

## ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 2149 (Garcia)

As Amended April 13, 2026

Majority vote

**SUMMARY**

Requires the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) to assess and publicly report to the Legislature and the Governor the state's progress in closing pupil academic achievement gaps and to include recommendations on actions that the state can take to meet its specific goals and benchmarks for the state to support local educational agencies (LEAs) in closing the achievement gap established pursuant to AB 2225 (Patel) of the 2025–26 Regular Session.

**Major Provisions**

- 1) Requires the LAO report to first be provided on December 1, 2028, and then on December 1<sup>st</sup> for each year thereafter as a component of the assessment of the state budget.
- 2) Requires the LAO's annual report to include, but not be limited to, all of the following:
  - a) A review and assessment of whether the prior year's adopted budget aligns with the Closing the Achievement Gap State Operations and Support Plan (Plan) developed pursuant to AB 2225 (Patel) of the 2025–26 Regular Session;
  - b) An assessment of new and existing unfunded or partially funded mandates or state requirements on LEAs and whether those mandates and requirements contribute to, or interfere with, LEAs' ability to close the achievement gap, including whether those mandates and requirements align with the Plan;
  - c) An evaluation of state support efforts and the efficacy of state-run and state-directed programs aimed at improving pupil outcomes and closing the achievement gap; and
  - d) Any barriers that LEAs face in closing the achievement gap.
- 3) Requires the LAO annual report to be submitted in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.
- 4) Requires the LAO to consult with education stakeholders to develop the annual report.

**COMMENTS**

*Key provisions of the bill.* This bill would require the LAO to assess and publicly report to the Legislature and the Governor the state's progress in closing pupil academic achievement gaps and to include recommendations on actions that the state can take to meet its specific goals and benchmarks for the state to support local educational agencies in closing the achievement gap established pursuant to AB 2225 (Patel) of the 2025–26 Session. The LAO's annual report would be required to include: 1) a review and assessment of whether the prior year's adopted budget aligns with the Plan developed pursuant to AB 2225 (Patel), 2) an assessment of new and existing unfunded or partially funded mandates or state requirements on LEAs and whether those mandates and requirements contribute to, or interfere with, LEAs' ability to close the achievement gap, including whether those mandates and requirements align with the Plan, 3) an

evaluation of state support efforts and the efficacy of state-run and state-directed programs aimed at improving pupil outcomes and closing the achievement gap; and 4) any barriers that LEAs face in closing the achievement gap. The required the LAO report would first be provided on December 1, 2028, and then on December 1<sup>st</sup> for each year thereafter as a component of the assessment of the state budget and require input from education stakeholders.

This bill is one of four bills sponsored by the California School Boards Association (CSBA) in the 2025-26 Session to establish "a comprehensive state-level operations and support plan that clearly defines how the state will help LEAs close achievement gaps" (CSBA Closing the Achievement Gap Legislative Package Overview). Other bills include: AB 2220 (Muratsuchi) would establish the Closing the Achievement Gap Commission, an advisory body to the State Board of Education (SBE), AB 2225 (Patel) would establish a working group to develop a Plan; and AB 2514 (Ransom) would require the working group and Plan to be established by AB 2225 (Patel) of the 2025-26 Session to include recommendations for the development of a State of the Achievement Gap Dashboard.

*Achievement gaps.* Achievement gaps are significant and persistent disparities in student performance and educational attainment between student groups. Achievement gaps exist between different student ethnic and racial groups, as well as between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. In California, achievement levels between student groups on nearly every indicator of student performance has been making progress in closing the achievement gap, but several student groups still fall behind state averages.

According to a 2015 report from the Economic Policy Institute, "Early Education Gaps by Social Class and Race Start U.S. Children Out on Unequal Footing: A Summary of the Major Findings in Inequalities at the Starting Gate," achievement gaps begin as early as birth, particularly among students with different socioeconomic backgrounds. The key foundations for learning begin as soon as a child is born, and starting school behind their peers typically persists as children progress through school. Studies show that the black-white achievement gap has persisted but changed over time. It narrowed in both reading and math from the early 1970s to the late 1980s, then widened in the early 1990s, but has been narrowing consistently since 1999 (Reardon, 2014). In addition, even though the Black/African American subgroup includes pupils at all income levels, its scores are below the scores of economically disadvantaged pupils, which suggests that poverty alone does not explain this outcome. According to Reardon et al., a relatively common question addressed in studies of racial/ethnic achievement gaps (particularly the black-white gap) is the extent to which the observed gaps can be explained by socioeconomic differences between the groups.

