

# Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

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## National PTA responds to President Trump's proposed budget

President Donald Trump recently released his budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2018. The proposal cuts funding for public education programs by \$9.2 billion.

"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. "Federal funding for education has remained at 2 percent of the federal budget for decades. Cutting funding for public education programs by an astounding \$9.2 billion would further undermine opportunity for all children. Greater investments in public education are critical to ensure every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential and to improve our nation's economic competitiveness."

In addition to cutting vital funding for public education programs overall, President Trump's budget proposal does not include funding for educator professional development or for Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants, which help ensure students receive well-rounded educational opportunities, learn in healthy and safe school environments and have opportunities to use technology in the classroom. Funding for Title I—which aids schools with high percentages of children from low-income families—as well as for special education grants through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) remains at the current level in the proposal. The proposal also does not include investments for family engagement in education through the Statewide Family Engagement Centers (SFECs) program.

"Now more than ever, it is imperative to invest in family engagement programs as well as special education and Title I to ensure all children are provided the best opportunities to thrive and learn," said Nathan R. Monell, CAE, National PTA Executive Director. "Across the country there are great disparities in available resources as well as the quality of and access to educational opportunities. National PTA remains steadfast in our belief that robust federal investments must be made in public education programs that promote equity and opportunity for all children."

While making significant cuts to public education funding, President Trump's budget proposal includes a new \$250 million competitive grant program that would allow public dollars to be used for private and religious school tuition. Additionally, the proposal allocates \$1 billion in Title I for the creation of a new grant program that would allow those funds to "follow" a child to any public school.

"National PTA has strong concerns about any proposal that would significantly affect the distribution of funds across and within Title I districts and create division and separation within communities. Our association also opposes any private school choice system—tax credits, vouchers or deductions—that drains critical public school resources," added President Bay. "Public dollars must remain invested in public schools and not be diverted for the benefit of all students and the future of our nation."

## Creativity is essential to the educational process

By Donna Artukovic, CAPTA Legislative Advocate

The research is clear: creativity is a great boon to the educational process.

For evidence, watch Sir Ken Robinson's TED Talk "Do Schools Kill Creativity?"

Read Nathan Sun-Kleinberger's essay "Restoring Creativity in the High School Classroom," and Larry Ferlazzo's column, "We Need to Nurture Creativity for All Students." (All of these can be found online.)

The unanimous opinion is that creativity helps students learn, augments long-term memory and produces new pathways in the brain that contribute to one's ability to solve problems and think outside the box.

More and more employers are looking for creative people to hire because they recognize that creativity is an essential skill in the workplace. Employers stress the importance of skills that arts education fosters, skills such as flexibility, and the ability to learn new ways of accomplishing tasks, spot problems and develop solutions. According to an executive at Boeing, we have a shortage of people with the creative skills for the jobs that are needed in a dynamic and competitive marketplace.

Is your school offering classes that develop creativity? Are teachers in the "content" areas using creativity to help students learn? Does your school value creativity?

Find out! Do some research. Let your board members and administrators know that our schools must foster creativity in order to graduate students who will thrive in the 21st century marketplace. Arts education will help students find new ways to live successfully, peacefully and with the ability to adapt and adjust to what is happening around them.

## Good news and bad in Governor Brown's May revise budget

As is often the case, there was both good news and bad news in Governor Brown's revised state budget proposal.

The governor's initial proposal in January called for only a small increase in education funding. Since tax revenues have come in at a higher level than he anticipated, he is now recommending a 5.4 percent increase over this year, or about \$2.8 billion in additional funding.

The May revise budget includes \$7.9 million to add about 3,000 slots to the state preschool program. This expansion was postponed in the governor's initial budget. Money for child care was also added back into the proposed budget. Funding for after-school programs, on the other hand, was not increased.

Brown is also proposing about \$1 billion in one-time money, which he suggests should go toward implementing the state's academic standards, teacher training and textbooks. However, this money would not be released until 2019, causing some education groups to worry that the money will be used for other purposes by then.

About \$1 billion of the \$1.4 billion that the governor would add to the education budget will not go to education programs because school districts are paying more

into the California state retirement systems for teachers and non-teaching staff. Both systems have been underfunded for years and the state is now addressing a \$60 billion unfunded liability by requiring higher payments by the state, school districts and individual teachers.

While schools have received more money during the past several years, the state has yet to fully fund the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which provides additional money to school districts for students who are low income, English learners or in foster care. Full funding will be achieved when every district receives at least the inflation-adjusted, pre-recession funding it received in 2007-08, a time when schools were far from being adequately funded.

There is also continuing concern about potential funding cuts from Washington D.C. If President Trump's federal budget proposal is approved by Congress, California would lose about \$400 million in federal funding for K-12 education. Higher education programs would also be cut, along with funding for teacher preparation and after school programs. If the Affordable Care Act is repealed, California will have to revamp its budget to accommodate the loss of federal health care funding.

## Encourage students to advocate for their school programs

It's never too early to encourage students to advocate for their own education programs. The Kennedy High School PTSA in La Palma found a way to do just that.

The PTSA decided to offer a grant program to students. Application forms were available and the grant program was publicized through teachers, PTSA student representatives and student clubs.

Students were given three weeks to complete the applications. A special PTSA meeting was scheduled to hear from the applicants. Each student group was given three minutes to make their presentation, with two additional minutes for questions and answers.

"The students were very well prepared, dressed professionally, and presented surprisingly well," said PTSA President Shanin Ziemer. "They took this very seriously. It was not only a good opportunity for them to get projects funded, but an excellent opportunity to make a professional presentation."

The PTSA evaluated student proposals based on PTA rules, goals and mission, benefits to the largest number of students possible, and long term benefits, where possible. Grants were provided to purchase new computers for the student newspaper, reusable components for a STEAM project, materials for a recycling project, and a toaster and griddle for the special needs students' breakfast club. The PTSA also provided partial funding for a printer for the ASB.

"Our school is more than 40 percent socioeconomically disadvantaged, so fundraising for groups can be a challenge and student participation can be limited due to costs," Ziemer said. "Our grant program allowed groups to pursue ideas that otherwise would not be feasible or would be very challenging."

As a result of the project, the PTSA leaders became aware of additional programs and projects that they would like to support.

### Include advocacy in your PTA budget

Be sure to include advocacy in your PTA budget for the next year.

Sacramento Safari will be held February 26 and 27, 2018. Budget about \$650 per person.

Other allocations might include:

- Voter registration drive supplies.
- Candidate forum expenses (if your school district will hold an election).
- Advocacy Resource Notebooks for new advocates (\$15 each).
- California State PTA Legislation Conference.
- California State PTA Convention, for training and events.