

Florida Department of Education

Bill Number: Senate Bill 856

Bill Title: Disability History and Awareness

Bill Sponsor: Senator Fasano

Effective Date: July 1, 2008

DOE Contact: Dr. Frances Haithcock, Chancellor, Division of Public Schools, (850) 245-0509

Executive Summary:

The bill creates s. 1003.4205, F.S., Disability history and awareness instruction. During the first two weeks in October each year, district school boards may provide disability history and awareness instruction in all K-12 public schools. District school boards shall designate these two weeks as "Disability History and Awareness Weeks."

During this two week period, students may be provided intensive instruction to expand their knowledge, understanding, and awareness of individuals with disabilities, the history of disability, and the disability rights movement. The instruction may be integrated into the existing school curriculum and may be delivered by qualified school personnel or knowledgeable guest speakers with a focus on including individuals with disabilities.

The goals of disability history and awareness instruction include: (1) better treatment of individuals with disabilities in society (especially youth in school) and increased attention to preventing the bullying or harassment of students with disabilities; (2) encouragement to individuals with disabilities to develop self-esteem, resulting in more individuals with disabilities gaining pride, obtaining postsecondary education, entering the workforce, and contributing to their communities; and, (3) reaffirmation of the commitment to the full inclusion of and equal opportunity for all individuals with disabilities.

State postsecondary institutions are encouraged to conduct and promote activities on their campuses which provide education, understanding, and awareness of individuals with disabilities, disability history, and the disability rights movement.

General Implementation Timeline:

July 1, 2008 The act will become effective.