

CHAPTER 2026-33

Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for Senate Bill No. 182

An act relating to education; amending s. 1002.33, F.S.; providing that students may not be dismissed from certain charter schools based on academic performance; amending s. 1002.395, F.S.; adding a condition for Florida Tax Credit (FTC) scholarship reimbursements; requiring that certain FTC scholarship funds revert to the organization; amending s. 1002.42, F.S.; providing that certain private schools are considered a permitted use in certain zoning districts; authorizing certain private schools to operate in facilities that meet specified requirements; providing exceptions; requiring certain private schools operating in such facilities to meet specified Florida Fire Prevention Code standards; providing that completion of a specified evaluation system with certain ratings by specified persons constitutes evidence of compliance with the Florida Fire Prevention Code for such private schools; authorizing the State Fire Marshal to adopt rules; amending s. 1003.42, F.S.; requiring students in specified grades to receive instruction in cursive writing; providing requirements for such instruction; requiring students to demonstrate proficiency in cursive writing by the end of a specified grade; defining the term “proficiency in cursive writing”; amending s. 1003.44, F.S.; requiring, subject to legislative appropriation, each district school board to adopt rules to require the display of portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln at each public school in the district; requiring the Department of Education to select the portraits and make them available to each school district; creating s. 1012.988, F.S.; establishing the School Teacher Training and Mentoring Program within the Department of Education; providing the purpose of the program; authorizing school districts and charter schools to place certain classroom teachers as teacher mentors in specified schools for specified purposes; providing requirements for teacher mentors and mentees; authorizing teacher mentors to receive a stipend; providing the time period for each mentor and mentee relationship through the program; providing limitations on the number of mentees teacher mentors may work with; providing department and teacher mentor responsibilities; authorizing the State Board of Education to adopt rules; amending s. 1011.62, F.S.; authorizing specified funds to be used for the School Teacher Training and Mentoring Program; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Paragraph (e) of subsection (10) of section 1002.33, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1002.33 Charter schools.—

(10) ELIGIBLE STUDENTS.—

(e) A charter school may limit the enrollment process only to target the following student populations:

1. Students within specific age groups or grade levels.
2. Students considered at risk of dropping out of school or academic failure. Such students shall include exceptional education students.
3. Students enrolling in a charter school-in-the-workplace or charter school-in-a-municipality established pursuant to subsection (15).
4. Students residing within a reasonable distance of the charter school, as described in paragraph (20)(c). Such students shall be subject to a random lottery and to the racial/ethnic balance provisions described in subparagraph (7)(a)8. or any federal provisions that require a school to achieve a racial/ethnic balance reflective of the community it serves or within the racial/ethnic range of other nearby public schools.
5. Students who meet reasonable academic, artistic, or other eligibility standards established by the charter school and included in the charter school application and charter or, in the case of existing charter schools, standards that are consistent with the school's mission and purpose. Such standards shall be in accordance with current state law and practice in public schools and may not discriminate against otherwise qualified individuals. A school that limits enrollment for such purposes must place a student on a progress monitoring plan for at least one semester before dismissing such student from the school. A student may not be dismissed based on academic performance while a school is implementing a school improvement plan pursuant to paragraph (9)(n) or corrective action plan pursuant to s. 1002.345.
6. Students articulating from one charter school to another pursuant to an articulation agreement between the charter schools that has been approved by the sponsor.
7. Students living in a development, or students whose parent or legal guardian maintains a physical or permanent employment presence within the development, in which a developer, including any affiliated business entity or charitable foundation, contributes to the formation, acquisition, construction, or operation of one or more charter schools or charter school facilities and related property in an amount equal to or having a total appraised value of at least \$5 million to be used as charter schools to mitigate the educational impact created by the development of new residential dwelling units. Students living in the development are entitled to 50 percent of the student stations in the charter schools. The students who are eligible for enrollment are subject to a random lottery, the racial/ethnic balance provisions, or any federal provisions, as described in subparagraph 4. The remainder of the student stations must be filled in accordance with subparagraph 4.

8. Students whose parent or legal guardian is employed within a reasonable distance of the charter school, as described in paragraph (20)(c). The students who are eligible for enrollment are subject to a random lottery.

Section 2. Paragraphs (g) and (h) of subsection (11) of section 1002.395, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

1002.395 Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program.—

(11) SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT AND PAYMENT.—

(g) Reimbursements for program expenditures may continue until the account balance is expended or the scholarship account is closed ~~remaining funds have reverted to the state.~~

(h)1. A student's scholarship account must be closed and any remaining funds must ~~shall~~ revert to the organization ~~state~~ after:

a.1. Denial or revocation of program eligibility by the commissioner for fraud or abuse, including, but not limited to, the student or student's parent accepting any payment, refund, or rebate, in any manner, from a provider of any services received pursuant to paragraph (6)(d);

b.2. Two consecutive fiscal years in which an account has been inactive; or

c.3. The student remains unenrolled in an eligible private school for 30 days while receiving a scholarship that requires full-time enrollment.

