

Date of Hearing: April 30, 2025

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Al Muratsuchi, Chair
AB 542 (Celeste Rodriguez) – As Amended April 3, 2025

SUBJECT: Education finance: continuation schools and classes: youth workforce development programs: instructional days

SUMMARY: Authorizes school districts having a continuation high school or offering continuation education classes to offer youth workforce development programs to students on one or two weekdays per school week, provided they are otherwise enrolled in at least 15 hours of class attendance per week. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Authorizes school districts having a continuation high school or offering continuation education classes to offer youth workforce development programs to students on one or two weekdays per school week, provided they are otherwise enrolled in at least 15 hours of class attendance per week.
- 2) Requires that youth workforce development program days be counted as instructional days.
- 3) Requires a school district implementing a youth workforce development program to establish procedures to track student attendance and participation while engaging in the work experience education program.
- 4) Defines “youth workforce development program” as a program implemented by a continuation high school or school offering continuation education classes, under the supervision of a certificated employee, that enables pupils to earn either academic credit or an industry certificate while engaging in workplace experiences, or workforce development training, with the goal of providing the pupils with the skills and experience necessary to obtain employment at a livable wage following graduation. Requires a youth workforce development program to be aligned to pupil skills and in-demand careers and provide pupils with technical training and soft skills and to be offered in partnership with a community college district, adult education program, regional occupational program or center, workforce development program accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, or an organization that offers industry-recognized certifications. Encourages school districts to give priority to programs that lead to an industry-recognized certificate or credential.
- 5) Defines “supervision” for the purposes of this program to mean student participation in paid or unpaid on-the-job experiences wherein the supervisor of the training site and certificated school personnel share the responsibility for the supervision of on-the-job experiences.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires that in continuation high schools and continuation education classes a day of attendance is 180 minutes of attendance and prohibits a student with being credited with more than 15 hours of attendance per school week. (Education Code (EC) 46170)

- 2) Requires a minimum school day in a high school to be 240 minutes with some exceptions, including a continuation high school or for students enrolled in a work experience education program as approved. (EC 46141)
- 3) Requires instructional time to be counted for the purpose of computing average daily attendance (ADA) when the student is in attendance under the immediate supervision and control of a certificated employee of the local educational agency (LEA). (EC 46300 and 47612.5)
- 4) Specifies that for purposes of a work experience education program in a secondary school that meets the standards of the California State Plan for Career Technical Education (CTE), “immediate supervision,” in the context of off-campus work training stations, means student participation in on-the-job training as outlined under a training agreement, coordinated by the school district under a state-approved plan, wherein the employer and certificated school personnel share the responsibility for on-the-job supervision. (EC 46300)
- 5) Specifies that the course of study for high school does not apply to a student enrolled in certain alternative programs, including a continuation high school. (EC 51228.1)
- 6) Authorizes the governing board of a school district to do all of the following:
 - a) Provide for the instruction of students in the skills, attitudes, and understanding necessary to succeed in employment by means of courses of work-based learning or work experience education;
 - b) Provide for guidance and supervision procedures designed to ensure maximum educational benefit to students from placement in suitable work-based learning or work experience education courses;
 - c) Provide for arranging, approving, coordinating, and awarding credit for work-based learning or work experience education courses, and for those purposes employ instructors, coordinators, and other necessary personnel; and
 - d) Provide for the district to purchase liability insurance for students enrolled in programs of study involving work experience, which may include work-based learning, or vocational education at locations off school grounds approved by the governing board, or require students to purchase insurance and to pass on all or a portion of the costs, at the discretion of the governing board, to the district. (EC 51760)
- 7) Requires that school districts opting to offer work-based learning opportunities to students enrolled in the district shall ensure that students are afforded the same statutory and regulatory safeguards as students in work experience programs. (EC 51760.1)
- 8) Defines “work-based learning” as an educational approach or instructional methodology that uses the workplace or real work to provide students with the knowledge and skills that will help them connect school experiences to real-life work activities and future career opportunities. (EC 51760.1)
- 9) Requires any entity that has a contract with an LEA to ensure that any employee who interacts with students, outside of the immediate supervision and control of the

parent/guardian or a school employee has a valid criminal records summary. Exempts an employee of an entity that has a contract with an LEA and offers work experience opportunities for students if all of the following requirements are met:

- a) At least one adult employee in the workplace during the student's work hours, who has direct contact with the student and has been designated by the employer as the employee of record who is responsible for the safety of the student has a valid criminal record summary;
- b) A staff representative of the LEA makes visitations as specified in a student's individualized education program, or, if unspecified, at least once every three weeks to consult with the student's workplace liaison, observe the student at the workplace, and check in with the student to ensure their health, safety, and welfare, including by addressing any concerns the student has raised; and
- c) The parent or guardian of the student has signed a consent form regarding the student's work placement, attesting that the parent or guardian understands the duties assigned to the student and the nature of the workplace environment. (EC 45125.1)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, "Continuation schools play a key role in the success of students as they provide a more flexible and supportive environment. For example, students may have familial obligations, be employed, have different learning styles or other needs, and are behind on credits needed for graduation. These schools serve diverse student populations across the state and provide additional support that a traditional high school cannot provide.

AB 542 aims to allow students the flexibility to pursue workforce development programs, which will expand employment opportunities. By amending current law, a governing board of a school district will be able to augment the five day instruction schedule while maintaining the state-required instruction time at continuation schools. This flexibility supports various employment pathways for students after graduation as well as economic growth in communities and across the state."

Key provisions of the bill. AB 542 would authorize continuation high schools to reconfigure their schedule to allow students to access workforce opportunities for one to two days per week, while still accessing the required 15 hours of classroom instruction on the remaining days of the week in order to authorize schools to receive average daily attendance funding (ADA) and afford students the opportunity to gain workforce skills.

What is a continuation high school? According to the California Department of Education (CDE), continuation education "is a high school diploma program designed to meet the needs of students who have not graduated from high school, are not exempt from compulsory school attendance, and deemed at risk of not completing their schooling."

According to the California Continuing Education Association (CCEA):

The continuation high school serves as our education system’s dropout prevention program. For many students, it is a second chance and safety net to help them complete their high school graduation requirements and earn a diploma.”

For apportionment purposes, minimum attendance in a continuation program is 15 hours per week and a minimum of 180 minutes per day. However, many continuation high schools provide full-day programs that exceed the minimum daily attendance requirement. In addition to the required academic courses for graduation, the program of instruction emphasizes occupational or career orientation or a work-study schedule and intensive guidance and counseling. Supplemental programs and services may include, but not be limited to, independent study, regional occupation programs, career counseling, concurrent enrollment in community college and/or adult education, and job placement and apprenticeships.

In the 2023-24 school year, there were 430 continuation high schools in California enrolling 48,822 students.

Who are the students attending continuation schools? Students enrolled in continuation education programs are often credit deficient or need a flexible educational environment because they are employed or engaged in family obligations. Many have learning styles that are not as well matched in traditional schools and larger school settings or are dealing with anxiety or other critical needs and challenges. They are often considered at risk of dropping out and may exhibit behavioral issues that impact their ability to succeed in a regular school setting.

Work-based learning. Statute defines “work-based learning” as an educational approach or instructional methodology that uses the workplace or real work to provide students with the knowledge and skills that will help them connect school experiences to real-life work activities and future career opportunities. It further specifies that high-quality work-based learning may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Emphasis on learning in the workplace;
- Exposure to a wide range of career areas and worksites in order to help youth make informed choices about education, training options, and career pursuits;
- Thoughtful placement of students into opportunities that are evaluated for their safety, qualified supervision, and learning opportunities;
- Appropriate sequencing of experiences ranging from site visits and tours, job shadowing, unpaid and paid internships, and paid work experience;
- Explicit aim to supplement or systematically reinforce classroom instruction in technical courses, academic courses, or both;
- Systematic attention to the development of 21st-century skills, such as communication, problem solving, teamwork, project planning, and critical thinking;
- A trained mentor who structures the learning at the worksite;

- Coordination between the classroom teacher and the workplace mentor or supervisor;
- Built-in regular assessment and feedback;
- Involvement of youth in choosing and structuring the experience; and
- Clear and measurable learning outcomes.

