

SENATE THIRD READING
SB 845 (Pérez)
As Amended August 19, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

Defines numerous terms relating to career technical education (CTE), work-based learning, and youth apprenticeships, expands the authority to provide instruction and support through work-based learning activities to charter schools, county offices of education (COE), and the state special schools, clarifies the responsibility to provide workers' compensation and liability insurance for pupils, and establishes a framework for youth apprenticeship programs overseen by the Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS).

Major Provisions

- 1) Defines numerous terms related to apprenticeships, work-based learning, CTE pathways, and internships.
- 2) Authorizes K-12 students enrolled in a community college as part of a dual enrollment programs to participate in, and receive credit for, work-based learning activities.
- 3) Authorizes a student body organization to operate a school-based enterprise program as part of a CTE or academic program of study when the program is supervised, structured, and guided as a work-based learning activity.
- 4) Authorizes LEAs and state special schools, offering high school, rather than only school districts, to offer work experience education (WEE) programs, and expands the WEE program to include work-based learning activities occurring in CTE and early college credit in addition to WEE programs.
- 5) Authorizes LEAs and state special schools to purchase, or to reimburse employers, for workers compensation and liability insurance for pupils involved in other work-based learning activities, including apprenticeships and preapprenticeships.
- 6) Requires that an employer providing workers' compensation and liability insurance for a pupil participating in a work-based learning activity be responsible for workers' compensation coverage and liability for any injuries sustained by the pupil.
- 7) Specifies that work-based learning activities offered by LEAs, state special schools, partnership academies, and regional occupational programs or centers (ROCPs) may include but not be limited to, on-the-job training in youth apprenticeship programs, internships, mentorships, and job shadowing experiences, offered through WEE courses, community classrooms, cooperative CTE programs, CTE courses and early college credit courses.
- 8) Notwithstanding any other law, requires that all pupils participating in work-based learning activities be afforded the same statutory and regulatory safeguards as pupils in WEE programs, but does not alter the minutes of a minimum school day that applies for the applicable programs.

- 9) Requires that guidelines developed by regional and local business organizations, in conjunction with LEAs, state special schools, and community colleges, for the establishment of work-based learning activities align regional coordinating efforts with an emphasis on strengthening employer engagement and identifying critical skills for the workplace and expanding work-based learning activities in partnership with community colleges and local workforce development boards.
- 10) Requires the governing board or body of an LEA or state special school offering a WEE program to allow pupils in grade 10 to receive credit for satisfactorily completing a WEE program.
- 11) Specifies that all employment laws or rules applicable to minors are applicable to pupils enrolled in WEE programs or participating in youth apprenticeship programs or other work-based learning activities.
- 12) Authorizes WEE programs including employment in youth apprenticeship programs or preapprenticeship programs to be consistent with specified provisions of the Labor Code.
- 13) Prohibits a pupil or their parent or guardian from having to pay a charge or fee for the pupil's participation in a preapprenticeship or youth apprenticeship program.
- 14) Notwithstanding any other law, requires a youth apprenticeship program that begins in high school to allow student apprentices to complete a percentage of their program before graduation from high school.
- 15) Authorizes grants to be awarded under the Golden State Pathways Program to pathway programs that provide work-based learning activities, including, but not limited to, career-connected learning opportunities, internships, mentorships, preapprenticeship programs, and youth apprenticeship opportunities.
- 16) Authorizes specified programs to include work-based learning activities, as defined, including but not limited to: partnership academies, WorkAbility, College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP), K-12 component of the Strong Workforce Program (SWP), agricultural CTE programs, Golden State Pathways (GSPP) programs, CTE Incentive Grant (CTEIG) programs .
- 17) Authorizes preapprenticeship programs approved by the DAS to coordinate with and be offered in conjunction with work-based learning activities, as specified.

COMMENTS

State Master Plan for Career Education. California Executive Order N-11-23, signed by Governor Newsom in August 2023, launched the Master Plan for Career Education. This directive aimed to integrate and align the state's education, workforce, and economic development programs to prepare students and adults for high-paying careers with or without a traditional four-year college degree.

In 2025, the Governor's office released the Master Plan for Career Education, noting that the many existing education and training programs are resourced through numerous agencies, have different base funding streams, and offer various specialized grant programs. Although these

programs may have similar goals, they often require separate plans, applications, and implementation components. The Master Plan was meant to provide a framework for responding to the challenges facing California's labor market and educational landscape. Among the recommendations included in the Master Plan, two relate specifically to K-12 schools:

- 1) Strengthening regional coordination, including by expanding opportunities for work-based learning, with a focus on building social capital and creating earn-and-learn opportunities such as paid internships and apprenticeships; and
- 2) Developing career pathways for high school and college students that align with current and future statewide and regional workforce needs; and that provide opportunities to engage in work-based learning, including internships, service learning, pre-apprenticeships, and apprenticeships.

