
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 2191 (Quirk-Silva) - High school graduation requirements: alternate pathways for individuals with exceptional needs: statewide resources

Version: March 26, 2026
Urgency: No
Hearing Date: June 22, 2026

Policy Vote: ED. 7 - 0
Mandate: No
Consultant: Lenin Del Castillo

Bill Summary: This bill requires the California Department of Education (CDE) and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) 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.

Fiscal Impact: The CDE estimates one-time General Fund costs of \$52,000 in the first year of implementation and ongoing costs of \$33,000 for two partial positions to establish and oversee the resource. The CCEE indicates that the bill's costs would be dependent on how it is implemented. To the extent that the existing lead is utilized, the costs for CCEE would likely be minimal since there is already an existing process in place. If a new and separate lead is established, the General Fund costs could be approximately \$750,000 each year which is based on the cost of CCEE's current special education resource leads. Further, there would be costs of \$50,000 to \$80,000 each year for the CCEE to select the lead and support implementation, and additional costs in the high tens of thousands to low hundreds of thousands of dollars to evaluate the selected lead's performance. The bill's provisions would be contingent upon an appropriation.

Background: Existing law 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). It establishes California's statewide system of support to provide assistance and capacity building to LEAs for purposes of improving student outcomes.

Existing law requires LEAs to award a high school diploma to a qualifying pupil with exceptional needs who satisfies statewide coursework and other applicable requirements. It 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.

Proposed Law: This bill requires, subject to an appropriation, the CDE and CCEE to establish a statewide resource focused on alternate pathways to a diploma for pupils with exceptional needs. It requires the statewide resource to be established on or before July 1, 2027.

This bill specifies that the statewide resource is to support capacity building within California's statewide system of support, and requires it to provide training and technical

assistance related to alternate diploma pathways for pupils with exceptional needs. Additionally, the bill provides that the support provided would assist LEAs in implementing and understanding diploma options and pathways available to students with disabilities.

Staff Comments: SB 74 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 6, Statutes of 2020) appropriated \$250,000 to support the convening of a workgroup to examine and propose alternative pathways to a high school diploma for students with disabilities. As a result, the Alternate Pathways to a High School Diploma Workgroup was convened and recommended the state create a new pathway specifically for students with significant cognitive disabilities. This new pathway was implemented in June 2024 and allows high school diploma attainment through meeting state minimum course requirements. 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.”

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