



PROPOSITION 58

California Education for a Global Economy Initiative

THE INITIATIVE:

Amends and repeals various provisions of Prop 227:

- Deletes the sheltered English immersion requirement which required instruction for English Language Learners mostly in English and effectively eliminated bilingual classes.
- Gives local districts the flexibility to create a program and design it for its students' needs.
- Requires school districts to solicit input regarding providing pupils effective and appropriate instructional methods in language acquisition programs.
- Empowers parents to request districts to create multilingual programs.
- Deletes the provision that one can sue for enforcement of the requirements of the proposition.
- Deletes the provision that school board members, teachers and administrators who willfully refuse to implement the provisions of the proposition may be held liable.
- Deletes the requirement that any amendment to this proposition must further the purpose of the proposition and be passed by a 2/3 vote of each house and signed by the Governor.
- Revises the vote threshold to amend the proposition to a majority vote in each house.
- These provisions would be operative on July 1, 2017.

BACKGROUND:

California's Bilingual Education Act, which required primary language instruction for English Language Learners (ELL), expired in 1986. However, the State Board of Education (SBE) continued to mandate its provisions. In February 1998, a superior court judge ruled that primary language instruction is not required. The SBE rescinded its policy and withdrew all requirements for primary language instruction. Local school districts were then permitted to design their own programs for ELL.

In 1998 Proposition 227, also called the English Language in Public Schools Statute, was approved by more than 60 percent of voters. It required schools to teach ELL in special classes taught nearly all in English. This eliminated bilingual classes in most cases. It also shortened

the time ELL spent in special classes limiting it to one year. Therefore, it effectively eliminated most programs that provided multi-year special classes for ELL. The English-only requirement could be waived at a parents' request. The goal of Proposition 227 was to teach English to children as rapidly and effectively as possible.

Supporters of this proposition pointed to research showing that sheltered English immersion is the most effective method of teaching ELL.

Opponents indicated that Prop 227 mandates a single, untested program for all schools. Districts would no longer have the right to design their own programs for ELL.

California School Boards Association (CSBA), California Teachers Association (CTA), the League of Women Voters, along with California State PTA, opposed Proposition 227. PTA opposed it because it forced ELL to take English-only classes regardless of students' individual needs. In addition, it took away parents' right to choose what's best for their children.

What accounted for California's attempt to end bilingual education in 1998?

Some voiced concerns that bilingual programs were too risky, too expensive and often poorly executed. In addition, there was widespread frustration with the persistently low achievement by many of the state's 1.4 million ELL. It was assumed that mandating all-English instruction would solve the problem. However, the results of Prop 227 have not been encouraging. A 2006 study of Prop 227's effects found that even after 10 years in California's schools, an ELL has less than a 40 percent chance of being considered English proficient. The achievement gap increases as ELL move through the grades. In areas where bilingual education remained an option, the reading achievement gap decreased.

In February, 2014, Senator Ricardo Lara submitted SB 1174, a bill which seeks to repeal the long-running restrictions on bilingual education. This bill was co-sponsored by Sen. Hancock, Sen. Monning, Sen. Block, Rep. Skinner and Rep. Gonzalez. PTA supported SB 1174 and it was passed by the Senate Education Committee (8-0), the Senate Appropriations Committee (7-0), the Assembly Education Committee (5-2), the Assembly Appropriations Committee (12-5), the Senate, the Assembly and then was signed by the Governor. Since the legislature cannot overturn a voter approved proposition, Lara's bill will put the issue to the voters.

SUPPORTERS:

Supporters of SB 1174 (27 listed) include Advancement Project, Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), California Association of Bilingual Educators (CABE), California School Boards Association (CSBA), California Teachers Association (CTA), Early Edge, The Education-Trust West and First 5.

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:

1. Top education systems in the world require students to learn multiple languages. Yet California has failed to develop a multilingual workforce.
2. Existing law (Prop 227) hinders the ability of districts and schools to promote multilingual skills. The barriers of Prop 227 have resulted in a low number of schools offering multilingual instructions and very long enrollment waiting lists at those that do.
3. Sen. Lara argued: "Given the diversity of California, the vast body of research on the benefits of language-immersion programs, and the growing popularity of these schools, clearly public perception has changed on the value of multilingual education programs."
4. Dr. Philip M. Carter, a sociolinguist professor and scholar of language, wrote an op-ed calling for the repeal of Prop 227. He argued that opposition to bilingual education is largely based on refutable myths.
5. Numerous studies have pointed to the benefits of bilingual education:
 - a. ELL students enrolled in bilingual programs since elementary school are more proficient in English than those in an all-English education system.
 - b. Bilingual education is more likely to result in bilingualism at no significant cost to mastering English.
 - c. Bilingualism is reliably associated with cognitive benefits and may delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease!
 - d. Bilingualism may also have economic and occupational benefits for young adults. It is associated with decreased likelihood of dropping out of high school and increased probability of obtaining a higher-status job and higher earnings.
 - e. Bilingual education can also play a role in reducing discrimination and strengthening intergroup relationships, identity and self-esteem.
6. More than 40 percent of the state's 6.2 million public school students speak at least one of 60 languages other than English at home. Yet only a small portion of those students are in programs that nurture their home language and use it to help them acquire English.
7. Many ELL do not have fluency in their own language, thus, developing fluency in a second language becomes even more difficult.

OPPOSITION:

1. Ron K. Unz, the Silicon Valley businessman who largely financed Prop 227, said he believes now more than ever that the law should remain on the books. He points to a rise in state standardized test scores in reading and math from 1998 to 2002 for ELL. (Other researchers dispute this finding and point to other test scores, dropout rates, and other statistical data that show the opposite.) Unz remarked "The proposal (SB 1174) is totally ridiculous and demonstrates that Sen. Lara has never bothered to investigate the issue. The academic performance of over a million immigrant students roughly doubled in the four years following the passage of Prop 227."

2. Maura E. Mujica, U.S English chairperson, encouraged the legislature to reject SB 1174 saying, “Being surrounded by English speakers has been shown to lead to faster proficiency among non-English speakers. Furthermore, being surrounded by other foreign language speakers has been shown to delay English acquisition.”

RECOMMENDATION:

The committee to look into this proposition (Donna Artukovic -chair, Carol Kocivar, Mary Perry, Colette Rudd) recommends the California State PTA support this proposition and work toward its passage.

Authority:

1. Support of SB 1174
2. Opposition to Prop 227
3. Position Statement -4.5.15 – Education of English Language Learners: ELL must be provided an education that will allow them the opportunity to acquire the skills necessary to realize their full potential. . . . Parents have the right and responsibility to participate in all decisions regarding the placement of their children in any program.
4. Position Statement - 4.5.35 – Freedom to Learn: Schools should offer a wide range of learning experiences appropriate to the students’ intellectual, physical, and emotional maturity

Links for additional information:

- Proposition 227 English Language in Public Schools:
http://repository.uchastings.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2150&context=ca_ballot_props
- SB1174 “California Education for a Global Economy Initiative”:
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140SB1174
- Analysis of the 2007-08 Budget Bill: Education of English Language Learners:
http://www.lao.ca.gov/analysis_2007/education/ed_11_anl07.aspx
- Effects of the Implementation of Proposition 227 on the Education of English Learners, K12: https://www.wested.org/online_pubs/227Reportb.pdf