

Sacramento Safari 2018 Speaker Reports

Reported by Vivien Moreno, Kathy Moffat, Shanin Ziemer and Gisela Meier

Please note that the opinions expressed in this report are those held by the speakers and may or may not coincide with PTA positions.

Jeff Camp and Carol Kocivar, Ed100.org

Jeff Camp is the founder and primary writer of Ed100; Carol Kocivar is a former California State PTA president and one of the main writers for the website. Ed100 offers a free, self-paced online course on California's education system in small, "bite-sized" lessons.

Jeff talked about why he started the website. After surviving a brain tumor, he re-evaluated his life and decided "the education of more than 6 million students seemed like a very valuable use of my time." "There was a hunger for a better understanding of the school system," he said. "How do we get more people to start thinking deeper and better about education?"

Carol said she and Jeff work very hard to make sure that Ed100 is "a resource you can trust." They constantly revise the lessons and read all of the research reports that they cite. At the end of each lesson readers can leave comments or questions. She urged local PTAs to put a link to Ed100 on their websites, help members to find this important resource, and help train our next generation of PTA leaders. Check out the Parent Leader Guide, a set of pages and posts that suggest some topics you might want to use as a meeting. Ed100 is also available in Spanish.

Ed100 Bootcamp Fourth District PTA Advocacy Team

Fourth District PTA leaders gave an abbreviated summary of all 10 lessons in Ed100. This program is a complete basic course on the workings of the education system in California for parents, teachers, administrators, and school board members. But particularly PTA members! And it is accessible to all. Just go to ed100.org

Lesson 1 – Poverty is a stronger predictor of school failure than are race or ethnicity.

Lesson 2 – 30,000,000 more words are heard and understood by advantaged students than by students in poverty. Special education; section 504; IDEA.

Lesson 3 – The importance of quality teachers.

Lesson 4 – Time with teachers in class matters. As class size rises, achievement drops. As snow days increase, test results fall. Summer learning loss is real and it is cumulative.

Lesson 5 – Students and Diversity: In the 1990's the trend went to larger schools. Smaller schools did better, but economics drove the trend to larger schools.

Lesson 6- New trends in instruction - blended learning; flipped classrooms.

Lesson 7 – Accountability

Lesson 8 – Education dollars: California is worst in nation in adults per student – whether it be teachers, counselors, librarians, nurses, administrators, etc. Parent help in schools is dramatically impactful.

Lesson 9 – Measures of Success: As a state, California is flying blind regarding education data. We do not have a statewide education data system.

Lesson 10 – So, now what? Where do we go from here? What changes are needed and how can they be accomplished in a system as large as the education system in California?

Each lesson has 8 to 20 short topics that take about 5 minutes each to complete. It is full of many surprising and startling statistics.

Dianna MacDonald, California State PTA President

“Family engagement is the cornerstone of what we need to do in schools to ensure that everything else works.” Without it, how do we target the critical issues? California State PTA (CAPTA) sponsored a family engagement bill last year, asking for \$1 billion to support family engagement, but it failed. It was a great opportunity to discuss *authentic* family engagement with our legislators. We learned that we needed to talk more about our national guide to family engagement, which has great priorities and tools.

Family engagement is currently defined differently throughout the state. There isn’t a good universal definition, and nothing in the state’s education code. This year CAPTA is sponsoring a new bill, AB2878. Assembly Member Rocky Chavez is carrying it and PTA is looking for a co-author from the other party, since this is a non-partisan issue. The bill does not ask for any funding, but it has been tagged for approval by the Appropriations Committee, which may cause a problem.

CAPTA is focusing on three main areas: Family Engagement is the priority. In addition to being one of eight priorities that must be addressed in the LCAP, research shows that family engagement leads to benefits such as reduced absenteeism, higher graduation rates, fewer drop-outs and increased academic achievement. The second focus is student voice -- how to involve students in the LCAP process. The third area is school climate. Each school now has its own definition. CAPTA is pressing for a more precise definition of school climate and uniform understanding of what it means.

On gun violence issues: many members have contacted CAPTA and Shereen Walter, CAPTA Vice President for Health and Community Concerns (and former Fourth District PTA VP of Advocacy) and asked us what we are going to do about this. CAPTA released a statement demanding mandatory background checks, waiting periods before purchasing guns, and prohibiting the sale of assault weapons. Students are planning a 17 minute walkout on March 14. PTA members are asked to call their legislators and put pressure on those who make the decisions.

