

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 1381 (Cervantes) – As Amended June 22, 2026

Policy Committee: Education

Vote: 8 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: Yes

SUMMARY:

This bill requires a local educational agency (LEA) to include within its annual notifications to parents and guardians information regarding the option for a pupil who is deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind to attend the California School for the Deaf or the California School for the Blind (State Special Schools).

The bill also requires, beginning with the 2027-28 school year, an LEA provide information regarding the State Special Schools when an LEA develops, reviews, or revises an individualized education program (IEP) for a pupil who is deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind. Lastly, the bill requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to provide LEAs with information about the State Special Schools for use during IEP development, reviews, and revisions.

FISCAL EFFECT:

- 1) Potential one-time Proposition 98 General Fund costs, likely minor, for LEAs to add information regarding placement at the State Special Schools to their annual notifications to parents and guardians and for IEP teams, as applicable, to provide the required placement information.
- 2) No costs to the CDE.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

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) **Background.** The State Special Schools refers to three distinct schools operated under the purview of CDE: the California School for the Deaf, Fremont, the California School for the Deaf, Riverside, and the California School for the Blind (also located in Fremont). CDE also operates three diagnostic centers located in Fremont, Fresno, and Los Angeles. The schools and diagnostic centers are funded separately from the Local Control Funding Formula via an annual Budget Act appropriation not directly tied to student enrollment or attendance. Cumulatively, the schools enroll approximately 900 students in a given year and students are enrolled in either a day school or a residential program, depending upon their individual needs and their residences.

According to the California Department of Education (CDE), in the 2023-24 school year, among students ages three to 21 who were enrolled in California schools, there were 2,548 students who were deaf, and 8,129 students who were hard-of-hearing. The total number of students with disabilities in that year was 836,846. Current law requires that the IEP team for any pupil who is deaf, hard of hearing, blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind consider the full continuum of placements and services available with parents or guardians, including the State Special Schools. It is unclear to the committee how many LEAs and IEP teams are not adhering to this requirement currently.

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