
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 542 (Celeste Rodriguez) - Continuation schools and classes: youth workforce development programs

Version: June 23, 2025

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: July 14, 2025

Policy Vote: ED. 7 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Lenin Del Castillo

Bill Summary: This bill authorizes school districts operating continuation high schools or continuation education classes to offer youth workforce development programs on one or two weekdays per week, provided students are enrolled in at least 15 hours of class attendance per week.

Fiscal Impact: This bill could result in Proposition 98 General Fund costs in the low hundreds of thousands of dollars each year for school districts to establish attendance and participation tracking procedures for continuation high schools that elect to offer youth workforce development programs. There are about 430 continuation high schools in the state serving about 48,800 students.

Background: Existing law provides that a school day in a continuation high school is 180 minutes and prohibits a student with being credited with more than 15 hours of attendance per week.

Existing law requires a minimum school day in a high school to be 240 minutes with some exceptions, including a continuation high school or for students enrolled in a work experience education program as approved.

Existing law requires instructional time to be counted for the purpose of computing average daily attendance (ADA) when the student is in attendance under the immediate supervision and control of a certificated employee of the local educational agency (LEA).

Proposed Law: This bill allows continuation high schools or continuation education classes to offer youth workforce development programs one or two days per week. The bill provides that the students must be enrolled in at least 15 hours of classroom instruction per week to participate, and requires school districts to track student attendance and participation while engaged in the program.

This bill defines a “youth workforce development program” as one implemented under the supervision of certificated staff that enables students to earn academic credit or an industry certificate while engaging in workplace experiences or training.

This bill requires the programs to be aligned with student skills and in-demand careers, include both technical and soft skills, and be offered in partnership with one or more of the following:

1. A community college district.

2. An adult education program.
3. A regional occupational program or center.
4. A workforce development program accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.
5. An organization offering industry-recognized certifications.

This bill encourages priority for programs that lead to industry-recognized certificates or credentials, and specifies that supervision includes shared oversight between the worksite supervisor and certificated school personnel.

Staff Comments: Continuation high schools serve students who are at risk of not graduating from high school, are not exempt from compulsory school attendance, and deemed at risk of not completing their schooling. Minimum attendance in a continuation school is 15 hours per week and a minimum of 180 minutes per day. However, some continuation high schools provide full-day programs that exceed the minimum daily attendance requirement. In the 2023-24 school year, there were 430 continuation high schools in the state that enrolled about 48,800 students.

This bill would allow continuation high schools to reconfigure their schedule to allow students to access workforce development programs for one to two days per week, while still accessing the required 15 hours of classroom instruction on the remaining days of the week in order to authorize schools to receive ADA funding. According to the author, "Continuation schools play a key role in the success of students as they provide a more flexible and supportive environment. For example, students may have familial obligations, be employed, have different learning styles or other needs, and are behind on credits needed for graduation. These schools serve diverse student populations across the state and provide additional support that a traditional high school cannot provide.

"AB 542 aims to allow students the flexibility to pursue workforce development programs, which will expand employment opportunities. By amending current law, a governing board of a school district will be able to augment the five day instruction schedule while maintaining the state required instruction time at continuation schools. This flexibility supports various employment pathways for students after graduation as well as economic growth in communities and across the state."

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