

# Sacramento Safari 2013

## Guest Speaker Reports

**MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2013**

Bonus Session with California State PTA  
Report by: Kim Anderson – VP Advocacy, Fourth District PTA

State PTA guests: Carol Kocivar, President; Patty Scripter, Director of Legislation and Paul Richman, Executive Director



This was brand new for us this year and there were approximately 40 Fourth District PTA members in attendance. The session was designed as a focus group for State PTA to pose questions and get input from our members on key topics and also to respond to any issues that were on our minds. It lasted 1 ¼ hours.

**Q.** On the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which eliminates most categoricals and redistributes \$\$ (although the dollars are inadequate), what do you think would constitute meaningful accountability, transparency and input for parents?

**Responses:**

- Need accountability by having kids show progress on tests
- Need to ensure \$\$ don't just go to salaries and benefits, although OK for new teachers to reduce class sizes. *(Paul Richman commented that we are unlikely to get strict language in there about \$\$ not going on bargaining table, but could ask to create accountability, transparency and reporting about how the \$\$ are spent).*
- Need to get to adequacy (at least come up to the average national per-pupil spending amount).

**Q.** State was asked if we were going to support LCFF?

A. Patty shared that we have no official position on it yet, although there are lots of issues we support. We'll look at it at the end of March based on our authorities and position statements. Bottom line is they are planning to shift dollars around and we still have inadequate funding, so the base grant is not enough. Have to be careful that we don't break into small groups over the supplemental grants and concentration factor and talk about "winners and losers," as PTA cares about ALL Kids. PTA is moving slowly because there is not a lot of good data available – will be requesting the comparison under the existing and proposed formulas. Good likelihood that LCFF will go through this year – lots of momentum behind it. Ed Coalition (which PTA is a part of) is pushing to slow down and get more data.

**Q.** Carol asked if we look at the runs and our particular district loses, will we feel badly?

**Responses:**

- Yes, because everyone is paying increased taxes following Prop 30's passage yet while affluent areas are paying a lot more in tax \$\$, their schools won't see the benefit due to redistribution of \$\$
- If base grant is raised, and still have supplemental grant, may eliminate need for "concentration factor"
- Should look at concentration grants being done by school, not by district, to ensure those \$\$ are spent on the kids that the money is meant for
- Concern was raised about segregation in schools if \$\$ distributed to specific schools, so needs to be done by district

Carol commented even though Prop 30 passed, it only avoided cuts, it didn't give us more \$\$ (which PTA has been saying all along). PTA has to be very clear – the education funding issue is not resolved!

4th District – Republican legislators don't want to hear us asking for more \$\$ for schools – we need something to ask them for, that's not money

Paul – Might see some changes coming up with new California leader, Jim Brulte. They may want to own education issue.

4th – If LCFF goes through, we should start frontloading our members now about importance of giving our input to school boards since they will be deciding how \$\$ are spent.

4th – Categoricals were created for a reason – is PTA OK with eliminating them?

Carol – we're discussing that. We support various categoricals so kids get the services they need. Want a mechanism to ensure that we see our priorities for kids reflected.

4th – Can new \$\$ all go to salaries and benefits under LCFF?

Patty – Yes, it would be up to the school board.

**Q.** What steps should we recommend to improve this process?

**Responses:**

- Hearings at school site councils
- Create a budget oversight committee
- Make sure the base grant is large enough meet basic needs
- Change word "taxes" to "investment." Talk about the resources kids need to succeed.

**Issues on 4th District PTA members' minds:**

- Councils working hard on membership – would like to see membership numbers listed on unit audits, to ensure all the dues they take in are received.
- Concerned about technical requirements for Common Core – PTA position on getting necessary \$\$? *Paul responded that is good issue to bring up with our legislators.*
- Lots of Foundations at schools now and PTA membership is dropping. What is relevance of PTA to ensure parents continue to join? *Paul: immediate opportunity is training and seeking their input. What resonates about PTA is that we have a seat at the table when decisions are being made – which Foundations and PTO's don't have. Patty: tie it in to scholarships.*
- Need to raise PTA's profile and get the message out that PTA is so much more than a fundraising organization. Share more about what we do in Sacramento.

