

# Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

APRIL 2017

## National PTA responses to federal education proposals

### Proposed Federal Budget

President Donald Trump recently released his budget blueprint for Fiscal Year 2018. The proposal cuts funding for public education programs by \$9.2 billion, while including a \$250 million investment to expand private school options.

“Opportunity starts and ends with access to a great education. Equitable, high-quality public education for all students is essential to children and the nation’s long-term success,” said Laura Bay, president of National PTA. “National PTA is disappointed to see President Trump’s proposal cuts funding for critical public education programs, while investing in private school options. National PTA opposes any private school choice system that drains public school resources. Public dollars must remain invested in public schools for the benefit of all students and the future of our nation.”

While National PTA is disappointed that President Trump’s budget proposal cuts vital funding for public education overall, the association is pleased to see the president designate an additional \$1 billion for Title I—which aids schools with high percentages of children from low-income families—as well as maintain funding of \$13 billion for special education grants through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Although these important foundational federal education programs were spared from cuts, we remain concerned about the disinvestment in education that this blueprint lays out.

“Across the country there are great disparities in available resources as well as the quality of and access to educational opportunities,” added President Bay. “It has long been a top priority for National PTA to work with the administration and Congress to ensure robust federal investments are made in public education programs that promote equity and opportunity for all children.”

### Private School Vouchers

National PTA advocates for the improvement of public education for all children and to guarantee public funds are not diverted to any private school choice proposal and/or voucher system.

National PTA also opposes tax credits and deductions for elementary and secondary school tuition and other education-related expenses for public and nonpublic school students.

Our association believes that private school choice systems have detrimental effects on our public school systems. Public dollars must remain invested in public

schools for the benefit of all students and the future of our nation.

### Public School Choice and Public Charter Schools

National PTA believes that no one educational program is best for all children. Public school personnel and parents must address the different ways that children learn and how public school systems can provide the best education for all children.

Furthermore, National PTA acknowledges public charter schools as one of many avenues to improving student achievement. National PTA supports public charter schools provided the authorizing bodies and schools reflect the positions and principles of National PTA in charters granted and implemented.

PTA supports charter schools that are tuition-free, non-sectarian, legally organized as non-profits, and transparent in governance and fiscal accountability.

For more information, go to [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org).

## Schools are required to teach the arts

By Donna Artukovic, CAPTA Legislative Advocate

Did you know that the teaching of visual and performing arts is required in the California State Education Code?

Is your school district aware of this requirement? Bring it to their attention!

### Education Code Section 51210

Areas of Study: Grades 1 to 6. Visual and performing arts, including instruction in the subjects of dance, music, theatre, and visual arts, aimed at the development of aesthetic appreciation and the skills of creative expression.

### Education Code Section 51220

Areas of Study: Grades 7 to 12. Visual and performing arts, including dance, music, theatre, and visual arts, with emphasis upon development of aesthetic appreciation and the skills of creative expression.

These statutory provisions make it clear: arts education is important, just as important as math, science, history and language arts. In fact, the arts have been shown to help students learn other subject matter in greater depth.

It is time for our district administrators and school board members to give arts education the same weight other subject matters receive. Our students deserve the extraordinary experiences arts education offers for all.

## OC Superintendents share insights from their school districts

Many thanks to the superintendents who participated in our Advocacy Forum in March. They are:

**Mike Christensen**, Orange Unified School District  
**Dr. Joanne Culverhouse**, La Habra City School District  
**Dr. Gregory A. Franklin**, Tustin Unified School District  
**Gregg Haulk**, Huntington Beach City School District  
**Dr. Frederick Navarro**, Newport-Mesa Unified School District

Here are some highlights:

### Teacher evaluations

All of the districts try to help teachers develop professionally, rather than dismissing them. “You can’t supervise teachers into submission,” said Franklin. There is an emphasis on conversations, building relationships, and working together to help students be successful. Only a few teachers need to be removed from the classroom.

### Budget challenges

The five school districts have different budget challenges depending on the types of students they serve, since the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) provides more money for districts that serve large numbers of students who are low-income and English language learners. Huntington Beach City School District, which has only 20 percent of high-needs students, is the lowest funded school district in Orange County. “When the economy slows down we will be in an incredible amount of trouble,” said Haulk.

Newport-Mesa is “community-funded.” Community-funded districts rely on local property taxes to meet the state’s minimum funding requirement and then retain any additional local taxes collected; unlike most districts, they do not rely on the state for funds to bring them up to that minimum, based on student attendance. “We have to be very careful with our reserves because we can’t get bailed out by the state in tough times,” said Navarro. He added that although the district receives no LCFF funding, it still has to follow LCFF regulations, including spending additional money on high-needs students.

In the La Habra City School District, 77 percent of the students are high-needs so the district gets supplemental funds as well as a concentration grant for the high percentage of students in those categories.

While funding levels may vary, the districts share some problems in common. One is the cost of providing special education, which is dramatically increasing, going as high as \$12 million in Huntington Beach and \$15 million in La Habra. All of the superintendents agree that these children should be served but that funding is inadequate.

The state’s new requirement for higher contributions to the employee retirement systems is also causing a headache for the superintendents. Tustin Unified will get a projected funding increase of \$2.2 million next year, but

payments to the retirement system will go up by \$2.7 million, said Franklin.

Funding is on a downward trend and districts will have to start looking at what they can do less of, said Christensen. “The state is not helping us with the message. The Governor makes a presentation and says schools are getting three-quarters of a billion dollars more, but he doesn’t say he is taking out one billion for [the retirement system],” he said.

The superintendents also pointed to California’s lack of commitment to education in general. When Ronald Reagan was governor, five percent of the state’s economic wealth went to schools; that is now down to three percent, said Franklin. It doesn’t make sense to advocate for welfare programs and prisons when investment in education would decrease the need for those, he added.

### Parent involvement in the development of Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs)

All of the school districts look for input from various groups, including PTA, ELAC, school site council, teachers, and other school staff. There is also a push to get more participation from students. Culverhouse said that in her district many parents are afraid to attend meetings or fill out forms or surveys, due to current federal immigration issues. Haulk talked about making sure everyone feels safe in sharing opinions and ideas. Those who yell the loudest should not get all the attention, he said.

### Dashboard

The superintendents welcomed the new school accountability system as a way for parents and the community to look at the whole child and evaluate schools through multiple measures. “The old system was punitive; the new one gives credit for growth.” Christensen said. The information in the Dashboard is two years old, but the superintendents hope the system will continue to evolve and improve.

### Changes in federal education policy

There is a lot of uncertainty about what the federal government may do. The effects could be extremely devastating or not too bad. More will be evident when the federal budget is passed in October. The superintendents say they are paying attention and trying to be pragmatic about whatever comes. Haulk expressed concern that the new head of the Department of Education has never been in a public school.

Franklin referred to President Trump’s statement that the schools are “flush with cash” and depriving children of a good education. “If we allow that kind of a gross generalization to go unanswered, shame on us,” he said. Public officials should be invited to visit public schools and find out what is really happening there.

“We are doing an amazing job in our classrooms,” said Navarro.