“We hear from students that they are afraid to go to school. How can they learn? The safety and well-being of our students is paramount.”

Celia Jaffe, CAPTA President Elect (and former Fourth District PTA President)

The new California Dashboard is a public information tool set up by the California Department of Education. It provides a huge amount of information or a quick glance. There is information about every school in California, with multiple measures including graduation rates, academic performance, suspension rates, English learner progress, college/career readiness, chronic absenteeism, and data for specific student groups. This information is based on data sent by school districts to the state. There are also Local Indicators, based on information collected locally: basic conditions (teacher qualifications, safe and clean buildings, textbooks for all students), implementation of Academic Standards, school climate surveys (student safety and connectedness), and parent involvement and engagement. Some of the information is presented in written narratives. The information shows both how things are going at the school and how they have changed over time.

The Equity Report on the Dashboard summarizes the information with pie charts in different colors. More pie pieces indicate better results, so the reports can be read in color or black and white.

The Dashboard includes a lot of things that PTA has been fighting for, providing an accountability system that involves more than just test scores. PTA is still working for a more specific definition of family engagement.

The Dashboard can be found at www.CASchoolDashboard.org Click around and figure it out. If you are on your school district's LCAP committee, you need to know the Dashboard. If you are a PTA leader, you should show this to your members.

Lea Darrah, CAPTA Director of Legislation

Advocacy is valuable, and parents need to get more involved. An important tool is your personal story; it is powerful with our legislators. You're an expert on your story and your child. If there's information you don't have, you can tell the legislator you'll get it back to them. Ask your PTA council or the Fourth District vice president of advocacy for information. We've got your back! Students can also be very effective advocates. Get the articulate ones to tell their personal stories. Go to CAPTA.org, click on Focus Areas, then Advocacy, for Legislative Action Reports to find CAPTA positions on bills. Everyone can say, without a bill number, we need kids to feel safe on campus, we need effective family engagement, and we need adequate funding. ACR164, SB830, AB2808, and AB1871 are bills we have recently supported. When talking to legislators don't say LCFF is fully funded, say we are at 2007-2008 levels. We are not 'fully funded' when funding is so inadequate.

Ron Bennett, CEO School Services of California

Bennett has been lobbying in the capital for more than 30 years and tells us the voice of the PTA is powerful. We should remind legislators we are unpaid volunteers who vote, we have a genuine voice. Legislators want to know, "What do the people who are affected by this legislative action think?" Ron believes that we need to focus more on our kids' mental welfare. "If PTA had its way, we would be taking care of demented minds long before something happens." High parental engagement is key to this.

This year has been a very good year financially in the United States and in California. The stock market is way up. Revenues are up. Job creation is excellent. Unemployment in California is very low – 3.9%. This could mean that wages and benefits may be driven upwards.

"At the capitol, they believe public education has been treated really well this year." The governor plans to increase LCFF funding by \$3 billion in ongoing money. This will fully fund LCFF two years ahead of schedule. The money comes earlier, but it's not higher, and the next two years will be lower. In 2020-21, schools will get a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) plus 3 percent, and the following year there will be a COLA only, according to the governor's proposal. If your school district has 80 percent or more of high-needs students, your funding will be 35th highest in the nation. If your high-needs students are less than 20 percent of your enrollment you will be last in the nation and probably stay there.

Prior to Prop. 13, California funded its schools through property taxes, which are a very stable and predictable funding source. Since the passage of Prop. 13, they are funded mostly through income taxes and capital gains taxes. These taxes are much more volatile and subject to the movements of the stock market and the state of the economy.

California's economy is doing well and job creation is way above expectations. However, most of these are service level jobs that don't pay well and don't provide benefits. We are at about 4 percent unemployment. Companies will soon have to fight for employees and that could increase wages.

Governor Brown has low-balled revenues, as he has a habit of doing when revenues are high. It is projected that there will be an additional \$1.8 billion in one-time money. There is a huge tug of war in the legislature over where that money should go. There are bills currently in the legislature to move that \$1.8 billion, or part of it, into ongoing funding for LCFF. In Bennett's opinion, the governor can afford to make a portion of that \$1.8 billion ongoing. Bennett believes that the LCFF allocation should go up by \$1.2 billion.

The governor has "met his funding projections" for LCFF two years early. However, meeting the LCFF restores funding cuts from the recession and brings K-12 schools up to 2007-08 funding levels. Clearly, that is far from sufficient.