**General comments from State PTA:**

- PTA is a statewide organization, where we speak for all children with one voice. With over 1,000 school districts in the state, we must have local oversight if LCFF goes through.
- Big opportunity with our legislators to strengthen PTA's voice. Need to go out, organize and train, as we did with Prop 38.
- PTA is getting back to our roots: training, education and advocacy.

**Carol Kocivar, CAPTA President, Patty Scriptor, CAPTA Director of Legislation, and Paul Richmond,**  
**CAPTA Executive Director**

*Report by Shanin Ziemer – Buena Park Council Legislative Chair*

The concept of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) is one CAPTA has long supported, but we need details and a bill before we can take a position. We would like to see a side by side comparison of where our schools would be with and without LCFF. If it becomes law, it will become even more important to get to know your local school board and be involved. We will want to be part of the decision-making process and get in front of it rather than complain about what was done after the fact. This is a great opportunity to strengthen the PTA with parent involvement and we hope to get a parent involvement component into the bill.

Our new PTA theme is "Top 20 by 2020," meaning we want to be in the top 20% in the nation for funding and achievement by 2020. We are working on framing our message with our legislators more carefully, using words like reinvestment and resources instead of taxes. Carol thanked us for all our work on Prop 38, saying that while it hurt to lose, it did get the message out there about the need for adequate school funding.

Patty talked about the process PTA goes through to take positions on bills. Positions can be: support, support if amended, oppose, oppose unless amended, seek amendments, approve, watch, neutral and no position. We must find standing to take those positions using our resolutions, legislative platform principle & planks, and position statements to support our position (those things we vote on at convention).

Paul discussed the value of the PTA organization. Some people think that PTA is just a fundraising organization, but PTA is the organization that connects family and schools. State is working to revamp the CAPTA website and use more social media including Facebook & Twitter. Paul said, "Money is the cause of our time because the need is so great and the negligence is so great." Adequate funding was the number one concern expressed by members on a recent survey. Edweek.org published a comparison of actual expenditures by state on education that adjusted for the cost of living and found that the top schools (e.g. NJ, NY, MA) spent between \$15,000-\$20,000 per student, the average nationally was just over \$11,000 per student, and in California we spent less than \$8,000 per student. We have dropped to 49<sup>th</sup> place.

On teacher evaluations: PTA believes: 1) that any teacher evaluation system should contain rigorous standards that clearly detail expectations of teacher performance; 2) that student achievement, based on multiple measures and multi-year data, should comprise a portion of evaluations; 3) that teacher evaluations should include multiple evaluations throughout the year conducted by trained administrators and peer evaluators; 4) that the purpose should include ongoing feedback and support; and 5) that teacher evaluations should include a mechanism for parent and student input.

We are concerned about the implementation of Common Core, the new testing, and the need for professional development for teachers and appropriate materials but no additional funding to implement all these changes. Our state is part of the Smarter Balance Consortium for testing and state PTA board members sit on the boards involved in implementation. That we have a seat at the table is a big statement to the power of PTA and the importance and relevance of our organization, and is something our members value highly.

Our position on guns has been amended to, "National PTA recognizes the importance of a safe learning environment in attaining the highest level of student learning and achievement. National PTA believes the most effective day-to-day school climate to be gun-free, *but defers to local collaborative decision-making to allow for the presence of law enforcement deployed in community-oriented policing.*" (the part in italics reflects the recent amendment).

### **Mac Taylor, California State Legislative Analyst**

*Report by Vivien Moreno – Fullerton Council Legislative Chair*



Mac Taylor spoke about the fiscal soundness of our state and the ramifications of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF).

Overall, this year's budget looks better for the first time in four or five years. In January, the state experienced a \$5 billion cash flow over the projected amounts. This was probably a one-time deal due to tax increases next year, so the LAO advises us to stay fiscally conservative and do not count on this large increase yearly.

California's economy looks good at the moment with housing markets rebounding, moderate job growth, and strong financial markets. We will have a better picture of the situation by the May revision, and there is still a lot to do to make up for the \$10 billion we have lost over the past five years.

The Governor's plan pays all the deferred money back to schools in as little as four years. This is imprudent fiscal policy that does not plan for any cash reserves. We have looming problems that are not going away: huge CALSTRS and other government employee health costs, and retirement pensions. Add the uncertainty of the federal sequestration, and it is sensible to slow down the repayment of deferred monies. But our time is limited, and if we really are on an economic upswing, we want to get all our deferrals paid back before the next recession hits.

