
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 542
Author: Celeste Rodriguez (D), et al.
Amended: 6/23/25 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 7-0, 7/2/25

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

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/29/25

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

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0, 6/4/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Continuation schools and classes: youth workforce development programs

SOURCE: Los Angeles Unified School District

DIGEST: 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.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes that a school day in a continuation high school is 180 minutes and prohibits crediting students with more than 15 hours of attendance per week. (Education Code (EC) § 46170)
- 2) Sets minimum school day requirements for grades 9–12 at 240 minutes, with exceptions for continuation high schools and students in work experience education programs. (EC § 46141)

- 3) Requires students to be under the immediate supervision and control of certificated staff to count instructional time for average daily attendance (ADA). (EC § 46300, § 47612.5)
- 4) Authorizes school boards to offer and supervise work-based learning and experience education programs, and provide liability coverage. (EC § 51760, § 51760.1)
- 5) Defines “work-based learning” as using the workplace to connect school experiences with real-life work activities and career opportunities. (EC § 51760.1)
- 6) Establishes requirements for supervising off-campus work experience and outlines criminal background checks for adults in work-based learning settings. (EC § 45125.1)

This bill:

- 1) Allows continuation high schools or continuation education classes to offer youth workforce development programs one or two days per week.
- 2) Requires students to be enrolled in at least 15 hours of classroom instruction per week to participate.
- 3) Requires school districts to track student attendance and participation while engaged in the program.
- 4) 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.
- 5) Requires 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:
 - a) A community college district.
 - b) An adult education program.
 - c) A regional occupational program or center.
 - d) A workforce development program accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

- e) An organization offering industry-recognized certifications.
- 6) Encourages priority for programs that lead to industry-recognized certificates or credentials.
- 7) Specifies that supervision includes shared oversight between the worksite supervisor and certificated school personnel.

Comments

- 1) *Need for this bill.* 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.”

- 2) *Leveraging flexibility for a high-need student population.* Continuation high schools serve students who are at risk of not completing high school and who often face multiple barriers to academic success, such as credit deficiencies, family obligations, and the need to work. This bill builds on the structural flexibility of continuation education—particularly its 180-minute minimum school day and 15-hour weekly cap on attendance—to give students more access to work-based learning without jeopardizing instructional time or ADA compliance.
- 3) *Aligned with Career Technical Education (CTE) and dropout prevention goals.* Research suggests that work-based learning can re-engage disconnected students and improve postsecondary transitions. By encouraging partnerships with workforce-aligned organizations and prioritizing credentialed outcomes, this bill echoes recommendations from the state’s CTE Master Plan and the broader push to offer more career pathways in secondary education.

- 4) *A question of who gets these opportunities.* While this bill creates new options for continuation schools, its benefits may ultimately depend on local capacity and partnerships. Schools in urban districts with robust employer networks may be well-positioned to offer paid internships, certifications, and mentoring. Rural or smaller districts, by contrast, may struggle to build comparable experiences. Implementation support—from state agencies or regional intermediaries—could help ensure that youth workforce development programs are not limited to a few well-resourced schools, but rather equitably available to continuation students across California.

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

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, 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.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/28/25)

Los Angeles Unified School District (Source)
 Association of California School Administrators
 California Community Foundation
 County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors
 Power CA Action
 San Diego Unified School District
 Sharefest

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/28/25)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0, 6/4/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Fariás, 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, Kalra, Krell, Lackey, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Patterson, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca

Rubio, Sanchez, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Ta,
Tangipa, Valencia, Wallis, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

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