

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: HB 1361 Education
SPONSOR(S): Temple
TIED BILLS: None. **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:** None.

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
1) Education Quality Subcommittee	18 Y, 0 N	Dixon	Sanchez
2) PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee		Bailey	Potvin
3) Education & Employment Committee			

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The bill expands the eligibility for the New Worlds Scholarship to include students enrolled in a Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program, who exhibit substantial deficiencies in early literacy or math skills based upon the results of the most recent progress monitoring assessment. The bill requires school districts and VPK program providers to notify parents of eligible students of the process to request and receive a scholarship. In addition, the bill expands the credentials for eligible part-time tutors.

The bill repeals individualized reimbursements and requires parents, of scholarship eligible students, to utilize the administrator’s system to make direct purchases of qualifying program expenditures.

The bill renames the “New Worlds Reading Initiative” to the “New Worlds Learning Initiative” (NWLI); expands the purpose of the initiative to include improving mathematics skills of students in prekindergarten through grade 12; and designates the University of Florida (UF) Lastinger Center for Learning as the administrator.

The bill renames the “micro-credential program” to the “New Worlds micro-credential program” and expands the program to include evidence-based professional learning activities that utilize best practices for mathematics instruction.

The bill creates the New Worlds Tutoring program within the NWLI, to support school districts and schools in improving student achievement in reading and mathematics and requires the program administrator to establish agreements with every school district to provide additional literacy or mathematics support to prekindergarten to grade 12 students enrolled in public school who meet certain requirements. Additionally, the bill requires the administrator to provide districts with best practice science of reading guidelines; technical assistance; professional learning recommendations; assistance in reviewing tutoring programs, professional learning programs, curriculum, and resources; and to provide an annual report summarizing district use of program funds and academic student outcomes.

The bill requires the Department of Education (DOE) to provide the program administrator with progress monitoring data for eligible students within 30 days of the close of each progress monitoring period.

The bill renames the “New Worlds Reading Initiative Tax Credits” to the “New Worlds Learning Initiative Tax Credits”.

The bill expands existing requirements to provide results from the first two administrations of the progress monitoring to a student’s teacher and parents, by also requiring results be delivered to prekindergarten student instructors.

The bill would have an indeterminate fiscal impact. See Fiscal Analysis.

The bill has an effective date of July 1, 2024.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Present Situation

New Worlds Reading Initiative (NWRI)

In 2021, the Legislature created the New Worlds Reading Initiative (NWRI), Florida's first statewide book distribution program. The purpose of the NWRI is to instill a love of reading by providing high-quality, free books to students in prekindergarten through grade 5 who are reading below grade level and to improve the literacy skills of students in prekindergarten through grade 12.¹ This initiative, established under the DOE, consists of:²

- the program providing high quality, free books to students;
- New Worlds Scholarship Program;³
- the New Worlds Scholar program,⁴ which rewards high school students who instill a love of reading and improve the literacy skills of students in kindergarten through grade 3; and
- the micro-credential program,⁵ which emphasizes strong core instruction and a tiered model of reading interventions for struggling readers.

To facilitate the NWRI, the DOE designated the UF Lastinger Center for Learning as the administrator,⁶ also serving as the nonprofit scholarship-funding organization (SFO).⁷ Among other responsibilities, the administrator is responsible for:⁸

- Developing, in consultation with the Just Read, Florida! Office, a selection of high-quality books encompassing diverse subjects and genres for each grade level to be mailed to students in the initiative and an online repository of digital science of reading materials and science of reading instructional resources that is accessible to public school teachers, school leaders, parents, and educator preparation programs and associated faculty.
- Distributing books at no cost to students either directly or through an agreement with a book distribution company.
- Assisting with local implementation of the NWRI by providing marketing materials to school districts and any partnering nonprofit organizations to assist with public awareness campaigns and other activities designed to increase family engagement and instill a love of reading in students.
- Maintaining a clearinghouse for information on national, state, and local nonprofit organizations that support efforts to improve literacy and provide books to children.
- Developing, for parents of students in the NWRI, resources and training materials that engage families in reading and support the reading achievement of their students.
- Providing professional development and resources to teachers that correlate with the books provided through the initiative.
- Developing and administering an early literacy micro-credential program for teachers.
- Submitting to the DOE an annual financial report that includes, at a minimum, the amount of eligible contributions received by the administrator; the amount spent on each activity, including administrative expenses; and the number of students and households served under the initiative.

¹ Section 1003.485(2), F.S.