This year Prop 98 funding will increase by \$2.7 billion. With the state's continuing moderate growth, the projected funding will increase by \$2-3 billion dollars annually for the next four years.

The Governor proposed LCFF as a trailer bill to this year's budget. The LAO agrees with the direction of this proposal. LCFF leads education funding away from antiquated categorical funding and toward a base funding grant with additional support for student populations who require more money to educate. This includes economically disadvantaged students, English language learners, and foster children. The Governor is proposing supplemental funding of an additional 35% for these populations. A base for high school pupil spending of \$7700 per student will take seven years to reach. The new program does not remove categorical funding for Home-To-School transportation and desegregation funding. Adult education would become the responsibility of the community colleges.

The LAO has voiced concerns that the Governor's proposal has no oversight written into the trailer bill. They recommend slowing the process down and sending it through the legislative process to include a distribution process, assessment and accountability.

LAO believes moving adult education from K-12 school districts to community colleges is not effective or efficient. Community colleges have never embraced adult ed. and would have to recreate a program that is not broken, just low in funding. They believe the community colleges will take the money for adult ed. and absorb it.

The LAO has serious issues with the Governor's plan to funnel Prop 39 money into schools. It may not be legal and may actually mess with Prop 98 and end up getting schools less money.

The Governor's goal for higher education is to provide effective services at a reasonable fee. (The LAO believes California's higher education fees are reasonable when compared to costs in other states.) The Governor acknowledges the problems of higher fees, less class choices, and the cost of keeping a physical campus updated and maintained. He is promoting on-line classes and a 5% increase of funds without accountability, but the LAO recommends colleges reevaluate their goals and outcomes first. They need to find a new balance between enrollment targets, operating costs and career readiness outcomes. The state still has low community college and Cal State tuition, and hits the national average with UC tuition. The tuition process is fundamentally bad policy since the regents keep tuition artificially low during good economic times and steeply raise tuition in bad fiscal times. The LAO recommends a steady, low rise in tuition every year to balance fiscal requirements. We also need to raise tuition on degrees that lead to high paying professions so we can subsidize the lower returning professions.

LCFF removes the problem with winners and losers by creating a hold harmless funding base so that all school districts have no less money than they do now. The question we should be asking our legislators is for data to prove the base funding per pupil, the additional 35%, and the concentration factor are the right numbers. Right now we need to slow down and go through the process to get hard data and determine tighter accountability measures for districts to make sure the higher need learners receive the necessary funds. All of us need to be clearer about our outcome targets for our children. The K-12 educational goal to get our children ready for career and college leads us to ask if the Governor's goal of \$7700 per pupil in 4 years is reasonable. We also need to be asking questions about how the disappearance of programs like ROP fits into career readiness from high school and college.

**George Skelton, Los Angeles Times Columnist**  
*Report by Shanin Ziemer - Buena Park Council Legislative Chair*



This session was handled as a Q&A. Skelton has been a reporter at the Capital since the 1960s and has a profound understanding of how the politics work up there. He says he does a lot of research for his columns and his opinions are based on facts and information. He opened with saying we were wrong to support Prop 38 as it had no chance, but it was the right way to fix school funding. However, no one will vote to increase their own taxes when also given the choice to increase others' instead. Prop 1A (high speed rail bond) has cost us two years of wasted money.

Q: How do you feel about LCFF? A: It makes sense to have more local control but categorical were hard fought for and were there for a reason. You have to grow the pot of money, not just change how you pull the money out of the pot. Just to move money around is a bad idea, robbing Peter to pay Paul. Middle income schools that have already lost a lot will lose badly (Low income areas get concentration money; high income areas can raise money with foundations). We need a way to remove bad teachers and need reform with the funding change. Suggests change to 55% to pass a parcel tax (2/3 now), or maybe some other form of local taxes.

Q: Do you think there are the votes to pass LCFF? A: Doesn't know yet. Our state education funding system is arcane and very few understand it. Of our 120 legislators, probably only one to three gets it. Because they don't understand, it has a better chance of passing. Our legislators lack courage to stand up to their party.

Q: How do you think the new term limits and redrawn districts will affect politics here? A: He is optimistic because the longer terms will allow our legislators to have a stake in the institution and have less short term solutions to long term problems. Also, they were always looking for their next job, and now they can focus on this one.

