

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 560 (Addis)

As Amended August 29, 2025

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), on or before July 1, 2027, to recommend a maximum adult-to-student staffing ratio for special day classes for students with disabilities ages three to 22, and requires local educational agencies (LEAs) and charter schools to take all reasonable steps to distribute workload associated with initial assessments across all resource specialists.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Add chief business officials, researchers and representatives with expertise in inclusive practices, and advocates focused on equity and disability rights, to the list of individuals with whom the SPI would be required to consult, and requires that the individuals consulted represent the state's geographic diversity, including, but not limited to, rural, urban, and high-need regions.
- 2) Requires the SPI to consider, in making this recommendation:
 - a) Determining appropriate staffing ratios to enhance pupil outcomes in accordance with the principles of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and state law; and
 - b) The supports needed for general and special educators to succeed in implementing inclusive models.

COMMENTS

Initial assessments conducted by RSP teachers. This bill requires LEAs to take all reasonable steps to distribute workload associated with initial assessments across all resource specialists employed by the LEA in an equal manner, unless otherwise collectively bargained.

Current law establishes a caseload limit of 28 students for resource specialists. Additionally, resource specialists conduct initial assessments to determine whether students qualify for special education services. As initial assessments are not included in the caseload limit under current law, the distribution of this workload is typically determined through collective bargaining. One school district's contract, for example, entitles resource specialists to up to eight hours of additional compensation per initial assessment conducted.

Adult-to-student ratios in special day classes. This bill requires, on or before July 1, 2027, the SPI to establish maximum recommended adult-to-student staffing ratios for special day classes for students ages three to 22, and to post this recommendation on the CDE website.

This bill also requires the SPI to take numerous factors into consideration when making this recommendation, including the varying needs of students depending upon their support needs, their ages, and instructional settings, as well as constraints such as workforce and facility needs,

and conditions in small and rural LEAs. Finally, the SPI would have to take into account the effects of this policy on the education of students in inclusive settings.

Current law authorizes school districts to place students in special day classes that serve students with similar and more intensive educational needs, only when the nature or severity of the disability of the individual with exceptional needs is such that education in the regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services, including curriculum modification and behavioral support, cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Unlike for grades K-3, there is no class size or adult-to-student recommended ratio for special day classes. Each LEA or SELPA sets limits through collective bargaining. For example, one SELPA's plan lists ratios ranging from 1:10 for classes serving students with mild to moderate support needs, to 1:3 for classes serving students with extensive support needs. When certain total enrollments are reached, the process of opening a new class is explored. For preschool special day classes, a ratio of 1:5 is required, pursuant to existing law.

It is unclear how many states have adult-to-student ratio requirements for special day classes, but New York state regulations establish a maximum class size of 15 students, or 12 students in a state-operated or state-supported school, with specified exceptions.

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."

Arguments in Support

The California Federation of Teachers writes, "The ability of our members to properly serve [students with IEPs is] often limited by underfunding, understaffing, and an overall unwillingness of our education infrastructure to treat the needs of exceptional students with the respect they deserve. We have heard countless stories of special day classes—those focusing solely on special education students—being eliminated, students with relatively severe disabilities being placed in crowded general education environments that clearly violate IEPs, and other harmful outcomes that at best limit the ability of these students to learn and at worst jeopardize their safety.

Our members who conduct initial assessments of students who may benefit from an IEP also report that this critically important—but very time-consuming—work is often not factored into their existing work load, forcing them into the impossible position into somehow doing multiple jobs at once at the expense of their own mental and even physical health. This highly concerning state of affairs also harms the student's right to an adequate IEP and further degrades educational quality. It also goes without saying that this situation contributes to burnout and severely complicates our ability to recruit and retain these essential workers.

AB 560 (Addis) approaches this problem by directing the California Department of Education to implement special day class size limits that would, if implemented, guarantee adequate attention to exceptional students and a reasonable workload for workers. Not only will this present a major

step toward the quality of education the students deserve, it's also critically important for their safety and mental well-being."

Arguments in Opposition

The Small School Districts Association writes, "While we recognize the critical importance of providing high-quality educational environments for students with disabilities, we are concerned that even a "recommended" ratio—absent a formal mandate—could result in serious unintended consequences for local school districts, particularly those in small or rural communities. As we have seen with other state-issued "guidance," such recommendations often become de facto mandates, cited in collective bargaining negotiations as minimum acceptable staffing levels. This can place immense fiscal and operational strain on small and/or rural school districts with limited resources and unique circumstances.

AB 560 implicitly assumes a uniform solution for districts of all sizes and settings. However, the educational landscape across California is extraordinarily diverse. A staffing recommendation that may be appropriate in a large, urban district is often ill-suited to the realities of rural and remote communities. Small districts face challenges such as geographic isolation, small candidate pools, and fluctuating enrollment—all of which make rigid staffing benchmarks both impractical and financially unsustainable.

California has long championed the principle of local control, entrusting educators and school leaders to make decisions that best meet the needs of their communities. AB 560 moves in the opposite direction. By elevating a standardized staffing ratio—regardless of how it is labeled—it risks diminishing the ability of local leaders to make context-specific decisions in the best interest of their students. Local boards, administrators, and educators are best positioned to determine appropriate staffing levels based on the resources, programs, and student populations in their districts."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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.

VOTES:**ASM EDUCATION: 9-0-0**

YES: Muratsuchi, Hoover, Addis, Alvarez, Bonta, Castillo, Garcia, Lowenthal, Patel

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 14-0-1

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Dixon, Elhawary, Fong, Mark González, Hart, Pacheco, Pellerin, Solache, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Sanchez

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 79-0-0

YES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alanis, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, 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

UPDATED

VERSION: August 29, 2025

CONSULTANT: Tanya Lieberman / ED. / (916) 319-2087

FN: 0001867