² Section 1003.485(2)(a)-(d), F.S.

³ See section 1002.411, F.S.; The New Worlds Scholarship program consists of scholarship accounts that are established to provide educational options for students.

⁴ See section 1008.365(8), F.S.

⁵ See section 1008.365, F.S.

⁶ Rule 6A-6.0532, F.A.C.; see also s. 1003.485(1)(a), F.S. Administrator means a state university registered with the department and designated to administer the initiative by implementing the NWRI and to receive funding as provided in s. 1003.485, F.S.

⁷ See ss. 1002.394(11) and 1002.395(6) and (15), F.S.

⁸ Section 1003.485(4), F.S.

- Maintaining separate accounts for operating funds and funds for the purchase and delivery of books.
- Expending eligible contributions received only for the purchase and delivery of books and to implement the requirements for NWRI, as well as for administrative expenses not to exceed two percent of total eligible contributions.
- Upon receipt of a contribution, providing the taxpayer that made the contribution with a certificate of contribution.

The DOE, in addition to designating the UF Lastinger Center for Learning to administer the NWRI, must also publish information about the NWRI and tax credits⁹ available for the NWRI¹⁰ on its website,¹¹ including the process for a taxpayer to select the administrator as the recipient of funding through a tax credit.¹² Beginning September 30, 2022, and annually thereafter, the DOE must also report on its website the number of students participating in the initiative in each school district and the academic achievement and learning gains, as applicable, of participating students based on data provided by school districts as well as the administrator's annual financial report. The DOE is required to establish a date by which each school district must annually provide the data necessary to complete the report.¹³

In the 2022-2023 school year, the NWRI served a total of 199,765 K-5 students in approximately 148,707 households statewide. Over 3.7 million books have been shipped to students since the inception of the program in October 2021.¹⁴ Students enrolled in the program demonstrated significant gains, of up to 55 percent growth rates in reading achievement during the 2022-2023 school year.¹⁵

New Worlds Scholarship Accounts

In 2018, the Legislature established Reading Scholarship Accounts to provide educational options for public school students in grades 3 through 5 who struggle with reading.¹⁶ In 2022, the program was renamed the New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts Program and the Legislature expanded eligibility for the scholarship to include public school students in grades kindergarten through 5 who have a substantial reading deficiency.¹⁷ In 2023 the program was renamed the New Worlds Scholarship Accounts Program and was expanded to include public school students in grades kindergarten through 5 who have a substantial math deficiency.¹⁸

The New Worlds Scholarship Accounts are contingent upon available funds, and on a first-come, first-served basis. Each student who is enrolled in a Florida public school in kindergarten through grade 5 is eligible for a scholarship account if the student:¹⁹

- Has a substantial reading deficiency or exhibits characteristics of dyslexia²⁰ or scored below a Level 3 on the statewide, standardized English Language Arts (ELA) assessment in the prior school year. An eligible student who is classified as an English Language Learner and is

⁹ See section 1002.395, F.S. and rule 6A-6.0960, F.A.C. The University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning is a registered Scholarship Funding Organization (SFO) and accepts tax credit contributions to support the New Worlds Reading Initiative.

¹⁰ See section 1003.485(5), F.S. New Worlds Reading Initiative Tax Credits; Applications; Transfers and Limits.

¹¹ Florida Department of Education, *Florida Tax Credit Scholarships*, <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/ftc/> (last visited Dec. 20, 2023) and Florida Department of Education, *New Worlds Scholarship Accounts*, <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/reading/> (last visited Jan. 3, 2024).

¹² Section 1003.485(3)(a) and (b), F.S.

¹³ Section 1003.485(3)(c), F.S.

¹⁴ UF Lastinger Center for Learning, *NWRI 2022-2023 Annual Enrollment Report*, at 5 and 11, available at [New Worlds Reading 2022-2023 Annual Enrollment Report FINAL 9.29.23 \(fldoe.org\)](https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/reading/), (last visited January 13, 2024).

¹⁵ *Id.* at 5.

¹⁶ Ch. 2018-6, Laws of Fla.

¹⁷ Ch. 2022-154, Laws of Fla.

¹⁸ Ch. 2023-108, Laws of Fla.

¹⁹ Section 1002.411(1)-(2), F.S.

