
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 560 (Addis) - Special education: resource specialists: special classes

Version: June 30, 2025

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 18, 2025

Policy Vote: ED. 7 - 0

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Lenin Del Castillo

Bill Summary: This bill requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), on or before July 1, 2027, to establish a maximum recommended adult-to-pupil staffing ratio for special classes serving students with disabilities ages 3 to 22. This bill also requires local educational agencies (LEAs) to take all reasonable steps to equitably distribute the workload associated with initial special education assessments among all resource specialists, unless otherwise collectively bargained.

Fiscal Impact:

- The California Department of Education (CDE) estimates General Fund costs of \$546,000 for 3.0 positions to investigate the anticipated increase in complaints to the department, and additional one-time General Fund costs of \$350,000 to convene the workgroup to make recommendations. The estimate for the workgroup is based on previous efforts undertaken by CDE, including the workgroup established by the 2020 Budget Act to examine and propose alternate pathways to a high school diploma and the IEP Workgroup, also established by the 2020 Budget Act, which was tasked with designing a statewide IEP template.
- To the extent that the workgroup recommends staffing ratios for special classes that result in smaller class sizes for LEAs, this bill could result in additional, unknown Proposition 98 General Fund costs pressures for those LEAs to implement smaller class sizes. The associated costs would vary by LEA as they would depend on several factors, such as their existing staffing levels and availability of classrooms and infrastructure needs. It is unclear if these activities would constitute a reimbursable mandate.

Background: Existing law establishes the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which ensures that students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment.

Existing law authorizes school districts to place students in special classes only when the nature or severity of the student's disability precludes satisfactory education in a regular class with supplementary aids and services.

Proposed Law: This bill requires LEAs to take all reasonable steps to distribute the workload associated with initial special education assessments equally among all resource specialists employed by the LEA, unless otherwise collectively bargained.

This bill requires the SPI, on or before July 1, 2027, to establish and post on CDE's website a maximum recommended adult-to-pupil staffing ratio for special classes (special day classes) serving students with disabilities ages 3 to 22.

This bill requires the SPI, in establishing the recommended ratio, to do the following:

1. Consult with a wide range of stakeholders, including education specialists, administrators, paraprofessionals, and parents, with a majority of consultees being current special class teachers and ensure representation from geographically and demographically diverse communities.
2. Consult with researchers and disability rights advocates with expertise in inclusive practices.
3. Consider factors such as student support needs (mild to moderate vs. extensive), age ranges, educational settings (preschool, elementary, secondary, nonpublic schools), LEA practices, national models, workforce and facility constraints, conditions in small and rural LEAs, and the impact of staffing on inclusive education under the federal IDEA.

This bill requires the SPI to submit a report with their recommendations to the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature and the State Board of Education by April 1, 2027.

Staff Comments: Currently, there is no statewide class size or adult-to-student ratio guidance for special day classes serving students with disabilities which is different from general education classrooms which have statutory caps or recommended ratios in the early grades. Staffing ratios in special education settings are typically determined locally and vary significantly by district, disability type, and setting. Some Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) set internal targets, but these may not reflect research-based recommendations or be responsive to broader inclusion goals. This bill directs the SPI to develop a recommended staffing ratio for special classes, informed by consultation with educators, administrators, parents, and researchers. It would also require the SPI to consider the needs of students with varying disabilities, different age groups, and diverse instructional settings. According to the author, "Assembly Bill 560, the Supporting California's Special Educators Act, ensures that students with diverse learning needs receive the individualized attention they deserve, as well as fostering an environment that supports our educators. Smaller class sizes will help enhance the quality of education for students, improve educational outcomes, and reduce the strain on our educational workforce. AB 560 will have a profoundly positive impact on both special educators and the students they serve."

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