

Date of Hearing: March 29, 2023

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Al Muratsuchi, Chair
AB 535 (Irwin) – As Introduced February 8, 2023

SUBJECT: School accountability: Statewide School Library Lead

SUMMARY: Requires, on or before July 1, 2024, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to select an applicant county office of education (COE) to serve as a Statewide School Library Lead (SSLL) to work collaboratively with the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) for the purpose of establishing library and literacy services that support the Statewide System of Support (SOS). Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires, on or before July 1, 2024, the SPI to select an applicant COE to serve as a SSLL to work collaboratively with the CCEE and to establish library and literacy services that support the statewide system of support. Requires the SSLL's duties to include, but not be limited to, all of the following:
 - a) Enhancing the state's investment in literacy and aligning those efforts with the California Comprehensive State Literacy Plan;
 - b) Working collaboratively with local Literacy Lead Agencies, the California Dyslexia Initiative (CDI), Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant recipients, Learning Acceleration System Grant recipients, the California SUMS (Scaling Up Multi-Tiered System of Support [MTSS] Statewide) Initiative, and Reading Instruction and Intervention (RII) Grant recipients;
 - c) Working directly with local educational agencies (LEAs), including COEs, to build capacity to develop excellent school library services and accelerate literacy and learning, including coordinating support, providing direct technical assistance, and delivering professional learning;
 - d) Working with local and regional entities to facilitate the integration of media and information literacy into the curriculum, scaling up collaboration and coteaching with teacher librarians, and promote the role of the Model School Library Standards for California Public Schools in preparing a globally competent workforce;
 - e) Working with local and regional entities to promote school libraries as safe spaces that create a positive school climate, champion intellectual freedom, and support social and emotional learning, mindfulness, and well-being; and
 - f) Working with local and regional entities to engage with families and communities to better synthesize, integrate, and extend literacy programs in a coherent and comprehensive manner.
- 2) Requires the implementation of the SSLL and related activities to be contingent upon an appropriation for these purposes in the annual Budget Act or another statute.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Authorizes the county superintendent of schools to, with the approval of the board of supervisors and the county board of education, agree with the county librarian to take over all existing contracts for supplementary books and other material adopted for the course of study between the school districts or community college districts and the county librarian. Requires, thereafter the county superintendent of schools to generally perform such library services for the school districts or community college districts as were theretofore performed by the county library. (Education Code (EC) 1770)
- 2) Requires the governing board of each school district to provide school library services for the pupils and teachers of the district by establishing and maintaining school libraries or by contractual arrangements with another public agency. (EC 18100)
- 3) Authorizes the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) to issue a services credential authorizing service as a library media teacher upon completion of specialized preparation. States that the standards for these credentials are a baccalaureate degree or higher degree from an institution approved by the CTC, a valid teaching credential, and specialized and professional preparation. (EC 44269)
- 4) Establishes an Expert Lead in Literacy within the SOS. The Expert Lead in Literacy must be a COE, selected by the CDE in partnership with the CCEE, to support grantees to build statewide professional learning networks and provide technical assistance to increase statewide capacity in implementing effective literacy instruction.
- 5) Establishes the California State Library, under the direction of the State Librarian, and lists among the responsibilities of the office to purchase and maintain materials and equipment as necessary to carry out California State Library programs and services consistent with well-established library standards.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, “School libraries and librarians play a critical role in developing students’ critical thinking skills. Misinformation and ‘fake news’ have the potential to undermine a student’s ability to distinguish the credibility of print and digital media. Library science stresses the value of research and citation, which empowers students to evaluate the print and digital media they consume.

AB 535 will create a Statewide School Library Lead that will assist educators in developing needed school library services to accelerate literacy and learning, ultimately providing our students with the proper tools needed to build their critical thinking capabilities.”

California school library statistics. Until the 2013-14 school year, the CDE annually collected information about school libraries using an online survey. Data from that year representing 43% of schools reveal that among the California public schools responding to the survey, 84% have a place designated as the library, although staffing, collections, and programs have a wide range of quality. Sixteen percent of the schools responding do not have a library. Approximately 9% of California schools have a credentialed teacher librarian on campus part time or longer; the

majority of professional staffing is found at the high school level. A teacher librarian has both a California teaching credential and a California teacher librarian services credential. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the national ratio of teacher librarians to students in the fall of 2011 was 1:1,023. California ranked at the bottom of professional library staffing numbers with a ratio of 1:7,374. In 2013-14, 86% of California public schools reported classified staff in the library.