²⁰ See s. 1008.25(5)(a), F.S.; see also Rule 6A-6.053(10)(a), F.A.C., specifying criteria for the determination that a student has a substantial deficiency in reading, including scoring the lowest level or benchmark on any assessment approved by the school district, scoring the lowest achievement level during a progress monitoring assessment approved by the school district, or demonstrating minimum skill levels in one or more areas of phonological awareness; phonics; vocabulary, including oral language skills; reading fluency; and reading comprehension.

enrolled in a program or receiving services that are specifically designed to meet the instructional needs of English Language Learner students shall receive priority.

- Has a substantial deficiency in mathematics or characteristics of dyscalculia²¹ or scored below a Level 3 on the statewide, standardized Mathematics assessment in the prior school year.

By September 30, school districts are required to notify the parent of each eligible student about the process to request and receive a scholarship, subject to available funds.²² To receive a scholarship account, parents of eligible students must:²³

- submit an application to an eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organization by the deadline established by the organization; and
- submit eligible expenses to the eligible nonprofit scholarship-funding organization for reimbursement of qualifying expenditures.

Qualifying expenditures may include:²⁴

- instructional material;
- curriculum;
- tuition and fees for part-time tutoring services provided by a person who holds a valid Florida educator’s certificate,²⁵ a person who holds a baccalaureate or graduate degree in the subject area, a person who holds an adjunct teaching certificate,²⁶ or a person who has demonstrated a mastery of subject area knowledge;²⁷
- fees for summer education programs designed to improve reading, literacy, or mathematics skills;
- fees for after-school educational programs designed to improve reading, literacy, or mathematics skills.

The amount of the New Worlds scholarship for an eligible student is specified in the General Appropriations Act (GAA)²⁸ and for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the amount specified was \$500 for each eligible student.²⁹

The table below displays the history for enrollment figures for students who participated in the program.³⁰

School Year	Grades of Students Participating in program	Number of Students Participating in Scholarships Accounts
2018-2019	Grades 3-5	5,639
2019-2020	Grades 3-5	6,792
2020-2021	Grades 3-5	4,964
2021-2022	Grades 3-5	2,035
2022-2023	Grades K-5	12,464

One hundred percent of the funds appropriated for the New Worlds Scholarship Accounts are released to the DOE at the beginning of the first quarter of each fiscal year.³¹ Once an eligible nonprofit SFO

²¹ See s. 1008.25(6)a, F.S.; see also Rule 6A-6.0533, F.A.C. for determining substantial math deficiency for students in kindergarten through grade 4.

²² Section 1002.411(6)(a), F.S.

²³ Section 1002.411(3)(a)1.-2., F.S.; see also, Florida Department of Education, Scholarship Funding Organizations, *Applications*, <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/sfo/applications.stml> (last visited Jan. 3, 2024).

²⁴ Section 1002.411(3)(a)2.a.-e., F.S.

²⁵ See s. 1012.56, F.S.

²⁶ See s. 1012.57, F.S.

²⁷ See s. 1012.56(5), F.S.

²⁸ Section 1002.411(7)(a), F.S.

²⁹ Specific Appropriation 97, s. 2, ch. 2023-239, Laws of Fla.

³⁰ Email, Step Up for Students, July 27, 2023 (on file with the House PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee).

³¹ Section 1002.411(7)(b), F.S.

notifies the DOE of a student's eligibility for a scholarship, the DOE will release the student's scholarship funds to the organization for deposit into the student's account.³²

The SFO must provide scholarship payments at least quarterly.³³ The accrued interest in the student's account is in addition to, and not part of, the awarded funds. Account funds include both the awarded funds and accrued interest.³⁴

The eligible SFO³⁵ may develop a system for payment of scholarship funds by funds transfer, including, but not limited to, debit cards, electronic payment cards, or any other means of payment that the DOE deems to be commercially viable or cost-effective. A student's scholarship award may not be reduced for debit card or electronic payment fees. Commodities or services related to the development of such a system will be procured by competitive solicitation unless they are purchased from a state term contract.³⁶

A student's scholarship account must be closed, and any remaining funds must be sent back to the DOE after:³⁷

- denial or revocation of scholarship eligibility by the Commissioner of Education 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; or
- three consecutive fiscal years in which an account has been inactive.

New Worlds Micro-Credential Program

Micro-credentials are a hybrid model of asynchronous, on-demand modules, and instructor-supported courses and practicum that equips birth to twelfth-grade instructional personnel to:³⁸

- Identify literacy difficulties and determine appropriate interventions.
- Apply evidence-based practices.
- Effectively use progress monitoring and intervention materials.