A 2004 Review of Economics and Statistics report, described that socioeconomic factors explain almost all (85%) of the black-white math gap, and all of the reading gap at the start of kindergarten. By the third grade, however, the same socioeconomic factors account for only about 60% of both the math and reading black-white gaps. This finding suggests that socioeconomic factors explain, in large part, the black-white differences in cognitive skills at the start of formal schooling, but do not account for the growth of the black-white gap as children progress through elementary school.

Student achievement on standardized test results in California demonstrates achievement gaps between different race and ethnic groups, students with disabilities and students without disabilities, and students of different socioeconomic statuses. For example, the 2025 CAASPP

ELA results for all grades assessed included 32.8% of Black or African American students and 38.84% of Latino students that met or exceeded targeted benchmarks for mathematics, compared to 61.8% of White students, and 74.4% of Asian students. The statewide average was 48.8%. 2025 CAASPP Math results for all grades assessed included 20.1% of Black or African American students and 25.74% of Latino students that met or exceeded targeted benchmarks for mathematics, compared to 51% of White students, and 70.3% of Asian students. The statewide average was 37.3%.

Academic achievement gaps have consequences beyond school. A 2018 Equality of Opportunity Project at Stanford University report, *Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States: An Intergenerational Perspective* states, "Black children born to parents in the bottom household income quintile have a 2.5% chance of rising to the top quintile of household income, compared with 10.6% for whites," and "American Indian and black children have a much higher rate of *downward* mobility than other groups [emphasis in original]."

*Statewide efforts to close achievement gaps in California.* Since the creation of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and the related accountability measures in 2013, California has developed the "Statewide System of Support" for all LEAs, including school districts, COEs and charter schools. The goal for support at all levels is to assist LEAs and their schools in meeting the needs of each student served, with a focus on building capacity to sustain improvement and effectively address inequities in student opportunities and outcomes. The System of Support is comprised of four entities in current law: the California Department of Education (CDE), State Board of Education (SBE), county offices of education (COEs), and California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE). Current law articulates a system of policymaking (the Governor, Legislature and SBE), data collection (CDE and LEAs), technical assistance (CDE, COEs, and CCEE), and practice (LEAs), but there is no entity formally tasked with collecting research related to achievement gaps, and supporting undergraduate and preservice preparation of educators programs. Although achievement gaps are widely studied both at the national and statewide levels, few supports exist to collect, distill and distribute the findings from that research to practitioners and technical assistance providers in order to change statewide policies and local practice. Please refer to the Assembly Education Committee analysis of this bill for additional information about state efforts underway to close the achievement gap.

### **According to the Author**

"As an educator, I believe that we must address the pupil accountability gap in our schools. We can no longer afford to treat the achievement gap as a localized problem for LEAs to solve in isolation. AB 2149 ensures that every state dollar and every new mandate is scrutinized for its efficacy in advancing equity, ultimately ensuring that the state's massive investment in public education translates into measurable progress for every child."

### **Arguments in Support**

The CSBA writes, "This legislative package proposes that the state, similar to local school district and county office of education boards, must adopt clear goals, measurable benchmarks and transparent and understandable reporting to the public on the state's progress towards a more aligned state system that improves outcomes for California students. This north star would guide the state's public education entities and serve as a common throughline to a shared goal of closing achievement gaps. Together, they represent a landmark effort by the Legislature to help further focus and align the state's policy, fiscal and operational efforts to support schools and

establish a new level of shared accountability between state entities and local educational agencies for closing achievement gaps."

**Arguments in Opposition**

None on file

**FISCAL COMMENTS**

This bill has been keyed as nonfiscal by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

**VOTES**

**ASM EDUCATION: 9-0-0**

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

**UPDATED**

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