

CHAPTER 2021-155

House Bill No. 7033

An act relating to the Task Force on Closing the Achievement Gap for Boys; creating the Task Force on Closing the Achievement Gap for Boys within the Department of Education; providing a purpose for the task force; providing for membership and meetings of the task force; requiring the department to provide certain staff support, data, and information to assist the task force; requiring that the task force submit a report to the Governor and Legislature by a specified date; providing for future expiration of the task force; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, 44 percent of third grade boys are reading below grade level, a 4 percentage-point deficit as compared to girls, and 53 percent of 10th grade boys are reading below grade level, an 11 percentage-point deficit as compared to girls, based on the 2018-2019 statewide, standardized English Language Arts assessment, and

WHEREAS, research shows that boys develop literacy skills later than girls, and

WHEREAS, in comparison to girls, boys are suspended and expelled from schools more than twice as often, are diagnosed with learning disabilities nearly three times as often, and are diagnosed with emotional disorders over three times as often, and

WHEREAS, boys benefit from specialized instructional, behavioral, and mental health supports in order to flourish academically and personally, NOW, THEREFORE,

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

Section 1. Task Force on Closing the Achievement Gap for Boys.—

(1) The Task Force on Closing the Achievement Gap for Boys, a task force as defined in s. 20.03(8), Florida Statutes, is created within the Department of Education to examine evidence-based strategies for closing the achievement gap for boys and to make recommendations to the department, the Governor, and the Legislature regarding professional development for instructional personnel and school administrators; the selection of curriculum, supplemental materials, and classroom activities in early learning programs and K-12 schools; and other academic, behavioral, and mental health supports to help educate and raise young men who are better prepared for success in school and in life.

(2) The task force shall be composed of the following members, to be appointed by July 1, 2021:

(a) The Commissioner of Education, or his or her designee, who shall be the chair of the task force.

(b) The following members appointed by the Governor:

1. The parent of a boy enrolled in either the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program under part V of chapter 1002, Florida Statutes, or the school readiness program under part VI of chapter 1002, Florida Statutes.

2. The parent of a boy enrolled in a public elementary school.

(c) The following members appointed by the President of the Senate:

1. A school psychologist employed by a school district.

2. An elementary classroom teacher.

3. A prekindergarten teacher employed by a provider participating in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program or the school readiness program.

4. The executive director of an early learning coalition.

5. A member of the Senate.

(d) The following members appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives:

1. A representative of a nonprofit organization that has conducted research or implemented a program designed to close the achievement gap for boys through specific instructional, behavioral, and mental health supports.

2. The superintendent of a school district that has implemented programming and strategies specifically to help close the achievement gap for boys through a partnership with one or more nonprofit organizations.

3. The director of an early learning provider participating in the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program or the school readiness program.

4. The principal of a public elementary school.

5. A member of the House of Representatives.

(3) Members of the task force shall serve without compensation but may be entitled to receive reimbursement for per diem and travel expenses.

(4) The task force shall convene no later than August 1, 2021, and upon the call of the chair thereafter. Meetings of the task force may be held through teleconference or other electronic means.

(5) The department shall provide staff, administrative support, and necessary data and other relevant information to assist the task force in carrying out its responsibilities.

(6) The task force shall submit a report containing its recommendations to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 1, 2021.

(7) The task force expires June 30, 2022.

Section 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.

Approved by the Governor June 21, 2021.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 21, 2021.