

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 2225 (Patel, et al.)

As Amended May 18, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Establishes a working group to develop a Closing the Achievement Gap State Operations and Support Plan (Plan).

Major Provisions

- 1) Requires, on or before July 1, 2027, the State Board of Education (SBE), in consultation with the California Department of Education (CDE), to establish a competitive process to select, and thereafter contract with, an organization that has experience assessing governance structures, improving strategies to close pupil academic achievement gaps, and working with stakeholders throughout the state.
- 2) Requires, on or before September 1, 2027, the selected organization to convene a working group and meet at least once per month until the Plan is submitted to the Governor and the Legislature. Requires the working group to consist of specified members. Specifies that members of the working group shall not be compensated for their services as a part of the working group but may be reimbursed for travel costs. Encourages members of the working group to participate in meetings remotely.
- 3) Requires the working group to develop a Plan that is foundationally based on the supportive role the state can play with regard to local educational agencies (LEAs). Prohibits the plan from recommending more local accountability processes and measures, local reporting requirements, or unfunded mandates.
- 4) Requires, on or before March 1, 2028, the working group to submit the Plan to the Governor and the Legislature
- 5) Encourages, on or before September 1, 2028, and annually thereafter, the Assembly Committee on Budget and the Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review to consider evaluating the state's progress in meeting the benchmarks and goals established in the Plan.

COMMENTS

Key provisions of the bill. This bill would establish a working group to develop a Plan. The Plan would be required to include 1) specific goals and benchmarks for the state to support LEAs in closing the achievement gap, 2) specific performance targets aimed at closing the achievement gap for the SBE, the CDE, and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), 3) an assessment of state entities tasked with meeting the state's public education goals, 4) recommendations for specific actions that each state educational entity, 5) the establishment of a clear definition of high-quality school district technical assistance, and recommendations for appropriate remedial action if the state does not meet the specified benchmarks and goals. The Plan would be developed by a working group led by a selected organization that has experience assessing governance structures, improving strategies to close pupil academic achievement gaps, and working with stakeholders throughout the state.

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 2149 (Garcia) if the current legislative session would require 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 performance targets established pursuant to AB 2225 (Patel) of the current legislative session, AB 2202 (Muratsuchi) of the current legislative session would establish the Closing the Achievement Gap Commission, an advisory body to the State Board of Education (SBE); and AB 2514 (Ransom) of the current legislative session would require the working group and Plan to be established by AB 2225 (Patel) 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 California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) both English language arts/literacy (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 CDE, SBE, county offices of education (COEs), and 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

According to the author, "AB 2225 convenes educators, families, researchers, and policymakers to develop a comprehensive statewide plan with clear goals, benchmarks, and annual performance targets to close achievement gaps and evaluate how well our state education programs are supporting student success. The achievement gap - persistent disparities in academic outcomes between different groups of students, often along lines of income, race, language status, or access to resources - show up in test scores, graduation rates, and college readiness, and they reflect deeper inequities in opportunity. AB 2225 is the first of a package of 4 bills in the CSBA's package to address these persistent gaps."

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. The goal of these measures is to create the conditions needed to close achievement gaps by aligning state policy, funding and oversight around a clear operations and support plan that empowers LEAs."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

One-time General Fund costs of an unknown amount, likely minor and absorbable, for the CDE to staff the working group.

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

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

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-4

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

ABS, ABST OR NV: Hoover, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

VERSION: May 18, 2026

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