

Date of Hearing: March 18, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Darshana R. Patel, Chair
AB 1659 (Ransom) – As Amended March 9, 2026

SUBJECT: Juvenile court school pupils: joint transition planning policy: courses of study

SUMMARY: Requires school districts to designate at least one district staff member as a point person to help facilitate the transition of the pupil between public school and juvenile court schools (JCS). Specifically, **this bill**:

- 1) Requires a school district in which a student has had contact with the juvenile justice system to designate at least one district staff member as a point person to help facilitate the transition of the pupil between public school and JCS. Requires the designated staff member to collaborate with the county office of education (COE) and county probation department throughout the calendar year to facilitate the following:
 - a) The immediate enrollment of a student transferred from JCS in an appropriate public school in their community, and their immediate placement in appropriate courses;
 - b) The timely transfer of education records when a student enters JCS, including the pupil's individualized education program (IEP) and 504 plan, if applicable; and
 - c) The acceptance of full or partial course credits for coursework completed by the student while enrolled in a JCS.
- 2) Requires the school district to inform the COE and county probation department of the staff member's name and contact information;
- 3) Restates existing law (Education Code (EC) 49069.5) that requires local education agencies (LEAs) to issue full and partial credits on an official transcript within two business days of foster youth transferring between public schools and JCS.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires COEs and county probation departments to have a joint transition planning policy to coordinate the transition of pupils between JCS and other public schools. Requires a COE to assign transition oversight responsibilities to existing COE personnel, who shall coordinate with the county probation department and relevant LEAs to ensure:
 - a) The immediate enrollment of a pupil transferred from JCS in an appropriate public school in their community, and their immediate placement in appropriate courses;
 - b) The transfer of education records, including an IEP and 504 plan, if applicable, within 72 hours of a pupil's release from JCS;
 - c) The acceptance of full or partial course credits for coursework completed by the student while enrolled in JCS;
 - d) The implementation of the pupil's transition plan, if one exists; and

- e) Access to information about postsecondary opportunities, including college financial aid. (EC 48647)
- 2) Requires LEAs to accept full or partial credit for coursework satisfactorily completed by a student while attending a public school, including JCS. (EC 48645.5, 51225.2.)
- 3) Requires LEAs to provide educational records of transferring students to their next LEA within two business days of receiving the transfer notification. The records include, among other items, a transcript updated with full or partial credit for coursework completed by the student. (EC 49069.5).

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill has been keyed as a possible state-mandated local program by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, “Students who are justice-impacted are children who deserve stability, care, and support, especially during major transitions in their lives. AB 1659 provides greater support for these students by ensuring there is a designated point of contact when a student transitions back to their home school district upon release from a court school. This bill strengthens the partnership between the county office of education and the student’s home district to put the student first and establish a more effective transition support system. A smooth reintegration process will reduce disruptions to these students’ education and help them stay engaged, focused on their future, and moving toward success.”

Juvenile court schools. According to the CDE, the purpose of JCS is to provide mandated, compulsory public education for juvenile offenders who are under the protection or authority of the county juvenile justice system and are incarcerated in juvenile halls, juvenile homes, day centers, juvenile ranches, juvenile camps, or regional youth educational facilities. These schools are operated by COEs. In the 2023-24 school year, over 13,000 students were enrolled across 51 JCS school sites.

Students are often enrolled in JCS for only a period of days or weeks; more than half are enrolled for less than 31 days (Youth Law Center, *Out of Sight, Out of Mind*). Nevertheless, JCS enables students to complete course credits leading to a high school diploma. A minimum day program for JCS is 240 minutes, in alignment with public school requirements, and students must take all required public education assessments.

Upon release, or after the court terminates jurisdiction, students aged sixteen to eighteen who are not exempt from compulsory school attendance are required to continue their education. These students are provided with planning and transition services that are critical to a successful transfer back to a non-JCS school.

Delayed re-enrollment and credit transfer can impact graduation rates for JCS students. For students transferring out of JCS, delayed re-enrollment in public school is a serious concern. According to data from the CDE, 1 in 4 students (25%) who attend JCS schools never re-enroll in any form of school. In the 2023-24 school year, this amounted to nearly 3,000 students who dropped out of school before obtaining their diplomas.

Once JCS students are re-enrolled, delayed or inaccurate credit transfer is common. At a minimum this can cause inappropriate course placement, but it can also impact if and when a student has accumulated enough credit for graduation. According to the CDE, graduation rates for former JCS students were only 40% in 2023-24, compared to the statewide average of 86%. Perhaps more starkly, for schools that reported data that year, only 1 former JCS student met the requirements needed to apply to California State University or University of California. Helping JCS students receive the credits they earned, full or partial, is critical to ensuring their long-term success.

Current law requires schools to issue credit earned by specified highly mobile students within two days of receiving the transfer notice. However, school personnel report that credit transfer for JCS students is often significantly delayed. This bill reiterates that JCS students are included in the two-day transfer requirement. However, if schools are already struggling to meet this timeline, simply restating the requirement may not be a practical solution. Future legislation may wish to more specifically examine and address the root causes of delayed credit transfer for justice-involved youth.

