grades 9-12.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The Committee Substitute would require that the category of dropout prevention programs called educational alternatives must include academic enrichment. After being in such a program for 12 months, a student would have to demonstrate some academic improvement or else the school district could not continue to earn state funding for the student in the dropout prevention category.

The academic improvement would be demonstrated by means of a nationally normed achievement test. If the student's scores on such a test showed no improvement, the school could choose either to cease to report the student in the dropout prevention category or to document improvement by some other method. The student's parent would have to participate in the documentation process, which could include grades or a portfolio of the student's work.

If a student did not improve academically by either of these standards, the school district would be required to identify the student and continue to provide an appropriate education to meet the student's needs. In addition, the school would be required to evaluate its services and report to the school district a plan for improving the services.

The bill would require testing each dropout prevention student each year using a nationally normed achievement test. All school districts use such a test every year already, so additional testing would not necessarily be required.

If this bill became a law, the Legislature would need to decide whether to add it to, or substitute it for, the performance-based funding already required for educational alternatives in grades 9-12. That requirement is placed in the Appropriations Act, not in substantive law, so it will not be in

effect after the 1998 Legislative Session unless that Legislature enacts it again. Also, those provisions apply only to students in grades 9-12, whereas this bill requires academic enrichment and documentation for all grade levels, 4-12.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Parents would be required to participate if a school district decided to document student achievement by a method other than testing.

C. Government Sector Impact:

School districts would be required to document student achievement every year based on the results of student scores on a nationally normed achievement test.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.

This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's sponsor or the Florida Senate.
