

# PEN Lines

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS NETWORK OF FLORIDA, INC.

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## Florida House of Representatives 2007 Session Summary for Education

*With the 2007 Florida House of Representatives Session closing, several educational bills have passed the House and are now waiting on Governor Crist's approval. Provided that the following bills are not vetoed, these bills will become law by July 1, 2007.*



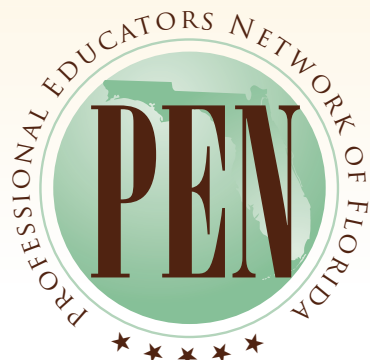
There were many bills that were proposed at the beginning of the 2007 Session, but few bills got more attention than the teacher merit pay bill. While the teacher merit pay program is not required for all school districts, the bill does specifically outline requirements to structure a merit pay system should a particular district decides to implement a merit pay system. One concern that many educators had for the teacher pay system was that it had the potential to be subjective and therefore inherently unfair. The Merit Award Program Bill requires that teachers are evaluated based on student performance (at least 60% of the total evaluation) and professional practices, or

administrator appraisal of teachers (maximum of 40% of total evaluation).

Other bills of interest to educators range from career development in high school students with the creation of career academies to voluntary drug testing programs for high school athletes to revised requirements for physical education for both elementary and high school students.

Individuals wishing to have the full text of each bill should refer to the Florida House of Representatives website. PEN's website has a link to direct you there.

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## Florida House of Representatives 2007 Session Summary for Education

The following summaries are excerpted from the Florida House of Representatives 2007 Session Summary:

### SB 450 – Florida Teachers Lead Program Stipend/Pre-K

The bill provides that prekindergarten, charter school, and job-share classroom teachers who teach pre-kindergarten through grade 12 students who are funded through the FEFP, shall be eligible to receive a Florida Teachers Lead Program Stipend.

### SB 1226 – Merit Award Program/School Board

#### Employees

The bill establishes the Merit Award Program for instructional personnel and school-based administrators. District participation in the program is voluntary. However, districts will only receive their appropriation for merit award supplements if they choose to adopt a plan under this section.

#### Components and eligibility

In order to be eligible for funding under this program, district plans must provide for an assessment and reward eligible employees based upon both performance of assigned students and principal or superintendent evaluations. All instructional personnel except substitute teachers, and all school-based administrators are eligible for merit awards without having to apply. Instructional teams such as those in co-teaching or team teaching situations may receive awards as a team.

The funds for districts that choose not to participate in the program revert to the fund from which they came. All funds appropriated for the program must be disbursed to qualifying employees by September 1 of the following school year. Charter schools are also eligible for merit award pay plans. If a charter school follows a district's salary schedule, the charter school is included within the district's plan. However, if a charter school does not follow the district's salary schedule or the district chooses not to

adopt a plan, the charter school may adopt its own merit award pay plan pursuant to the requirements of the statute. Each district plan must designate top performing employees and must include a supplement of at least 5 percent of the average teacher's salary for that school district, but no more than 10 percent of the average teacher's salary for that school district from state appropriated funds. Districts may use their own funds to provide additional supplements. The amount of the awards may not be based upon length of service or base salary. The employee must remain employed at a Florida public school in order to receive the bonus. District plans may include a component rewarding exemplary work attendance of eligible employees.

By October 1st, the districts must submit documentation to the Department of Education regarding the expenditure of program funds. Any program funds that are not disbursed by the participating district are to be refunded to the Department of Education. If funds are not refunded to the Department of Education, the Department of Education shall withhold Florida Education Finance Program district lottery funds of an equivalent amount. Merit-based awards may not adversely affect the opportunity of the recipient to receive any other compensation made available to other teachers and principals within the district.