Work-based learning benefits continuation school students. A study of health pathways at two continuation schools in Oakland includes an analysis of the impact of work-based learning. The authors note, “work-based learning opportunities can help students see themselves in a career they might not otherwise have considered. Helping students envision a pathway to a career can serve as motivation for continuation high school students to course-correct and re-engage with school.” (Warner, 2020)

The authors also note the importance of structuring work-based learning opportunities to reduce the barriers that hinder students from participating, including balancing the time spent in class, work, or other family obligations to make time for internships, as well as offering stipends.

They contend that it is imperative that work-based learning opportunities be offered during the school day so students who must work in the evenings can still participate. Staff can take advantage of the less stringent seat time and scheduling requirements in continuation high school settings to allow students greater flexibility in when and how they access work-based learning opportunities and ensure that these school-day opportunities do not come at the expense of earning credits needed for graduation.

Arguments in support. The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the sponsor of the measure writes, “Students attending continuation schools are disproportionately likely to experience challenges to their success, including working to support their families, being pregnant, parenting, or facing disciplinary or justice-related issues. For many of these students, the opportunity to acquire skills that will lead to steady employment is a strong motivator to remain in school and achieve their diploma. Los Angeles Unified works with a variety of workforce partners to provide students with multiple pathways to reliable, union-connected job opportunities.

Under existing law, students in continuation school must attend classes for a minimum of fifteen hours a week. Continuation schools are required to operate 175 days a year, a schedule that compels students to attend classes five days a week, for a minimum of three hours a day. AB 542 would allow students to attend classes for fewer than five days a week, while maintaining fifteen hours of instruction. This will give students greater flexibility to have work experience education opportunities without having to arrange transportation from school to a worksite, and opens opportunities that are offered in the morning or as part of an eight-hour day.

Workforce experience education, including youth workforce development programs, is supervised by the local education agency with guidelines to ensure an enriching and safe experience for the student that is aligned with their academic and career goals. As such, these hours will count towards average daily attendance and the required days of instruction, while still maintaining required hours of instruction on other days of the week. By providing students with

greater opportunities to gain valuable workforce experience, AB 542 supports the goals of the newly released Master Plan for Career Technical Education and the promotion of an education system that supports multiple pathways to student success.”

Related legislation. AB 401 (Muratsuchi) of the 2025-26 Session would require Career Technical Education Incentive Grant (CTEIG) program recipients to be granted renewal grants for a total of four years, subject to specified conditions, and requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to designate 90% of the CTEIG funds for renewal grants and 10% for new applicants; adds a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to the CTEIG appropriation; and removes a limitation on grant awards above a specified level.

SB 845 (Pérez) of the 2025-26 Session would require the CDE to coordinate the updating of CTE model curriculum standards and framework at least every 5 years, convene CTE industry advisory groups for each CTE subject area including specified representatives, to provide input to the updating of the standards and frameworks, identify various work-based learning opportunities, including apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, as well as outlining the responsibilities of the LEA in sponsoring work-based learning.

SB 480 (Portantino) of the 2023-24 Session would have authorized CTE courses, for purposes of a high school graduation requirement, to include a course which includes participation in a pre-apprenticeship or a youth apprenticeship program; required the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to develop and adopt work-based learning program guidelines; requires the CDE to develop guidance on the definition of specified CTE programs; required the State Board of Education (SBE) to consider including youth apprenticeship programs in the College/Career Indicator associated with the California School Dashboard, and established the High School Apprenticeship Pilot Program. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Association of California School Administrators
 California Community Foundation
 California Opportunity Youth Network
 Center for Powerful Public Schools
 Jerico Development
 John Muir Charter School
 Klabin Company
 Los Angeles Unified School District
 New Ways to Work
 Opportunity Youth Schools Coalition
 Power California Action
 Reaching At Promise Students Association
 San Diego Unified School District
 3 individuals

Opposition

None on file

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