

## ASSEMBLY THIRD READING

AB 2468 (Patel)

As Amended April 13, 2026

Majority vote

**SUMMARY**

Establishes in statute the Supporting Inclusive Practices (SIP) project at the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) and specifies its responsibilities.

**Major Provisions**

- 1) Establishes in statute the SIP project at the CCEE, and specifies its responsibilities.
- 2) Requires the CCEE, commencing with the 2027–28 fiscal year, through one or two county offices of education (COE) designated by the CCEE, to administer the SIP project and build on its alignment and partnerships with statewide improvement initiatives.
- 3) States that the purposes of this project are to do all of the following:
  - a) Improve student outcomes, as measured by the California School Dashboard, by increasing opportunities for students with disabilities to access education in general education settings, as mandated by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and as measured by state performance plan indicators related to least restrictive environment, including in preschool, and pupil academic achievement;
  - b) Align and integrate with differentiated assistance (DA), direct technical assistance (DTA), and other initiatives within the statewide system of support (SOS), and with the California Department of Education's (CDE) Compliance and Improvement Monitoring (CIM) process, and leverage expertise of the project in serving students with disabilities across improvement initiatives housed at the CCEE; and
  - c) Support the educator workforce to serve students with disabilities;
- 4) Requires the CCEE, in administering the project, to align and integrate the project with DA, DTA, and other initiatives within the SOS.
- 5) Requires the SIP project to conduct, at a minimum, all of the following activities:
  - a) Providing technical assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and charter schools focused on supporting evidence-based practices to increase access by students with disabilities to education in general education settings, and supporting progress toward a high school diploma;
  - b) Requires this technical assistance to include, but not be limited to, assistance on staffing arrangements that support access by students with disabilities to education in the general education setting, including, but not limited to, co-teaching, with a focus on strategies that support the retention of education specialists in the teaching profession;
  - c) Establishing demonstration sites in each geographic lead agency region of the state that showcase evidence-based practices at different grade levels and with different student

- populations, and facilitating tours of teams of staff from other LEAs and charter schools to learn from these sites;
- d) Holding inclusion academies, which are innovative professional learning experiences for regional teams designed to support the design and implementation of systemwide inclusive culture, policies, and practices, including collaborating with partners in school districts, COEs, special education local plan areas (SELPAs), and SOS technical assistance providers. Requires the SIP project to also use local data to develop a strategic plan centered in a culture of accountability and meaningful inclusion;
  - e) Working with teacher preparation programs in each major region to establish inclusive placement pipelines, including by the use of demonstration site visits and inclusion academies;
  - f) Working with early childhood-related technical assistance providers, including by providing statewide support for the Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program grant;
  - g) Developing and making resources available to all LEAs and charter schools, including, but not limited to, webinars, social media, podcasts, recorded resources on inclusion topics, and requested professional development;
  - h) Providing support and technical assistance to LEAs and charter schools on using the statewide Individualized Education Program (IEP) template, to support access by students with disabilities to education in general education settings;
  - i) Implementing the activities of the project in a manner that leverages and aligns with existing improvement efforts administered by the CCEE to build LEA and charter school capacity and support systemwide improvement; and
  - j) Coordinating and aligning its work with other statewide initiatives administered by the CDE, including initiatives in literacy, Community Schools, and early learning, to provide coherence across improvement efforts and reduce duplication of technical assistance.
- 6) Requires that the SIP project:
- a) Collaborate with an institution of higher education (IHE) to support evaluation of the project, including the use of evidence-based practices, for the purpose of continuous improvement of the project;
  - b) Ensure that all regions of the state are provided with access to the project's support; and
  - c) Prioritize support, as directed by the CCEE through agreement with the CDE, to LEAs and charter schools that have been identified for both DA or DTA related to outcomes for pupils with disabilities and for intensive intervention through the CDE's compliance monitoring system.
- 7) States that the CDE may contract with the CCEE for the project to provide technical assistance to LEAs and charter schools identified as not meeting State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators pursuant to the IDEA, and consistent with the SOS, and those LEAs and

charter schools identified for intensive intervention through the CDE's compliance monitoring system.

- 8) Requires the CCEE to, for each year in which funding is appropriated for the project, submit a report to the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature, the CDE, the State Board of Education (SBE), and the Department of Finance (DOF). Requires each report to include, but not be limited to, all of the following information:
  - a) A summary of the activities conducted, including LEA and charter school participation by activity;
  - b) The number of LEAs and charter schools, educators, and students served by the project;
  - c) A summary of outcome data of LEAs and charter schools receiving DTA, including, but not limited to, performance on SPP indicators, indicators used on the California School Dashboard, and the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP);
  - d) How the project has worked with other initiatives housed at the CCEE; and
  - e) Recommendations for improving state-level activities or policies.
- 9) Requires the CCEE, when carrying out these activities, to adhere to, and inform LEAs and charter schools with which it works of, the requirements of Education Code section 56040.6, pertaining to students who are deaf, hard of hearing (DHH), or deaf-blind.
- 10) States that this section shall not be construed as modifying or otherwise affecting the right of students with disabilities, including students who are DHH, or deaf-blind, to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) pursuant to the federal IDEA, the development of an IEP, or the IEP team's determination of placement, aids to ensure effective communication, or the continuum of program options required to be made available.
- 11) States that the implementation of the measure is contingent upon an appropriation for its purposes in the annual Budget Act or another statute. States the intent of the Legislature that a minimum \$30 million over five years be appropriated for this purpose

## COMMENTS

*Research shows significant increases in inclusion with support from SIP.* The SIP project is administered by the Special Education Division of the California Department of Education (CDE), and operated through two COEs. The project aims to help LEAs strengthen inclusive practices through tiered technical assistance and support. It has been operating for ten years but is not established in statute.