#### Student performance component

District assessment of instructional personnel must consider the performance of students assigned to the teacher, or in the case of co-teaching or team teaching, within that teacher's sphere of academic responsibility. School-based administrators are evaluated according to the performance of the entire student body at the school. Improved student performance is measured by statewide standardized tests and, for grades and courses not covered by the statewide assessment program, by district determined testing instruments that meet certain criteria. District assessment measures must balance student performance based on academic proficiency and learning gains. The student performance component must be weighted at no less than 60 percent of the overall evaluation.

#### Professional practices component

District merit award plans must require that each employee meet the criteria set forth by the district for its principal/superintendent

appraisal. This portion of the assessment shall be weighted at up to 40 percent of the evaluation. The district appraisal criteria must include, but are not limited to:

- Ability to maintain discipline.
- Outstanding knowledge of subject matter and ability to deliver high quality instruction.
- Ability to evaluate student instructional needs.
- Ability of teachers and principals to work well with parents and families of students.
- The Florida Educator Accomplished Practices for instructional personnel and the Florida Principal Leadership Standards for school-based administrators.

In addition, the criteria for school-based administrators also includes management of human, financial and material resources to maximize such resources for direct instruction and the ability to recruit and retain high-performing teachers.

#### Department of Education and school district procedural requirements

Districts are required to notify employees of the criteria and procedures of the district plan. The Department of Education is required to provide technical assistance upon request on plan development and to collect and disseminate best practices for district determined testing instruments. The advice and recommendations provided by the Department of Education are not subject to the administrative rulemaking procedures of chapter 120, F.S.

Districts must submit their plan to the Commissioner of Education by October 1 of each year. The Commissioner of Education shall review the plan for compliance by November 15. If a district plan fails to meet the statutory requirements, the Commissioner of Education must detail in writing the revisions that are to be made. Revised plans must be submitted by January 31. The Commissioner of Education must certify any district or charter school plans that do not comply to the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House annually by February 15.

Districts are required to annually review their plans for compliance and issue a report that must be sent to the Commissioner of Education by October 1 of the following school year to verify compliance the previous year. The Commissioner of Education must then submit a report to the Governor,

President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House certifying district or charter schools that failed to implement plans in accordance with the statute. The report must be sent by the Commissioner of Education by December 1st.

Plans submitted and approved for the 2007-2008 school year shall apply during the 2007-2008 school year and the 2008-2009 school year. Thereafter, all plans submitted shall apply during the following school year. Any subsequent revisions must be reviewed by the district school board and the Commissioner of Education. Beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, participating districts must be able to administer end-of-course exams in all grade groupings and subject areas. Statewide assessments, College Board Advanced Placement Examination, International Baccalaureate Examination, Advanced International Certificate of Education Examination, or national industry certification will satisfy this requirement. Individual merit awards are subject to collective bargaining under chapter 447, FS. An expedited procedure is provided to resolve an impasse between the district and the union over the adoption or details of a merit award program plan pursuant to s. 1012.225, FS.

### **Options for the 2006-2007 school year**

The STAR proviso language from the 2006-07 GAA is codified and repealed, and the 2006-2007 appropriation is rescinded. The sum of \$147.5 million is appropriated as a supplemental appropriation for Aid to Local Governments, Grants and Aids –Florida Education Finance Program. These funds are to be allocated to districts based on each district's portion of the total state K-12 base funding amount.

The STAR deadline for submission of district plans is pushed back to May 1, 2007. Any district that is able to submit its plan by the May 1 deadline and have a plan approved will receive its appropriation. Districts with an existing performance pay policy pursuant to s. 1012.22(1)(c), FS., may also be eligible for funding, but they must amend their plan to meet the new statutory criteria prior to the disbursement of funds under this section, or if they do not amend their plan to meet the statutory requirements, they may receive only the amount they disbursed under s. 1012.22(1)(c)4., FS.

