
CONSENT

Bill No: SB 1381
Author: Cervantes (D)
Amended: 4/16/26
Vote: 21

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE: 7-0, 4/15/26
AYES: Pérez, Ochoa Bogh, Cabaldon, Choi, Cortese, Gonzalez, Reyes

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: Senate Rule 28.8

SUBJECT: State special schools: information

SOURCE: State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DIGEST: This bill requires local educational agencies (LEAs) to provide parents and guardians of specified students with disabilities with information about state special schools, including the California Schools for the Deaf and the California School for the Blind, through annual parent notifications and during the individualized education program (IEP) process.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Requires school districts, at the beginning of each school year, to notify parents or guardians of specified rights, responsibilities, and school policies, including attendance options, available programs, and other required disclosures.
- 2) Requires the annual notification to include information on topics such as enrollment options, career technical education pathways, apprenticeship opportunities, dual enrollment, public health guidance, and student safety topics, with the California Department of Education (CDE) responsible for developing certain standardized components of the notice.

- 3) Authorizes school districts to provide annual notifications by mail, electronically, or other written communication methods, requires acknowledgment of receipt, and mandates translation of notices when a threshold of non-English-speaking pupils is met.
- 4) Requires that all individuals with exceptional needs receive special education instruction and related services at no cost, consistent with federal law.
- 5) Requires that pupils with disabilities be educated with nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate and that more restrictive placements occur only when necessary.
- 6) Requires IEP teams, for pupils who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or visually impaired, to consider language and communication needs, access to peers and professionals, and appropriate instructional modalities, including braille where appropriate.
- 7) Requires IEP teams, when determining placement and least restrictive environment for pupils who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind, to consider a range of placement options, including those provided by school districts, county offices of education, nonpublic schools, and the California Schools for the Deaf.
- 8) Requires IEPs to be developed within specified timelines, reviewed at least annually, and implemented promptly, with procedural safeguards ensuring parent participation in meetings and decision making.

This bill:

- 1) Requires an LEA, as part of its existing annual parent notification, to provide parents or guardians of a pupil who is deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind with information regarding the option to attend a state special school, including the California Schools for the Deaf and the California School for the Blind.
- 2) Commencing with the 2027-28 school year, requires an LEA, when developing, reviewing, or revising an IEP for a pupil who is deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind, to provide the pupil's parent, guardian, or educational rights holder with information about the California Schools for the Deaf or the California School for the Blind.

- 3) Requires the CDE, on or before July 1, 2027, to develop and provide standardized informational materials to LEAs for purposes of these notifications.

Comments

- 1) *Need for the bill.* According to the author, “My district proudly hosts the California School for the Deaf in Riverside. In alignment with Senate Bill 1381, we are committed to ensuring that parents or guardians of students who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, or deaf blind receive comprehensive notification regarding the option for their child to attend a state special school. While interdistrict transfers may sometimes be met with reservations, it is essential that we consider the individual needs of each child and prioritize their best interests.

“The California School for the Deaf Riverside (CSDR) provides specialized resources, tools, and expertise designed to support the unique needs of deaf students. We have seen firsthand how students in such dedicated environments can achieve not only academic success but also personal growth, with some even reaching remarkable milestones such as winning CIF championships. This is the motivation behind my introduction of this bill: to make sure families are informed about available opportunities and can access the most fitting educational environments for their children.

“By expanding access to these specialized schools, we are not diminishing the resources of local districts; rather, we are fostering a collaborative environment where all can thrive. This alignment allows districts to utilize their resources more effectively while placing students in settings that cater specifically to their needs. Ultimately, our shared goal is to do what is right for our students. We all understand that education is a critical pathway to social mobility, and it is our duty to advocate for equitable access for every child.”

- 2) *The role of state special schools within the special education system.* State law establishes a continuum of special education placements, with the majority of pupils with disabilities served by their LEA and a smaller share served in more specialized settings, including nonpublic schools and state special schools. California operates three state special schools, including the California Schools for the Deaf (Northern and Southern California) and the California School for the Blind, which are intended to serve pupils whose needs cannot be met in traditional local settings.

Consistent with federal law, IEP teams are responsible for determining placement based on a pupil's unique needs, with a strong preference for the least restrictive environment and meaningful parent participation in decision making. Existing law also requires IEP teams, in the case of pupils who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind, to consider a range of placement options, including the California Schools for the Deaf.

- 3) *This bill adds a targeted information requirement within the IEP process.* This bill builds on the existing IEP framework by requiring LEAs, beginning in the 2027-28 school year, to provide parents of pupils who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind with information about the California Schools for the Deaf or the California School for the Blind when an IEP is developed, reviewed, or revised. This requirement is distinct from existing law, which focuses on ensuring that IEP teams consider appropriate placement options, but does not explicitly require that parents be provided with standardized information about specific state-operated schools during the IEP process.

The bill also separately requires LEAs to include information about both the California Schools for the Deaf and the California School for the Blind in annual parent notifications, suggesting an intent to increase awareness of state special school options more broadly.

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

SUPPORT: (Verified 4/27/26)

State Superintendent of Public Instruction (source)

OPPOSITION: (Verified 4/27/26)

None received

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