

2024 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 546

BY REPRESENTATIVE AMEDEE

CURRICULA: Provides relative to French language instruction in public schools

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 17:272, relative to foreign language instruction in public schools;
3 to require French language immersion instruction in elementary school, middle
4 school, and high school; to provide exceptions based on financial circumstances as
5 determined by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education; to prohibit
6 exemptions under certain circumstances; to require the state Department of
7 Education to recommend instructional materials; to provide for implementation; and
8 to provide for related matters.

9 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

10 Section 1. R.S. 17:272 is hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

11 §272. French language and culture; teaching in public schools

12 A. The French language and the culture and history of French populations
13 in Louisiana and elsewhere in the Americas shall be taught in public elementary and
14 secondary schools as follows:

15 (1) ~~As expeditiously as possible but not later than the beginning of the 1972-~~
16 ~~1973 school year, all~~ All public elementary schools shall offer at least ~~five~~ three
17 years of French instruction ~~starting with oral French in the first grade; except that~~
18 ~~any parish or city school board, upon request to the State Board of Education, shall~~
19 ~~be excluded from this requirement, and such request shall not be denied. Requests~~
20 ~~already received from school boards for exclusion from the provisions of Act 408 of~~

1 ~~1968 shall also be valid for exclusion from the provisions of this Act unless~~
2 ~~individual school boards deem otherwise. School boards which have not already~~
3 ~~requested exclusion may do so at any time between July 1, 1971, and the beginning~~
4 ~~of the 1972-1973 school year. The fact that any board is excluded, as here provided,~~
5 ~~from participation in the program established by this section shall in no case be~~
6 ~~construed to prohibit such school board from offering and conducting French courses~~
7 ~~in the curriculum of the schools it administers. In any school where the program~~
8 ~~provided for herein has been adopted the parent or other person legally responsible~~
9 ~~for a child may make written request to the parish school board requesting that said~~
10 ~~child be exempted from this program.~~

11 (2) All public middle schools shall offer a program of at least three years of
12 instruction in the French language and at least one course included in the culture,
13 language, music, and traditions of French-speaking Louisiana that may be modeled
14 on the French elective program as provided by the Vermilion Parish School System.

15 ~~(2) As expeditiously as possible but not later than the beginning of the 1972-~~
16 ~~1973 school year, all (3) All public high schools shall offer a program of at least~~
17 ~~three years of instruction in the French language and at least one course included in~~
18 ~~the culture and history of the French populations of Louisiana and or other French~~
19 ~~speaking areas in the Americas; except that any parish or city school board may~~
20 ~~request the State Board of Education to be excluded from this requirement and such~~
21 ~~request shall not be denied. Requests already received from school boards for~~
22 ~~exclusion from the provisions of Act 408 of 1968 shall also be valid for exclusion~~
23 ~~from the provisions of this Act unless individual school boards deem otherwise.~~
24 ~~School boards which have not already requested exclusion may do so at any time~~
25 ~~between July 1, 1971, and the beginning of the 1972-1973 school year or one course~~
26 included in the specific Cajun, Creole, and Indian dialects of French and Creole in
27 Louisiana.

28 B. The state Department of Education shall establish and maintain a list of
29 recommended Louisiana French instructional materials specific to Louisiana French

1 and Creole language and culture for use in the instruction required by this Section
2 and in French immersion programs throughout the state. The department shall
3 consult with local school boards and entities with expertise in these subject areas,
4 including but not limited to the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana,
5 the Louisiana Educational Television Authority, and the Center for Louisiana Studies
6 at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, when establishing and maintaining this
7 list.

8 C.(1) Any student shall be exempt from the requirements of Subsection A
9 of this Section if his parent or legal guardian requests his exemption.

10 (2)(a) The provisions of Subsection A of this Section shall not apply to any
11 school board for which providing the instruction is not financially feasible as
12 determined by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. No school
13 board that offers foreign language instruction in any language other than French shall
14 be determined to be unable to provide French instruction on financial grounds.

15 (b) Notwithstanding Subparagraph (a) of this Section, if at least twenty-five
16 parents request the instruction at a particular school level, the requirements of
17 Subsection A shall apply to the school board regardless of any financial
18 determinations made by the state board.

19 ~~C. D.~~ The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the state
20 superintendent of education, and all other public educational officials and
21 administrators are properly charged with the implementation of this section. shall
22 implement the provisions of this Section.

23 ~~D. E.~~ The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, the state
24 superintendent of education, and the ~~parish School Boards~~ city, parish, and other
25 local public school boards participating in the ~~program set forth in this section~~
26 instruction required by this Section shall include in their budget provision for the
27 implementation of ~~this program~~; the requirements of this Section and may avail
28 themselves of any funds which may be provided by the federal government or other
29 sources in accordance with the existing law and regulations of this state.

1 Section 2. The sequence of instruction required by this Act shall begin not later than
2 the beginning of the 2028-2029 school year.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HB 546 Original

2024 Regular Session

Amedee

Abstract: Requires three years of French language instruction in elementary school, in middle school, and in high school.

Present law requires French language instruction in public schools, allows school boards to request exemption from this requirement from BESE, and provides that the exemption shall not be denied.

Proposed law specifically requires that three years of French language instruction be offered in elementary school, three years be offered in middle school, and three years be offered in high school. Exempts school boards on the basis of financial infeasibility as determined by the State Bd. of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE); prohibits the determination that a school board is financially unable to offer the instruction if it offers any other foreign languages; and provides that proposed law applies regardless of financial determinations if the instruction is requested by at least 25 parents.

Proposed law requires the state Dept. of Education (DOE) to shall establish and maintain a list of recommended materials for use in proposed law instruction and in French immersion programs throughout the state.

Proposed law requires the sequences of instruction required by proposed law to begin by the 2028-2029 school year.

(Amends R.S. 17:272)