Schools and districts are currently heavily burdened by mandated payments to the State Teachers Retirement Fund (STRS) and Public Employees Retirement Fund (PERS), both huge retirement funds. Payments to these funds will take a large share of what comes to schools this year and in coming years.

"That still leaves you 45th in the nation. It doesn't raise the level of effort for California. We are the richest state in the richest nation in the world, but we spend above the national average in every other commodity except education." California spends much more than the national average on roads, and three times the national average on prisons. "Our parents and grandparents took better care of their children's education than what we are doing. We used to lead the world. Not now!" Businesses used to come to California because we had the most educated workforce in the nation and our student performance was in the top five.

After four years of LCFF, districts are laying off teachers again. Causes include declining enrollment and increasing costs of the retirement system. Costs are going up 4 to 5 percent, but revenue is only up by 2.5 percent, so cuts are being made. We have to convince legislators to make education a priority in more than just words. They will all say education is the highest priority, but see what they do.

Q: Why does the governor prefer conservative budget estimates? A: During bad times his staff likes to overestimate because they don't want to be the bearer of bad news. During good times, they like to have good news as a surprise rather than later bad news taking money back.

Q: If the PERS/STRS crisis was precipitated by downturn of economy, why do schools still have to pay more and more to fund it? A: During the dot com boom – in the early 2000's – STRS enacted a large increase in retirement benefits to teachers. Then came the bust and the huge deficit. Now, years later, the stock market has recovered and is now producing double digit returns. Projections say it will require double digit stock market returns to continue for 25-30 years for the retirement debt to be paid.

Eric Heins, President, California Teachers Association

When you're lobbying here, there are a bunch of paid lobbyists who do nothing but look at that complex budget all the time. Never go in to argue about the budget. That's not your power; you have your story. Tell your story. Sometimes decisions are made at a distance from the results, but parents are on the ground, in the classroom. Legislators don't know the direct effects. How the policy affects you is what matters. It's a good idea to have a big picture idea of budget and economy, but that's not your power. "It's all about relationships!" Parents, teachers, students, administrators: relationships with each other, how we share, and how we talk about it. We connect by what we share.

At the federal level it's a lot of "upset and things that don't make sense to me" that don't match with our values in California. Behaviors are unacceptable and cause polarization into two camps that can't even talk to each other. "I'd be on the phone to parents if I saw that behavior in my classroom." About 30 percent of teachers are Republicans and identify as very conservative. We are in a completely different space than almost every other state in the nation. When this is over, we will be a place others can look to for how to do things.

Everyone needs a strong public education system to build our economy, draw business to our state, but also because it's right for our students. LCFF was revolutionary. Eliminating categoricals is a huge change. Letting districts work with teachers and community is revolutionary. Now we have custom spending with community input and no longer a one-size-fits-all budget plan across the state. Parents need to take advantage of that opportunity to have input!

The shifting of funds to the students that have more need helped even out inequalities. Districts that were traditionally underfunded are getting a chance to make significant improvements.

"I did not become a teacher to become union president, my dad was a minister, and I'm not from a union family." Many people have a false impression of unions.

NCLB was a one-size-fits-all federal approach with a literal script for how to teach and it wasn't a great way to teach. Administrators would come in and observe and literally measure and fill out a check list and not talk to students. "I was called a great teacher because I was holding a teacher's manual in my hand" and that was wrong. Following a script was the wrong way to teach. I used my relationships with other teachers to work towards making a change. "Everything we do, at the center of it is improving student learning." We want to attract and keep the best teachers. Benefits and pay help to do that. You cannot be a teacher if you cannot afford it (rent, feed your family, etc.). Teachers leave the profession because of salary.

The old API scores only helped realtors but didn't tell us much. The new Dashboard and multiple measures system are much better. We should stop doing so much testing. Sample testing of grades 3, 8, and 11 would save money, and get us the same results.

School climate: Do students have access to a library and librarian, do they feel safe, are they fed, suspension rates... we need to talk about these issues. The indicators shouldn't just look at numbers. We need blended indicators. For example, when we look at lower suspension rates, what are those kids doing when they stay in school? Is there a restorative justice process? On AP courses, who has access, who finishes, who passes the tests?

