

Date of Hearing: April 24, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Al Muratsuchi, Chair
AB 2865 (Wendy Carrillo) – As Amended March 18, 2024

SUBJECT: Pupil instruction: excessive alcohol use

SUMMARY: Requires instruction on the nature and effects of alcohol use to include information about excessive alcohol use and the short-term and long-term health risks of excessive alcohol use. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires instruction on the nature and effects of alcohol use to include information about excessive alcohol use and the short-term and long-term health risks of excessive alcohol use.
- 2) Requires this instruction to include information about excessive drinking, the immediate effects of alcohol that increase the risks of harmful health conditions, and how excessive alcohol use can lead to the development of chronic diseases and other serious problems, including mental health problems. Authorizes the instruction about mental health problems to include instruction about depression and anxiety.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires instruction on the nature of alcohol, narcotics, restricted dangerous drugs as defined, and other dangerous substances and their effects upon the human system as determined by science to be included in the curriculum of all elementary and secondary schools. Requires this instruction to be included in the curriculum of all secondary schools. Requires the governing board of a district to adopt regulations specifying the grade or grades and the course or courses in which the instruction with respect to alcohol, narcotics, restricted dangerous drugs, and other dangerous substances to be included. Requires all persons responsible for the preparation or enforcement of courses of study to provide instruction on the subjects of alcohol, narcotics, restricted dangerous drugs, and other dangerous substances. (Education Code 51203)
- 2) Requires that instruction shall be given in elementary and secondary schools by appropriately trained instructors on drug education and the effects of the use of tobacco, alcohol, narcotics, and dangerous drugs, as defined, and other dangerous substances. (EC 51260)
- 3) Defines an “appropriately trained instructor” as one who, based upon the determination of the site administrator, demonstrates competencies in interacting in a positive manner with children and youth; demonstrates knowledge of the properties and effects of tobacco, alcohol, narcotics, and dangerous drugs; and demonstrates skills in conducting affective education, which includes methods and techniques for helping children and youth to freely express ideas and opinions in a responsible manner and to gain an awareness of their values as they affect decisions related to drug use and misuse. (EC 51260)
- 4) Requires that, for grades 7 to 12, instruction on drug education be conducted in conjunction with courses given on health or in any appropriate area of study. Encourages, for grades 1 through 6, instruction on drug education to be conducted in conjunction with courses on health.

- 5) Prohibits the State Board of Education (SBE) from accrediting any teacher education institution for teacher certification purposes after the 1972–73 fiscal year unless it offers courses for prospective teachers on drug education and the effects of the use of tobacco, alcohol, narcotics, restricted dangerous drugs, and other dangerous substances. Requires the SBE to continually reevaluate approved teacher training institutions to ensure that programs are in conformance with these requirements. (EC 51261)

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill has been keyed a possible state-mandated local program by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, “Schools are an important setting for interventions aimed at preventing alcohol use and abuse among adolescents. Early education is a critical step to avoid alcoholism and the associated harms that come with the disease. AB 2865 would require the instruction on the nature and effects of alcohol to include information about excessive alcohol use and the short-term and long-term health risks of excessive alcohol use.”

Drug and alcohol prevention education in the California health curriculum. Current law requires instruction on the nature of alcohol, narcotics, restricted dangerous drugs, and other dangerous substances, and their effects upon the human system as determined by science to be included in the curriculum of all elementary and secondary schools. This bill adds to that requirement by requiring instruction on the nature and effects of alcohol to include information about excessive alcohol use and the short-term and long-term health risks of excessive alcohol use.

For grades 9 through 12, the Content Standards for Grade Levels Nine through Twelve include:

- Essential Concepts: 9–12.1.2.A Explain the impact of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use on brain chemistry, brain function, and behavior.
- Essential Concepts: 9–12.1.1.A Describe the health benefits of abstaining from or discontinuing use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

In 2019, the SBE adopted the current Health Education Curriculum Framework. In the curriculum for each grade, from kindergarten through 12th grade, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs (ATOD) is a major theme, with discussion of the key competencies and concepts and examples of lessons. According to the Introduction to the Health Education Curriculum Framework:

High-risk behaviors, such as unhealthy eating; inadequate physical activity; high-risk sexual and violence-related behaviors, including bullying and intimate partner violence; and usage of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, are often established in childhood and adolescence. Today’s youth encounter greater health challenges and more complex health-related issues at a faster pace than in previous generations (Telljohann et al. 2015). Health education teachers have the unique opportunity to make a meaningful impact and positive change for the youth of today and tomorrow by teaching students positive health behaviors, skills, and practices they will remember and apply for a lifetime.