Q: Any other thought to fund schools more quickly than the five years to bring funding up what LCFF would take? A: No, we have to raise taxes, but it's not politically feasible. We need reforms to make change viable. His wife was a teacher for 38 years. His daughter was a teacher for 5 but was insulted by poor pay and weak administrative leadership. It's not a great profession today. We need to do more for teachers and get rid of bad ones, but any change will be hard to get by the CTA (California Teachers Association).

Q: Our huge problem is lack of funding and people leaving the state. How do we raise money without raising taxes? A: Really there is no good way, maybe a bake sale? Tax is an evil word. "Anytime I want a ton of email I can write about taxes or guns." We aren't over taxed. We need tax reform: extend taxes to services, increase the vehicle license fee, institute an oil excise tax. Taxes are too high on the rich, so the system is way too volatile. "Everyone should have skin in the game." We need steady revenue.

Q: Do you ever foresee a day where Prop 13 will be repealed? A: No. I voted against it and I'm still against it even though I benefit from it. Things have gone downhill ever since it passed. It should have said taxes were fixed once the owner was over 65.

Q: The legislature doesn't understand the school funding formula. Do they understand the significance that changing it via a budget trailer is bad? A: In an abstract sense, yes. But if the governor gets the leaders to support it, it will go through. They have had some hearings on the issue, and if the caucus takes the position to support it, it could happen. Term limits have resulted in no experts so no thoughtful process and no in-depth hearings.

Q: If LCFF passes, any accountability suggestions? A: The money needs to go to the districts, not the schools.

Q: Is it time for the party to do what they want? A: The Republicans have been the party of no. Now they are trying to get along. They have no power, but are waiting for the Democrats to fail. We have polarized politicians and a polarized public. It shows on TV and in the newspapers. People only look at the information they want to see and solidify their positions. The Democrats are being more cautious in their spending, but just gave \$2 million to the Secretary of State to do what she should be doing which is processing the backlog of business licenses.

Q: What 2 things do you look forward to in the next couple of years? A: Somebody running against Brown, he's too arrogant and happy. Maybe retiring? Really though, that the longer term limits and top two election system will result in more moderates.

Q: With the redrawn lines are you seeing more moderates? Has it made any difference? A: Democrats won so big in our state and nationally too. It's made the Republicans take some time for self-reflection and now they are kind of quiet. They missed an opportunity with all the fighting. Maybe they could have worked on immigration reform or something, but no.

Q: No one is talking tax reform, why not? A: It's too controversial and special interests are too protective. It takes a 2/3 vote to raise a tax, but only half to lower it. Prop 13 won't change. We might be able to change the local parcel tax threshold from 2/3 to 55%.

Q: Gun safety in schools. There are many bills at the state and federal level. Opinions? A: "I think it's crazy to arm teachers. Any teacher who would want to be armed shouldn't be teaching." Police on campus, they're trained professionals so of course. He owns a gun and believes in gun control. People can go over state lines and bring them here. Most gang guns are from Reno.

Q: What about teacher evaluations? A: I like grading teachers by looking at student progress between years. But use it as a factor, not the complete factor. Education begins at home with involved parents.

Q: What about pension reform? A: Teacher pensions are not that great. Teachers pay about 8% of their salary in. A lot of cops and firemen don't pay any and can retire at age 50. We made some progress last year, but it's likely as far as they'll go. Unfunded CalSTRS means \$4 billion we owe. It's the biggest financial issue of the state.

Q: What do you think of online education: I've not looked into it that much. One of the reasons I like public education is that it's good for kids to mix and be exposed to a variety of views and people. In college, one of the biggest and most important aspects is that socialization. Online we'll create zombies and cheapen education.

Q: The system is broken with polarized politics, and other issues. Are you hopeful? A: Yes. I think recent reforms will work. The US won't again have the big power we did after WWII. We are fighting two wars and paying by borrowing from China. The public don't want to sacrifice and politicians won't ask. We have global competition. Middle class schools are the soul of the state and the nation. To cut them is bad because it's a time when we need to compete globally even more.

**Rick Simpson, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Assembly Speaker, John Perez**  
*Report by Theresa Blankenstein – Los Alamitos Council Legislative Chair*



*We presented Rick with a Very Special Person Award from 4<sup>th</sup> District PTA*

Simpson began by discussing the Local Control Funding Formula (also known as the Weighted Student Formula 2.0) and concerns that he and friends in the education community continue to have regarding the proposal. He said that it is just a different allocation method; however, the system continues to be profoundly underfunded.

