
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair
2023 - 2024 Regular Session

AB 2640 (Kalra) - Pupil instruction: animal dissection

Version: June 20, 2024

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 5, 2024

Policy Vote: ED. 7 - 0

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Lenin Del Castillo

Bill Summary: This bill requires local educational agencies (LEAs) to provide notifications related to the dissection of animals in schools, and also provides that the California Department of Education (CDE) shall develop a template for students to use to opt-out.

Fiscal Impact:

- The CDE indicates that it would likely incur additional costs allocating staff time to develop the template teachers may use to provide notice to students, and to potentially respond to additional Uniform Complaint Procedures (UCP) complaints regarding students' rights to refrain from participation in the dissection of animals. However, the extent of these General Fund costs is unknown.
- By expanding the UCP process to include complaints related to pupil's rights to refrain from participation in an activity involving the dissection of animal, this bill could increase the Proposition 98 General Fund costs associated with the existing UCP mandate. The extent of these costs is unknown and would depend on the number of complaints each year. The UCP mandate has an adopted statewide cost estimate of \$209,613 and a prospective cost of \$34,751 each year.
- This bill could result in additional, unknown Proposition 98 General Fund costs for LEAs to provide additional notifications and alternative assignments for students to complete in place of dissections.

Background: Existing law requires each teacher teaching a course that utilizes live or dead animals or animal parts to inform students of their rights to refrain from animal dissection. It also requires that a student's objection to participating in an educational project pursuant to this section be substantiated by a note from his or her parent or guardian.

Existing law requires a student with a moral objection to dissecting or otherwise harming or destroying animals, or any parts thereof, to notify his or her teacher regarding this objection, upon notification by the school of his or her rights. It states that if the student chooses to refrain from participation in an education project involving the harmful or destructive use of animals, and if the teacher believes that an adequate alternative education project is possible, the teacher may work with the student to develop and agree upon an alternate education project for the purpose of providing the student an

alternate avenue for obtaining the knowledge, information, or experience required by the course of study.

Existing law requires that the alternative education project require a comparable time and effort investment by the student, and prohibits it from being more arduous than the original education project as a means of penalizing a student and for students choosing an alternative educational project to pass all examinations of the respective course of study in order to receive credit for that course of study. If such tests require the harmful or destructive use of animals, permits a student to seek alternative tests.

Proposed Law: This bill requires each teacher teaching a course that utilizes live or dead animals or animal parts for purposes of dissection, or a public school on behalf of the teacher, to provide written notice to each pupil and the pupil's parent or guardian of the pupil's rights that include all of the following information as part of the written notification:

- a) A pupil's right to refrain from participating in an assessment, education project, or test involving the dissection of animals.
- b) How non-participation will not affect a pupil's grades for exercising their rights.
- c) Any animal sourcing information provided by the vendor or provider of the animals.
- d) The chemicals used to preserve the animals to which the pupil will be exposed.
- e) The complaint procedures.

This bill requires the CDE to develop a template that a teacher, or a public school on behalf of the teacher, may use to provide written notice to students and make the template available on its internet website.

This bill allows a pupil to request information about the chemicals used for dissection.

This bill encourages public schools, except for classes and activities, conducted as part of a program in agricultural education that provide instruction on the care, management, and evaluation of domestic animals, to explore using effective alternative methods in lieu of utilizing live or dead animals or animal parts for dissection in a course of study, by July 1, 2028. This bill also encourages schools to explore using effective alternative methods in lieu of utilizing live or dead animals or animal parts for dissection in a course of study, by July 1, 2028.

This bill expands the UCP process to include complaints related to pupil's rights to refrain from participation in an assessment, education project, or test involving the dissection of animals and to choose an alternative assessment, education project, or test.

Related Legislation: AB 1586 (Kalra, 2019) would have prohibited students enrolled in public or private schools from dissecting, or viewing the dissection of, animals in the study of biological sciences. This bill was held in the Assembly Education Committee.

Staff Comments: Many teachers and education professionals maintain that there is no substitute for the hands-on learning experience of dissection. To understand the current use of animal dissection and alternatives and attitudes toward the practices, a nationwide survey of middle and high school biology teachers and students was conducted in Evaluation of Educator & Student Use of & Attitudes toward Dissection & Dissection Alternatives. Most teachers (84%) and students (76%) reported using dissection in their classrooms, although nearly half of educators indicated that dissection is decreasing at their school.

According to the author, “The lessons of anatomy are an important scientific teaching in a student's academic career. However, with the advancements in educational technology, alternative methods can still reach the same educational outcome without having to rely on costly animal dissection kits. California law allows students to opt-out of animal dissection and request an alternative assignment but they are not made aware of their right and feel obligated to participate.”

This bill would reinforce pupils' existing right to opt-out of animal dissection projects by requiring, as a part of the written notification to students and parents or guardian of the pupil's, information about pupil's right to refrain from participating in an assessment, education project, or test involving the dissection of animals.

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