

Date of Hearing: May 13, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 2555 (Patel) – As Amended April 15, 2026

Policy Committee: Education

Vote: 9 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: Yes

**SUMMARY:**

This bill revises a local educational agency's (LEA) English learner (EL) reclassification determination process, effective July 1, 2027, to require reclassification of an EL pupil, with or without disabilities, to English proficient when the pupil demonstrates proficiency via an approved assessment and requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to record a student's reclassification in the appropriate data system.

The bill also expands existing notification requirements upon LEAs regarding EL pupils and, subject to an appropriation, requires CDE to contract to develop alternate coursework rubrics and evaluation of the effects of the bill on the reclassification

**FISCAL EFFECT:**

- 1) Potential Proposition 98 General Fund apportionment revenue loss of an unknown, potentially significant amount, likely in the millions of dollars of dollars annually, to LEAs, collectively statewide, associated with reduced supplemental Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) funding for students no longer designated as EL.

LCFF includes additional supplemental funding based on an LEA's percentage of unduplicated pupils (UPP), defined as EL, low-income, or foster youth, with pupils designated as more than one only counted once. According to CDE, the population of pupils who might no longer generate this supplemental funding due to reclassification is approximately 16,000 total statewide, out of about 3.8 million total unduplicated pupils. This is because 94% of EL students are also low-income. However, the LCFF calculates UPP as a three-year average of unduplicated pupils divided by an LEA's total enrollment, which smooths any year-over-year decline in supplemental funding associated with unduplicated pupils who are reclassified. Additionally, LEAs experiencing significant numbers of EL reclassifications because of this bill will also likely experience significant cost savings associated with no longer needing to provide English Language Development (ELD) resources to English proficient students.

- 2) Minor and absorbable costs to CDE to implement required changes to the EL reclassification process.
- 3) One-time General Fund cost pressures of an unknown but likely significant amount, possibly in the hundreds of thousands to low millions of dollars, for the Legislature to appropriate funding to CDE to contract for the development of content-aligned rubrics and sample

alternative coursework and an evaluation of the effect of changes to the reclassification criteria established by this bill.

## COMMENTS:

### 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

California's reclassification system was established in 1976 and has not materially changed since. Research shows that the current system is characterized by inconsistency, redundancy, subjectivity, and complexity, and is highly influenced by different mindsets about reclassification. Research also shows that roughly half of all English learners who are not reclassified by the end of elementary school have scored proficient on the state's assessment of English language proficiency. Research further shows significant gaps in reclassification rates by home language, with Spanish-speaking students significantly less likely to reclassify than other students. On average, it takes 226 days for a student who has scored proficient in English to reclassify, and many students score proficient for multiple years before they are reclassified. It is time for a comprehensive reform to this system. By streamlining the reclassification criteria, making reclassification automatic, better engaging parents, strengthening the monitoring of reclassified students, and reframing reclassification as a milestone on the path to biliteracy, AB 2555 will establish a coherent, consistent, efficient, and transparent reclassification system – one worthy of our students' potential.

### 2) **Background.** Current law establishes four criteria for the reclassification of English learners as fully English proficient. A teacher's evaluation, language proficiency via an assessment, parental opinion and consultation, and comparison of a student's performance against an empirically established range of performance in basic skills based upon the performance of an English proficient student of the same age. The EL classification is meant to be temporary, eventually leading to reclassification of a student as Fluent English Proficient. LEAs across the state have different criteria for reclassification of EL students within the criteria mentioned above. Some have rigorous reclassification standards and lower reclassification rates; others have high reclassification rates and more lenient standards. Many more fall in between.

The teacher's evaluation can be useful in assessing language uses that are not easily measured using a standardized assessment, such as interactive language use with peers and language use during academic content learning. However, no tools or guidance are provided to teachers for the purpose of completing this evaluation. As a result, these evaluations can vary widely. Research also indicates measures not related to academic or English proficiency, such as behavior and attendance, are sometimes inappropriately incorporated into these evaluations.

In addition, current law requires CDE to conduct compliance monitoring of schools to ensure they are following laws with regard to the education of English learners. The CDE reports its most common compliance finding for English learners is "access to core subject

matter,” which indicates that schools may not be providing ELs with sufficient access to core curriculum. This, among other things, leads to many ELs who demonstrate English proficiency but are not reclassified being at prolonged academic disadvantage relative to their peers.

This bill repeals the criteria for EL reclassification beyond a proficient score on an approved assessment and requires an LEA to ensure that a reclassified pupil’s instructional program reflects that the pupil is reclassified.

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