
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 2191	Hearing Date:	June 10, 2026
Author:	Quirk-Silva		
Version:	March 26, 2026		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Ian Johnson		

Subject: High school graduation requirements: alternate pathways for individuals with exceptional needs: statewide resources.

SUMMARY

This bill requires the California Department of Education (CDE) and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), subject to an appropriation, to establish a statewide resource within California's system of support focused on helping local educational agencies (LEAs) develop alternate pathways to a high school diploma for students with exceptional needs.

BACKGROUND

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the CCEE to advise and assist school districts, county superintendents of schools, and charter schools in achieving the goals identified in their local control and accountability plans (LCAPs). (Education Code (EC) § 52074)
- 2) Establishes California's statewide system of support to provide assistance and capacity building to LEAs for purposes of improving student outcomes. (EC §§ 52059.5, 52059.6, 52073)
- 3) Requires LEAs to exempt certain pupils with exceptional needs from local coursework and graduation requirements that are in addition to statewide graduation requirements if the pupil meets specified criteria. (EC § 51225.31)
- 4) Requires LEAs to award a high school diploma to a qualifying pupil with exceptional needs who satisfies statewide coursework and other applicable requirements. (EC § 51225.31)
- 5) Authorizes pupils with disabilities to earn a diploma through alternate pathways and individualized course of study determinations established through the individualized education program (IEP) process, consistent with state and federal law. (20 U.S.C. § 1414; EC §§ 56000 et seq.)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

- 1) Requires, subject to an appropriation, CDE and the CCEE to establish a statewide resource focused on alternate pathways to a diploma for pupils with exceptional needs.
- 2) Requires the statewide resource to be established on or before July 1, 2027.
- 3) Specifies that the statewide resource is to support capacity building within California's statewide system of support.
- 4) Requires the statewide resource to provide training and technical assistance related to alternate diploma pathways for pupils with exceptional needs.
- 5) Contemplates that the support provided would assist LEAs in implementing and understanding diploma options and pathways available to students with disabilities.

STAFF COMMENTS

- 1) ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, "A high school diploma opens a world of opportunities for California youth. Every young person deserves a pathway to earn a high school diploma regardless of their conditions. For far too long students with disabilities have been denied high school diplomas and relegated to certificates of completion. These certificates are not widely recognized by institutions of higher education and employers, further limiting the chance that these students will have at independence and academic growth. AB 2191 establishes upon appropriation, a statewide resource focused on eliminating the unnecessary barriers that stand between our neurodivergent students and the access, equity, and opportunity they deserve in earning a high school diploma. Making sure that a special education resource lead project is providing technical assistance, peer support, and resources to help school districts implement the important policy of alternative pathways."
- 2) ***Increasing attention on diploma pathways for students with disabilities.*** In recent years, policymakers, advocates, and LEAs have increasingly focused on how California's graduation requirements and diploma pathways interact with the educational experiences of students with disabilities. While existing law provides certain protections and flexibilities for qualifying students with exceptional needs, implementation across LEAs can vary significantly. Questions regarding available diploma pathways, course access, transition planning, and alignment with IEPs can create confusion for families and educators alike. This bill appears intended to address those inconsistencies through statewide technical assistance and capacity building rather than through direct changes to graduation requirements themselves.
- 3) ***Use of the statewide system of support as an implementation mechanism.*** Rather than establishing a new standalone program or mandate on LEAs, this bill

relies on California's existing statewide system of support infrastructure and the expertise of the CCEE to disseminate best practices and provide technical assistance. The Legislature has increasingly utilized the statewide system of support to address implementation challenges in specialized policy areas where statewide consistency may be beneficial, while still preserving local flexibility. Committee staff notes that the bill does not prescribe a specific diploma pathway model or impose new graduation requirements, but instead focuses on developing statewide expertise and guidance capacity.

- 4) ***Potential overlap with existing special education technical assistance structures.*** California already operates multiple technical assistance and support entities related to special education, including Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA), the Supporting Inclusive Practices initiative, statewide technical assistance centers, and other state-supported special education resources. The Committee may wish to consider how the statewide resource envisioned by this bill would coordinate with or differ from those existing structures in order to avoid fragmentation or duplication of efforts. To the extent the bill moves forward, clarity regarding roles, responsibilities, and intended deliverables may assist with implementation.
- 5) ***Bill contingent upon an appropriation.*** The bill's requirements are expressly contingent upon an appropriation. As a result, implementation would depend upon the availability of future funding in the annual Budget Act or another legislative appropriation measure. The bill does not currently specify staffing levels, program structure, or anticipated statewide implementation costs.

SUPPORT

California Alliance of Child and Family Services
California Teachers Association
Coalition for Adequate Funding for Special Education
Los Angeles County Office of Education
San Francisco Unified School District
The Arc and United Cerebral Palsy California Collaboration

OPPOSITION

None received

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