

CUCPTSA Legislative Newsletter – March 2010

LOCAL

CUSD Budget

Currently the CUSD budget deficit for the 2010/2011 school year is estimated at approx \$34 million. The next interim report will be submitted to OCDE in March and will again be a qualified budget as the CUSD Board continues to attempt to identify the needed cuts from the 2010/2011 budget. Midyear cuts look unlikely at this point. During past board meetings, only approx \$11 million in potential cuts had been identified. These potential cuts include:

- Elimination of Grade 1 CSR
- Elimination of International Baccalaureate (IB) program
- Elimination of Block Music
- Elimination of high school resident subs
- Elimination of K-8 summer school
- Elimination of athletics programs
- Elimination of activities programs

The CUSD budget has already been cut by \$55 million in the last 2 school years and per student funding is now approximately the same as it was in the 2005/2006 school year.

In late February, the CUSD staff held a budget workshop to review and examine core programs, then determine priorities within the programs and activities. This will be an ongoing process.

March 15 is the deadline to notify certificated staff of preliminary layoffs.

Negotiations (PTA REMAINS NEUTRAL AT ALL TIMES)

CUEA (Teachers) - Fact Finding failed to reach an agreement on January 26. A written report is normally issued within 30 days; however, the Fact Finding Chair is using the provision that affords her the opportunity to continue to work with both parties beyond the 30 days before issuing the report. Once the report is issued, the District has 10 days in which to make the report public. The District must then take under consideration the recommendations contained in the report and determine whether to implement the recommendations from the Fact Finder, implement them with modifications, or implement their last and best final offer.

CSEA (Classified Staff) – No updates.

Teamsters – No updates.

Ballot Measure Changing the Way CUSD Trustees are Elected

On January 15, the parent group that submitted the petition seeking to change the way trustees are elected, asked that the initiative be placed on the November ballot rather than the June ballot. This request was made to the Orange County Committee on School District Organization, due to the legal battle and financial implications. On February 10, the OC Committee on School District Organization held a special meeting/public hearing to reevaluate the June election date. They voted 10-0 to reset the election date to November 2, 2010.

Superintendent Search Process

The CUSD Board of Trustees is working with a consultant firm to search for a permanent superintendent. In February, a timeline was established for this process. Interviews/focus groups were held, some of which were open to the public, and on March 1st, the profile report was presented to the Board. In mid-April, a slate of 5-7 candidates will be presented to the trustees who will then interview each of them. By late April, the final 3 candidates will be selected, and by early May a decision will be made.

At the CUSD Special Board Meeting on March 1, a Leadership Profile Report was presented to the Board, compiled from the interviews, focus groups, and leadership profile assessment forms (258 were collected and tabulated). The trustees determined that an either/or statement regarding traditional education experience and/or business experience be placed in the advertisement for the superintendent position. Other qualities/skills sought by the trustees are: transparency, visibility, ability to “stay the course”, ability to work/interact well with all (faculty, staff, students, parents, community), and maintain high expectations.

Board Resolution for Delegation of Authority

At the CUSD Board meeting on March 1, a resolution was brought before the trustees with the purpose of preparing for the possibility of a strike and ensuring a safe environment for students if a strike is called. Dr. Mahler indicated that it takes time to organize for a strike and that the resolution is an “act of transparency” on the part of the district. The resolution presented was a combination of three different plans put together by four people including Dr. Mahler and CUSD’s negotiations attorney (John Rajcic, lead negotiator). The resolution was approved with a 7-0 vote.

Orange County State of Education – February 25, 2010

There were three guest speakers:

Ron Bennett: President and CEO, School Services of California

Lucy Dunn: President and CEO, Orange County Business Council

Bill Habermehl: Orange County Superintendent of Schools

Superintendent Habermehl talked about controlling our own destiny and “BHAGs” (Big Hairy Audacious Goals), or out of the box thinking:

- Eliminate tenure
- OC is underfunded (state and federal government owe us)—create a Measure E
- Flexibility from legislature (Sacramento is not the wisdom of education)
- Invest in quality preschool
- Start kids in preschool at age 4 to capture language development years and have school go from P-11 instead of K-12

The full report may be found at www.cucptsa.com

STATE

Senate Budget Package: On Thursday, February 19, 2010, the California State Senate passed a package of 27 bills that contained \$15 billion in spending cuts, \$12.8 billion in temporary tax increases, \$11.4 billion in borrowing, and leaves a \$1 billion reserve. If California receives its anticipated federal funds, half of the borrowing will be triggered off, taxes will be reduced and some of the cuts will be restored.

The Senate Democrats have named the package, “Agenda 2010.” The Democratic plan has fewer [spending cuts](#) than the governor’s proposal and relies more on shifting \$1.8 billion in [gas taxes to the General Fund](#), curbing corporate [tax breaks](#) and enforcing payment of taxes already owed. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has threatened to veto a bill that would reduce a corporate tax break, calling it a tax increase. He is also against a bill requiring online sites, even ones based out of state, to charge sales taxes. The Senate plan also makes some adjustments to Proposition 98 and K-14 funding but funding will still be reduced in 2009-10 and 2010-11.

