

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.)

BILL: SB 842

SPONSOR: Senator Klein

SUBJECT: Grade Forgiveness Policies

DATE: February 1, 2000 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	White	O'Farrell	ED	Favorable
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

This bill requires high schools to limit their grade forgiveness policies to replacing a grade of “D” or “F” with a grade “C” or higher. The grade that replaces the “D” or “F” must be earned subsequently in the same or a comparable course. Grades in all other courses must then be included in the calculation of the cumulative grade point average (GPA) required for graduation.

This bill amends s. 232.246, F.S.

II. Present Situation:

Courses Required for Graduation

Section 232.246(1), F.S., outlines courses required for high school graduation. Graduation requires successful completion of either a minimum of 24 academic credits in grades 9 through 12 or an International Baccalaureate curriculum. The 24 credits are distributed as follows:

- Four credits in English.
- Three credits in mathematics (one of these credits must be Algebra I, a series of courses equivalent to Algebra I, or a higher-level mathematics course).
- Three credits in science.
- One credit in American history.
- One credit in world history.
- One-half credit in economics.
- One-half credit in American government.
- One credit in practical arts career education/exploratory career education/performing fine arts.
- One-half credit in life management.
- One credit in physical education.
- Eight and one-half elective credits.

Graduation Standards

Section 232.246(5), F.S., requires each district school board to establish standards for graduation for its schools. In addition to completing the requirements outlined in s. 232.245, F.S., and any others prescribed by the district, a student must earn a passing score on the high school competency test and attain a certain grade point average that is set to increase in increments to reach 2.0 (that is, a “C” average, cumulative from grades 9-12):

- Students who entered 9th grade before the 1997-1998 school year must achieve a cumulative grade point average of 1.5 on a 4.0 scale (that is, unweighted); however, these students must earn a cumulative unweighted grade point average of 2.0 in courses for graduation that are taken after July 1, 1997, or have an overall cumulative grade point average of 2.0 or above.
- Students who entered 9th grade in the 1997-1998 school year and thereafter must achieve a cumulative unweighted grade point average of 2.0 in courses required for graduation.

Grade Forgiveness Policies

Section 232.246(5)(e)1., F.S., requires school districts to adopt policies designed to assist students in meeting the GPA requirements for graduation. These policies may include forgiveness policies, summer school attendance, special counseling, volunteer or peer tutors, school-sponsored help sessions, homework hotlines, and skills classes.

Implementation Strategies

In practice, many school districts require more than the 24 credits required by law to graduate, and all allow students to accumulate more than 24 if the student wishes to do so and can generate the credits during the regular school day, at a community college, summer school, or night school. Only the 24 credits with the highest grades are used to calculate the grade point average for graduation. This practice has the effect of allowing a grade to be “forgiven” even though the substitute course did not resemble the original one and was taken before the one it replaced. It also has the effect of allowing grade forgiveness policies to bring up grades of “C” or better.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The legislation under consideration requires that, beginning in the 2000-2001 school year, forgiveness policies will be limited to replacing a grade of “D” or “F” with a grade “C” or higher. The higher grade must be earned subsequent to the original grade, and it must be in the same or a comparable course. Except for courses that are subsequently retaken under the forgiveness policy, all course grades must be included in the calculation of the cumulative GPA required for graduation.

In practice, this change will mean that grade forgiveness will be more difficult to accomplish. It will not occur automatically when the top 24 grades are selected for averaging. Also, the bill will tend to cause some students to take additional courses because some bad grades may not be forgivable without repeating a course and because some students will need additional courses to make a 2.0 GPA if all the course grades are included in the final average.

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:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

If students take additional courses in an effort to bring up their grade point averages, the state will incur the cost of providing the courses. Options include night school at an adult education facility, summer school, and co-enrollment at a community college.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.