Any funds that would have been available to districts that choose not to meet any of the

## **Legislature Cuts State-Funded Educators Professional Liability Insurance Program**

As of the 2006 Florida Legislative session, the Florida Legislature made the decision to cut their Florida Educators Professional Liability Insurance Program for public school educators. While the state-funded insurance plan expired on June 30, 2006, the Legislature also abolished the law requiring the state to provide this insurance coverage.

The program was intended to be “last resort” insurance coverage for educators that do not have their own liability insurance or for additional coverage for situations not covered by other state or district insurance plans. This insurance was also in addition to educators’ own liability insurance, the insurance that school systems provide to their employees,

and the state’s sovereign immunity law which protects educators from personal liability in most tort situations.

The program, which was estimated to cost the state around 1.4 million dollars, was mainly terminated due to the fact that the cost of maintaining the insurance far outweighed the actual amount of claims that it fulfilled. As of November 30, 2005, the program only paid a little over \$50,000 in claims.

Educators depending on this insurance for their sole coverage or for additional protection against professional liabilities may want to consider other options for professional liability insurance, such as through professional educator organizations such as PEN of Florida.

above requirements for the 2006-2007 school year revert to the fund from which the appropriation came. Furthermore, any funds the districts do not disburse pursuant to their merit award, STAR, or s.1012.22(1)(c), FS., plan must be returned to the Department of Education. Any amount of such funds that are not returned shall be withheld by the Department of Education from the district’s Florida Education Finance Program allocations.

### **HB 2092 – Education**

The bill revises the organizational structure of the Department of Education by specifically requiring the establishment of a Division of Workforce Education and a Division of Finance and Operations. The bill provides that the director of each of the divisions set forth in statute may be designated as “Deputy Commissioner” or “Chancellor”. The bill also deletes language requiring a division of colleges and universities within the Department of Education. The bill provides the Commissioner of Education with authority to organize and name the structural units of the Department of Education in a manner that meets legislative intent and promotes efficiency and accountability.

### **District school board member compensation**

The bill replaces the current requirements with the salary formula that was in place prior to the school code rewrite in 2002, setting the salary according to a formula based on the population of each county and adjusted each year in accordance with s. 145.19, FS., which includes factors set forth by the Department of Management Services.

### **Revision of physical education and fine arts requirements for high school graduation**

The bill revises the fine arts requirement for high school graduation by adding performing arts, which may include speech and debate. The bill also provides various extracurricular or elective course options for fulfilling the physical education and the fine arts/performing arts requirements for high school graduation. Students may fulfill the one credit physical education requirement by participating in JV or Varsity sports for two years provided that the student passes a competency test on personal fitness with a score of “C” or better.

Students who complete a semester course in marching band with a grade of “C” or better, and students who take dance as an elective

# SUNLINK Provides Valuable Resources for Educators, Students, and Parents

For anyone that has heard of SUNLINK may have only thought about this resource as one for media specialists, especially when it comes to inter-library loans of books and educational materials. But this website (<http://www.sunlink.ucf.edu/default.html>), funded by the Florida Department of Education and maintained by the University of Central Florida offers much more than some books to borrow. There is something for everyone on this organized, informative web site.

There are must-read book lists for young readers, complete with award information, synopses, and purchasing information. In addition, students can utilize the research resources for a variety of educational projects. Along with that, students

can also learn about standardized test preparation, finding a college or career, even plan their next Florida vacation. The amount of resource information covers so many different subjects and age levels that it is worth it for any student to browse through the website.

Educators can also utilize the teacher resource links, advice on how to teach students the right way to write plagiarism-free papers, professional development opportunities, and much, much more. There is even a section especially for high school principals.

Parents will enjoy the section of SUNLINK devoted to homework help, parenting advice, resources on the FCAT and Sunshine State Standards. The format is user-friendly and tailored to improving the lives of families by empowering parents.