On the Supreme Court *Janus* case regarding unions [*Janus v. American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Council 31*. The case was heard in February; a decision is expected in June.]: a 45-year-old Supreme Court decision said that nobody is forced to join a union (compelled membership) but they are still covered under the contracts and what the union bargains for. So the fair share is that they pay the costs (agency fee) associated with that bargaining. The argument in the *Janus* case is that the bargaining process with public school districts is inherently political. We anticipate the court to rule against CTA. People would still get all the contract bargaining and protections, but now for free. "The people against this boldly present that their goal is to defang unions." The usual number of fair share members in the union is 10 percent.

School shooting and arming teachers: It's a bad idea and clearly nobody thought it through. How do you deal with a shooting and having a gun? The concept would make schools more unsafe. We need to deal with the real problem, provide counselors, and smaller classes so teachers can connect with their students. Students who have an adult to connect to are much more likely to succeed.

Q: Why is CTA against raising teacher tenure from 2 to 3 years? A: The original bill was for 5 years. It used to be 3 years in California. During tenure teachers had limited due process rights, but it was negotiated down and as a tradeoff the teachers are at will employees (can be let go for any or no reason). By March 15 they must get a pink slip (warning they may be laid off), and by May 15 they get a final decision. It's not really tenure though, it's due process permanent status which entitles teachers to a hearing in front of their peers before being fired. It used to be easy to fire a teacher, for example, for standing up to district policy they disagreed with. Due process allows teachers to advocate for their students. No other job has that long of a probationary period. We worked on a compromise 3-year bill, which had a 3rd year elective probation year to allow teachers to get more assistance to improve if needed.

Q: What about student participation in the teacher evaluation process? A: CTA has a white paper on effective teacher evaluations. The evaluation procedure is locally bargained. Nobody wants a poor teacher, especially other teachers that have to pick up the slack when they get the students. Evaluation should focus on why/how. If a teacher is struggling, you can help them become better. Some teachers should be counseled out of the teaching profession, but that should be a fair process. Some teachers struggle because class sizes are too big, so we need to also look at the whole system. We need to provide the resources to help them get better. A majority of poor teachers leave the profession voluntarily, but we need to help those who are struggling to do better. CTA has a resource, "Survive and Thrive," to help teachers who are burning out. We need supports in place.

Ken Kappahn, Senior Fiscal and Policy Analyst, Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO)

Ken Kappahn presented an overview of the state budget as it relates to school funding, a look at the governor's proposed education budget for 2018-19 and an update on the state's economy.

Overview of the state budget

Most budget conversations revolve around the General Fund, the state's main operating account, which pays for most major programs, including education. The General Fund for 2017-18 is about \$125 billion. About 40 percent of that goes to K-12 education.

The state legislature has a good deal of control over the use of the General Fund, subject to two propositions: Prop. 98 (approved in 1988), which establishes a funding requirement for schools and community colleges (the "minimum guarantee") and Prop. 2 (passed in 2014), which requires the state to set aside some money each year to build state reserves and pay down the debt.

Prop. 98 is a complex funding system with eight formulas and a dozen inputs. In addition to the minimum guarantee, schools are entitled to catch-up payments ("maintenance factor") from years when the state did not meet the minimum funding levels. The state owed schools \$11 billion at the end of the recession, but most of that has been repaid.

Generally, the minimum guarantee is the higher of the following amounts:

- The total state and local funding schools received during the prior year, adjusted for enrollment and an inflation factor (usually positive), or

- About 40 percent of the General Fund (plus local property tax revenue).

In practice, the state usually funds schools at the minimum guarantee, although in 2017-18 schools received an amount higher than the guarantee. Prop. 98 does not protect schools from the volatility of the state budget, so the minimum is not a stable amount.

The governor's proposed budget for 2018-19

There has been a growth of about 5 percent in state revenues. The governor's budget allocates \$4.5 billion for constitutionally required increases to Prop. 98 and Prop. 2, and \$7 billion for discretionary priorities. Most of the discretionary funding (80 percent) would go to the state reserves, with 20 percent going to infrastructure projects.

The governor's budget reflects a cautious approach, with few funding increases outside of Prop. 98 and few new commitments to ongoing programs. State reserves would be the highest since 1970. This caution is in response to uncertainties about the economy and federal policies. The LAO agrees with this approach, Kappahn said.

The governor's budget includes \$5 billion in spending proposals for K-12 education, allocated as follows:

- \$2.9 billion to complete full funding of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) two years early. [Full funding is defined as returning K-12 funding to 2007-08 levels, adjusted to inflation.]
- \$1.8 billion for one-time discretionary grants.
- \$314 million for other programs and initiatives.