For more information, see www.senate.ca.gov/ftp/SEN/COMMITTEE/STANDING/BFR/home/RevisedFinal200BudgetSummary.pdf.

LAO Report

The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) produced a report entitled, "The 2010-11 Budget: Proposition 98 and K-12 Education" on February 25, 2010 which reviews the governor's budget proposal. The LAO thinks the Governor's overall plan heads in the right direction by finding some ways to reduce costs, providing additional flexibility, seeking additional federal funding, and looking at on-going versus one-time solutions.

The LAO made two alternative suggestions regarding Proposition 98. One approach would be to suspend Proposition 98 to whatever level the state decided. Another approach would be to develop additional solutions in the rest of the budget in order to meet the higher current-law Proposition 98 requirement for 2010-11 (\$53.2 billion vs. the governor's proposed \$50 billion). This would require raising additional revenues (by roughly \$6 billion) or cutting other spending (by \$3.2 billion).

The LAO also recommends changing the start date for Kindergarten from turning five by December 2 to September 1 which would result in 100,000 fewer kindergarteners in 2011-12 freeing up \$700 million from revenue limits and categorical programs. Going further in maximizing flexibility is another suggestion along with aggressively pursuing increased IDEA funding from the Federal government.

Go to www.lao.ca.gov for the complete report.

Governance Reform

On February 12, **Repair California**, leaders of an effort to stage a constitutional convention, announced that faced with a steep cash shortage and a ticking clock to qualify for the November ballot, they have "called it quits."

Repair California reported raising about \$350,000 in 2009 -- well under the \$3 million to \$3.5 million organizers estimated they'd need to collect the more than a million signatures needed to place their two measures on the ballot.

On March 1, officials from the reform group, **California Forward**, said that unless deep-pocketed donors come through with pledges for big support, the campaign to qualify a package of their budget reform proposals for the November ballot could be put on ice.

California Forward Co-Chair, Robert Hertzberg, a former Democratic leader of the Assembly, said that the group needed to secure a "few hundred thousand dollars" by March 5 in order to move forward with an initiative campaign to qualify two budget reform measures, which include lowering the vote requirement for passing a budget from two-thirds to a majority vote.

Proponents have raised just about \$132,000, according to campaign finance records, of the about \$2 million organizers say they need to gather enough signatures to qualify the two measures.

The legislature's own governance reform efforts, chaired by Senator Mark DeSaulnier and Assembly Member Mike Feuer, continue to move forward.

Assembly Speaker, John Pérez, said on March 3 that he is prepared to ask the Legislature to put California Forward's proposal to lower the vote requirement for passing a budget on the November ballot. He's still waiting to hear from California Forward if they have finalized all the elements they have been tweaking, but he's prepared to take it to the Assembly caucus rather quickly.

New California Secretary of Education

On February 23, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger announced the appointment of Bonnie Reiss as Secretary of Education. Previously, she served as senior advisor to Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger from 2003 to 2007, where she advised the Governor on all major policy initiatives, including education, the environment and children's issues. From 1994 to 2003, Reiss served as founding president of the Inner-City Games Foundation, later renamed After School All-Stars.

Reiss has served on the University Of California Board Of Regents since 2007. She serves on the board of directors for After School All-Stars and the Governor and First Lady's Conference on Women. In 2007, Reiss received the William S. White Lifetime Achievement Award from the U.S. Department of Education for her advocacy in the area of public education and, in 2006 she received the Advocate of the Year Award from the University of California Student Association. From 2004 to 2006, Reiss served on the California State Board of Education.

Reiss, 54, of Los Angeles, earned a Juris Doctorate degree from Antioch Law School and a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from the University of Miami. This position does not require Senate confirmation and the compensation is \$175,000. Reiss is a Democrat.

The Office of the Secretary of Education is the primary education advisor to the Governor and is committed to creating, promoting and supporting the Governor's policies that ensure access to quality education for all Californians.

Update on the Lt. Gov Appointment

In February 2010, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger re-nominated Republican state Senator Abel Maldonado to replace Democrat John Garamendi who was elected to Congress.

California lawmakers are scheduled to conduct confirmation hearings on Senator Maldonado in upcoming weeks. They have until May 17, 2010 to take action on the nomination or Senator Maldonado automatically becomes Lieutenant Governor.

New Speaker, John Perez, Sworn In

On March 1, John Perez was sworn in as the new speaker of the California Assembly. He replaces Karen Bass, who terms out of the Assembly this year. Having served only one year, Perez could remain speaker for almost five years.

In his acceptance speech, Perez said that he understands that he needs to work with Republicans as well as Democrats and announced that two Republicans will be appointed to Assembly committee chairs. Currently all committee chair positions in the Assembly are held by Democrats.

Perez wants the Legislature to develop a state budget more in the open instead of behind closed doors that include only the top four legislative leaders and the Governor. He said budget hearings and deliberations would be broadcast on the Internet and, when possible, on television.

Perez emphasized that he believes the so-called Big Five meetings should be held to make minor adjustments in the budget rather than to make major policy decisions.

