

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 1659 (Ransom)

As Amended March 9, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires school districts to designate at least one district staff member as a point person to help facilitate the transition of the pupil between public school and juvenile court schools (JCS).

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires a school district in which a student has had contact with the juvenile justice system to designate at least one district staff member as a point person to help facilitate the transition of the pupil between public school and JCS. Requires the designated staff member to collaborate with the county office of education (COE) and county probation department throughout the calendar year to facilitate the following:
 - a) The immediate enrollment of a student transferred from JCS in an appropriate public school in their community, and their immediate placement in appropriate courses;
 - b) The timely transfer of education records when a student enters JCS, including the pupil's individualized education program (IEP) and 504 plan, if applicable; and
 - c) The acceptance of full or partial course credits for coursework completed by the student while enrolled in a JCS.
- 2) Requires the school district to inform the COE and county probation department of the staff member's name and contact information;
- 3) Restates existing law (Education Code (EC) 49069.5) that requires local education agencies (LEAs) to issue full and partial credits on an official transcript within two business days of foster youth transferring between public schools and JCS.

COMMENTS

Juvenile court schools. According to the CDE, the purpose of JCS is to provide mandated, compulsory public education for juvenile offenders who are under the protection or authority of the county juvenile justice system and are incarcerated in juvenile halls, juvenile homes, day centers, juvenile ranches, juvenile camps, or regional youth educational facilities. These schools are operated by COEs. In the 2023-24 school year, over 13,000 students were enrolled across 51 JCS school sites.

Students are often enrolled in JCS for only a period of days or weeks; more than half are enrolled for less than 31 days (Youth Law Center, *Out of Sight, Out of Mind*). Nevertheless, JCS enables students to complete course credits leading to a high school diploma. A minimum day program for JCS is 240 minutes, in alignment with public school requirements, and students must take all required public education assessments.

Delayed re-enrollment and credit transfer can impact graduation rates for JCS students. For students transferring out of JCS, delayed re-enrollment in their next school is a serious concern.

According to data from the CDE, 1 in 4 students (25%) who attend JCS schools never re-enroll in any form of school. In the 2023-24 school year, this amounted to nearly 3,000 students who dropped out of school before obtaining their diplomas.

Once JCS students are re-enrolled, delayed or inaccurate credit transfer is common. At a minimum this can cause inappropriate course placement, but it can also impact if and when a student has accumulated enough credit for graduation. According to the CDE, graduation rates for former JCS students were only 40% in 2023-24, compared to the statewide average of 86%. Perhaps more starkly, for schools that reported data that year, only 1 former JCS student met the requirements needed to apply to California State University or University of California. Helping JCS students receive the credits they earned, full or partial, is critical to ensuring their long-term success.

District-level liaisons were recommended in a previous report to the Legislature. In 2016, the CDE released *Juvenile Court Student Transition Statewide Work Group: Report and Recommendations to the Legislature*, pursuant to AB 2276 (Bocanegra), Chapter 901, Statutes of 2014. Their recommendations included the creation of a student transition team, comprised of designated transition liaisons at the COE, county probation department, and school district. While the first two positions have been created, the district personnel positions were never implemented.

Improved administrative collaboration may smooth student transitions. Recently, a number of reports have confirmed the need for system-level collaboration, including:

- 1) Youth Law Center, *Out of Sight, Out of Mind*, 2023: Investing in transition services and relationships with districts of origin is "imperative";
- 2) FowardChange, *Fewer Chutes, More Ladders*, 2026: System-level coordination is essential to reduce recidivism and improve the lives of youth;
- 3) Bishop, *Educational Planning of Court-Involved Youth*, 2019: Establishing points of contact in each agency can enhance educational planning for court school youth.

This research confirms anecdotal evidence from California school administrators, who have observed that JCS students experience the best outcomes when their home district has a clearly identified person supporting their transitions. Current law requires COEs have designated transition personnel assisting students as they leave JCS, yet there are no corresponding designated personnel at the receiving school district. A warm handoff of the student from JCS to their next school district is difficult without a team of people working at both ends to help the student successfully re-enroll.

According to the Author

Students who are justice-impacted are children who deserve stability, care, and support, especially during major transitions in their lives. AB 1659 provides greater support for these students by ensuring there is a designated point of contact when a student transitions back to their home school district upon release from a court school. This bill strengthens the partnership between the county office of education and the student's home district to put the student first and establish a more effective transition support system. A smooth reintegration process will reduce disruptions to these students' education and help them stay engaged, focused on their future, and moving toward success.

Arguments in Support

Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE) writes: "When COEs and school districts work together to support smooth transitions, juvenile court school students are more likely to re-enroll promptly, get credit for work completed, and take appropriate courses to help them graduate. Without support, these vulnerable students can fall through the cracks, dropping out of school altogether and even ending up with more juvenile justice system involvement.

Current law mandates that COEs have a designated staff person to serve as a transition liaison for court school students, but there is no comparable mandate for school districts. AB 1659 will remedy that omission by ensuring that school district staff is identified to partner with COE staff to support students through these transitions, helping them enroll in appropriate courses and get credit for work completed.

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, "Unknown but likely minor and absorbable Proposition 98 General Fund (GF) cost pressures to each school district to designate a juvenile court school pupil point person within the district. However, current law already requires each school district to conduct the various transition activities referred to in this bill but without a point person responsible for connecting the appropriate COE and county probation department staff with the correct district staff to ensure a timely transition.

Potential Proposition 98 GF and non-Proposition 98 GF savings, possibly in the tens of thousands of dollars statewide, through the decreased cost to JCSs and county probation departments to the extent this bill results in a pupil who would otherwise not re-enroll timely and recidivate after transferring out of a JCS now re-enrolls in a comprehensive high school setting and matriculates through the K-12 education system without further incident."

VOTES**ASM EDUCATION: 8-0-0**

YES: Patel, Hoover, Alvarez, Bonta, Castillo, Garcia, Lowenthal, Zbur

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 14-0-1

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Arambula, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Muratsuchi, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Calderon

UPDATED

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