California Youth Apprenticeships. SB 191 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review) Chapter 67, Statutes of 2022, required the Division of Apprenticeship Standards (DAS) to convene a committee to develop recommendations on the expansion of youth apprenticeships in California for in-school and out-of-school youth and established the California Opportunity Youth Apprenticeship (COYA) grant program.

In 2024, the CYAC released a detailed set of recommendations to establish a statewide youth apprenticeship system. The report notes, “when young people can alternate between the workplace and the classroom, school becomes more relevant and purposeful, and access to economic opportunity more tangible. By allowing students the opportunity to apply classroom concepts at the worksite, classroom learning and work performance become mutually reinforcing.”

Work-based learning. Work-based learning integrates academic learning with real-world applications to provide paths to educational and career advancement and build the talent pipeline. According to the California Department of Education (CDE), work-based learning measures used for the College and Career Readiness Index (CCI) displayed on the California School Dashboard include pre-apprenticeships, state and federal job programs, transition work-based experiences, and transition classroom-based work exploration.

The only definition of work-based learning within the Education Code pertains only to the WEE program. Although work-based learning is referenced in numerous other code sections relating to various CTE programs, the definition does not clearly apply in these cases. The intent of this bill includes the development of consistent definitions and conditions of work-based learning and associated terms.

According to the Author

"California's education and workforce frameworks are leaving many students behind, especially low-income, Black, Latino and English Learner youth who enroll in college at lower rates and face barriers to completing a four-year degree. While 62% of high school graduates enroll in college within a year, only 34% of Californians hold at least a bachelor's degree. At the same time, 30% of future jobs will require training beyond high school, but less than a four-year degree. Our career education system is not meeting the needs of students and workforce demands. California voters recognize this gap, as highlighted in a recent survey where "three-quarters of voters believe it is very or extremely important for K-12 schools to provide career-connected learning and develop partnerships with colleges and employers.

SB 845 expands access to career-connected learning across the state by strengthening hands-on learning opportunities, removing barriers to industry participation, and connecting students with high-demand careers – all efforts that are guided by the Career Education Master Plan and the recommendations of the California Youth Apprenticeship Committee (CYAC). Doing so will provide a strong foundation for preparing students for career success, which is essential for building a more inclusive economy."

Arguments in Support

Nextgen California writes, "In California, only about 30% of young people earn a four-year degree, while many others face systemic barriers that delay, disrupt, or completely block their access to higher education. Work-based learning, youth apprenticeships, dual enrollment, and credit for prior learning offer promising, equitable pathways to help students overcome these challenges. However, the design of the state's current career education system is not formulated or positioned to meet our workforce needs. A lack of coordination between government, industry, and educational institutions, along with disjointed curriculum standards, makes the transition from education to employment extremely difficult and very inefficient for both the student and the employer.

AB 845 provides an alternative approach to the current program design. Specifically, the bill provides a framework that will foster collaboration between local education agencies, government, and the private sector industries by incorporating the use of more diverse learning opportunities and real-world work experience into the current system. SB 845 expands access to hands-on training and essential life skills, as well as strengthens career pathways for students who might otherwise struggle to secure stable careers in California's most in-demand industries."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Appropriations Committee:

- 1) One-time costs of \$450,000 and \$400,000 ongoing annually (CA Apprenticeship Council Training Fund) for DAS to expand establish and oversee the youth apprenticeship program.
- 2) Minor Proposition 98 General Fund costs to K-12 LEAs and California Community Colleges (CCCs), collectively statewide, to participate in the expanded youth apprenticeship and CTE framework. The bill authorizes the use of various existing CTE funding pathways to support its implementation, such as Golden State Pathways, CTE Incentive Grant, Agriculture CTE funding, and Partnership Academies.

VOTES

SENATE FLOOR: 39-0-1

YES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Archuleta, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Choi, Cortese, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Jones, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNERney, Menjivar, Niello, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

ABS, ABST OR NV: Reyes

ASM EDUCATION: 8-0-1

YES: Patel, Hoover, Ahrens, Bonta, Castillo, Garcia, Lowenthal, Pellerin

ABS, ABST OR NV: Zbur

ASM LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT: 7-0-0

YES: Ortega, Alanis, Chen, Elhawary, Kalra, Lee, Ward

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-4

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache

ABS, ABST OR NV: Hoover, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

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