
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 2241
Author: Boerner (D), et al.
Amended: 4/27/26 in Assembly
Vote: 21

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 7-0, 6/17/26

AYES: Pérez, Ochoa Bogh, Cabaldon, Choi, Cortese, Gonzalez, Reyes

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/13/26

AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 78-0, 5/26/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: School facilities: inclusive school playgrounds

SOURCE: Author

DIGEST: This bill establishes the California Inclusive School Playgrounds Act and creates an Inclusive Playground Advisory Committee within the California Department of Education (CDE) to develop model guidelines for inclusive school playgrounds. The advisory committee would be responsible for developing statewide guidance on playground design that supports participation by students with disabilities alongside their nondisabled peers, conducting outreach and education, and providing recommendations to the Legislature regarding inclusive playground policies and resource needs.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the Department of General Services (DGS) to review plans and specifications for public buildings and school facilities to ensure compliance with state and federal accessibility requirements, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

- 2) Requires DGS to supervise the design and construction of school buildings to ensure compliance with applicable safety and accessibility requirements.
- 3) Requires the CDE to establish standards governing the design and construction of school facilities.
- 4) Establishes the School Facility Program (SFP), administered by the Office of Public School Construction (OPSC) and State Allocation Board (SAB), which provides state funding for school construction and modernization projects.
- 5) Authorizes school districts to use state school facilities funding for specified school facility improvements, including certain playground safety improvements.
- 6) Establishes the ADA, which requires public facilities, including playgrounds, to meet minimum accessibility standards for individuals with disabilities.

This bill:

- 1) Establishes the California Inclusive School Playgrounds Act.
- 2) Defines an “inclusive school playground” as an outdoor play area designed to enable students with disabilities to play alongside nondisabled students through universal design features that exceed minimum accessibility requirements.
- 3) Establishes a 15-member Inclusive Playground Advisory Committee within the CDE, comprised of representatives with expertise in disability advocacy, child development, universal design, school facilities, and inclusive playgrounds.
- 4) Requires the advisory committee, by January 1, 2028, to coordinate with CDE to develop and publish model guidelines for inclusive school playgrounds that reflect universal design principles and address equipment, surfacing, sensory features, safety, maintenance, and the needs of underserved, rural, and special-needs communities.
- 5) Requires the advisory committee to recommend requirements or incentives that encourage inclusive playground features, conduct outreach and education activities, and coordinate with state agencies on accessibility and child-development efforts.

- 6) Requires the advisory committee, beginning January 1, 2028, and every five years thereafter, to submit a report to the Legislature regarding inclusive school playgrounds, including recommendations on resource allocation.
- 7) Authorizes CDE to review proposed inclusive school playground designs submitted by local educational agencies seeking state funding and provide technical feedback regarding consistency with the model guidelines.
- 8) Requires CDE to support implementation using existing resources or available grant funding.
- 9) Authorizes the State Board of Education to adopt regulations to implement the bill.

Comments

Need for the bill. According to the author, “Asm. Boerner is pleased to author AB 2241, a bill that would ensure newly built or renovated playgrounds at public schools are made with inclusivity in mind. Play is a fundamental right for every child, recognized by United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child. Federal ADA standards mandate basic accessibility, but do not ensure inclusive play features. Out-of-state and internationally, there are many examples of playground design going above and beyond to create experiences for children which help them grow, both socially, and mentally, as well as in developing their fine motor skills. Current California design for playgrounds is not sufficient to nurture these important skills for our children. AB 2241 would address these issues by ensuring that new and renovated playgrounds on public school campuses are inclusive, accessible, and engaging for children of all abilities, designed by an expert advisory committee and given priority funding.”

Accessibility versus inclusion. A central policy question raised by this bill is whether compliance with accessibility laws alone is sufficient to ensure meaningful participation for students with disabilities. Federal ADA standards establish important baseline requirements for access, including accessible routes, surfacing, and connections to play structures. However, accessibility and inclusion are not the same.

Research cited by supporters of this bill suggests that children with disabilities may continue to experience barriers to social interaction and play participation even in playgrounds that technically satisfy accessibility requirements. Inclusive

playground design generally seeks to address a broader set of considerations, including sensory engagement, social interaction, cognitive accessibility, and opportunities for cooperative play among children with differing abilities. This bill reflects a growing policy discussion regarding whether public facilities should be designed not only to be accessible, but also intentionally inclusive.

Existing state oversight of school facilities. California already maintains a robust framework for reviewing school facility projects. CDE, DGS through the Division of the State Architect, OPSC, and SAB all play roles in reviewing, funding, and approving school construction projects. Existing law also requires compliance with state and federal accessibility standards.

This bill does not alter those approval processes or create new design mandates. Instead, it creates a mechanism for stakeholders with expertise in disability advocacy, child development, universal design, and school facilities to develop best-practice guidance that may inform future school playground projects. Notably, recent amendments added representatives from local educational agencies, the State Architect, and OPSC to the advisory committee, helping ensure that the advisory committee's recommendations are informed by practical experience with school facility planning, construction, and state funding programs.

A guidance-first approach. As introduced, this bill proposed a more expansive role for the state, including funding-related incentives and additional statewide assessments. Subsequent amendments substantially narrowed the measure. This bill now focuses primarily on establishing an advisory committee, developing model guidelines, conducting outreach, and providing recommendations to policymakers.

As amended, the measure adopts a guidance-first approach rather than creating new funding requirements or imposing new facility standards. This narrower structure may allow the state to gather expertise, identify best practices, and better understand existing barriers before considering whether additional statutory or funding changes are warranted in the future.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

The CDE indicates that the bill's costs would depend on whether it would have a member sitting on the council. To the extent that it were to have a member appointed, there would be ongoing General Fund costs of \$188,000 and 1.0

position to support the council and provide guidance. If CDE does not have a member on the council, it would incur ongoing General Fund costs of \$56,000 to appoint a chair. The bill requires CDE to support implementation using existing resources or available grant funding.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/13/26)

Back to the Start

Coalition for Adequate Funding for Special Education

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/13/26)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 78-0, 5/26/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Castillo, Chen, Connolly, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Elhawary, Ellis, Flora, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Jeff Gonzalez, Mark González, Hadwick, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Hoover, Irwin, Jackson, Johnson, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta, Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NO VOTE RECORDED: Muratsuchi, Celeste Rodriguez

Prepared by: Ian Johnson / ED. / (916) 651-4105
8/14/26 15:15:58

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