## Kristin Muire Joins PEN Family as New Communications Director



With PEN enjoying increasing growth in membership, we have added a new member to the PEN staff in order to better serve

members. Kristin Muire, a UF master's program graduate in public relations and

political campaigning, brings to PEN her expertise and experience in communications, membership recruitment, and non-profit fund raising. Kristin will be serving as PEN's Communications Director, visiting Florida schools to broaden PEN's membership and to share the benefits of being a member of PEN. We excitedly welcome Kristin Muire to PEN and look forward to the assets she will bring to our organization.

course may fulfill 1/2 credit in physical education and 1/2 credit in performing arts. Students who complete two years of Junior R.O.T.C. classes, a significant component of which is drills, may fulfill the one credit physical education requirement and the one credit performing arts requirement.

### High School graduation grade forgiveness policies

The bill restores the language and policy that was in place prior to Legislature's revision of the high school grade forgiveness policies in 2006. Specifically, the bill deletes provisions that allowed students to receive elective

credits for credit recovery courses in addition to the recovered credit. District policies relating to credit recovery must allow students to replace grades of "D" or "F", or the equivalent of such grades, in required courses with a subsequent grade of "C" or higher, or the equivalent of such grades, in a comparable course, and replace grades of "D" or "F", or the equivalent of such grades, in elective courses with a subsequent grade of "C" or higher, or the equivalent of such grades, in another elective course.

The bill also provides an exception for a student in the middle grades who takes a high school course for high school credit

and earns a grade of "C", "D", or "F" or the equivalent of such grades. In such cases, the district forgiveness policy must allow the replacement of the grade with a grade of "C" or higher; or the equivalent of such grades, earned subsequently in the same or comparable course.

### Charter school revisions

The bill includes numerous conforming changes to reflect the fact that applications may be made for charter schools to the Florida Schools of Excellence Commission and its cosponsors as well as to school districts. The bill also reinserts good cause as the legal standard for district school board review of charter school applications. This language provides that district school boards that deny an application for a charter school must state reasoning based upon good cause for such denial. This legal standard guides the review of such denials by the State Board of Education as well as the district courts of appeal.

The bill requires that a charter school must have been in operation for three years in order to be eligible to receive the 15-year renewal contract in order to conform to the subsequent requirement that charter schools must have received an A or a B for three of the past four years in order to receive the 15-year renewal contract.

The bill requires that charter school governing boards participate in board governance training approved by the Department of Education that must include government in the sunshine, conflicts of interest, ethics, and financial responsibility. It also clarifies that charter school facilities are exempt from assessments for special benefits and makes such exemption retroactive to July 1, 1996, which is the date of the original enactment of the charter school statute.

### Charter school districts

The charter school district pilot program is extended until July 1, 2010, for Palm Beach, Hillsborough, Orange, and Volusia County. This pilot program allows these districts to be exempt from certain statutes within the state school code pursuant to a written charter contract with the State Board of Education.

### Merit award program

The bill clarifies that instructional personnel and administrators who retire may still receive the bonus they earn the previous year through the new merit award program.

Subject to the Governor's veto powers, the effective date of this bill is upon becoming law.

### **HB 1161 – High School Work Experience**

The bill provides for the creation of the High School to Business Career Enhancement Program. The program is established to offer certain high school students in each school district the opportunity to participate in an internship program with local employers that have partnered with the district to offer such opportunity. District school boards are required to adopt policies and procedures for the implementation of this program. The internships shall be coordinated with the career goals of each student participant.

The bill provides that no more than 100 internships may be offered each school year by a district school board. An internship shall be at least 8 weeks long but no more than 20 consecutive weeks during any school year, and a student is prohibited from working more than 20 hours per week. The participating employer is required to monitor the academic value of the internship using criteria developed by the school board and must conduct an evaluation of the student at the conclusion of the internship.

