

2026 LEGISLATIVE SHARING PRIORITIES

California must ensure students with disabilities have meaningful access to a quality education to acquire the skills needed to go on to higher learning, secure stable employment, and live independently as adults. Along with students and families, Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) Administrators and our statewide educational allies are partnering with legislators to provide access to necessary special education supports and services. SELPA Administrators' state legislative priorities are as follows:

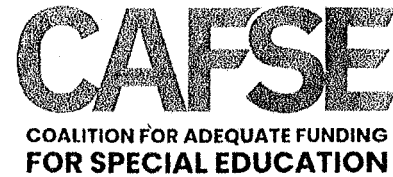
Support: Governor Newsom's proposed increase in AB 602 base rate funding

Ask: *Support the proposed AB 602 base rate increase to \$999 per ADA.*

Background: The 2026-2027 Governor's Budget proposal would provide \$509 million to fully equalize special education funding rates under AB 602. This represents meaningful progress toward fairness, access, and equity for students with disabilities across California. California has taken important, data-driven steps in recent years to strengthen special education finance—advancing more equitable base rates, increasing support for low-incidence disabilities, and improving reimbursement for high-cost placements. Completing equalization builds on that progress and reflects a continued commitment to support students regardless of geography. Districts are confronting sustained cost pressures driven by the increased prevalence and complexity of identified disabilities, recruitment and retention challenges, and the expansion of inclusive education environments. When AB 602 was enacted, approximately 11% of students were identified with disabilities. That figure has grown to 15.1%, and more than 32% of identified students now demonstrate significant needs. These trends underscore the urgency of aligning state resources with current realities.

A significant part of this trend is the increased identification among children ages 0–5 whose early developmental trajectories were disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic. As these students enter the TK-12 system, districts must deliver timely assessments, specialized instruction, and related services consistent with federal requirements.

Strategic, targeted investment in special education not only ensures appropriate access and opportunity for students with disabilities, but it also strengthens the entire education system. When special education is adequately funded by the state, districts are compelled to redirect fewer Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) dollars away from general education programs. Retaining more LCFF resources allows schools to sustain core instructional programs, benefiting all students, both with and without disabilities.



Support: AB 2555 - (Patel) English Learners: Reclassification

Ask: *Support AB 2555*

Background: This bill would reform the state's reclassification system to make it standardized, efficient, transparent, consistent with current state English learner policies, and accessible to parents, and to emphasize that reclassification is a milestone on the journey to biliteracy. This bill would also further streamline the reclassification system specific to students with disabilities by allowing the LEA to reclassify a student with disabilities by alternative means.

Support: AB 2490 - (Valencia) Teacher credentialing: substitute teachers: days of service.

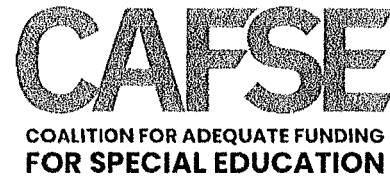
Ask: *Support AB 2490*

Background: This bill seeks to address the ongoing teacher shortage in California by extending the maximum duration that substitute teachers can serve in a single special education assignment from 20 to 60 cumulative days. This extension aims to provide greater continuity and stability in classrooms, particularly benefiting students who may be disproportionately affected by frequent teacher turnover. The bill includes safeguards to ensure that local educational agencies prioritize hiring fully credentialed teachers and qualified interns before resorting to long-term substitutes and requires that there is training for substitute teachers in 60-day positions. By allowing substitutes to remain in the same classroom for longer, AB 2490 intends to enhance student-teacher rapport and improve educational outcomes during staffing shortages.

Support: AB 2241 - (Boerner) Inclusive playgrounds

Ask: *Support AB 2241*

Background: This bill would create an Inclusive School Playground Advisory Committee made up of nine experts to coordinate with CDE to develop and publish model guidelines for inclusive school playgrounds. The bill would require the CDE, on or before July 1, 2027, to identify any grant programs that fund school playgrounds and amend guidelines for those grant programs to prioritize proposed projects that meet the model guidelines. Play is recognized by human rights authorities as a fundamental right for every child and is essential for physical, social, and cognitive development for disabled and nondisabled children alike. Playgrounds should enable children and adults of different abilities to play together, fostering integration, empathy, and learning. Inclusive playgrounds remove barriers and add accessibility features to ensure that children of all backgrounds, ages, and physical abilities play together without limitations. To align with inclusive best practices and California's civil rights values, there is a need for inclusive playground standards, a funding preference for inclusive play projects, and expert oversight to guide design and outreach led by a dedicated advisory committee of specialists that will ensure that California's playgrounds meet modern universal-design goals and community needs.



Other Positions of Support from SELPA Administrators of California

Support: AB 2191 - (Quirk-Silva) High school graduation requirements: alternate pathways for individuals with exceptional needs: statewide resources

Ask: *Support AB 2191*

Background: This bill would require CDE and CCEE to establish a statewide resource focused on establishing alternate pathways to a diploma for individuals with exceptional needs within the current statewide system of support by July 1, 2027.

Support if Amended: AB 2468 - (Patel) School accountability: pupils with disabilities: inclusion

Ask: *Support AB 2468 if Amended*

Background: We support the intent of AB 2468 and the continued expansion of the Supporting Innovative Practices (SIP) project to improve inclusive practices and outcomes for students with disabilities across California. SIP, under the California Department of Education, has demonstrated meaningful impact, particularly for LEAs serving students with the greatest needs, and this proposed \$30 million investment, which we strongly support, presents an important opportunity to build on that success.

Our **Support If Amended** position reflects the need to ensure this expansion strengthens and aligns with the Statewide System of Support (SSOS), maintains coherence across CDE, CCEE, and SBE efforts, and prioritizes measurable, equitable outcomes. It is also critical that expanded SIP access includes intentional geographic and equity-based prioritization for LEAs not currently identified for required or enhanced supports, ensuring rural, small, and under-resourced LEAs can equitably benefit from voluntary participation opportunities. Amendments are needed to ensure clear accountability, prioritize support for high-need LEAs, preserve and strengthen existing technical assistance structures (including CIM and DA), and promote coordinated implementation so that expanded resources enhance, rather than inadvertently fragment, the current system.