As the administrator for NWRI, the UF Lastinger Center is responsible for developing a micro-credential³⁹ that requires teachers to demonstrate competency to diagnose literacy difficulties and determine the appropriate range of literacy interventions based upon the age and literacy deficiency of the student; use evidence-based instructional and intervention practices grounded in the science of reading, including strategies identified by the Just Read, Florida!; and effectively use progress monitoring and intervention materials.⁴⁰

Additionally, the administrator must administer the early literacy micro-credential program, designed specifically for instructional personnel in prekindergarten through grade 3, which includes components on content, student learning, pedagogy, and professional development, built on a strong foundation of scientifically researched and evidence-based reading instructional and intervention programs that incorporate explicit, systematic, and sequential approaches to teaching phonemic awareness, phonics,

³² Section 1002.411(7)(c), F.S.

³³ Section 1002.411(7)(f), F.S.

³⁴ Section 1002.411(7)(d), F.S.

³⁵ For the 2023-24 school year, Step Up For Students is the only Scholarship Funding Organization administering this scholarship program; see Florida Department of Education, *New Worlds Reading Scholarship Accounts*, <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/reading/> (last visited Jan. 2, 2024).

³⁶ Section 1002.411(7)(e), F.S.

³⁷ Section 1002.411(7)(h), F.S.

³⁸ University of Florida, UF Lastinger Center for Learning, *Flamingo Literacy Micro-Credentials*, <https://lastinger.center.ufl.edu/work/literacy/flamingo-literacy/literacy-microcredentials/> (last visited Jan. 3, 2024).

³⁹ Section 1003.485(1)(g), F.S.; Micro-credential means evidence-based professional development activities grounded in the science of reading which are competency-based, personalized, and on-demands.

⁴⁰ Section 1003.485(h), F.S.

vocabulary, fluency, and text comprehension and incorporate decodable or phonetic text instructional strategies.⁴¹ Micro credentials must also be available, at no cost, to:⁴²

- Instructional personnel who are K-12 staff members and whose function includes the provision of direct instructional services to students.
- Prekindergarten instructors who instruct at a private or public voluntary prekindergarten education program.
- Child care personnel who are owners, operators, employees, and volunteers working in a child care facility.

In the 2023-2024 school year, the Division of Early Learning, in partnership with the UF Lastinger Center, established opportunities for instructional and child care personnel who work in a public or private early learning program to earn emergent⁴³ or elementary literacy micro-credentials. The elementary literacy micro-credentials provide high-quality, evidence-based online course content to build their literacy knowledge and skills to effectively support literacy learning for students, birth through grade 5. Each micro-credential consists of three 20-hour (60 hours total)⁴⁴ components.⁴⁵ Micro-credential completers may receive a completion stipend of up to \$2,000 if they meet stipend eligibility criteria.⁴⁶

New Worlds Reading Initiative Tax Credits

Under the NWRI, taxpayers can make private monetary contributions to the administrator of the initiative and receive a dollar-for-dollar credit against the following Florida taxes:

- corporate income tax;
- excise tax on liquor, wine, and malt beverages;
- gas and oil production tax;
- insurance premium tax; and,
- use tax due under a direct pay permit.⁴⁷

Taxpayers who wish to participate must apply to the Department of Revenue for an allocation of tax credit.

Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring System

The recently procured statewide, standardized coordinated screening and progress monitoring system (system) measures student progress in the VPK program and public schools to identify the educational strengths and needs of students.⁴⁸ The system measures student progress in meeting the appropriate expectations in early literacy and mathematics skills and in ELA and mathematics standards.

⁴¹ Section 1003.485(i), F.S.

⁴² Section 1003.485(i)3., F.S.

⁴³ The UF Lastinger Center for Learning's emergent literacy micro-credential prepares early learning instructional personnel and child care providers to support student outcomes for school readiness, identify literacy difficulties accurately, apply evidence-based practices, and engage in effective progress monitoring and intervention. University of Florida, UF Lastinger Center for Learning, Flamingo Literacy Micro-Credentials, <https://lastinger.center.ufl.edu/work/literacy/flamingo-literacy/literacy-microcredentials/> (last visited Jan. 3, 2024).

⁴⁴ Section 1003.485(i)2., F.S. The micro-credential must be competency based and designed for eligible instructional personnel to complete the credentialing process in no more than 60 hours.