The bill provides that the number of internships that an employer may provide is limited according to the number of employees that the employer employs in the school district in which the internship is offered. It clarifies that the employment of students participating in this program is not subject to unemployment tax under ch. 443. Also, the bill requires any employees or contracted personnel of an employer participating in this program who have direct unsupervised access to student interns be subject to the level 2 background screening requirements as described in s. 1012.32, F.S. The employer is required to bear the cost of the state and federal criminal history check required by level 2 background screening of such persons.

### **SB 1232 – Career & Professional Education**

The bill creates the Florida Career and Professional Education Act to provide a statewide planning partnership between business and education communities, to improve middle and high school academic performance, support local regional economic development, and address critical workforce needs.

### **School district requirements**

The bill requires school districts to develop, in collaboration with local workforce boards and the postsecondary community, strategic five-year plans that objectively address the needs of local and regional workforce through the development and implementation of academies. The strategic plan must include provisions for at least one career and professional academy to be operational in the school district at the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year.

The bill encourages the Florida Virtual School to offer rigorous career courses to meet any district academy course deficits. The bill also authorizes two or more school districts to collaborate in developing and offering career academies, provided the strategic plan is approved by the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AW) and certain requirements are met.

The bill requires career and professional academies to include the following:

- A rigorous, standards-based academic curriculum integrated with a career curriculum that leads to industry certification, a standard high school diploma, and postsecondary credit as appropriate;
- Instruction in a career designated as high-growth, high-demand, and high-pay by the local or regional workforce board;
- One or more partnerships between the local school district, postsecondary institutions approved to operate in Florida, and local workforce boards;
- Maximum articulation of credits based on articulation agreements between the academy and postsecondary institutions approved to operate in Florida;
- Instruction from highly skilled, industry-certified professionals;
- Internships, externships, and on-the-job training;
- Maximum use of private-sector facilities and personnel;
- Personalized academic advisement and support for middle grades career exploration;
- Attainment, at minimum, of the Gold Seal Scholars award; and
- An evaluation plan developed jointly with the Department of Education and the local workforce board.

### **State Board of Education and Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) requirements**

The bill requires the State Board of Education to establish an expedited process for the continuous review of newly proposed rigorous and relevant core high school courses. The review would be conducted by an appointed curriculum committee comprised of subject area, business, and postsecondary experts. Decisions regarding course eligibility must be made within 60 days. Approved courses would be included in the Course Code Directory and would also be considered for possible dual enrollment and postsecondary credit.

The bill requires the AWI to identify appropriate industry certification based on the highest national standards available. Local work force boards and academies may request additions to the list of industry certifications, provided requests are based upon high-demand labor needs of the regional workforce economy. The AWI would publish annually an updated list of industry certifications to be used within the career academies.

The bill requires the Department of Education to work with Workforce Florida and Enterprise Florida in the collection and analysis of academic achievement and performance data of academy students. The bill requires an evaluation plan and self-assessment tool to determine outcomes such as graduation rates, achievement of industry certification, postsecondary enrollment, satisfaction of business and industry, employment rates, earnings figures, and awards of scholarships and postsecondary credit.

The bill amends the FEFP calculation and provides supplemental weighted funding, as specified in the General Appropriations Act, for students enrolled in career and professional academies, provided the instruction leads to industry certification upon academy completion. Districts, however, will not be eligible to receive both career academy and dual enrollment weighted funding for participating students, and the total appropriation is limited to \$30 million annually.

### **HB 461 – High School Athletics**

The bill establishes a one-year, random, anabolic steroids testing program for students in grades 9 through 12 who participate in football, baseball, and weightlifting. The program is to be administered by the Florida

High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) during the 2007-2008 school year. Public and private schools must participate in the program as a prerequisite to FHSAA membership.

Up to one percent of student athletes may be tested for steroid use under the program. If a test is positive, the school must immediately suspend the student from participation in all interscholastic athletic practice and competition for a period of 90 days and the student must attend a drug education program. Eligibility for athletics may not be restored until the student tests negative on an exit drug test. The drug test result and the period of ineligibility may be appealed by the school and student.

