

SB 941 (Portantino)

Local educational agency instruction collaboration agreements: science, technology, engineering, and mathematics: dual language immersion programs

PROBLEM

California is experiencing a record shortage of teachers during particularly difficult circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic arrived at a time when California was already combatting declining numbers of teachers, especially in math, science, and bilingual education. Some impacted local educational agencies are canceling important dual-language immersion classes due to a shortage of qualified credentialed teachers. The shortage of credentialed science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) teachers is also impacting the learning environment of many pupils. Teacher shortages are particularly pronounced in rural areas, communities of color, and low socioeconomic areas, where the consequences of substandard learning outcomes are likely to reverberate through future educational attainment and economic prospects.

BACKGROUND

California has the most public school students in the nation and faced a critical shortage of teachers even before disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic. In the 2017-18 school year, 80% of California school districts faced a shortage of teachers. Nine out of 10 school districts stated that the shortage was getting worse. A recent report on school districts around the state by the Learning Policy Institute found that the most pronounced shortages include math, science, and bilingual education. The deficit of certified teachers is more pronounced in rural regions and communities of color and has only been exacerbated by the current pandemic.

School districts are being forced to cancel classes or seek emergency credentials for teachers who have not benefited from a complete academic education background or student teaching experiences. An alternative to class cancellations or emergency credentials is to allow inter-district collaborations. Currently, local educational agencies can accept transfer students through the District of Choice program. Students can transfer to another school district that participants in the program through a random, unbiased selection process that is not dependent on academic or athletic performance, physical condition, or English language proficiency. The pronounced shortage of STEM and dual-language immersion teachers necessitates specific collaborations between school districts for these courses.

SUMMARY

SB 941 would authorize the governing board of a school district, a county board of education, or the governing body of a charter school to enter into an agreement with one or more local educational agencies to offer individual classes to pupils from other local educational agencies who have been impacted by disruptions, cancellations, or teacher shortages in STEM classes, or dual-language immersion programs, as provided.

SB 941 would require a local educational agency subject to the agreement to accept pupils through an unbiased process that prohibits an inquiry into, or evaluation or consideration of, specified pupil characteristics, as provided, to hold random drawings to determine approval for study when the number of pupils seeking a classroom opportunity exceeds the available

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number of seats in a classroom, as provided, and to publicly post certain information related to these opportunities. The bill would require the department, on or before January 1, 2028, to evaluate the success of these local educational agency collaborations, as provided.

This bill would make these provisions inoperative on July 1, 2029, and would repeal them as of January 1, 2030.

EXISTING LAW

Existing law authorizes the governing boards of 2 or more school districts to enter into an agreement, for a term not to exceed 5 school years, for the inter-district attendance of pupils who are residents of the school districts. Existing law also authorizes the governing board of a school district to accept pupils from other school districts by adopting a resolution to become a school district of choice, as defined, in accordance with specified procedural requirements and limitations.

SUPPORT

Association of California School Administrators (ACSA)

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