
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

Senator Carol Liu, Chair
2015 - 2016 Regular

Bill No: SB 451
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Version: April 8, 2015
Urgency: No
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Hearing Date: April 22, 2015
Fiscal: No

Subject: Pupil instruction and services: educational counseling

SUMMARY

This bill authorizes school districts that choose to provide a comprehensive educational counseling program to include academic counseling, as specified; requires professional development to include strategies for counseling students about educational and career options; and includes legislative intent language regarding the role and responsibilities of school counselors.

BACKGROUND

Existing Law:

Authorizes school districts to provide a comprehensive educational counseling program for all students that include academic counseling, career and vocational counseling, personal and social counseling. (Education Code § 49600)

Defines educational counseling to mean specialized services provided by a school counselor possessing a valid Pupil Personnel Services credential issued by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing. (EC § 49600)

Requires students, as a condition of graduating from high school, to successfully complete specified coursework, any locally-imposed graduation requirements, and pass the high school exit exam. (EC § 60850)

ANALYSIS

This bill:

1. Authorizes school districts that choose to provide a comprehensive educational counseling program to:
 - A. Provide specific academic counseling services such as reviewing student records, meeting with students and parents to discuss a student's records, educational goals, and academic progress, providing course work information, assisting students having difficulty passing the high school exit exam, and other services specified.
 - B. Provide career and vocational counseling services such as those that help pupils identify personal interests, skills, and abilities, understand the

relationship between academic achievement and career success, and understand the value of participating in career technical education and work-based learning activities, among other things as specified.

2. States legislative intent that school counselors perform specified functions and services including:
 - A. Monitor and improve pupil behavior, collaborate and coordinate with school and community resources, engage in professional development opportunities, use research-based strategies to reduce stigma and conflict and improve student well-being.
 - B. Provide counseling intervention and support services, promote and maintain a safe learning environment by providing restorative justice strategies, intervene to address school-related problems, including issues related to chronic absences, implement programs to promote the academic, career, personal, and social development of all students.
3. Requires ongoing professional development related to career and vocational counseling to include strategies for pupils pursuing postsecondary, career technical education, multiple pathway, college, and global career opportunities.
4. Deletes an outdated provision relating to school counselors providing services prior to January 1, 1987.
5. Makes other technical changes.

STAFF COMMENTS

1. ***Need for the bill.*** According to the author, counselors are in a unique position to support teachers, administrators, and schools as they work to improve student outcomes, however, unlike many professions in the state's K-12 system there are no standards or guidelines for school counselors. The author further asserts as the state implements the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), counselors can play a critical role in meeting the state priorities outlined in the Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAP) including school climate, high school graduation rates, and access to college preparation courses. This bill seeks to improve the quality of educational counseling provided to students by establishing guidelines and standards for school counselors.
2. ***Middle and High School Supplemental Counseling program (MHSSCP).*** The MHSSCP sought to increase the number of school counselors that serve seventh- through twelfth-grade students. These counselors would help to provide students with information on all educational and vocational options available to them and serve students who have failed or are at risk of failing the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), as well as students who are at risk of not graduating due to insufficient credits. According to California Department of Education (CDE) funding for the MHSSCP was included in the Pupil Retention Block Grant, a state-funded categorical program that was discontinued as of the 2013-14 fiscal year and now part of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF).

This bill closely aligns guidelines, standards and counseling strategies with similar requirements outlined in Middle and High School Supplemental School Counseling Program (MHSSCP).

3. ***Existing Standards for School Counselors.*** Existing law authorizes the governing board of a school district to provide educational counseling programs administered by credentialed counselors for all students that include academic counseling, career and vocational counseling, personal and social counseling (EC Section 49600). This statute was established in 1987 and according to the California Association of School Counselors do not reflect the issues facing students today, such as school bullying, equity issues or those identified within the eight state priorities.

Under Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) local education agencies are required to complete a local control and accountability plan (LCAP). The LCAP must include a district's annual goals in each of the eight state priority areas which include student achievement, student engagement, student outcomes, school climate, implementation of common core state standards, course access, basic services and parental involvement. This bill attempts to update educational counseling programs by including elements of the eight state priority areas.

4. ***California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).*** Existing law authorizes the development of a high school exit exam in English language arts and math that are aligned with California academic content standards adopted by the State Board of Education. All students in California public schools must satisfy the CAHSEE requirement, as well as all other state and local graduation requirements, to receive a high school diploma. The primary purpose of the CAHSEE is to: (1) significantly improve student achievement in public high schools and (2) to ensure that students who graduate from public high schools can demonstrate grade level competency in reading, writing, and mathematics.

The State Board of Education adopted the California Common Core Standards in English language arts and mathematics in August 2010. The California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) is aligned standards that were adopted by the State Board of Education in 1997. The CAHSEE has not been updated for alignment with current academic content standards. As such, policy conversation around the CAHSEE have included suspending the assessment, updating or replacing the exam with other measurements. This bill makes several references to the high school exit exam and given its uncertain future, **staff recommends** the bill be amended to include "or its successor" after "high school exit exam."

5. ***Correct drafting error. Author's amendment:*** The author wishes the bill be amended to correct a drafting error by reinstating the subsection on "career and vocational counseling," under the section regarding "areas for which pupils are required to receive counseling." Specifically, on page 3 between lines 24 and 25 insert from page 6 lines 12 to 36.

6. ***Related and prior legislation.***

SB 272 (Wiggins, 2009) would have codified the MHSSCP block grant program by authorizing school districts that choose to provide an educational counseling program to include specific academic, career and vocational counseling. SB 727 was ultimately vetoed by the Governor, whose message read:

School district governing boards already have the authority to include the specified program requirements within its comprehensive educational counseling program. Nothing under current law prohibits a district from doing so. As a result, this bill is unnecessary.

SUPPORT

California Association of School Counselors
California Teachers Association

OPPOSITION

None received.

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