He considers two benchmarks important. The first benchmark that he uses is the "Getting Down to Facts" studies (Stanford, 2007) that asked the question, "What does it cost to have a high degree of confidence that students will succeed?" The study reported that it would take a 40% increase in education spending. That recommendation was made before the recession and school funding decreases occurred. (That would equate to \$30B to \$35B additional dollars added to pre-recession school funding levels; the total K-12 education budget is between \$56B and \$57B.)

The second benchmark he considers (discussed by John Mockler) is the percentage of personal income we spent on K-12 education when Ronald Reagan was governor – approximately 2.3% - which would again amount to an increase of \$30B to \$35B.

Simpson said that there is no political will to raise this level of funding. He suggested that if we care about adequate funding then we need to raise local funds (like we did before Proposition 13). He discussed a bill introduced by Senator Mark Leno that would reduce the votes needed to pass a parcel tax from 2/3 to a 55% majority. However, he cautioned

us to be careful about settling for a tool that is woefully inadequate. He stated that the parcel tax is regressive, not economically sensitive, and we would have to keep raising rates. He thinks it is one of the dumbest taxes. He suggested that a better alternative would be to consider what qualifies as a general tax and a special tax under the state constitution. He explained that a special tax is levied for a specific purpose and requires a 2/3 vote whereas a general tax is for a general purpose and requires only a majority vote. He noted that special purpose governments can't raise general purpose taxes. However, a school district should be able to raise a special tax for libraries, sports, etc. or a general tax for general education with a simple majority vote. He said this would require a change to the California Constitution to remove the prohibition, however, an amendment to Proposition 13 would also be necessary under Leno's parcel tax bill and you can't raise enough money with parcel taxes (they are dead-end taxes).

He then raised the issue of on-line instruction and student outcomes. There is a restriction regarding on-line instruction and the governor seems to have a problem with this. Instruction which occurs concurrently (i.e. the teacher is on-line at the same time) is permitted, but if it is asynchronous (i.e. the teacher and students are on-line at different times – no supervision) then it is not permitted. The governor has proposed to expand school districts ability to offer asynchronous on-line instruction to K-12 students. Mr. Simpson asked the California Research Bureau to look at research available on this issue regarding student outcomes. They did not find a lot of research – only four studies. The four studies and the student outcomes reported were from:

- Minnesota – On-line courses tripled from 2006 to 2009. There was also an 18% to 25% increase in the drop-out rate. In one year, the reading results were comparable, but in another year, the reading results were lower. Math results had half the improvement.
- Pennsylvania – On-line instruction was offered by virtual charter schools rather than “brick and mortar” schools. Student outcomes were much worse in math and language arts in all sub-groups.
- K-12 Inc. – They offer nationwide virtual schools. Student outcomes were that only half met the AP norm, only half met state targets, the mean performance was lower in math and language arts, and there was a reduction in graduation rates.
- Ohio – State Board of Education equivalent. Student outcome was that fewer students went into higher education.

Bottom line was that no results were comparable or better for on-line learning so Governor Brown has the burden of proof here. The word “reform” is overused. “Not all change is improvement. Not all motion is progress.”

Mr. Simpson took questions from the audience.

Question: Doesn't the ability for local districts to raise taxes create a problem because some areas will raise taxes and other areas won't raise taxes?

Answer: It does raise equity issues, but there are statutory ways to deal with it. For example, authorize a menu of taxes to choose from, such as city sales tax, county sales tax, income tax, etc. In *Serrano v. Priest*, the Supreme Court didn't say funding has to be equal. The problem was the tax inequity – the same choice raised different amounts of money. AB 65 was the state's long term response to *Serrano v. Priest* and state aid was used to create equal tax revenues for equal tax efforts. Mr. Simpson stated that he would “love to solve this problem.”

Question: Given that the junior college system is highly impacted, is there any research regarding on-line instruction at this level?

Answer: Not aware of the research, but there is some – for example, Udacity. The governor has proposed it. It may be more successful at the secondary level.

Question: Is there oversight for districts that are not being fiscally responsible?