2. All funds that revert to the organization must be separately accounted for and used to fund scholarships in the fiscal year the reversion occurs. Any funds remaining at the end of the fiscal year may be carried forward to the following fiscal year and must be fully expended for annual or partial-year scholarships in the following fiscal year.

3. By July 1 of each year, an organization must report to the Department of Education the total number of scholarship accounts that were closed during the prior fiscal year and the amount of funds that reverted to the organization.

Section 3. Subsection (19) of section 1002.42, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1002.42 Private schools.—

(19) FACILITIES AND LAND USE.—

(a) A private school may use facilities on property owned or leased by a library, community service organization, museum, performing arts venue, theater, cinema, or church facility under s. 170.201, which is or was actively used as such within 5 years of any executed agreement with a private school

to use the facilities; any facility or land owned by a Florida College System institution or university; any similar public institutional facilities; and any facility recently used to house a school or child care facility licensed under s. 402.305, under any such facility's preexisting zoning and land use designations without rezoning or obtaining a special exception or a land use change, and without complying with any mitigation requirements or conditions. The facility must be located on property used solely for purposes described in this paragraph, and must meet applicable state and local health, safety, and welfare laws, codes, and rules, including firesafety and building safety.

(b) A private school may use facilities on property purchased from a library, community service organization, museum, performing arts venue, theater, cinema, or church facility under s. 170.201, which is actively or was actively used as such within 5 years of any executed agreement with a private school to purchase the facilities; any facility or land owned by a Florida College System institution or university; any similar public institutional facilities; and any facility recently used to house a school or child care facility licensed under s. 402.305, under any such facility's preexisting zoning and land use designations without obtaining a special exception, rezoning, or a land use change, and without complying with any mitigation requirements or conditions. The facility must be located on property used solely for purposes described in this paragraph, and must meet applicable state and local health, safety, and welfare laws, codes, and rules, including firesafety and building safety.

(c) A private school located in a county with four incorporated municipalities may construct new facilities, which may be temporary or permanent, on property purchased from or owned or leased by a library, community service organization, museum, performing arts venue, theater, cinema, or church under s. 170.201, which is or was actively used as such within 5 years of any executed agreement with a private school; any land owned by a Florida College System institution or state university; and any land recently used to house a school or child care facility licensed under s. 402.305, under its preexisting zoning and land use designations without rezoning or obtaining a special exception or a land use change, and without complying with any mitigation requirements or conditions. Any new facility must be located on property used solely for purposes described in this paragraph, and must meet applicable state and local health, safety, and welfare laws, codes, and rules, including firesafety and building safety.

(d) A private school enrolling 150 or fewer students, or located within the unincorporated area of a county as defined in s. 125.011, shall be considered a permitted use and occupancy in a commercial or mixed-use zoning district within a county or municipality without rezoning or obtaining a special exception or a land use change, and without complying with any mitigation requirements, conditions, performance standards, ordinances, rules, codes, or policies, except that a county or municipality may require proportionate mitigation measures necessary to mitigate vehicular traffic and pedestrian safety.

1. The vehicular traffic and pedestrian safety mitigation measures required by a county or municipality pursuant to this subsection shall be limited to those impacts reasonably and directly attributable to the operation of the private school at the site and shall be no greater in cost or scope than what is required of all other uses, education or otherwise, within the same zoning district.

2. The private school subject to vehicular traffic and pedestrian safety mitigation measures may, in lieu of complying with such mitigation measures, provide a traffic study that demonstrates the school will not have disproportionate impact on vehicular traffic or pedestrian safety compared to other allowable uses within the same zoning district.

(e) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, a private school enrolling 150 or fewer students may operate in a facility that is an existing assembly, day care, mercantile, or business occupancy, as defined in the Florida Fire Prevention Code. A private school operating in such a facility must meet the standards for existing educational occupancy requirements under the Florida Fire Prevention Code, adopted by the State Fire Marshal. Completion of the fire safety evaluation system for educational occupancies in the National Fire Protection Association, Life Safety Code, NFPA 101A: Guide on Alternative Approaches to Life Safety, adopted by the State Fire Marshal, by a registered design professional licensed under chapter 471 or chapter 481, with a determination of achieving at a minimum an “at least equivalent” conclusion, is considered evidence of compliance with the Florida Fire Prevention Code. The State Fire Marshal may adopt rules to implement this paragraph.

Section 4. Paragraph (w) is added to subsection (2) of section 1003.42, Florida Statutes, to read:

1003.42 Required instruction.—

(2) Members of the instructional staff of the public schools, subject to the rules of the State Board of Education and the district school board, shall teach efficiently and faithfully, using the books and materials required that meet the highest standards for professionalism and historical accuracy, following the prescribed courses of study, and employing approved methods of instruction, the following:

(w)1. For students in grades 3 through 5, the study of cursive writing and the development of the skills necessary for legible cursive writing, including:

a. Letter formation.

b. Proper spacing and alignment.

c. Practice in writing complete words and sentences in cursive.