The average number of school library books per student in 2013-14 in K–12 was 20.4. In 1986, the number reported per student was ten. The average number of books per library collection is 14,137, which at the time was close to the national average. “Books” includes both print and digital formats. In that year, the average copyright date was 20 years old. The average copyright date is measured in the nonfiction section and includes both print and digital books.

Various funding mechanisms have supported school libraries over the last 30 years, including the tax checkoff program from 1994-1997 generated funds from taxpayer donations and dispersed them on a competitive grant basis, the School and Library Improvement Block Grant which was flexed during the 2008-09 fiscal year along with many other categorical programs, and the 2013–14 Budget Act replaced the previous K–12 finance system with a new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF).

Impact of recent state and local policies on school library collections. According to a 2022 working paper from the Wheelock Educational Policy Center at Boston University, *Politics and Children’s Books: Evidence from School Library Collections*, books on the topics of LGBTQ+, race/racism, or abortion are less likely to be found in school libraries in conservative areas, and are more likely to have discontinued Dr. Seuss and Christian fiction titles. Using web-scraping techniques to collect original data on hundreds of titles in over 6,600 school libraries nationally to identify patterns in library resources and content, researchers found that the book challenges in the 2021-22 school year have had “chilling effects” on the acquisition of new LGBTQ+ content. The working paper states that books with “controversial content” are widely available, however, the prevalence of these titles is related to local politics, state laws, and social environments. Most public schools have a library on site, but little is known about the quality or content of school library programs. Disparities exist in library resources and collection quality, particularly between schools in low- and high-income areas.

Statewide SOS. The LCFF was established in the 2013-14 fiscal year to address the achievement gap by providing more equitable funding among LEAs, that is, to provide a higher level of funding to LEAs that enroll larger numbers of unduplicated pupils so they could provide those pupils with additional services and support. The reforms to the funding system were accompanied by changes to the state accountability system, including Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs). The LCAP is a three-year plan that describes the goals, actions, services, and expenditures to support positive student outcomes that address state and local priorities. The LCAP provides an opportunity for LEAs (school districts, COEs, and charter schools) to share their stories of how, what, and why programs and services are selected to meet their local needs.

A key part of California’s new approach is a refocused system of support for LEAs (school districts, charter schools, and COEs), which is based on a three-level framework:

- Support for All LEAs and Schools (Level 1): Various state and local agencies provide an array of resources and voluntary assistance that all LEAs may use to improve student performance at the LEA and school level and narrow disparities among student groups across the LCFF priorities, including recognition for success and the ability to share promising practices.
- Differentiated Assistance (Level 2): County superintendents, the CDE, charter authorizers, and the CCEE provide differentiated assistance for LEAs, in the form of individually designed assistance, to address identified performance issues.
- Intensive Intervention (Level 3): The SPI or, for charter schools, the charter authorizer may require more intensive interventions for LEAs with persistent performance issues over a specified time period.

Each of the three levels represents a *type of assistance* available or provided to LEAs, *not* a status or label applied to LEAs.

Agencies named in the SOS. The LCFF identifies both Lead Agencies and State Agencies and tasks them with advancing the goal and purposes of the SOS. The Lead Agencies are tasked with building capacity and developing and providing supports to particular entities or groups within California's education system, while the State Agencies are tasked with facilitating and coordinating the work of the Lead Agencies. The support provided by these agencies ensure that there is: 1) a clear point of contact for a school district or COE to seek support responsive to a locally identified need, 2) a clear process and responsibility for agencies within the system of support to work together to connect the school district or COE with relevant resources or avenues for assistance, and 3) improved visibility of the resources, expertise, and services available across the state through various agencies and state-funded initiatives to support student success. ***The Committee may wish to consider*** the numerous "lead" projects that have been recently established as the SOS has grown.