On average, school districts would receive a per-pupil increase of 5.5 percent, although the increases would vary from district to district due to the differing funding rates per student under LCFF.

With the full funding of LCFF, discussions are underway regarding what to do next. Possible changes include increasing the base rates (which all districts receive), increasing supplemental rates (additional funding for students who are low-income, English learners or in foster care), providing more flexibility over spending, or creating new categorical programs. A proposal in the state senate would increase the base rate by 2 percent on top of the governor's proposed increase. This would provide an average of \$200 in additional funding per student. The cost for this would be \$1.2 billion.

The governor is also asking for new disclosure requirements. Each school district would have to prepare a summary showing how its budget aligns with the goals in its Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). The LAO is skeptical of this plan, Kappahn said. LCAPs are long and complicated and must link spending to goals. There should be a move to simplify the LCAP rather than adding more requirements, he said.

Economic Update

California gained 343,000 jobs over the past year. About 3 million jobs have been added since 2010. Most sectors of the state economy are growing more quickly than the national average. The largest gains have been in education, health care, construction, and leisure and hospitality. The state unemployment rate of 4.3 percent is the lowest level since data collection began in 1976. "Economic times don't get much better than this," according to the LAO.

Tax collections are running about \$2.7 billion ahead of budget projections. Through the end of January, personal income taxes are up by \$2.4 billion and corporate taxes are up \$400 million, but sales taxes are

down by \$50 million. April is the key month to watch, because this is when most tax revenues come in. Preliminary signs are strong and the stock market remains relatively high despite a recent dip. This is important because the state receives most of its funding from high income earners who benefit from stock increases.

In November 2017, the LAO's fiscal outlook predicted that state revenues would be \$3.4 billion higher than the governor's budget across 2017-18 and 2018-19. The LAO assumed job growth would slow down and the stock market would remain flat. Since conditions are much better, the state's revenues could be higher than current predictions by several billion dollars, come May or June.

Substantial increases in revenue would normally trigger big increases in Prop. 98 and Prop. 2 allocations, but this is not the case this year. The Prop. 98 minimum guarantee is unlikely to increase significantly because the state has already restored the funding reductions that occurred during the Great Recession. Even a revenue surge of several billion dollars would increase the guarantee only a few hundred million dollars. The Prop. 2 rainy day reserve fund is already at its target amount.

Most of the new revenue would be discretionary, meaning the legislature could allocate it to schools or to other priorities.

Responses to questions

The bullet train receives no money from the General Fund. It is funded through a separate special account consisting of federal funds, state bonds, and cap and trade money.

If California entered a moderate recession in 2019, there would be enough funding in the reserves to prevent cuts for two years.

Costs for the state employee retirement system are likely to increase by \$1.3 billion in 2018-19. Costs could drop off after 2020-21, but are likely to be 18 to 19 percent of district budgets over the next two decades.

Roni Jones, WestEd, California Comprehensive Center, Specialist

"WestEd provides support to help our schools do better." They assist districts in dealing with the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs).

LCFF is a huge change in school funding. We used to have categoricals (e.g. money only for buses whether you wanted/needed to buy buses or not). LCFF is based more on student needs.

LCFF is designed to improve student outcomes via:

- Simplicity to aid in transparency
- Equity through student-focused formula
- Performance through aligned program and budget plans
- Local flexibility to meet student needs.

It is not perfect but it is better than the old funding system with categorical funds that could only be used in specific ways.

On the federal level, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was compliance oriented. Put a check in the box and you're OK. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the new federal education law, and LCFF represent a

mindset shift that is performance oriented, focused on ongoing continuous improvement. Compliance orientation looked for equal funding, performance orientation works toward equal outcomes. It's a lot more work to figure out what works, but there is flexibility to adapt and change with a goal of transparency and building understanding in the community. We look at the systems of the district as a whole to find ways to improve.

The funding formula is a base amount per student plus adjustments for grade levels and extra needs students (low income, foster youth, and/or English Learners. Each student is only counted once so it's an "unduplicated count"). Additional funding is provided based on concentrations of those high needs students. Now we're looking at demographic groups (those extra-needs kids) and not just racial groups.

Performance-based planning is "Transparently aligning resources with well-researched outcomes and services to improve local performance and meet your overall mission for all students."

Performance-based planning looks at a whole host of indicators. The Dashboard is an important tool in this process.