The bill requires the FHSAA to report on program results to the Legislature by October 1, 2008. The report must include statistics on the number of students tested; the number of violations; the number of appeals and their dispositions; and the costs incurred by FHSAA to administer the program.

Tied legislation, CS/HB 463, provides that all records relating to the steroid drug tests and any appeals thereof are exempt from open public records requirements and that the portions of meetings during which such records are discussed are exempt from open public meetings requirements.

### **SB 108 – Minority & Underrepresented Student Achievement**

The bill requires the Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement (Partnership) to work with school districts to identify minority and underrepresented students for participation in Advanced Placement (AP) and other advanced courses. The Partnership must provide information to students and parents regarding opportunities to take AP and other advanced courses. It must also provide information to parents, teachers, counselors, administrators, school districts, community colleges, and state universities regarding opportunities to take the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test or the Preliminary ACT. The bill also requires the Partnership to cooperate with the Department of Education to provide information about its activities to administrators, teachers, and counselors.

### **HB 511 – School Districts**

CS/HB 511 directs the State Board of Education to designate a school district as an

academically high-performing school district, if the district:

- Earns a district grade of “A” for 2 consecutive years, beginning with the 2004-2005 school year;
- Has no district-operated school that earns a grade of “F”;
- Complies with all class-size requirements; and
- Has no material weaknesses or instances of material noncompliance noted in its annual financial audit.

A school district maintains the academically high-performing designation for 3 years, if the district complies with the initial eligibility criteria and earns at least a grade of “A” for 2 years within a 3-year period. However, a district loses the designation if a district-operated school earns a grade of “F” during the 3-year period.

An academically high-performing school district, during the 3-year-period, is exempt from the provisions of the Florida K-20 Education Code (Chs. 1000-1013, F.S.), which pertain to school districts, and state board rules implementing the exempt provisions. However, an academically high-performing school district is not exempt from laws and rules pertaining to students with disabilities; civil rights; student health, safety, and welfare; election or compensation of district school board members; the student assessment program; the school grading system; most financial matters; most planning and budgeting provisions; differentiated pay and performance pay policies for school administrators and instructional personnel; most educational facilities provisions; and certain instructional materials provisions.

An academically high-performing school district may renew the designation at the end of the 3-year period, and the district is required to submit an annual report on the district’s performance to the State Board of Education and the Legislature. Current law restricts a school district’s use of revenues from the two-mill non-voted capital improvement levy to certain projects. A school district is exempt from the restrictions if the Commissioner of Education certifies that all of the district’s instructional space needs for the next 5 years can be met from capital outlay sources that the district reasonably expects to receive within 5 years or from sound methods of meeting the district’s space needs. The bill adds three additional requirements that a school district must meet in order to be exempt from the restrictions:

- The district must meet the class-size reduction requirements for the current year;
- The district must receive an unqualified opinion of its financial statements for the preceding 3 years; and
- The district must have no material weaknesses or instances of material noncompliance in an audit for the preceding 3 years.

If a school district meets all of the requirements for exemption from the restrictions, the bill allows the district to use revenues from the two-mill levy to pay premiums for the district’s property and casualty insurance necessary to insure the educational and ancillary plants of the school district. Operating revenues made available due to a school district’s use of the two-mill levy for property and casualty insurance may be used only for the district’s nonrecurring operational expenditures. The bill requires a school district, if the district anticipates using revenues from the two-mill levy for property and casualty insurance premiums, to list that anticipated use on the list of projects included in a newspaper of general paid circulation in the district.

The bill reorganizes provisions relating to the use of revenues from the two-mill levy and deletes redundant and obsolete provisions.

