Regular Session, 2013

ACT No. 361

ENROLLED

SENATE BILL NO. 205

BY SENATORS LAFLEUR AND GUILLORY AND REPRESENTATIVES MONTOUCET AND ORTEGO

Prefiled pursuant to Article III, Section 2(A)(4)(b)(i) of the Constitution of Louisiana.

AN ACT

To enact R.S. 17:273.3, relative to curriculum and instruction; to provide relative to foreign language immersion programs; to authorize local public school boards to establish foreign language immersion programs; to provide for a process whereby parents may request a local public school board to establish a foreign language immersion program; to provide for certification of such programs; to provide with respect to foreign language teachers; to provide with respect to student transportation; and to provide for related matters.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

Section 1. R.S. 17:273.3 is hereby enacted to read as follows:

§273.3. Foreign language immersion programs; creation by local school boards; parent petition

A. This Section shall be known and may be cited as the "Immersion School Choice Law".

B. The legislature finds that:

(1) Research indicates that students who participate in foreign language immersion programs, particularly French, demonstrate greater levels of proficiency in the English language, higher overall academic achievement, and higher levels of self-esteem.

(2) Learning a second language has a positive effect on intellectual growth and increased awareness of diverse cultures through access to history, art, and literature.

(3) Students in foreign language immersion programs have been shown to demonstrate enhanced cognitive functions in solving complex problems and

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mathematical computations through the development of more divergent and higher order thinking skills.

(4) In Louisiana, French language development and French language immersion programs, in particular, provide a better understanding of the state's social traditions and serve to promote, preserve, and develop our unique bilingual culture.

C.(1) Any local public school board may establish a foreign language immersion program in any school under its jurisdiction that shall be open to the enrollment of any student who resides within the jurisdictional boundaries of the school district.

(2)(a) Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year, a local school board, if requested in writing by the parent or legal guardian of at least twenty-five students enrolled in kindergarten who reside within the jurisdictional boundaries of the school district, shall establish a foreign language immersion program for such students, provided that all of the following apply:

(i) The parent or legal guardian of each student commits, in writing, that the student will participate in the program.

(ii) The requisite number of written requests are submitted to the local school board not later than March first prior to the school year in which the program is to be established.

(iii) The minimum foundation program formula provides funding to local school systems employing foreign language teachers to provide salary supplements for such teachers at a level equal to or greater than the level of funding provided for this purpose through such formula for the 2011-12 fiscal year.

(iv) A sufficient number of foreign language teachers with the required credentials as prescribed by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education are available through programs administered by the Department of Education and the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana to establish the program.

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(v) There is no existing foreign language immersion program offered by the local school board that has been certified by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education pursuant to R.S. 17:273.2.

(b) Such program shall be continued as long as at least twenty students remain enrolled in the program.

(c) The local school board shall ensure that any foreign language immersion program established pursuant to this Section is designated as a Certified Foreign Language Immersion Program by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in accordance with R.S. 17:273.2 within three years from the date such program is established.

D. Notwithstanding any provision of R.S. 17:158 to the contrary, a local school board shall not be required to provide transportation to any student enrolled in a foreign language immersion program established pursuant to this Section that is located outside of the attendance zone of the school the student would otherwise attend, if providing such transportation would result in additional transportation costs to the school system.

_____
PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE

_____
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

_____
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF LOUISIANA

APPROVED: _____

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