The planning cycle for each year should be:

- Adopt a vision
- Assess needs and capacity, align with desired student outcomes
- Confirm or select evidence-based actions and services
- Review or select metrics for measuring progress
- Align and adjust plans to desired student outcomes
- Calibrate plans and resources to needs

The underlying activities for this cycle are:

- Translate plans into action
- Implement and monitor progress
- Evaluate success and adjust plan
- Align plans and expenditures

This year-round process should begin in July or August of each year and end in June.

Progress is no longer just about that once per year test score. Now more aspects of a school are measured, things like family engagement. "Do you feel welcome on campus? Do you hear from your child's teacher when they do well, or only if there is a problem?"

Two kinds of data should be tracked: implementation data (such as observation through walkthroughs, program creation and principal surveys) and outcome metrics (such as average daily attendance, EL reclassification and rate of parent participation).

You set goals and track your progress. You need to look at implementation data: are you actually doing what you planned and is there a timeline for completion? And also look at outcome metrics: how does it affect the kids and how do you collect data? Are you getting the results you expected? Use the answers to create your LCAPs. Funding must align with those LCAP goals.

One issue with LCAPs is participation vs. engagement. For parents to engage in the LCAP process there needs to be a two-way conversation, not just a presentation of information. "They are required to give

you information but don't realize they can learn more from you than they may have to give you." It is important for parents to understand where and how decisions are made. Students, parents, and community members need to give input.

The LCAP process may fail if plans are partially implemented or rushed (just a short period for input and looking at data only once a year). Other problems include resistance to the plans (happens often when decisions are made behind closed doors and presented rather than developed in a collaborative effort), a lack of resources to support the plan, or a poorly communicated plan. Some superintendents are deciding to retire because they don't want to deal with it.

The LCAP process is successful when there is follow-through and realistic timeframes, ways to improve things for students are championed, and the plan is fully resourced and well-communicated.

How parents can help improve outcomes for the LCFF:

- Help set high-level priorities based on data, expectations and needs of the community
- Recommend specific programs, when applicable.
- Review and provide feedback on recommended actions
- Continuously assess the program with the district

Ask questions! PTA can help facilitate meetings. Offer to partner with the district staff and help them move forward towards more parent involvement in the process. When building relationships, presume positive intentions. Network with other PTAs; look at schools doing this right and bring that model to your school. It can come down to one enthusiastic and active key person.

The Family Engagement Toolkit on the California Department of Education website has good tips. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/lc/documents/family-engagement.pdf>

Another resource is <http://caljustice.org/lcffengagement/> for helping with student engagement, but it can be adapted to help parents as well.

The district's role:

- Turn priorities into specific programs and initial budget
- Provide multiple opportunities for the community to weigh in on directions
- Create a final LCAP and budget
- Collect data and report progress
- Continuously assess programs with the community

The state's role:

- Ensure the district is meeting the needs of all students
- Ensure the district is working towards the goals and needs of the community

School district budgeting and improvement is messy.

- There are always lots of different options.
- There is never enough money to fund everything.
- There are always unexpected expenses.
- Projects and budget need to be adjusted.
- Change takes time (but we are seeing progress).

Dr. Shirley Weber, Assemblymember, 79th District

Dr. Weber said she came to the capitol to get involved in education issues. Children need a voice in every corner of the state. "PTA is the way parents can have an organized voice for children." We have a great reputation in the capital. We are a voice for children first.

One of her concerns is food insecurity and homelessness among university students. Some university students have jobs or children and can't finish in four years. People should not be rewarded for finishing in four years; that is a reward of its own. If someone finishes college in eight years, that is an accomplishment that should be celebrated.

Social justice and equality should be everyday words. Too many young people are being incarcerated. Some young people are put on a gang list by the police department based on unverified sources or being seen with a gang member. If they get in any trouble their prison term is increased due to "gang enhancement." The gang lists are sometimes shared with the military or employers, adding more difficulties for young people.

The prison system is expensive. California has the largest prison system of any state. It creates a tremendous complex of criminal activity. We need to be working on a "warm handout" (an effective process for reintegration into society after prison) to lower recidivism rates. "Prison should make better citizens, not better criminals." There are good models for this in the Bay Area.

Dr. Weber is the author of AB1220, a bill on teacher tenure. Under the current system, a school has only 18 months to decide if a new teacher is going to work out. New teachers don't have time to develop their skills. Under AB 1220, tenure would be given after three years. If the teacher is still struggling the principal could extend that to five years. Only two other states give teachers only two years; most states have three to five years.

