

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 2410

Introduced by Assembly Member Bonta

February 19, 2016

An act to amend Section 8203.3 of, and to add Sections 8203.6 and 8203.7 to, the Education Code, relating to early learning.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2410, as introduced, Bonta. Early learning: Local Control School Readiness Act of 2016.

Existing law, the Child Care and Development Services Act, among other things, requires the State Department of Education to develop prekindergarten learning development guidelines in accordance with specified criteria. The act also requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to ensure that all contracts for child care and development programs include a requirement that each public or private provider maintain a developmental profile to appropriately identify the emotional, social, physical, and cognitive growth of each child in order to promote the child's success in the public schools.

This bill would enact the Local Control School Readiness Act of 2016. The bill would require the department to develop prekindergarten learning development guidelines, focused on preparing 4- and 5-year-old children for kindergarten, based on current science that reflects how publicly funded programs can close the school readiness gap. The bill would authorize a local educational agency, as defined, in partnership with community-based organizations, to apply to the State Board of Education for a waiver from the department's Desired Results Quality Improvement System. The bill would specify material to be submitted with such a waiver request.

The bill would require the department to submit to the state board, by July 1, 2018, a kindergarten readiness definition that has clear benchmarks for skills that are predictive of later success in academics and social-emotional, health, and executive functioning skills as evidenced by current research.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: yes.

State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 SECTION 1. (a) This act shall be known, and may be cited,
2 as the Local Control School Readiness Act of 2016.

3 (b) The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

4 (1) High-quality, early learning experiences have been shown
5 to produce substantial short-term gains in children's early language,
6 literacy, mathematics, and social skills as well as long-term effects
7 on a wide range of school, health, and behavioral outcomes that
8 persist into adulthood, as has been demonstrated in studies
9 produced by numerous scholars.

10 (2) California's investments in early learning should focus on
11 gains in school and behavioral outcomes that support low-income
12 California children, English language learners, and children of
13 color advancing with their peers.

14 (3) One feature of high-quality early learning programs is
15 alignment with the K-3rd grade education that preschoolers will
16 soon enter. Preschool to 3rd grade alignment is critical in the areas
17 of standards, curriculum, instructional practice, professional
18 development, family engagement, and assessments.

19 (4) For public K-12 education, in determining what pupils should
20 learn and how they should learn it, the role of the state is to set
21 standards, curriculum frameworks, and standardized assessments
22 for select grade levels. Local educational agencies (LEAs) select
23 curriculum, instructional materials and methods, provide
24 professional development, and monitor pupil progress through
25 diagnostic assessments.

26 (5) For California's early learning programs, the role of the state
27 extends far beyond its role in K-12 education, and it falls short in
28 one key area. In addition to early learning standards and curriculum
29 frameworks, the State Department of Education develops, adopts,
30 and mandates specific diagnostic assessments to be used on pupils,

1 specific assessments for classroom environments, specific
2 professional development for instructional staff, and specific parent
3 satisfaction surveys. While these are important components of a
4 high-quality early learning program, LEAs and other local
5 preschool providers cannot tailor these to meet the unique needs
6 of their pupils nor to align with kindergarten-3rd grade. Nor do
7 these compliance-focused regulations support an outcome of school
8 readiness for low-income children in California. The
9 state-mandated assessments and professional development are
10 often done for compliance purposes only, do not improve the
11 quality of early learning programs, and are an undue administrative
12 burden on LEAs and preschool providers.

13 (6) Where the state falls short: California does not have a clear
14 definition for what pupils need to know to be ready for
15 kindergarten. Without this definition, the impact of California's
16 early learning programs on school readiness is unknown. California
17 invests over \$1.6 billion in state preschool and transitional
18 kindergarten, and there is no information on what percentage of
19 pupils start school ready for success.

20 (c) Therefore, it is the intent of the Legislature to accomplish
21 both of the following:

22 (1) Empower LEAs and their nonprofit partners or
23 subcontractors to decide how best to prepare their preschool pupils
24 for success in school and align their preschool programs with K-3rd
25 grade.