Answer: Yes, county offices of education must approve budgets. If spending is higher than revenues, they have options they can choose. Also, oversight can come from the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) and annual reports to the California Department of Education.

Question: What are trailer bills?

Answer: They are bills that amend other state statutes in order to accomplish the goal of the original bill. Generally, they don't go through the regular legislative process. The governor's Local Control Funding Formula proposal should go through this process. He wrote in an email to John Fensterwald (EdSource Today) that their position is simple, “No bill? No law. Period.” The governor needs an author and a bill that goes through the regular process. Bills can be added after the bill introduction deadline with the approval of the speaker's office. Mr. Simpson thinks there is a 50/50 probability that the Local Control Funding Formula proposal will pass into law. He stated that he thinks it is a good thing to give more money to kids in poverty, but it needs to be done carefully due to unintended consequences. For example, it could provide a financial incentive to resegregate.

Question: Can you receive an English Learner designation for any language?

Answer: The law provides for some discretion. It also allows five years to become fluent.

Question: What about the class-size reduction categorical funding?

Answer: The research on smaller class sizes is unambiguous and improvements for the disadvantaged populations are double. The suggestion is \$700 per student to lower class sizes down to 24 because that is what we can afford. Research is clear on the benefits of lower class sizes. There is less research available regarding the English Learner and Free and Reduced-Price Lunch proposal (i.e. the governor's Local Control Funding Formula proposal).

**Ron Bennett, President and CEO, School Services of California**  
*Report by Shanin Ziemer - Buena Park Council Legislative Chair*



*We presented Ron with a Very Special Person Award from 4<sup>th</sup> District PTA too!!*

Ron is an expert in the area of education. School districts across the state hire his company to help with a wide variety of issues. When you tell a superintendent that Ron Bennett said... they listen. They often pay hundreds of dollars to hear him speak at professional events.

Ron said that we must look at California in context with other states and with the world. Many people think that Prop 30 has brought in all this 'new money' and solved the financial crises in our schools, but that isn't true. Without Prop 30, we would have lost \$500 per student, but with it, we stayed close to even. The situation in districts across the state varies greatly, some are still cutting, some are okay, and some are even giving raises. All districts have lost 15% to their revenue limits and 19% to categoricals. "It's not about the needs of the child being met; it's about where we're going to get the money." LCFF will lead to more disparity. With concentration grants some districts will offer raises, where other without concentrations won't be able to. There are two issues, the level of funding and the distribution.

Companies used to come to California for our educated workforce. Now we have a high cost and low efficiency workforce. We need to support public education.

Five years ago we were touting our adult education as one of our biggest success stories and an essential program and spent more than \$600 million each year. Now we spent less than \$300 million. If LCFF passes the governor will give the responsibility to community colleges. It will diminish their effectiveness, and the community colleges don't even want it. The governor has suggested they could subcontract it back to the K-12 districts, which makes no sense. LCFF also draws down Regional Occupational Program (ROP) funding, which will go away completely in 2021. ROP and Career Technical Education (CTE) are funded by both state and federal funds, and are now at less than 50% of where they were five years ago. They were an effective partnership between state, federal, public, and private interests, and kids could leave high school and enter a career with their training. In an era of needing to be college and career ready, these are valuable programs that we are losing. We need more taxpayers and fewer receivers, and these programs help us get that. We used to only export factory jobs, now we're exporting high paying professional jobs and bringing in foreign labor to do the jobs here.

We haven't received a federal waiver because we are too honest and say we won't use student test scores in teacher evaluations. Other states have cheated and don't really do it, but say they do. Our classrooms are less homogeneous than in other states, and test data is not a good way to evaluate teachers. You shouldn't use a test for a purpose it wasn't designed for.

The governor claims he will add \$15 billion to education funding over seven years on top of what we have now. He promised a COLA (cost of living adjustment) of +5.5% the first year and 3.5% the second year. That hasn't happened but once (in 2001) in 25 years. LCFF relies on better economic growth than seems realistic. The top 1% is responsible for 40% of the state's income, next year it would be 43%. Our income stream is too volatile.

At a conference, a Taco Bell franchise owner told the story of how he had to deal with 5 different agencies just to build a parking lot. We are over regulated. In this climate he feels that the legislature should be asking businesses. "What can I do to help you?"