This bill is important in light of the current teacher shortage. New teachers leave the profession because of the high cost of housing or because they didn't feel trained enough or competent enough. New teachers are usually placed in the most difficult schools, making their jobs harder. "No one goes into teaching to fail," Dr. Weber said. "They go into teaching because they like seeing people grow and develop."

AB1220 was approved by 75 percent of the Assembly and must now be approved by the Senate. It is supported by a number of education groups, including PTA, but opposed by the teachers union.

We need more transparency in school spending. School districts get \$4,000 to \$5,000 per student for children who have special needs. Where does that money go? We should see a quantitative difference in the child. Three bills on accountability were passed by the legislators but vetoed by the governor. Knowing where the money goes is extremely important.

Seventy-seven percent of high school graduates can't pass proficiency tests in college. The greatness of California is based on our educated workforce. We can't keep under-educating kids and expect to drive our economy. We need parent advocates for all kids!

"I hope you continue to be an advocate. Our kids need a voice, someone who will stand up and fight for them. But it's not an easy task." Stay focused. Don't get caught up in the issues stopping your goal. A

teacher was complaining that her students came to school without brushing their teeth, making it difficult to teach them. Feed children, put toothbrushes and toothpaste in the school, then teach them. "They need the skills to do for themselves and their family. Never accept excuses of kids being poor or this or that because you will end up in the same place you are right now: with a generation of people who we are sorry for who can't do for themselves." Help kids to build a future and be the citizens our state needs them to be.

"Feeding kids who are hungry is something we can do, but it is not a substitute for reading, writing, and math." "Our communities are weakened when we don't do the best for every child."

"Only the legislature can add money or take it out, only they can make the budget." Legislators saying they can't do anything is a cop out. Our kids need a voice, someone who will stand up and fight for them. "Be clear and concise and consistent on what you want!"

Kristin Schumacher, California Budget and Policy Center, Senior Policy Analyst

The vision of the California Budget and Policy Center is a California where everyone has the opportunity to participate fully in the state's economic, social, and political life.

The Great Recession officially ended in 2009, and our state has outperformed the nation. High wage earners' incomes are up 40 percent since 1970 but mid-range earners are up only 5 percent. Productivity is increasing but workers aren't getting paid for it. Wages are stagnant. The poverty rates are higher now than in 2007. One in 7 people live in poverty, for kids it's 1 in 5. California has the highest poverty rate in the nation. There is racial disparity in poverty. Poverty rates are 30 percent for Native Americans and black families, and 10 percent for white children.

Poverty-level income for a mom with two kids is \$1,600 per month. The *Making Ends Meet Report* by the Center found that for a family to live in California they need at least \$5,500 per month, which is three times the federal poverty level. Poverty affects brain development, mental and physical health, and academic achievement. The gap shows as early as 9 months and grows as children get older. Students from low income families show lower test results as well as double the suspension rates, and lower graduation rates (the average is 90 percent, but 80 percent for low income students). There is an income-based achievement gap.

The obstacles presented by poverty lead to less high school graduation and less college graduation, and result in higher poverty as adults. More than half of children who grow up in poverty end there as adults. But high quality childcare and preschool can overcome this and leads to reducing or eliminating that gap. It reduces special education needs, increases high school graduation rates, and results in less involvement with the criminal justice system. Over the long term every dollar invested saves \$2 to \$4, and some studies show as high as \$6 to \$7.

However, it is very hard to find quality childcare. The cost is high, on average: \$15,000 per year for infants, \$10,000 per year for pre-school, and \$6,000 per year for school aged children. The typical family makes \$94,000 per year so childcare uses about 10 percent of their income, but for the average single mother it can be as high as 70 percent of income. Without subsidized care (where the state helps with cost) the poor rely on lower quality care.

Poverty is often called a two generation problem. If you help the children, it helps parents (keeps them employed and housed reliably). But state childcare programs were cut during the recession. They lost

\$1 billion out of \$3 billion, which translates into 110,000 childcare slots removed. Since then 43,000 have been added back in, and other programs supported. But even so, funding is still one-half billion lower, and more than 60,000 slots lower, than 2007. There are more than 1 million kids who would qualify, but are not funded. The governor's budget doesn't include any increase. In 2013 only 1 in 7 eligible children received services.

During the budget process, we are looking at how federal tax changes will affect us, and what the May revise will bring. "What California do we want and does the budget reflect that?" Also there are questions about what next governor will do.