26 (2) Begin to shift the role of the state from a compliance-based
27 early learning system to one that focuses on child outcomes. The
28 first step in this process is to mandate the State Department of
29 Education to conduct a study for establishing a kindergarten
30 readiness definition to be considered for adoption by the State
31 Board of Education by July 1, 2018.

32 SEC. 2. Section 8203.3 of the Education Code is amended to
33 read:

34 8203.3. (a) ~~On or before June 30, 1999, the State Department~~
35 ~~of Education~~ (1) *The department* shall develop prekindergarten
36 learning development guidelines. ~~The development of these~~
37 ~~guidelines shall be funded from funds appropriated for this purpose~~
38 ~~in the Budget Act of 1998.~~ The guidelines shall focus on preparing
39 four- and five-year-old children for kindergarten. ~~The kindergarten,~~

1 *based on current science that reflects how publicly funded*
2 *programs can close the school readiness gap.*

3 (2) *The guidelines developed under this section shall identify*
4 *appropriate developmental milestones for each age, how to assess*
5 *where children are in relation to the milestones, and suggested*
6 *methods for achieving the milestones. In addition, the guidelines*
7 *shall identify any basic beginning skills needed to prepare children*
8 *for kindergarten or first grade, and methods for teaching these*
9 *basic skills. The guidelines shall be articulated with the academic*
10 *content and performance standards adopted by the State Board of*
11 *Education state board for kindergarten and grades 1 to 12,*
12 *inclusive. The State Department of Education department may*
13 *contract with an appropriate public or private agency to develop*
14 *the guidelines.*

15 (b) *In future expenditure plans for quality improvement*
16 *activities, the State Department of Education department shall*
17 *include funding for periodically updating the guidelines consistent*
18 *with academic and performance standards and relevant research,*
19 *broadly distributing the guidelines, and providing education,*
20 *outreach, and training services to implement the guidelines.*

21 (c) *Programs funded by the State Department of Education*
22 *department under Article 6 (commencing with Section 8230),*
23 *Article 7 (commencing with Section 8235), and Article 8*
24 *(commencing with Section 8240) shall use the prekindergarten*
25 *learning development guidelines developed pursuant to this section.*

26 SEC. 3. *Section 8203.6 is added to the Education Code, to*
27 *read:*

28 8203.6. (a) *A local educational agency, including a school*
29 *district, charter school, and county office of education, in*
30 *partnership with community-based organizations, may apply to*
31 *the state board for a waiver from the department's Desired Results*
32 *Quality Improvement System, which includes the developmental*
33 *profile. A Local Control Quality Improvement Plan shall be*
34 *submitted with the waiver request, and shall include all of the*
35 *following:*

36 (1) *At least one diagnostic assessment tool that is used no less*
37 *than three times a year to monitor children's developmental*
38 *progress. This assessment shall be valid, reliable, including*
39 *inter-rater reliability, and linguistically, culturally and*

1 developmentally appropriate, and include a benchmark for
2 kindergarten readiness.

3 (2) A regular process for reviewing the assessment data with
4 teachers and adult caregivers.

5 (3) A plan for providing coaching and professional development
6 to support teachers to meet pupil needs.

7 (4) A plan for parent engagement and support that includes at
8 least two parent conferences each year to review children's
9 developmental progress and school-home linkages to support
10 learning, and an annual parent satisfaction survey.

11 (b) Once a waiver is approved under subdivision (a), the local
12 educational agency shall submit an annual continuous quality
13 improvement plan to the department.

14 (c) To enable waiver applicants to continue to participate in the
15 Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), they may
16 substitute the developmental profile with their own kindergarten
17 readiness outcomes or diagnostic assessment tool.

18 SEC. 4. Section 8203.7 is added to the Education Code, to
19 read:

20 8203.7. By July 1, 2018, the department shall submit to the
21 state board a kindergarten readiness definition that has clear
22 benchmarks for skills that are predictive of later success in
23 academics and social-emotional, health, and executive functioning
24 skills as evidenced by current research. The department may
25 contract with an appropriate public or private agency.