2. By the end of grade 5, each student must demonstrate proficiency in cursive writing. For purposes of this subparagraph, the term “proficiency in cursive writing” means all of the following:

a. The ability to write uppercase and lowercase letters of the alphabet in cursive writing.

b. Writing words and sentences in cursive legibly and maintaining proper spacing and alignment.

c. The ability to read and apply cursive writing in a manner that supports literacy development, including writing essays and assignments in cursive writing in accordance with state academic standards.

The State Board of Education is encouraged to adopt standards and pursue assessment of the requirements of this subsection. Instructional programming that incorporates the values of the recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor and that is offered as part of a social studies, English Language Arts, or other schoolwide character building and veteran awareness initiative meets the requirements of paragraph (u).

Section 5. Subsection (4) of section 1003.44, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1003.44 Patriotic programs; rules.—

~~(4) Each district school board shall adopt rules to require; in all of the schools of the district and in each building used by the district school board,~~

(a) The display of the state motto, “In God We Trust,” designated under s. 15.0301, in a conspicuous place at each public school in the district and in each building used by the district school board.

(b) Subject to legislative appropriation, the display of portraits of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in a conspicuous place at each public school in the district. The Department of Education shall select the portraits and make them available to each school district.

Section 6. Section 1012.988, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

1012.988 School Teacher Training and Mentoring Program.—

(1) The School Teacher Training and Mentoring Program is established within the Department of Education. The purpose of the program is to increase the effectiveness and involvement of classroom teachers and improve student achievement, classroom management, and excellence in the state’s public schools.

(2)(a) School districts and charter schools may place retired classroom teachers or current classroom teachers in schools earning a grade of “D” or “F” to act as teacher mentors to:

1. New classroom teachers;
 2. Classroom teachers who are rated as needs improvement, developing, or unsatisfactory on the prior year's performance evaluation under s. 1012.34; or
 3. Classroom teachers identified by the school administrator as struggling with behavior management within the classroom.
- (b) Each teacher mentor selected by the school district, charter school, or charter management organization must have:
1. At least 3 years of teaching experience in prekindergarten through grade 12.
 2. Earned a highly effective rating on his or her most recent performance evaluation under s. 1012.34.
- (c) Each teacher mentor may receive a stipend of up to \$3,000.
- (d) Each mentor and mentee relationship through the program shall be for one grading period.
- (e)1. A retired classroom teacher serving as a teacher mentor may not have more than five mentees at a time.
2. A classroom teacher serving as a teacher mentor may not have more than one mentee at a time.
- (3) The Department of Education shall establish program standards and a standard contract template for the teacher mentor and mentee which outlines the responsibilities of each person and establishes the framework and goals of the program.
- (4) Each teacher mentor must:
- (a) Present significant historical events with accuracy and integrity, grounded in verifiable evidence and scholarly rigor.
 - (b) If a curriculum is used, use a curriculum that affirms the principles of fairness and equal opportunity reflected in the Florida Educational Equity Act and encourages respectful dialogue across diverse perspectives.
 - (c) Maintain confidentiality, unless prohibited by law.
 - (d) Not have a personal agenda other than assisting his or her mentee in developing and reaching the mentee's goals.
 - (e) Help his or her mentee in developing skills and expertise, including drawing upon the teacher mentor's own personal experiences.

(5) The State Board of Education may adopt rules to administer this section.

Section 7. Paragraph (a) of subsection (7) of section 1011.62, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1011.62 Funds for operation of schools.—If the annual allocation from the Florida Education Finance Program to each district for operation of schools is not determined in the annual appropriations act or the substantive bill implementing the annual appropriations act, it shall be determined as follows:

(7) EDUCATIONAL ENRICHMENT ALLOCATION.—

(a) The educational enrichment allocation is created to assist school districts in providing educational enrichment activities and services that support and increase the academic achievement of students in grades kindergarten through 12. Educational enrichment activities and services may be provided in a manner and at any time during or beyond the regular 180-day term identified by the school district as being the most effective and efficient way to best help the student progress from grade to grade and graduate from high school. Funds from the educational enrichment allocation may be used for the School Teacher Training and Mentoring Program under s. 1012.988 if funds are available. For fiscal year 2023-2024, the educational enrichment allocation shall consist of a base amount as specified in the General Appropriations Act. Beginning in fiscal year 2024-2025, the educational enrichment allocation shall consist of the base amount that includes a workload adjustment based on changes in the unweighted full-time equivalent membership. Beginning in fiscal year 2025-2026, and each year thereafter, the statewide average base amount as specified in the General Appropriations Act shall be used for any new educational entity funded in the Florida Education Finance Program.

Section 8. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

Approved by the Governor April 20, 2026.

Filed in Office Secretary of State April 20, 2026.