Ultimately, the low graduation rate for justice-involved youth has serious consequences at both the individual and system level. Many studies have shown that dropping out of high school, especially for justice-involved youth, is one of the strongest predictors of future incarceration (Chandler, 2026). Conversely, school attendance and positive attitudes about school have a large, positive impact on preventing future delinquency (Wilson & Lipsey, 2024). Thus, ensuring that students leaving JCS have an immediate, smooth transition back into public school – in other words, a “warm handoff” – is critical for their future success.

District-level liaisons were recommended in a previous report to the Legislature. In 2016, the CDE released *Juvenile Court Student Transition Statewide Work Group: Report and Recommendations to the Legislature*, pursuant to AB 2276 (Bocanegra), Chapter 901, Statutes of 2014. Their recommendations included the creation of a student transition team, comprised of designated transition liaisons at the COE, county probation department, and school district. While the first two positions have been created, the district personnel have not.

Improved administrative collaboration may smooth student transitions. Recently, a number of reports have confirmed the need for system-level collaboration, including:

- Youth Law Center, *Out of Sight, Out of Mind*, 2023: Investing in transition services and relationships with districts of origin is “imperative”;
- ForwardChange, *Fewer Chutes, More Ladders*, 2026: System-level coordination is essential to reduce recidivism and improve the lives of youth;
- Bishop, *Educational Planning of Court-Involved Youth*, 2019: Establishing points of contact in each agency can enhance educational planning for court school youth.

This research confirms anecdotal evidence from California school administrators, who have observed that JCS students experience the best outcomes when their home district has a clearly identified person supporting their transitions. Current law requires COEs have designated transition personnel assisting students as they leave JCS, yet there are no corresponding designated personnel at the receiving school district. A warm handoff of the student from JCS to

their next school district is difficult without a team of people working at both ends to help the student successfully re-enroll.

Equity implications. Justice-involved youth are often part of other vulnerable communities. In 2021-2022, 70% of California JCS students were Black and Latino; 20% were English Learners; 20% were students in foster care; and 30% were students with disabilities (Youth Law Center, 2023). As many as 40% may also have experienced homelessness, though this data is inconsistently reported. Thus, juvenile justice issues are intrinsically linked to equity issues. Strengthening the re-enrollment process for JCS students will likely improve outcomes, including attendance and graduation rates, for these vulnerable populations.

Arguments in Support: Alameda County Office of Education (ACOE) writes: “When COEs and school districts work together to support smooth transitions, juvenile court school students are more likely to re-enroll promptly, get credit for work completed, and take appropriate courses to help them graduate. Without support, these vulnerable students can fall through the cracks, dropping out of school altogether and even ending up with more juvenile justice system involvement.

Current law mandates that COEs have a designated staff person to serve as a transition liaison for court school students, but there is no comparable mandate for school districts. AB 1659 will remedy that omission by ensuring that school district staff is identified to partner with COE staff to support students through these transitions, helping them enroll in appropriate courses and get credit for work completed.

ACOE’s mission is to equip the most vulnerable students and those who serve them with the tools to thrive. AB 1659 is firmly aligned with our mission because it will improve the support juvenile court school students, some of our most vulnerable students, receive during a particularly challenging time in their academic careers.”

Prior legislation. AB 2181 (Gipson), Chapter 703, Statutes of 2024, requires a juvenile court school operated by a COE to exempt a student from local graduation requirements of the COE, and to permit a student to remain enrolled to complete statewide coursework requirements for graduation, under specified conditions.

AB 1354 (Gipson), Chapter 756, Statutes of 2019, requires COEs to ensure that a student enrolled in a juvenile court school for more than 20 school days has an individualized transition plan and access to specified educational records upon release.

AB 1124 (Cervantes), Chapter 754, Statutes of 2017, permits the education rights holders of students enrolled in juvenile court schools to voluntarily defer or decline the issuance of a diploma for meeting state graduation requirements so that a student may take additional coursework at the juvenile court school or, once released, at a school operated by an LEA.

SB 304 (Portantino) of the 2017-2018 Session would have required each student detained for more than 20 consecutive schooldays to have an individualized transition plan and transition portfolio, and requires the individualized transition plan and transition portfolio to address specified issues. This bill was vetoed by the Governor with the following message:

I signed Assembly Bill 2276 in 2014, which requires a county office of education and probation department to develop a joint transition planning policy to assist students

transitioning from juvenile court schools to other schools. I believe this provides sufficient guidance to get the job done.

AB 2306 (Frazier), Chapter 464, Statutes of 2016, requires school districts to exempt former juvenile court school students who transfer into school districts after their second year in high school from local graduation requirements that exceed those of the state, and requires a COE to issue a diploma of graduation to a pupil who completes statewide coursework requirements for graduation while attending a juvenile court school.

AB 2276 (Bocanegra), Chapter 464, Statutes of 2014, required the Superintendent, in consultation with the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC), to convene a statewide stakeholder group to develop a model for the immediate transfer of educational records, uniform systems for calculating and awarding credits, transition planning, and the immediate enrollment of pupils who are being transferred from juvenile court schools; and report recommendations for state action to the Legislature by January 1, 2016.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Disability Rights California
Children's Defense Fund California
East Bay Community Law Center
California Youth Defender Center
Children Now
Association of California School Administrators
Alameda county Board of Education
Fres Lifelines for Youth
Equal Justice society
California County Superintendents
Office of the Riverside Couty superintendent of Schools
Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice
Alameda County Office of Education
Los Angeles County Office of Education

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Sarah Cate Hawthorne / ED. / (916) 319-2087