



SB 468 (Stargel)/HB 757 (Donalds) - While this bill has the noble goal of improving reading proficiency, the means by which it attempts to accomplish the goal are extremely problematic. [NOTE: All line numbers refer to Committee Substitute 1 at <http://bit.ly/2nKc4tJ>]

- Multiple research studies (<http://bit.ly/2n4q79X>) have shown that academic based preschool is at best ineffective and at worst academically and emotionally harmful including for reading proficiency. One prominent example is the 2015 Tennessee VPK Study (<http://bit.ly/1FwI6OH>) showing some improvement at the end of the preschool year but actual decline in both academic and emotional parameters by second grade.

On international reading assessments, Finland outperformed the US while supporting play-based preschool and not beginning formal academic instruction until age seven.

Recommendations:

1) Limit the training of teachers to those working in kindergarten through grade 5 (line 45)

2) Change "prekindergarten" to "kindergarten" (line 238)

3) Include language such as between lines 113 and 114 to encourage or even require VPK programs to develop, based on the input of early childhood experts, "play-based, developmentally appropriate curriculum and programs" for VPK

- VPK children should not be assessed in reading at 4 years old because it is developmentally inappropriate, and has the potential to falsely label children as struggling readers when development is variable at this age. An international coalition of early childhood experts holds the same view (<http://bit.ly/2neIP1J>).

Recommendation: Strike language in lines 103-113

- Labeling a preschool child "at risk" is harmful and inaccurate due to variable developmental progress at this age. Because of the identification number also mandated in this bill, a permanent stain on a child's record will occur before even beginning formal schooling.

Recommendation: Amend lines 171-177 so it reads "A child may reenroll in one of the school year programs at the request of the child's parents and at the recommendation of the child's teacher."

- Labeling a child with an identification number at age four is an invasion of privacy, is part of federal and state efforts to create lifelong citizen dossiers, and is unnecessary if preschool in Florida returns to a developmentally appropriate play-based experience.

Recommendation: Strike lines 80-83

- Requiring background knowledge and literacy skills consistent with "state academic standards" is detrimental because the state academic standards are still "Common Core" rebranded as the Florida Standards, which is tied to a decline in eighth grade NAEP reading scores, no change in fourth and 12th grade scores (<http://bit.ly/2no7zUv>) compared to 2013 and a decline in NAEP college readiness scores no significant change from 2013 in reading (<http://bit.ly/2nSAzkX>). This is hardly a ringing endorsement of Common Core's success.

Recommendation: Remove "consistent with state academic standards" on line 72

- Multiple studies and an admission by Bill Gates have shown technology to be ineffective, if not harmful, to academic achievement in reading. Technology is not necessary in order to teach reading and is also very expensive.

Recommendation: Strike "and technology tools to improve student reading performance." on line 51.

- There is emphasis on non-fiction or "technical" texts which accentuates one of the worst aspects of the Common Core English standards used in Florida under the guise of the Florida Standards. Students are deprived of great literature that helps them make sense of the world and actually learn better to think critically. This has been ably dissected and debunked by such prominent experts as Dr. Sandra Stotsky, a member of the Common Core validation committee who refused to sign off on the standards, and Dr. Terrance Moore, formerly of Hillsdale College, and now head master at a classical charter school in Atlanta, who has authored a book called *The Story Killers*.

Recommendation: Remove "For Secondary teachers, emphasis shall be on technical text." in lines 56-57.

For more details on preschool reading research, please see <http://bit.ly/2n4q79X>.

For a more general compilation of preschool research, please see: <http://bit.ly/2nKN19U>.