



FACT SHEET

AB 3136 (O'Donnell)

Special education finance reform

SUMMARY

AB 3136 would provide critical support to California's students with special needs by establishing state support for special education preschool services, providing funding to equalize long-standing special education funding inequities, and provide support for students requiring higher cost services.

PROBLEM

Special education preschool: Under state and federal law (IDEA), local educational agencies are mandated to provide a free and appropriate public education to children with disabilities aged birth to age 22, including preschool-age children with special needs. In spite of this mandate, no state funding is allocated for special education preschool programs.

Early intervention programs for preschoolers are an excellent investment. Children who receive high quality care and education before kindergarten are 40% to 60% less likely to require special education interventions when they reach school-age, resulting in significant future cost savings to the state and local educational agencies.

In California, no state funding is provided to support the estimated \$490 million schools report spending on special education programs. The California Statewide Special Education Task Force and the Public Policy Institute of California have recommended that the state establish a funding mechanism to support preschool special education programs.

Equalization: California's special education funding formula, known as AB 602, also does not equitably provide the necessary funding to pay for the costs of providing educational services to the state's 700,000 students with disabilities. For decades, California's special education funding rates have varied considerably – from \$480 to \$930 per pupil - for no logical reason.

The Legislative Analyst's Office, the Public Policy Institute of California, and the California Statewide Special Education Task Force have all recommended that the Legislature provide funding to equalize special education AB 602 funding rates.

Growth in students who need extra support: In twenty years since the last major special education finance reform, the percentage of special education students requiring greater supports has risen dramatically. During the same period, the state's dedicated fund to support low incidence students was eliminated.

SOLUTION

AB 312 will address these critical needs by:

- Establishing a funding mechanism to support special education preschool programs, by adding preschoolers to the AB 602 funding formula.
- Addressing long-standing inequities by equalizing special education funding rates to the 95th percentile.
- Providing a supplemental grant to support students with greater needs, including students on the autism spectrum, and students who are blind, visually impaired, and intellectually disabled.
- Allowing school districts the ability to calculate a declining enrollment adjustment based on district, rather than SELPA, average daily attendance.

SPONSORS AND CONTACT

Sponsors: Coalition for Adequate Funding for Special Education and California Association of School Business Officials.

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