According to a 2026 policy brief by Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), *Advancing Inclusive Education in California Schools*, SIP serves a combination of LEAs referred through CDE's Compliance and Improvement Monitoring (CIM) process when data indicate persistent, systemic patterns related to LRE.

LEAs may also receive support from SIP when they express interest in strengthening inclusive practices. SIP currently includes 96 grantees who voluntarily participate and 10 assigned by the

CDE Special Education Division. Nearly all required participants (98% over 10 years) ask to continue engagement with SIP as voluntary grantees once CIM support ends.

Data regarding growth in inclusion for districts participating in SIP, as measured by SPP indicator 5a (students included in general education at least 80% of the day) indicate that:

- 1) Growth in the percentage of students included in general education was 13 times the state average over five years;
- 2) Growth in the percentage of students included in general education was 6 times the national average over five years; and
- 3) Growth among CIM districts per year was 3 times the state average between 2022 and 2024.

According to the PACE report:

- 4) Districts entering SIP with the lowest baseline rates have made the largest gains, while higher baseline cohorts showed smaller but still positive gains.
- 5) SIP grantees also reduced the use of more restrictive placements. Across cohorts, use of separate schools (SPP Indicator 5c) declined in six of seven cohorts, with reductions of up to 11.7 percentage points, and three cohorts met the state's separate-school target of 2.6 percent or lower.
- 6) There were meaningful gains among LEAs that were required to participate through the CDE's CIM process. CIM districts achieved 4.16% of growth in the 2021–21 cohort and 6.20% in the 2021–22 cohort.

*California lags behind other states in inclusion of students with disabilities.* According to the PACE report, California places a smaller proportion of students with disabilities in general education settings for most of the school day than the national average. Both California and the nation exhibit steady improvement over the past decade, but California consistently remains below the national average.

#### **According to the Author**

"Research over many decades has found that inclusion offers a host of academic, behavioral, and social benefits for students with disabilities, as well as for their peers. In spite of these benefits, California has lagged behind most other states in the rate of inclusion of students with disabilities for many years.

50 years after the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), California schools still struggle to realize the vision that all students with disabilities experience meaningful inclusion and belonging in the academic and social life of school communities. Research consistently shows that schools need sustained, practice-embedded support and a systemwide, proactive approach to achieve meaningful gains in inclusive education.

Recent research from Policy Analysis for California Education shows that districts participating in the Supporting Innovative Practices project have increased inclusion at a rate significantly higher than the state average. Over five years, SIP districts experienced 13 times the growth

compared to the state average. Districts required to participate by the California Department of Education because of low rates of inclusion experienced growth 6 times the state average.

AB 2468 will ensure that SIP is able to continue and expand its successful work, as well as align and integrate it with the other improvement initiatives."

### **Arguments in Support**

Disability Rights California writes, "Students with disabilities consistently achieve stronger academic and long-term outcomes when they are educated in inclusive settings alongside their nondisabled peers. Inclusive environments improve access to grade-level curriculum, reduce disciplinary referrals, and increase opportunities for post-secondary success including employment and independent living.

However, too many students in California remain in unnecessarily restrictive placements. This gap is not due to a lack of evidence, but a lack of consistent systems training and support to implement inclusive practices effectively. AB 2468 (Patel) addresses this challenge by codifying and expanding the SIP project, a model that provides targeted technical assistance to school districts. Districts participating in SIP have significantly increased inclusive placements compared to the statewide average demonstrating the effectiveness of sustained, practice-based support.

AB 2468 (Patel) strengthens this approach by: providing technical assistance to local educational agencies and charter schools, establishing demonstration sites across regions, supporting professional learning through inclusion academies, and expanding inclusive practices through teacher preparation and early childhood systems.

From a disability rights perspective, AB 2468 (Patel) is critical to advancing the principles of equity, access, and inclusion that are central to both federal and state law, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Under IDEA, students with disabilities have a legal right to be educated in the least restrictive environment, yet too often that right is not fully realized in practice. This bill helps bridge the gap between legal mandate and lived reality by investing in the systems and supports necessary to make inclusion meaningful and sustainable. By investing in systems that make inclusion achievable at scale, this bill moves California closer to fulfilling that promise."

### **Arguments in Opposition**

None on file

## **FISCAL COMMENTS**

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) Ongoing Proposition 98 General Fund cost pressures of at least \$30 million annually.
- 2) The establishment of the SIP project and the bill's requirements are contingent upon funding in the annual Budget Act for this purpose, for which the bill states legislative intent of at least \$30 million. Currently, federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funds SIP activities carried out by the CDE and federal law restricts these funds to each state's respective State Education Agency (SEA), which is CDE. Additionally, existing law funds the CCEE's operations through an annual appropriation from Proposition 98 General Fund.

## VOTES

**ASM EDUCATION: 8-0-1**

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

**ABS, ABST OR NV:** Lowenthal

**ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 15-0-0**

**YES:** Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

## UPDATED

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