



2025-2026 General Assembly

SENATE BILL 257: 2026 Appropriations Act, Sec. 7.48: Student Attendance Early Intervention Pilot Program

Analysis of: S.L. 2026-41, Sec. 7.48

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Prepared by: Legislative Analysis
Division Staff

Section 7.48 of S.L. 2026-41 (Senate Bill 257) requires the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to establish the Student Attendance Early Intervention Pilot Program (Pilot Program) to implement a data-driven attendance intervention system in select public schools in the State to reduce chronic absenteeism. The Pilot Program must prioritize implementation within a single public school unit (PSU) to ensure fidelity of implementation, accountability, and operational efficiency. The Pilot Program will operate during the 2026-2027 and 2027-2028 fiscal years.

School Selection: All PSUs can apply to participate in the Pilot Program and DPI must select one PSU and the schools within that PSU by September 1, 2026. The selection criteria are as follows:

- No more than 15,000 students can be covered across all the selected schools.
- The selected schools must demonstrate diversity in student demographics, including socioeconomic status, geography, and school-level characteristics to support a representative pilot program.
- Schools with a chronic absenteeism rate above the State average must be prioritized.
- Consideration must be given to the technical readiness, staffing capacity, and ability of the PSU and the school to meet implementation timelines.

Vendor Selection: DPI must select a vendor by September 15, 2026, to work with the schools in the Pilot Program. The vendor must offer a research-proven attendance intervention solution that includes tiered evidenced-based workflows, automated bidirectional family engagement, longitudinal documentation of outreach and supports, and statewide reporting and monitoring across the schools.

Implementation Requirements: Implementation of the Pilot Program must begin by January 1, 2027, and the selected PSU, schools, and vendor must work together to do the following:

- Designate a local program coordinator.
- Implement an attendance system that includes the following:
 - Real-time attendance monitoring and early warning indicators and automated, two-way communication with families, including multilingual capability.
 - Intervention protocols aligned with a multitiered system of support including intervention workflows for at-risk students.
 - Data dashboards for educators and administrators.
 - Documentation and compliance tracking aligned with State attendance rules and policies.

Kara McCraw
Director



Legislative Analysis
Division
919-733-2578

Senate Bill 257

Page 2

- Safeguards for data privacy in compliance with State and federal laws.
- Prohibits rewarding attendance by excusing students from examinations.
- Provide training to staff.

Contracts; Nonrevert: DPI can either contract with a selected vendor directly or allocate funds to the selected PSU for that PSU or schools in the PSU to contract with the selected vendor. Funds appropriated for the Pilot Program do not revert at the end of the 2026-2027 fiscal year and will instead remain available until June 30, 2028.

Use of Funds: The appropriated funds can be used for the following: (i) technology acquisition and licensing; (ii) implementation and integration services; (iii) training and professional development; and (iv) program administration and evaluation.

Reporting: Reporting must be conducted at the PSU and school level with DPI aggregating results across the participating schools for evaluation purposes. By February 1, 2028, DPI must report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the following:

- Measurable reductions in chronic absenteeism resulting from the Pilot Program.
- Improved student engagement and attendance consistency while participating in the Pilot Program.
- Operational efficiencies provided by the Pilot Program for school staff.
- Any recommendations on Statewide Expansion of the Pilot Program, long-term funding strategies, and integrating statewide data systems and longitudinal data initiatives into the Pilot Program.
- Any other information DPI finds to be relevant in evaluating the effectiveness of the Pilot Program.

This section became effective July 1, 2026.