## **TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2013**

**Joan Buchanan, 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly District, Chair Assembly Education Committee**  
*Report by Leslie Parker – Capistrano Unified Legislative Co-Chair*



Assembly Member Joan Buchanan, elected to the State Assembly in November 2008, currently represents the 15th Assembly District, which includes portions of Alameda, Contra Costa, Sacramento and San Joaquin counties. Her new district, as a result of 2010 Redistricting, is the 16th Assembly District. Assembly Member Buchanan is serving her first year as Chair of the Assembly Education Committee bringing a deep understanding of educational issues gained during her 18 years serving on the San Ramon Valley School Board, including four terms as board president.

Assembly Member Buchanan shared that she has 5 kids, several grandkids and that her roots are in PTA.

She started by telling us that the issues facing the Education Committee are immense.

She began by talking about Common Core and the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC.) Both will help the state move forward. Reading will put more emphasis on non-fiction which is a critical skill across the curricula, and Mathematics will be more concept-oriented which will allow for students to build their understanding of math skills in a deeper way. Forty-five states belong to the SBAC so comparisons will be more meaningful.

She sees a problem in that prior standards were well examined and thought out; we took time for implementation, textbooks, etc. and had money to buy instructional materials. Now, the budget does not allow for all that. \$3.4 million in grants from the federal government is not enough for materials, and the computers don't all comply with the SBAC requirements so there is a logistics problem. We need a more thoughtful approach to implementation – we are "on a collision course" between making a bad system work well and a good system work poorly – we need a good system that succeeds.

Another issue before the Assembly Education Committee is Teacher Evaluations. Assembly Member Buchanan is carrying a spot bill on Teacher Evaluation. She feels the evaluation system should be an umbrella of best practices; that districts should create evaluations systems that include formal observation (teacher know when they are being observed) and informal observation (unanticipated by teacher), and multiple measures. Test scores should be used to *inform the teachers* on how their practices are working; professional improvement plans are needed to help teachers do well. An evaluation should be geared toward *teacher improvement*.

She is also carrying a bill on Discipline and Dismissal. She voted against Assembly Member Padilla's bill last year because it required dismissal for merely an accusation and the appeal of a dismissal took from 12 to 18 months. Her bill would require resolution within seven months.

The committee is also working on a bill regarding mandatory reporting of teacher misconduct to law enforcement. It will require a district policy to be in place, which is to be reviewed with every employee on a yearly basis, and civil and criminal liability would attach. Child safety is the paramount goal.

Regarding Governor Brown's Local Control Funding Formula, Assembly Member Buchanan applauds Governor Brown in taking leadership on attempting to simplify the formula for school funding but she is concerned that in its current state, it may pit districts against each other. She acknowledged that the current system is imbalanced, as revenue limits vary so much. Her district is a "low revenue" district – the 4<sup>th</sup> lowest in the state. It is very similar to the Capistrano Unified District. While she agrees with the goal that English Learners, Low Income and Foster Youth have more needs, it is a moral imperative that all students have a chance to succeed. She believes a Policy Committee is needed to resolve the problems created by the proposed formula rather than voting on it as a trailer bill to the budget; that we should not rush into a new system. Overall adequacy is required and the base grants should be raised, with a hold harmless factor so no districts will get less than they have under the old formula. "We can't have 35% subsidizing 65%."

Some specific concerns she noted were:

- The Governor has not given a reason why the concentration grant starts at 51% of students.
- Why 3 programs (Special Ed, Transportation and TIGG) were left out of the funding formula. She noted that the transportation fund is one of the most inequitable. For example, Pasadena gets \$3.2 million while Palmdale gets only \$302,000, though they have equal demographics.
- 'Categoricals' were created for a reason. Under the new funding formula, ROP is likely to disappear, and adult education being swept into the community college system will fail because only \$300 million is allotted, when they used to spend \$600 million. In addition, the community colleges don't really want the burden and the local school districts do a better job dealing with their local communities' needs.

When asked what the PTA should do to help resolve the funding disparities, Assembly Member Buchanan told us to write letters to the Speaker, the Pro Tem and the Governor asking for adequacy and accountability. There is actually some alignment between Democrats and Republicans on the Local Control Funding Formula due to the disparity in funding. But she said most legislators don't understand the disparity because they have different backgrounds, so we need to engage them in the conversation, and keep it going, both in Sacramento and in our own districts. Her passion is education but her talent is finance so she is able to ask the right questions.

