

Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

APRIL 2015

Transition is a major theme for Sacramento Safari

Transition was a major theme for this year's Sacramento Safari. The Capitol is in the process of "fundamental change, a major 180 degree shift, and huge policy changes," various speakers said.

"This transition is difficult and we are taking time to do it well and allow for a transparent and inclusive process," said Karen Stapf-Walters, Executive Director of the California State Board of Education and education policy advisor to Governor Brown.

Changes are being made in the way schools are funded, what they teach, how student achievement is assessed and how accountability is measured. The State Board of Education and Department of Education are busy working out the details of these new programs.

There is also "a real paradigm shift" away from policies that try to improve education by rewarding or punishing schools and districts.

"That market system was never successful," said Rick Simpson, Deputy Chief of Staff for the Assembly Speaker. The new strategy is to offer support and find ways to help schools be successful, he said.

One example of this is the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, a new state agency designed

to advise and assist school districts that are struggling with their Local Control and Accountability Plans. If a district is coping with a particular difficulty, the collaborative can bring in a team of experts from another district that has dealt with similar problems.

This new attitude of intervention rather than punitive measures also applies to school attendance. Legislation passed last year, sponsored by State Attorney General Kamala Harris, addresses the problem of truancy through improved tracking and early, supportive interventions. The California Department of Education is working on proactive programs to reduce suspensions, expulsions and drop outs, and to improve school climate, creating an environment that is supportive and attractive to both teachers and students.

"What does it look like when a child likes to go to school?" asked Janelle Kubenic from West Ed. "That is a better metric than a test score."

A few facts from Sacramento Safari

Here are a few facts from speakers at this year's Sacramento Safari. A complete report may be found at www.fourthdistrictpta.org under Advocacy.

- California went from being the most complicated state for education funding to being the simplest. ~Janelle Kubenic, WestEd.
- In 2012-13, 24,000 fewer teachers enrolled in teacher education programs than in 2008-09 — a 55 percent decline during this time period. ~Mary Vixie Sandy, California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
- "Arts are not the icing on the cake, they are the eggs that hold the cake together!" ~Donna Artukovic, Fourth District PTA and State PTA advocate.
- Only 17% of students who were chronically absent in K-1 are proficient readers by 3rd grade. Students who aren't proficient readers by third grade are four times more likely to drop out of school. ~Robert Sumner, California Department of Justice
- In a statewide survey, 45 percent of California's 9th graders said they could not report at least one caring adult at school. ~Tom Herman, California Department of Education

Yay, Dads!
Fifteen Dads attended this year's Sacramento Safari, the highest number ever!

Advocacy Roundtable

Everything You Wanted To Know About the New Assessments*

***But Were Afraid To Ask**

- Are the new standards fully implemented?
- Are all of our students ready to be tested?
- How will the test results be reported?
- What will the test results really mean?

Join us for an in-depth discussion with education leaders from the Orange County Department of Education.

Friday, April 24 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Fountain Valley School District
10055 Slater Avenue, Fountain Valley

All PTA members are welcome to attend.

California State PTA takes positions on legislative bills

The state legislative session is well underway and lawmakers have introduced hundreds of bills. So far, California State PTA has taken positions on 28 of those.

Assuring that every child has quality teachers is a major PTA goal. CAPTA supports AB 141 (Bonilla) which would require school districts or county offices of education to provide induction programs for beginning teachers at no cost to the teachers. Currently these programs are required for teachers, but districts and county offices of education are not required to provide them and may charge teachers a fee when they do.

Charter schools are coming under scrutiny this year due to reports of multi-million dollar salaries for charter company executives, underfunding at school sites, lack of transparency and oversight, and evidence that charter schools are discouraging the enrollment of English language learners, special needs children and other students who are more costly to educate. A number of bills related to these issues have been introduced and CAPTA supports two of them. One is SB 322 (Leno) which would ensure that charter schools have nondiscriminatory admission policies as well as suspension and expulsion policies that conform to state laws. AB 709 (Gipson) would explicitly state that charter schools are subject to open meeting and transparency laws.

As the state's assessment system is revamped, many are questioning the usefulness of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). CAPTA supports SB 172 (Liu), which would suspend the CAHSEE for the next

API suspended for another year

California's Academic Performance Index (API), the state's process for evaluating schools, has been suspended for another year by the State Board of Education. A new system probably won't be in place until the fall of 2016.

The state board members have made it clear that they intend to eliminate the API, which rates schools based primarily on standardized test scores, and replace it with a new system that would also include factors such as school climate, student engagement, graduation rates, and implementation of new academic standards.

The State Board is taking recommendations from the Public Schools Accountability Act Advisory Committee, which is working on ways to integrate these other factors into the new accountability system. One of the members of this committee is Celia Jaffe, a member of the Fourth District PTA Advocacy Team and the State PTA Education Commission.

three school years. It would also require the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to convene an advisory panel to study whether to continue the exit exam and, if not, what should replace it.

As a trailer bill to the current year's budget, the state legislature passed a measure that puts a cap on individual school district reserves. District administrators have objected that this would hamper their ability to plan for major expenditures and emergencies. CAPTA supports AB 1048 (Baker), which would repeal that measure.

CAPTA will continue to study bills that affect children and education and will take positions on additional bills. For a full report on state advocacy activities, go to www.capta.org.

CAPTA supports immunizations

California State PTA supports SB 277 (Pan), which would eliminate the personal belief exemption and have all medically eligible children be immunized against vaccine-preventable diseases, thus protecting vulnerable children.

"Vaccines have dramatically decreased the rate of mortality associated with many viral and some bacterial diseases," CAPTA said in a statement issued in March. "The vaccines we use today are extremely safe and effective for the general population. Immunizations are recognized as one of the most beneficial and effective public-health measures."

PTA, both nationally and in California, has been a strong supporter of vaccinations. Beginning in 1925, PTA was a driving force behind providing check-ups to identify health problems in 5- to 6-year-olds entering school for the first time. This became the main vehicle for immunizing children against diseases.

The members of California State PTA adopted two resolutions -- **Immunization Awareness and Education Programs** and **Measles (Rubeola*), Mumps and Rubella Vaccinations** -- that are the basis for our authority to support SB 277.

If 96 percent or more of our population is vaccinated against communicable diseases, the small portion of people who medically cannot be vaccinated are protected. Children who are immunocompromised and cannot be vaccinated are extremely vulnerable to vaccine-preventable diseases and suffer a greater chance of dying than the general population. It is our duty as a community to protect these children in school. Others such as infants and adults who are immunocompromised are also at risk.