Lead Agencies:

- Geographic Lead Agencies: The Geographic Lead Agencies are primarily responsible for building the capacity of COEs to ensure that counties are equipped to build the capacity of their LEAs to support the continuous improvement of student performance within the state priorities.
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Support: The California SUMS Initiative provides resources, professional learning opportunities, and funding for LEAs to align academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports to serve the whole child.
- Expert Lead in Literacy: As part of the ELSB Grant Program, the Expert Lead in Literacy supports grantees to build statewide professional learning networks and provide technical assistance to increase statewide capacity in implementing effective literacy instruction.
- Special Education Resource Leads: The Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) Resource Leads consist of two types of statewide special education leads: SELPA Systems Improvement Leads and SELPA Content Leads. The main goal of the SELPA

Leads is to increase the capacity of SELPAs and LEAs to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

- **Community Engagement Initiative Lead Agencies:** The Community Engagement Initiative Lead Agency builds capacity in communities and LEAs and schools in order to expand successful community engagement practices statewide.
- **Title III COE Regional English Learner Specialists:** The Title III Regional COE Leads provide technical assistance to LEAs within each of the 11 County Superintendent regions through a partnership between the CDE and the California County Superintendents (CCS).
- **Educator Workforce Investment Program:** The Educator Workforce Investment Grant program provides professional learning opportunities for teachers and paraprofessionals across the state for implementation of the EL Roadmap Policy and special education.
- **21st Century California School Leadership Academy:** The 21st Century California School Leadership Academy provides high-quality professional learning for administrators and other school leaders. A list of the regional academies may be found on the funding results page.
- **California Dyslexia Initiative:** The goals of the CDI include building capacity in the SOS to provide early intervention services for students with specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia; identifying effective models for identification and treatment of specific learning disabilities and delivering professional development on evidence-based instruction and strategies informed by research.
- **Statewide SOS for Expanded Learning:** The SOS for Expanded Learning is the technical assistance network for supporting After School Education and Safety Program and 21st Century Community Learning Program grantees throughout California.
- **Early Math Initiative:** The Early Math Initiative is intended to result in resources, communications and professional learning that will improve immediate and long-term mathematical outcomes for children from birth through age eight. The Initiative aims to increase awareness of the importance of early math, support the adults who work with young children in providing high-quality, frequent, engaging early math experiences and to reshape perceptions and understanding about early math.
- **Homeless Education Technical Assistance Centers:** The Centers have been selected to provide support and technical assistance to other COEs, in a regional approach, to ensure they have the capacity, resources, and tools required to support their LEAs with the implementation of the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Act. The provisions of this Act are designed to improve the identification, educational stability, access, support, and academic achievement of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

State Agencies: The LCFF identifies the CDE, the CCEE, and the SBE as the three state agencies tasked with the responsibility of facilitating the work and supports being provided by the Lead Agencies. These agencies work collaboratively to coordinate the supports being provided

throughout the system, provide guidance to the Lead Agencies, and solicit input and feedback from educational stakeholders, as well as partnering with the Lead Agencies to provide opportunities for LEAs to build their capacity.

Model School Library Standards. The Model School Library Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, were adopted by the State Board of Education, on September 16, 2010. The Library Standards include two types of standards:

- “School Library Standards for Students” that delineate what students should know and be able to do at each grade level or grade span to enable students to succeed in school, higher education, and the workforce; and
- “School Library Program Standards” that describe base-level staffing, resources and infrastructure, including technology, required for school library programs to be effective and help students to meet the school library standards.

The Library Standards recognize that school libraries have evolved from simply providing print materials to offering rich selections of print, media, and digital resources; from teaching students how to search a card catalog to teaching students strategies for searching a variety of print, media and digital resources; from teaching basic reading literacy to teaching information literacy (the ability to access, evaluate, use, and integrate information and ideas effectively). The student standards also include the legal, ethical and safe use of information both in print and online, other aspects of cyber safety, and use of technology.

Recommended Committee Amendments. *Staff recommends that the bill be amended to:* require the SSSL to work with charter schools, in addition to school districts and COEs.