The bill also directs the State Board of Education to submit recommendations to the Legislature by December 1, 2007, on the elimination of state reporting requirements that are duplicative of required reporting under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

### **HB 967 – Physical Education**

The bill requires district school boards to provide 150 minutes of physical education each week to students in kindergarten through grade 5. The bill broadly defines physical education as the development or maintenance of skills related to strength, agility, flexibility, movement, and stamina, including dance. The definition also includes the development of knowledge and skills regarding teamwork and fair play; the development of knowledge and skills regarding nutrition and physical fitness as part of a healthy lifestyle; and the development of positive attitudes regarding sound nutrition and physical activity as a component of personal well-being.

The bill also requires the Commissioner of Education to make available on the Department of Education’s website: links to the Internet-based clearinghouse for professional development; school wellness and physical education policies; and other internet sites that provide professional

development for elementary teachers of physical education. The information on the department's website must provide elementary teachers with information concerning current physical education and nutrition philosophy. In addition, the bill requires the State Board of Education to review, and revise as necessary, the Sunshine State Standards to ensure the standards reflect the state-of-the-art physical education philosophy and practice in this state.

### **SB 2512 – English for Speakers of Other Languages/Educators**

Establishes inservice requirements for teachers of English for Speakers of

Other Languages (ESOL), as follows:

- Primary English instructor (Basic ESOL) who is an English/language arts teacher: 300 inservice hours or the equivalent;
- Instructor teaching reading, mathematics, science, social studies, or computer literacy: 60 inservice hours or the equivalent;
- Instructor teaching other subject areas: 18 inservice hours or the equivalent; and
- School administrator or guidance counselor: 60 inservice hours or the equivalent.

The bill, in effect, reduces the ESOL inservice requirements for reading instructors from 300 inservice hours to 60 inservice hours.

### **CS/SB 1046 – Education Pre-K -12 Appropriations**

The bill provides that slot machine revenues transferred to the Educational Enhancement Trust Fund may be used for recurring appropriations. The bill defines team teaching, co-teaching, and inclusion teaching. The bill amends FEFP provisions in s. 1011.62, F.S., as follows:

- ESE Guaranteed Allocation — Provides that a school district's expenditure of funds from the ESE guaranteed allocation for gifted students in grades 9 through 12 may not be greater than the amount the district spent for gifted students in grades 9 through 12 during the 2006-2007 fiscal year. This spending limitation does not apply for exceptional students and gifted students in grades K through 8.
- DJJ Supplemental Allocation — Provides the methodology for calculating the supplemental allocation for students in juvenile justice education programs.

## **Laura Corzo Wins PEN's Mini-Grant Prize**



Each year, PEN awards grant funds to teachers seeking to enhance student learning with innovative classroom projects. These grant funds serve to increase student achievement when district budgets stop short of funding extra initiatives in the classroom, forcing dedicated teachers to dip into their own pockets to finance them.

This year's \$500 mini-grant went to Mrs. Laura Corzo of Elbridge Gale Elementary in Palm Beach County. Her class program idea, "Mrs. Corzo's Suitcase", implements a simple yet resourceful reading program aimed at giving students a way to read books at home with parents. "Mrs. Corzo's Suitcase" particularly assists economically disadvantaged students who may not have books to read at home.

The "suitcase" in the reading program is simply an inexpensive supply box in which a student may choose a book from the classroom library and take it home. The student reads the book at home, has the parent fill out a confirmation slip, and the student brings the book back along with the slip. The student then reads the book to the class as the "Guest Story Teller". After the student reads four books at home, they are able to pick a prize out of Mrs. Corzo's special treasure box.

The grant will cover the basic supplies to begin the project, including the "suitcases", reading books, and treasure box prizes.

Corzo came up with the reading curriculum in response to the issue of students not receiving enough literary support at home. This problem, along with the fact that her economically disadvantaged students did not have even the resources at home to read, initiated her desire to do something more for the students. Not only does "Mrs. Corzo's Suitcase" increase parents' involvement in their children's reading, it also fosters something even more important: a student's love for reading for a lifetime.

