
SENATE COMMITTEE ON BUDGET AND FISCAL REVIEW

Senator John Laird, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 181	Hearing Date:	June 29, 2026
Author:	Alvarez and Patel		
Version:	June 26, 2026 Amended		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	No
Consultant:	Yong Salas		

Subject: Education Governance

Summary: This bill: (1) reorganizes California's state education governance structure by transferring management of the California Department of Education (CDE) from the elected Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to a Governor-appointed, Senate-confirmed Education Commissioner; (2) restructures the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Office of the SPI; (3) transfers numerous statutory duties from the SPI to the Education Commissioner; and (4) requires recommendations for a second phase of state education governance consolidation.

Proposed Law: Specifically, this bill:

Governance Structure

- 1) Replaces the elected SPI as the executive head of the CDE with a Governor-appointed, Senate-confirmed Education Commissioner who serves at the pleasure of the Governor.
- 2) Provides that the CDE shall be administered through the SBE and the Education Commissioner, rather than the SPI.
- 3) Vests all executive and administrative functions of the CDE in the Education Commissioner.
- 4) Authorizes the Education Commissioner to exercise general supervision over department operations and issue orders necessary to carry out duties vested in the CDE.
- 5) Transfers all grant and contract approval authority currently exercised by the Executive Director of the SBE to the Education Commissioner beginning January 1, 2027.

State Board of Education

- 6) Reconstitutes the SBE beginning January 15, 2027, by adding the SPI, one appointee of the Senate President pro Tempore, and one appointee of the Speaker of the Assembly as voting members while reducing the Governor's appointments from ten to nine.

- 7) Repeals the requirement that the SPI serve as Secretary and Executive Officer of the SBE.
- 8) Repeals the requirement for the SBE to appoint an acting secretary during the SPI's absence or incapacity.
- 9) Requires the Education Commissioner, rather than the SPI, to execute SBE policies and direct the work of SBE appointees and employees.

Office of the Superintendent

- 10) Establishes a separate Office of the SPI consisting of the elected SPI, constitutional deputies and associate superintendents, specified exempt staff, and transferred civil service employees.
- 11) Authorizes the SPI to transfer up to five CDE employees to the Office of the SPI.
- 12) Shifts payment of the SPI's travel expenses from the CDE to the Office of the SPI.

Staffing Changes

- 13) Authorizes the Governor to appoint up to 16 exempt deputy positions for the Education Commissioner.
- 14) Transfers existing SBE deputies and specified SPI-appointed deputies to report to the Education Commissioner.
- 15) Transfers civil service employees performing transferred functions from the SBE to the CDE while preserving their civil service status.

Administrative Responsibilities

- 16) Transfers to the Education Commissioner the statutory responsibility to supervise the state's schools.
- 17) Transfers responsibility for preparing official forms, authenticating department documents, maintaining official records, and exercising other executive administrative functions previously assigned to the SPI.
- 18) Transfers authority to designated department employees with deputy powers.
- 19) Requires the Education Commissioner to direct the CDE to respond to legislative requests for information, data, and technical assistance in a timely manner, to the extent practicable.

Program Administration

- 20) Transfers authority over federal education agreements, grants, and contracts from the SPI to the Education Commissioner.

- 21)Transfers responsibility for administering adult education workforce programs and related federal workforce funds.
- 22)Transfers responsibility for annual state school apportionment estimates.
- 23)Transfers responsibility for administration of the California Schools for the Deaf, California School for the Blind, and related statewide programs.
- 24)Transfers responsibility for school accountability advisory committees, school facilities planning functions, development of fiscal standards and criteria, parent engagement resources, child abuse reporting materials, and approval of CDE program guidelines.
- 25)Transfers responsibility for administration of private school affidavits, heritage school registration, and the Heritage Enrichment Resource Fund.

Other Governance Changes

- 26)Adds the SPI as a voting member of the California Community Colleges Board of Governors.
- 27)Requires the Education Commissioner to develop recommendations by October 1, 2027, for a second phase of education governance consolidation, including recommendations regarding statewide support entities, county office regional functions, the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, the Office of Civil Rights, and the future role and staffing of the Office of the SPI.
- 28)Makes conforming and technical changes throughout the Education Code to reflect the transfer of statutory authority from the SPI to the Education Commissioner.

Fiscal Effect: This bill has no fiscal effect.

Support: None on file.

Opposed: None on file.

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