When asked about the flight of higher education students away from California due to the UC system taking more students from out of state, she explained that bringing in the higher out-of-state tuition actually allows for more in-state students because the school has more money. She is concerned, however, that they aren't adding any new UC campuses in spite of the rise in population.

When asked about the use of technology and online courses, she warned that we are in "infancy" with STEM education and just buying equipment isn't enough to make a difference. Technology can be a useful tool but success in school comes from having a highly effective teacher in the classroom, and even an online course requires a teacher, so it won't save money.

**Chris Reefe, Senior Consultant for the Assembly Human Services Committee**

*Report by Shanin Ziemer - Buena Park Council Legislative Chair*



Chris Reeve spoke to us primarily about the issue of Foster Care. The state used to age kids out of foster care on the day of their graduation or when they turned 18, whichever was later. You graduated from high school, packed up your things and were out the door and on your own. Now the system supports the foster care youth with services until the age of 21. In order to receive this support you have to meet requirements for work, training, or education. 55,000 kids are in foster care. In 2001 that number was 100,000 but the system has worked harder to place children in 'family-like environments' with family members or friends (like godparents) to try to maintain some connection to their old lives and to prevent so much moving and changing schools. The system supports the new parents with an ultimate goal of adoption by the new family.

Under LCFF the funds to support foster care youths in schools are flexed, so there is a big concern in the community about the loss of that support and the community is adamantly opposed to LCFF. Foster youth need more support; they drop out at double the average rate and are more often designated special needs. That designation can come from being more than two years behind and can be the result of all the moving around, and not an actual learning disability. Most case workers have a caseload of 120-250 children. Laws to protect the privacy of foster youth have made it very difficult to collect data to help assess needs. There needs to be some flexibility to allow anonymous data collection. One issue we face with our legislators is that with term limits, there are new people all the time and no one becomes an expert. You are starting over each term with re-explaining the issues.

**Monique Ramos, California Department of Education, Governmental Affairs**  
*Report by Sue Hill – Capistrano Unified Legislative Co-Chair*

The Department of Education is working on implementing the elements of AB 250 (Brownley), passed last year, which deals with tests developed by the multi-state Smarter Balanced Assessments Consortium (SBAC) to coincide with the Common Core Standards.

In January State Superintendent, Tom Torlakson, made 12 recommendations to the Legislature and some highlights include:

- Implement SBAC assessment in 14/15 school year. Suspend STAR tests, except for what is federally required. This would result in \$15M in savings that could be used to implement the Common Core throughout the state, including professional development, technology and texts.
- Develop new science standards including STEM. California is a member of a group working on new science standards. In November 2013 the state will adopt or reject these new standards.
- National Center for State Collaborative is testing a new assessment for students with cognitive disabilities.
- Recommends using the SBAC assessment for ELL population for a year or two, then decide whether or not a different assessment needs to be developed for this population.
- He is rethinking state's needs for assessments. Process includes consulting with stakeholder groups and considering alternative testing schedules. For example, instead of testing each child in each subject every year, perhaps test art one year, science another or perhaps simply testing smaller samples. This is simply a preliminary discussion point.

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium offers both diagnostic and formative tools. State is pricing out costs so that teachers can have access to formative assessments.

The state is looking at alternatives to CAHSEE (California High School Exit Exam) because it is aligned to the current standards, not the Common Core. Also, considering the possibility of implementing matriculation exams for pathway decisions to show proficiency in specific areas of study to businesses and universities, for example: engineering.

Proposed legislation:

- AB 848 (Bonilla)—suspend current assessments to reflect Torlakson's recommendations. Still developing actual language for bill.
- SCA3 (Leno)-reduce threshold to pass a parcel tax to 55%
- The Department of Education is supportive of the Padilla bill regarding teacher evaluations. (*\*This bill was subsequently dropped and Padilla is now a co-author of Assembly Member Buchanan's teacher evaluation bill.*)

Other Common Core Information:

- California must have the new assessments in place by the 2014/15 school year to be eligible for the US Department of Education waiver of NCLB requirements.
- There is a proposal for a 12-week testing window which will allow more districts to implement the computer based test. The paper and pencil tests will be available for up to three years.
- SB 1458 (Steinberg) will require major changes in the calculation of API scores, which will include graduation rates, college and career readiness, and other components.