



ASSEMBLYWOMAN QUIRK-SILVA, 65<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT  
**AB 1956 (QUIRK-SILVA): VISUALLY IMPAIRED PUPILS: BRAILLE  
INSTRUCTION AIDES AND TEACHER CREDENTIAL PROGRAMS**

## SUMMARY

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AB 1956 updates California statutes related to braille instructional aides and teacher credential programs.

## BACKGROUND

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California is experiencing one of its most severe teacher shortages in two decades. Budget cuts and layoffs as a result from the recession contributed to a steep decline in the number of teachers in California.

The worst teacher shortages are in special education, where two out of three teachers hired in 2016-17 had substandard credentials. The Learning Policy Institute indicates that the most vulnerable students with the greatest needs, who require the most expert teachers, are those with the least qualified teachers.

In 1990, the California Legislature established the *California School Paraprofessional Teacher Training Program*, with the purpose of providing school paraprofessionals a pathway to become certified classroom teachers in K-12 public schools. In 1991, follow-up legislation was passed to require that the program focus on the recruitment of paraprofessionals to specialize in bilingual and special education teachers.

The initial legislation created a pilot program to include 12 school districts across the state and included 13 program sites within California Community Colleges and California State University campuses. The programs not only supported participants by paying full tuition, all book costs, and other institutional fees, but also provided crucial academic support, test preparation, administrative fees and, in some instances, child care.

Recognizing the success of the program, the Legislature expanded the program in 1997, re-authorizing the program as the *Wildman-Keeley-Solis Exemplary Teacher Training Act of 1997*, to include 24 or more school districts or county offices of education. The expansion also authorized participation to include the University of California and private/independent colleges and universities with approved teacher preparation programs.

It was not until 1999 when Governor Gray Davis identified the program as an important element of his education initiative, *Enhancing Professional Quality*, and included \$10 million in the state budget to fund the program.

In an effort to recruit teachers for special education, Article 3.5 of the Individualized Education Program for Visually Impaired Pupils requires, among other things, that a local educational agency may reinforce braille instruction using a braille instructional aide who meets specified criteria under the supervision of a teacher who holds an appropriate credential, to teach pupils who are functionally blind or visually impaired. In addition, the section requires that a local educational agency that employs a braille instructional aide to provide her or him with information regarding teaching credential programs, including the *Wildman-Keeley-Solis Act of 1997*.

However, legislative changes throughout the years, have changed the name of this unique teaching credential program.

## SOLUTION

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AB 1956 updates California statute in order to accurately identify the teaching credential program local school agencies are required to provide to braille instructional aides as the "*California Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing Program*." The bill also makes technical, non-substantive changes to the language.

## SPONSOR

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