(Most of the above articles are excerpted from the Sacramento Bee – except the LAO one).

State PTA Legislation Conference: February 21- 22, 2010 -- Sacramento, California

Connecting the Dots: From Issues to Advocacy

CUCPTSA Attendees: Lori Abbott, Kim Anderson and Alli Maier
Total attendees: approximately 160

Heard from 14 guest speakers:

Anthony Adams - Assembly Member, Hesperia

Danny Alvarez - Staff Director of Senate Education Committee

Ron Bennett - President of School services of California

Julia Brownley, Chair - Assembly Education Committee

Lupita Cortez Alcala - CDE Deputy Superintendent, Governmental Affairs

Kevin Gordon – President, School Innovations & Advocacy

Mary Hayashi - Assembly Member, Hayward

Tim Hodson - Center for California Students

Debbie Look - California State PTA (CAPTA) Director of Legislation

Jo Loss - CAPTA President

Scott Plotkin - Executive Director of California School Boards Association

Jean Ross - Director of California Budget Project

Patty Scripser - CAPTA Education Advocate

Rick Simpson – Deputy Chief of Staff to Speaker Karen Bass

Highlights and things we heard consistently include:

- State PTA is taking a three pronged approach in its current advocacy by:
 1. Opposing the Governor's proposed budget for 2010-11 which further cuts education and critical children's services. Will be unveiling our comprehensive "Stand Up for California's 9 Million kids" advocacy strategy shortly.
 2. Supporting qualifying the "Local Control of Local Classrooms Funding Act" which would lower the threshold for passage of local school funding measures to 55%, from the current 2/3, and also urging PTA members to sign the petition and to actively participate in gathering signatures.
 3. Joining the school finance lawsuit against the State of California, along with the California School Boards Association and the Association of California School Administrators. The premise is that the funding mechanism for Education is fundamentally unconstitutional.
- Huge need to give school districts more local control of their in every possible way. That would include property taxes funneling into local school funding and lowering the parcel tax passage threshold from the current 2/3 to 55%.
- Prop 98 & Prop 13 models need to be revisited...
 - Prop 98, as a funding mechanism, has been so manipulated that it has become practically worthless to the education community as a safety net.
 - We want a locally funded system, not a state funded system. We are one of the only school systems in the nation funded this way. Everyone else is funded locally through property taxes.
- State is facing a \$20 billion deficit over next 16 months and it will be even tougher to bridge the gap, because all easy solutions have been used up.
- Urge our legislators to uphold the July 2009 budget agreement; cutting education by an additional \$2.4 billion, as the Governor is proposing, is breaking that agreement.
- Long term reason for the budget crisis is the passage of Proposition 13, and the short term reason is the economy.
- The 2/3 vote to pass a budget is a big problem, especially with the Assembly Republicans willing to hold the line.
- From 1929-1935, a 6-year period at the height of The Depression, the per-pupil spending went down 25%. In the last 2 years, the per-pupil spending has gone down **18%**.
- Compared to the national average in per student funding: California was down \$700 last year, down \$1700 this year, and will be down approx. \$1950 next year.
- Regarding RTTT Funding: still unknown if California will get any money in the first round – we'll find out in April.

The Full Report & Executive Summary may be found at www.cucptsa.com

FEDERAL

Race To The Top

The U.S. Department of Education has announced the state finalists for the first round of RTTT: Colorado, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina and Tennessee. California was not chosen in the first round. The finalists will travel to Washington D.C. to present to the RTTT review panel before the final winners are chosen by Secretary Arne Duncan. All applicants will receive detailed comments from the review panel, even if the application was unsuccessful. A second round of RTTT application will be due in June.

Obama's plan for low-performing schools

March 1st, President Obama spoke at the America's Promise Alliance GradNation event hosted by Alliance Founding Chairman General Colin Powell and his wife and Alliance Chair Alma Powell.

President Obama challenged states to identify high schools with graduation rates below 60% and discussed the Administration's investments to help them turn those schools around. The Obama Administration has committed \$3.5 billion to fund transformational changes in America's persistently low-performing schools. Additionally, the President's FY 2011 budget includes \$900 million to support School Turnaround Grants. President Obama also emphasized the importance of investing in dropout prevention and recovery strategies to help make learning more engaging and relevant for students, and announced new efforts to invest \$100 million in a College Pathways program to promote a college readiness culture in high schools, through programs that allow students to earn a high school diploma and college credit at the same time.

Jobs for Main Street Act Update

In December, the House passed a jobs bill that included a \$29 billion fund to save education jobs. However, the Senate recently passed a much smaller bill that did not include the education package. There is a possibility that the Senate will address the education fund in a separate bill.

Federal Budget Update

The House held its first education budget hearing at the end of February to review the administration's proposal for 2011. Members of the committee questioned Secretary Arne Duncan about the decision to freeze funding for special education at the current level of expenditures, which is approximately 17% of the cost of educating students under IDEA. In another proposal, the budget would consolidate the Javits Gifted and Talented Education Act with several other programs, and some are concerned that this would jeopardize funding for gifted education.