Talking Points for Sacramento Safari

Thank you all for your attendance at 4th District PTA’s Sacramento Safari and for taking the time away from your families to become more knowledgeable about the issues that are impacting California’s children and schools.

Part of each of your duties in attending Sacramento Safari as a representative from your unit or council is to bring back information about the trip in the form of a legislative report at your next meeting.

In an effort to continue to provide our 4th District advocacy leaders with helpful materials, these talking points are being provided as a basis for this report. Of course, we hope and expect that each of you will provide your own perspective and personal style to your report!

Sincerely,

Shereen Walter

Vice President Advocacy, Fourth District PTA

**Talking Points for Sacramento Safari**

**March 16-17, 2015**

* To start us off on the first day, we had a panel titled “Education: View from the Top.” This panel comprised the top education policy advisors from the Senate, Assembly and the Governor’s office. They covered such topics as assessments and accountability, the CAHSEE, the Vergara lawsuit and the issue of high quality teachers, adequate education funding, school facility funding, early childhood education, the cap on school district reserves and career technical education (CTE).
  + The State Board voted last week to suspend the API and is looking to develop a multiple measure system to replace it.
  + SB 172 is a bill that would suspend the CAHSEE for 3 years while the discussion continues about its usefulness as a graduation requirement.
  + Given that research shows that seniority aligns the most with teacher effectiveness, what is a better or fairer method of determining teacher layoffs?
  + California has not made the teaching profession attractive due to reduced retirement benefits, laws to make it easier to dismiss a teacher and proposals for a longer time to job security.
  + It was refreshing to hear from the Governor’s office that there was never a discussion that LCFF addresses the adequacy question. The difficulty with having the adequacy conversation now is that the non-Prop. 98 side of the budget is not getting any more money in the proposed budget.
  + The governor would like to give more tools for school facility funding at the local level with the possibility of providing at the state level for communities who cannot raise the funds locally. This continues to be an ongoing conversation.
  + The senate will still push the governor to meet the goal agreed upon for increased state preschool slots while some members of the assembly want to expand state subsidized preschool more quickly. The governor’s office says that this is a resource issue.
  + The discussion about possible repeal of the cap on school district reserves is still happening and several bills have been introduced to either repeal or modify this budget trailer bill.
  + The Governor and legislature are looking for ways to provide incentives for districts to continue to provide valuable CTE opportunities for students.
* Dynamic lunch keynote speaker, Jannelle Kubinec, the Director of the Comprehensive School Assistance Program for WestEd talked with us about the LCFF and LCAPs.
  + The flexibility of the LCFF means that school districts can do almost anything with their funds, but should they? The LCFF is all about simplicity and transparency and about equity for the kinds of kids who are in our schools today.
  + The LCAP is about connecting plans to outcomes for kids.
  + She also spoke about the importance of purposeful involvement by parents in schools.
* Mary Vixie-Sandy, Executive Director, California Commission on Teacher Credentialing spoke with us about issues surrounding the recruitment, preparation, induction, development and evaluation of teachers.
  + Teacher demand is greater than the supply of new teachers.
  + Teaching is not an attractive narrative today. An ad campaign to encourage college students to go into teaching is being worked on.
* Mac Taylor, the California Legislative Analyst talked to us about the proposed state budget.
  + All the additional monies are going to schools in the budget. There is an additional $7.8 Billion in additional money going to schools. Money to pay down debts (including mandates, deferrals and emergency repairs), $4 B towards the LCFF (closes 1/3 of the gap towards the goal at full implementation) and large increases for community colleges.
  + He also spoke about the fact that the LAO supports the repeal of the cap on school district reserves so districts can manage cash flow, mitigate volatility in funding and expenditures, address unexpected costs, save for large purchases and reduce the costs of borrowing money.
  + The LAO has some ideas for the facility funding issue such as annual facilities grants for school districts. The grants could be adjusted for local differences and prior state investments. One time funds could be provided in the transition.
* California State PTA Arts Advocate, Donna Artukovic talked to us about the importance of arts education for our students.
* We heard from CAPTA President Colleen You and Director of Legislation Kathy Moffat about what excites them about being a leader within PTA.
  + We also heard about the success of the CAPTA School Smarts program
  + CAPTAs eight State Priority Cards which contain questions parents should be asking when participating in their school district’s LCAP process
  + CAPTA received the National PTA Advocacy award for their work in California on parent involvement in the LCAP.
  + Discussion about the school facility bond measure currently in the signature collecting phase.
* Our dinner keynote speaker was Senator, and past Speaker of the Assembly, Bob Hertzberg. He worked the room, introducing himself to every person at every table and then regaled us with stories of his days working with Governor Schwarzenegger, the importance of getting to know a legislator when asking for their vote and a hint about his proposed bill to increase the tax base in California.
* Day two opened with a welcome from Nick Schweizer, a Deputy Superintendent at the California Department of Education. His comments were:
  + California has made gains in the area of graduation rates and the lowering of suspensions and expulsions.
  + The Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) has priorities of
    - Professional development of teachers for Common Core
    - The whole child including early childhood education, school breakfasts and lunches and afterschool programs.
* Next up was Robert Sumner, Deputy Attorney General from the Attorney General’s Office. Robert presented some great information about the importance of reducing chronic absence and truancy in elementary school.
* The next segment of the day consisted of information packet presentations by California Department of Education representatives:
  + Tom Herman on school climate. Mr. Herman stated that school climate improvement can be low cost and easily implemented. “It is not what you do, but how you do it!”
  + Aileen Allison-Zarea on updates to the History Social Science framework
  + Karen Shores on the Next Generation Science Standards. Thirteen states and the District of Columbia have adopted NGSS including California.
* We had a lunch planning session at Cafeteria 15L for our afternoon legislator visit and then finished up our day by visiting our legislators and then debriefing with the entire group of 72 attendees about how our visit went. Opportunities were provided for members of our group to participate in a VIP Capitol Tour, Assembly or Senate floor visits, or Committee hearings.
* I encourage our unit/council to send two representatives next year on this valuable trip!