⁴⁵ Florida Department of Education, *Professional Learning*, <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/early-learning/providers/pro-learning.shtml> (last visited Jan. 3, 2024). [hereinafter, NWRI Professional Learning]

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ Section 1003.485(5), F.S. Florida Department of Revenue, *New Worlds Reading Initiative-Tax Credit*, <https://floridarevenue.com/taxes/taxesfees/Pages/newworlds.aspx> (last visited Jan. 4, 2024). See also ss. 211.0252, 212.1833, 220.1876, 561.1212, and 624.51056, F.S.

⁴⁸ Section 1008.25(9)(a)1., F.S.

To facilitate timely interventions and supports, the system must provide results from the first two administrations of the progress monitoring to a student's teacher within 1 week and to the student's parent within 2 weeks of the administration of the progress monitoring.⁴⁹

Science of Reading Literacy and Intervention Program

The Just Read Florida! Office is required to work with the Florida Center for Reading Research⁵⁰ to identify scientifically researched and evidence-based reading instructional and intervention programs grounded in the science of reading which incorporate explicit, systematic, and sequential approaches to teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and text comprehension and incorporate decodable or phonetic text instructional strategies.⁵¹

To assist with the pursuit of evidence-based reading practices, in 2023, the Legislature appropriated \$16.0 million in nonrecurring funds from the General Revenue Fund for the Science of Reading Literacy and Tutoring Program. The funds are to be used to provide additional reading literacy support to students in kindergarten through grade 5 enrolled in a public school who either scored below Level 3 on the final English Language Arts (ELA) assessment in the prior year or who the district has determined through progress monitoring to be below grade level and in need of additional reading intervention.⁵²

Each school district received a minimum of \$150,000. The balance of the appropriation was allocated to districts that had more than 50 percent of third grade students score below Level 3 on the ELA assessment in the prior year. Each school district received their allocation by August 15, 2023.⁵³

School districts may use the funds for: stipends for tutors during the school day, before and after school, or a summer program; licenses for computerized or automated literacy tutoring that provides each student with the ability to read to the software and receive, in real time, tutoring interventions that are based in science of reading principles and individually tailored to the needs and ability of each student; professional development; or curriculum, resources, and materials necessary to implement explicit and systematic instructional strategies.

As of January 3, 2024, no funds have been disbursed to school districts.⁵⁴

Effect of Proposed Changes

New Worlds Reading Initiative

The bill renames the NWRI to the "New Worlds Learning Initiative" (NWLI); expands the purpose of the initiative to include improving mathematics skills of students in prekindergarten through grade 12; and designates the University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning as the administrator.

The bill requires the DOE to provide the program administrator with progress monitoring data for eligible prekindergarten to grade 12 students within 30 days of the close of each progress monitoring period, in an effort to create program efficiencies and better serve eligible students.

The bill requires that the annual financial report, submitted by the program administrator, also include the number of micro-credentials and reading endorsements earned, the number of school districts that participated in the New Worlds tutoring program, and the number of students and households served under each component of the NWLI.

⁴⁹ Section 1008.25(9)(c), F.S.

⁵⁰ Florida State University, Florida Center for Reading Research, <https://fcrr.org/> (last visited Dec. 20, 2023).

⁵¹ Section 1001.215(4), F.S.

⁵² Specific Appropriation 96, s. 2, ch. 2023-239, Laws of Fla.

⁵³ *Id.*

⁵⁴ Email, Department of Education (January 5, 2024) (On file in PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee).

The bill creates the New Worlds Tutoring program within the NWLI, to support school districts and schools in improving student achievement in reading and mathematics. The bill requires the program administrator to:

- Establish agreements with every school district to provide additional literacy or mathematics support to, at a minimum, prekindergarten to grade 12 students enrolled in public school who have a substantial deficiency in reading or mathematics in accordance with s. 1008.25, F.S.
- Provide best practice science of reading guidelines for districts in consultation with the Just Read, Florida! Office.
- Provide technical assistance and recommend professional learning to districts.
- Assist districts in reviewing tutoring programs, professional learning programs, curriculum, and resources to ensure they adhere to the science of reading or best practices in mathematics.
- Provide an annual report to the Legislature and the DOE summarizing district use of program funds and academic student outcomes.

The bill renames the “micro-credential program” to the “New Worlds micro-credential program” and expands the program to include evidence-based professional learning activities that utilize best practices for mathematics instruction. The current micro-credential program only includes activities grounded in the science of reading.

The bill renames the “New Worlds Reading Initiative Tax Credits” to the “New Worlds Learning Initiative Tax Credits”.