Arguments in support. The Ball/Frost Group writes on behalf of their client, “The California School Library Association supports the bill for several reasons. First, establishing a library lead, which would work closely with the existing statewide literacy lead, will expand the State’s investment in early literacy, work with school districts throughout the state on improving library skills and free reading resources, and facilitate the integration of media and information literacy into school district curriculum.

Second, by every national ranking, school libraries are last in the nation in the ratio of credentialed librarians to students. Montana ranks first with 404 students for every librarian. New York ranks 18th with 1,060 per librarian and California ranks 50th with 9,767 students per credentialed librarian. For comparison purposes, the 49th ranked state is Idaho with 7,381 students per librarian. While this bill does not create more librarians, it does create the opportunity for the library leads to better educate local education leaders of the value of the school library and its role in improving early literacy and overall academic achievement.

Additionally, having a quality school library is a critical equity issue. So many of our California communities are considered book deserts. This is especially true in elementary schools where free reading materials are likely 20 to 30 years old, are not culturally relevant or age appropriate for students. Working with local school leaders, the library lead can assist in the local curating process and provide expert assistance in upgrading these collections. Finally, teacher librarians are trained in the content areas of information and media literacy. Having a state-level library

lead will enable the state to work more collaboratively with local districts and county offices of education to improve classroom content and teaching methods in this important policy issue.”

Arguments in opposition. Patricia Taylor, an individual writes, “Do not let AB 535 get out of the Assembly Education Committee! CA school districts are seeing age inappropriate sexually explicit books in our school libraries. These are getting past our librarians. Let us parents/community members monitor our own libraries. We don’t need a state lead!”

Related legislation. AB 181 (Committee on Budget), Chapter 52, Statutes of 2022, established the Arts, Music, and Instructional Materials Discretionary Block Grant, funding for various literacy coach initiatives, and established the Learning Recovery Emergency Block Grant.

AB 2464 (Mia Bonta) of the 2021-22 Session would have established the Family and Community Literacy: Supporting Literacy and Biliteracy in Schools, Families, and Communities Grant Program and the California Family Literacy Innovation Project to support early literacy. This was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

SB 488 (Rubio), Chapter 678, Statutes of 2021, requires the CTC to ensure, by July 1, 2025, that an approved teaching performance assessment (TPA) for a preliminary multiple subject credential and a preliminary education specialist credential assesses all candidates for competence in instruction in literacy, revises the definition of literacy instruction for purposes of teacher preparation and requires the CTC to ensure that its standards for program quality and effectiveness align to this definition, and provides an alternate means of meeting the current reading instruction competence assessment (RICA) for some credential candidates affected by COVID-19 test center closures.

SB 98 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 24, Statutes of 2020, establishes the Early Literacy Support Block Grant, which requires the CDE to award funds to LEAs with the 75 schools that have the highest percentage of students in grade three scoring at the lowest achievement standard level on the state ELA assessment. Appropriates \$50 million for this purpose and authorizes \$3 million of this amount to be used to establish an Expert Lead in Literacy at a COE, to serve within the SOS. Appropriates \$50 million for the purpose of funding California SUMS. Authorizes \$9.8 million for the RII Grant Program to generate and disseminate professional learning opportunities for kindergarten through grade twelve educators in the areas of evidence-based literacy, intensive literacy interventions, and support of pupils’ executive functioning skills.

AB 1684 (Maienschein) of the 2019-20 Session would have required the CDE to develop and implement a professional development program to support educators in teaching literacy and reading, including providing dedicated funds to schools identified by the state’s accountability system as needing special ELA support, consistent with the state’s SOS for schools. This bill was held in the Senate Education Committee.

SB 494 (Hueso) of the 2017-18 Session would have established the Golden State Reading grant program for the purpose of assisting LEAs in ensuring that all students meet reading standards and language progressive skills by the end of grade 3. This bill was vetoed by the Governor, who stated:

Local educational agencies already have the flexibility under the Local Control Funding Formula to provide students the support they need to ensure that appropriate reading and language skills are achieved.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

American Association of School Libraries
California County Librarians Association
California School Library Association
Madera County Superintendent of Schools
Merced County Office of Education
Napa County Office of Education
Ventura County Office of Education

Opposition

7 individuals

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