

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 1721 (Muratsuchi)

As Amended March 9, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), in consultation with the State Board of Education (SBE), to convene a stakeholder workgroup on school safety by July 1, 2027, and for the workgroup to make recommendations on the development and approval process as well as the required elements of a comprehensive school safety plan.

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires the SPI, in consultation with the SBE, to convene a stakeholder workgroup on school safety by July 1, 2027
- 2) Requires the workgroup to include, but not be limited to, administrators, teachers, school employee organization representatives, parents, students, law enforcement, fire agency personnel, school safety experts, and Pupil Personnel Services credential holders.
- 3) Requires the SPI, to the greatest extent feasible, to ensure that the educators in the workgroup include those employed in both elementary and secondary schools, that at least one educator has experience in working with students with disabilities; and that the overall composition of the workgroup represents the geographic diversity of the state and has a balance of educators and first responders from both urban and rural areas.
- 4) Requires the workgroup to review existing comprehensive school safety plans and make recommendations on the development and approval process for the required elements of a comprehensive school safety plan.
- 5) Requires the workgroup to make recommendations on improvements to the structure, organization, and layout of school safety plans; to the development and approval process at the local level; and procedures for the addition or deletion of elements of a school safety plan.
- 6) Requires the SPI to submit a report on the recommendations of the workgroup to the Legislature and the Department of Finance by July 1, 2028.

COMMENTS

School safety plans have become unwieldy and less effective due to frequent changes. In addition to a requirement to include new content and procedures in comprehensive school safety plans, AB 1747 (Rodriguez), Chapter 806, Statutes of 2018, required the California Department of Education (CDE) to develop and post on its website best practices for reviewing and approving school safety plans. Among other resources, the CDE developed and posted a Compliance Tool for a Comprehensive School Safety Plan which includes more than 30 items to be considered. One may question whether the multitude of requirements to be included in the content and related procedures of the comprehensive school safety plans required for California public schools have led to documents that are unwieldy and that may compromise school safety.

School safety plans as a key component of school safety. Comprehensive school safety plans are a key component of school safety and are required by state law. Safety plans are a collection of procedures for schools to use in the event of an emergency, as well as policies to promote a safe learning environment. Each school district and County Office of Education (COE) is responsible for the overall development of all safety plans for its schools that operate kindergarten or any grades 1 through 12. A charter school's petition is required to include the development of a school safety plan which largely mirrors the requirements for the school district and COE plans. The comprehensive school safety plan is developed by the schoolsite council or a safety committee as shown in the figure on the preceding page, published by the California State Auditor.

Alternative methods of improving school safety. According to the Learning Policy Institute (LPI), "A rise in the number of school shootings over time has driven increasing attention to school safety. However, school shootings are not the only physical safety threat students may encounter at school. Other types of violence include sexual assault, robbery, physical attack or fights, and threats of physical attack (with or without a weapon). In addition to immediate physical harms, school violence can have long-lasting effects that undermine students' engagement and mental health. It can also increase drug use and risk of suicide. Although there is widespread agreement that all children and youth deserve a safe and healthy school environment, there is significant debate about how best to promote student safety." (DePaoli, 2023)

The LPI report identifies two common approaches to improving school safety: increasing physical security and building supportive school communities. Physical security strategies that may be utilized include controlling access to the building and requiring badges for staff and visitors, as well as security cameras, metal detectors, and the deployment of school resource officers (SROs). There is growing interest in improving school safety through building supportive school communities to protect against school violence, including mental health supports, social and emotional learning programs, restorative practices, and structures that support positive relationships within schools. LPI reports that research supports the use of these approaches to support school safety.

According to the Author

According to the author, "Schools are responsible for creating learning environments that are safe and secure for students, staff, and visitors. Schools must be prepared to respond to emergencies, including natural and man-made hazards, and strive to prevent violence and behaviors that undermine safety and security. Following the addition of multiple new requirements for a comprehensive school safety plan in recent years, there is a need to have experts review the requirements, conduct a thorough assessment, and make recommendations on how to improve and update the plans while maintaining those elements critical to school safety."

Arguments in Support

The Association of California School Administrators writes, "Since 2013, 15 bills have been signed into law amending the Comprehensive School Safety Plan (CSSP's) required content and procedures. In the 2023-24 legislative session alone, nine new measures were adopted, significantly impacting the required content and procedures that must be developed in a district's CSSP. While these changes reflect a growing recognition of the need for comprehensive support and safety procedures in educational environments, the rapid introduction of these new requirements has led to increasing concerns among administrators and stakeholders regarding the overall effectiveness and practicality of a district's CSSP."

Given the recent additions to the CSSP requirements, it is essential to engage experts in the field to conduct a detailed review of these new requirements. By requiring the Superintendent of Public Instruction to evaluate the CSSP framework in conjunction with public safety and emergency services experts and district site leaders, policymakers can assure students and families that the CSSP remains an effective tool for promoting student well-being and safety."

Arguments in Opposition

The California Public Defenders Association writes, "California public defenders represent thousands of young people across the state in youth justice and related education proceedings. While acutely aware of the need for enhanced safety in schoolhouses, and supportive of the convening of a statewide advisory working group to address those concerns, we have strong reservations about the emphasis on law enforcement/surveillance as the primary strategy for achieving that goal. We offer three proposed amendments to address those concerns.

We have suggested redefining the composition of the stakeholder workgroup to include youth advocates, behavioral health professionals, school counselors, restorative justice practitioners, disability rights organizations, LGBTQ+ student advocates, and representatives from communities disproportionately impacted by school policing. Depending on who is at the table, redefined safety plans could lead to the increased emphasis on threat assessment frameworks, surveillance tools, and formalized coordination with law enforcement agencies, rather than meaningful investment in counseling, prevention-based strategies, and community supports.

We would also like to see "safety" explicitly defined to include behavioral health, student well-being, suicide prevention, and trauma-informed practices—not solely threat mitigation. Last, we suggest including language that elevates prevention based and supportive strategies as primary safety tools, with enforcement-based approaches secondary and narrowly tailored. We all share the same goal of ensuring students in school are safe. How we define "safety" and who is brought to the table are important components of achieving that goal. We look forward to continuing to work with the author so that we can support this bill."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee, "One-time General Fund costs likely in the tens of thousands of dollars to the CDE to convene the workgroup and complete the required report and recommendations. Regardless of cost, consistent with this committee's rules and practice, this bill is eligible for placement on the suspense file because it has the primary purpose of creating a report."

VOTES

ASM EDUCATION: 8-0-0

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

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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