The bill replaces references to the term “professional development” with the term “professional learning”. This was a change made throughout the education code during the 2023 Legislative session.⁵⁵

The bill replaces references to the term “New Worlds Reading Initiative” with the term “New Worlds Learning Initiative”.

New Worlds Scholarship Accounts

To facilitate early intervention, the bill expands the eligibility for the New Worlds Scholarship to include students enrolled in a VPK program, through either a public or private provider, who exhibit substantial deficiencies in early literacy or math skills based on the results of the most recent progress monitoring assessment. VPK program students exhibiting substantial deficiencies in any of the three progress monitoring assessments would be eligible for the program.

In addition, the bill expands the credentials for eligible part-time tutors to include a person who holds a micro-credential under the NWRI; or for a prekindergarten student, by a person who holds a child development associate credential issued by the National Credentialing Program of the Council for Professional Recognition or a credential approved by the Department of Children and Families; holds a bachelor’s or higher degree in early childhood education, prekindergarten or primary education, preschool education, or family and consumer science; or holds a bachelor’s or higher degree in elementary education, if the prekindergarten instructor has been certified to teach children any age from birth through 6th grade.

The bill requires parents, of scholarship eligible students, to utilize the administrator’s system to make direct purchases of qualifying program expenditures and repeals individualized reimbursements to increase the efficiency of the program.

The bill requires school districts and VPK program providers to notify parents of eligible students of the process to request and receive a scholarship, when providing results from the administration of each progress monitoring assessment.

The bill repeals outdated language that required the payment of the scholarships on a quarterly basis. The entire scholarship amount is placed in the student's account upon eligibility determination.

Coordinated Screening and Progress Monitoring System

The bill expands existing requirements to provide results from the first two administrations of the progress monitoring to a student's teacher and parents, by also requiring results be delivered to prekindergarten student instructors.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

- Section 1:** Amends s. 211.0252, F.S.; conforming provisions to changes made by the act.
- Section 2:** Amends s. 212.1833, F.S.; conforming provisions to changes made by the act.
- Section 3:** Amends s. 220.1876, F.S.; conforming provisions to changes made by the act.
- Section 4:** Amends s. 561.1212, F.S.; conforming provisions to changes made by the act.
- Section 5:** Amends s. 624.51056, F.S.; conforming provisions to changes made by the act.
- Section 6:** Amends s. 1002.411, F.S.; expanding eligibility for New Worlds Scholarship Accounts to certain students enrolled in the VPK program; revising program eligibility criteria; revising eligible expenses for students who have an account; requiring parents to use a specified system to make direct purchases if such system is available; providing that certain organizations are administrators for purposes of establishing scholarship accounts; revising school district and private prekindergarten provider notification requirements; authorizing certain organizations to develop a system for the direct purchase of qualifying expenditures; deleting provisions relating to fund transfers and certain payment methods; deleting a requirement for quarterly payments of scholarships.
- Section 7:** Amends s. 1003.485, F.S.; renaming the "New Worlds Reading Initiative" as the "New Worlds Learning Initiative"; providing that the University of Florida Lastinger Center for Learning is the administrator for the initiative; revising definitions; revising the requirements for the New Worlds micro-credential program; establishing the New Worlds tutoring program; deleting a requirement that the Department of Education designate an administrator for the initiative; requiring the department to provide specified data to the administrator within specified timeframes; authorizing the micro-credential curriculum to include certain best practices; requiring the administrator to include certain information in a specified annual report; requiring the administrator to administer the New Worlds tutoring program; providing requirements for the administrator relating to such program; revising eligibility criteria for the New Worlds Learning Initiative; deleting obsolete language.
- Section 8:** Amends s. 1008.25, F.S.; making technical changes; requiring progress monitoring results to be provided to prekindergarten instructors within a specified timeframe.
- Section 9:** Establishes an effective date.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

See Fiscal Comments.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

Although the fiscal impact is indeterminate, the number of scholarships awarded is based upon the availability of funds and on a first-come, first-served basis.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

Section 16 of the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 GAA provides for the reversion of the unexpended balance of funds provided to the DOE for the New Worlds scholarship program and for these remaining funds to be appropriated for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 for the same purpose. A total of \$22.8 million was reverted and appropriated for Fiscal Year 2023-2024; added to the \$4 million in recurring general revenue funds brings the total for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 to \$26.8 million. As of January 13, 2024, a total of \$890,500 has been disbursed. If disbursements stay in this range, it is anticipated that there will be a balance of unexpended funds available for purposes of funding the scholarships in Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

None.

2. Other:

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES

None.