After a new curriculum framework is adopted, the SBE typically adopts instructional materials for grades K-8, which align to the framework, but in 2020, the SBE cancelled the adoption of health instructional materials due to a lack of publisher interest.

Alcohol's effect on health. According to the National Institute on Abuse and Alcoholism, drinking too much – on a single occasion or over time – can take a serious toll on one's health. Alcohol can impact the body in the following ways:

- **Brain:** Alcohol interferes with the brain's communication pathways and can affect the way the brain looks and works. These disruptions can change mood and behavior and make it harder to think clearly and move with coordination.
- **Heart:** Drinking a lot over a long time or too much on a single occasion can damage the heart, causing problems including: cardiomyopathy (stretching and drooping of heart muscle), arrhythmias (irregular heartbeat), stroke, and high blood pressure.
- **Liver:** Heavy drinking takes a toll on the liver and can lead to a variety of problems and liver inflammations, including: steatosis (or fatty liver), alcoholic hepatitis, fibrosis, and cirrhosis.
- **Pancreas:** Alcohol causes the pancreas to produce toxic substances that can eventually lead to pancreatitis, a dangerous inflammation in the pancreas that causes its swelling and pain (which may spread) and impairs its ability to make enzymes and hormones for proper digestion.
- **Cancer:** According to the National Cancer Institute, "There is a strong scientific consensus that alcohol consumption can cause several types of cancer. In its Report on Carcinogens, the National Toxicology Program of the US Department of Health and Human Services lists consumption of alcoholic beverages as a known human carcinogen. The evidence indicates that the more alcohol a person drinks—particularly the more alcohol a person drinks regularly over time—the higher his or her risk of developing an alcohol-associated cancer. Even those who have no more than one drink per day and people who binge drink (those who consume 4 or more drinks for women and 5 or more drinks for men in one sitting) have a modestly increased risk of some cancers. Based on data from 2009, an estimated 3.5% of cancer deaths in the United States (about 19,500 deaths) were alcohol related." Clear patterns have emerged between alcohol consumption and increased risks of certain types of cancer: head and neck, esophageal, liver, breast, and colorectal.
- **Immune System:** Drinking too much can weaken your immune system, making your body a much easier target for disease. Chronic drinkers are more likely to contract diseases like pneumonia and tuberculosis than people who do not drink too much. Drinking a lot on a single occasion slows your body's ability to ward off infections – even up to 24 hours after getting drunk.

Alcohol related deaths. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, excessive alcohol use was responsible for about 178,000 deaths in the United States each year during 2020–2021 (19,743 deaths in California), or 488 deaths per day (54 deaths per day in California). For the age group of 0 to 19 years of age there were 3,028 alcohol related deaths in the United

States. This was a 29% increase from 2016–17 when there were an estimated 138,000 deaths per year. These deaths result from conditions that develop from drinking over long periods of time, as well as from binge drinking (drinking too much on one occasion). Two-thirds of the deaths (about 117,000 deaths) are due to chronic conditions that develop from long-term alcohol use, including various types of cancer, heart disease, liver disease, and alcohol use disorder. One-third of these deaths (about 61,000 deaths) happen from drinking too much on one occasion, such as from motor vehicle crashes, poisonings involving substances in addition to alcohol, and suicides.

Recommended Committee Amendments. *Staff recommends that the bill be amended* as follows: require the instruction on the nature and effects of alcohol to include information regarding alcohol related deaths. Subdivision (c) of EC section 51203 would read:

(c) Instruction on the nature and effects of alcohol pursuant to this section shall include information about excessive alcohol use and the short-term and long-term health risks of excessive alcohol use. This instruction shall include information about excessive drinking, the immediate effects of alcohol that increase the risks of harmful health conditions, and how excessive alcohol use can lead to the development of chronic diseases and other serious problems, including mental health problems ***and alcohol related deaths***. The instruction about mental health problems may include instruction about depression and anxiety.

Related legislation. AB 2822 (Woodruff), Chapter 540, Statutes of 1990, requires high schools to teach the adverse effects of drugs and alcohol on pregnancy.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

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