

Talking Points for Sacramento Safari
March 17-18, 2014

By Shereen Walter – VP Advocacy

- First off was Rick Simpson, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Assembly Speaker John Perez. He spoke to us about:
 - Concerns regarding SB 837 (Steinberg) which would require school districts that provide Kindergarten to provide one year of Transitional Kindergarten to four year olds. The Speaker would like to see an increase in funding for current programs that serve low income families.
 - The need for additional monies to help school districts implement Common Core State Standards.
 - Concerns with the Governor's proposal on blended learning. There is no research suggesting that online learning has the benefits or successful outcomes of traditional learning.
- Mac Taylor, the Legislative Analyst, spoke to us about the Governor's proposed budget.
 - For the first time in many years, he was able to bring us positive information regarding school budgets and the proposed pay down of deferrals for K-12 and increases in the Local Control Funding Formulas base grant.
 - The LAO believes the Governor's proposed budget is a smart mix of one-time and ongoing spending; that payments towards reducing the "wall of debt" are reasonable and that the proposal keeps the implementation of LCFF on track.
- Assembly Member Joan Buchanan spoke to us about the Attorney General's office putting a spotlight on chronic absence with the introduction of 5 bills on the subject.
 - Her office is looking for a path to move forward on the subject of teacher evaluation and dismissal after the defeat last year of her bill to reduce the amount of time and cost for teacher dismissals.
 - It does not look like anything will be done by the State this year in the area of school facility bonds.
- We heard from State PTA President, Colleen You; Director of Legislation, Kathy Moffat and Executive Director, Paul Richman, on the importance of speaking up and speaking out for California's children as well as the priority that CAPTA is placing on preparing our PTA parents to engage with their school districts on the new Local Control and Accountability Plans.
- Our dinner panel consisted of representatives from the various school groups (CA State PTA, CA Teachers Association, Association of California School Administrators and the CA School Boards Association) moderated by Rick Simpson. These representatives highlighted the similarities and differences between the groups regarding such issues as transitional kindergarten, teacher evaluation and dismissal, Common Core State Standards and their implementation and the governor's proposed budget.
- Day two opened with a choice of two sessions presented by members of the California Department of Education. Choices included the new Smarter Balanced Assessments, Superintendent's Initiative Update, Early Childhood Learning, LCFF and LCAP, Common Core State Standards, College & Career Readiness and School Climate.
- We had a lunch planning session for our afternoon legislator visit and then finished up our day by visiting our legislator and then debriefing with the entire group of 80 attendees about how our legislator visit went.
- I encourage our unit/council to send two representatives next year on this valuable trip!