PEN commends Mrs. Corzo for her innovative classroom program and her commitment to student achievement. Since PEN awards mini-grants each year, teachers with ideas on how to enhance student learning should apply for our grants. Just go to the PEN website at [www.penfl.org](http://www.penfl.org) and click on "Scholarships and Mini-Grants". The deadlines are October 1st for the fall and May 1st for the spring awards.

- Sparsity Supplement — Provides that the sparsity supplement shall be a minimum of \$100 per FTE.
- Deletes obsolete provisions in ss. 1011.62 (6) (b), F.S., relating to programs that are no longer funded as a categorical, and 1011.71 (5) (b), F.S., relating to a school district expenditure requirement that has expired.
- The bill requires the Office of Program and Policy Analysis and Government Accountability to conduct a survey of school districts to obtain information about the educational programs and services provided to students in kindergarten through grade 12 who are gifted and to submit a report by December 1, 2007

Join PEN and Save \$300 to \$500 a Year!

# MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SOCIAL SECURITY # \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CHARTER SCHOOL \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

## Type of Membership (please check one)

- Professional (\$150 annually)
- Husband/Wife Discount (\$225)
- First Year Teacher (\$75 annually)
- Associate (\$117 annually) Non-instructional personnel
- Associate Husband/Wife Discount (\$162)
- Student (\$20 annually); cash payment only

## Methods of Pay (Please check one)

- Cash (Check enclosed; payable to PEN of FL)
- Credit Card \_\_\_\_\_  
Exp Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Payroll Deduction:

I authorize my employer, the \_\_\_\_\_ County School Board, to deduct from my salary and transmit to the Professional Educators Network of Florida (PEN) dues annually certified by PEN in \_\_\_\_\_ (total # of your district's pay periods) equal deductions. I hereby waive all rights and claims to said monies so deducted and transmitted in accordance with this authorization and relieve the school board and all its officers from any liability thereof. This authority shall remain in effect until revoked by me in writing upon thirty (30) days written notice to the school board and to PEN.

(SIGNATURE REQUIRED) \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

# Thousands of Dollars in Scholarships and Grants Offered by PEN

PEN is offering thousands of dollars in scholarship and grant monies for teachers through four awards. The Professional Educator of the Year, Teacher Scholarships, Classroom Mini-Grants, and New Classroom Start-Up Grants are ways for teachers to enhance their professional development and classrooms.

The Professional Educator of the Year Award, a \$2500 award, is to recognize one outstanding educator a year that is making a significant impact on students through excellent teaching methods. Application deadline is December 1.

Teacher Scholarships range from \$200-\$500 and are available to advance educator's professional career. The funds can be used to cover anything from tuition to books to conference fees. Fall application deadline is October 1; spring deadline is April 1.

The Classroom Mini-Grants, also ranging from \$200-\$500, is designed to help

teachers fund classroom projects and initiatives costing above and beyond what the school district provides. The money can be used to fund any aspect of the classroom project, including books, software, technology items, and other equipment. Fall application deadline is October 1; spring deadline is May 1.

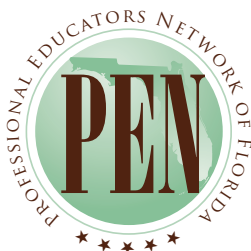
For new teachers, the New Classroom Start-Up Grants ranging from \$200-\$500 is aimed at assisting educators new to the profession in the expensive and sometimes frustrating task of setting up a new classroom. Application deadline is October 1.

The brief application for all of these funds is available on the PEN website ([www.penfl.org](http://www.penfl.org)) under the "Scholarship and Mini-Grant" link. You may also call the PEN office at 800.311.7770 to have an application mailed to you. PEN members received preference for award decisions, but all educators are encouraged to apply.

## We Need Your Updated Information!

We are currently working on updating our data base of e-mail contact information. In order to better serve you with legislative updates, teacher development opportunities, and more, please e-mail us

with your current e-mail contact information. Just send an e-mail to [admin@penfl.org](mailto:admin@penfl.org) with "E-MAIL UPDATE" in the subject heading.



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