The state has two childcare programs. One is through the CalWorks program, and the other program is a capped program with first-come first-served.

Tamara Rasberry, Assistant Deputy, Strategic Partnerships and Outreach, California Secretary of State
The Secretary of State is the chief elections officer of California. He also manages all the business filings for the state and manages the state archives. Some of the archive exhibits are online at www.SoS.ca.gov. Also, you can look at "My Voter Status" and see the status of your last ballot and check if your vote was counted.

The Secretary of State's office has focused a lot on voter outreach and registration, and making voting accessible. They work on getting young voters to register and vote, and make voting a habit. High school students can pre-register at age 16 and 17. When they turn 18 they get their voter registration card in the mail. www.RegisterToVote.ca.gov

There are over 20 million registered voters in California. The Motor Voter Act started in April. Eligible voters will have the option to register at contact with the DMV – they must be a citizen and over 18. We will see an increase in the number of voters, but we need to get them educated to move from just registered to voters. People often don't vote because they don't know enough about issues or candidates, so her program educates them on how to get informed.

Voting in California is very secure. The Secretary of State does not count votes. Each county does their own counts, and voting machines are not connected to the internet. After each election, 1 percent of total votes are counted by hand to verify machine voting matches the paper. There is an I.T. support department at the state, which is especially helpful for rural poorer counties. Homeland security also works with the state on voting security. Counties clean up voter rolls, but many counties hesitate to remove voters from rolls.

The Voter Choice Act was piloted in several counties, and will be eligible statewide in 2020. All voters get a ballot in the mail, which you can return by mail or turn in at various centers that are open for 11 days running up to the election. Every polling station in a county will have the eligible voters list so you can turn in ballot or vote anywhere in your county, not just your local polling place.

Senator Ricardo Lara, 33rd District

California is the sixth largest economy in the world. We don't compete with other states; we compete with other countries. Other countries introduce children to multiple languages in elementary school and their students know four or five languages by the time they are in 5th or 6th grade. We have fallen behind on this due to a backward attitude when Pete Wilson was governor. At that time there was an English-only agenda that devalued multilingual teachers.

Lara authored Prop. 58, which eliminated the English-only law. Charter schools with multilingual programs have been thriving; now the other public schools need to catch up. The goal is for every school to have a multilingual option. Children learn other languages easier when they are young. Children who are learning English should retain their native language. Scientific data shows that children with multilingual skills surpass monolingual students in test scores. In the business world, it's better to close a deal in the language of the country you are in.

Another issue for Lara is the way children are questioned by police in a criminal matter. Previously children were interrogated by police without a parent being present and in some cases were coerced into confessing to crimes they did not commit, leading to the incarceration of innocent young people. Last year Lara passed a bill that states children under the age of 16 may not waive their Miranda rights. A parent or attorney must be present during interrogation.

Lara is currently working on a bill (SB 1052) that requires 14- or 15-year-olds who are convicted of a crime to be sent to juvenile detention. Currently these young people can be sent to adult prison, "where we lose that child forever," he said. Most of the children in the justice system are being victimized by an adult, he said.

Children with health issues don't do well in school. Two years ago the state passed the Healthy Children Act, which provides MediCal for children. More than 250,000 children are now enrolled. In addition to providing preventative health care for children, this reduces the costs for emergency room care.

Federal law now prevents giving leftover food to hungry students at school cafeterias. A lot of food gets wasted. For some children, school food is the only food they get. Lara is now working on solutions to this issue.

Senator Janet Nguyen, 34th District

Each state senator represents about 1 million people. Nguyen is the parent of two kids: 4- and 7-year-old boys. She is the only senator with children under 5. Her older son is in public school in Fountain Valley and she is a strong believer in pre-K education. "Every child, regardless of their background or income, deserves the same treatment and opportunities, and to know that in America the sky is the limit." Today it is very difficult and expensive to raise a family in California. Many families have both parents working. Childcare is expensive.

As a mom she has a very different perspective on legislation affecting children and schools than many senators, because she is living it. She went to college to be a doctor, but a college class inspired her to go into politics. "If you're not at the table, you're going miss dinner." Laws that are created today for tomorrow, and we must consider: how do they impact you?

We must work to protect Prop. 98 funding and keep that minimum guarantee for schools. But it goes up and down with the economy. It's a small jar of money and everyone wants to get their hands in there. Who gets it and who gets protected? The minority party doesn't get much say in California.

Q: Will legalization result in more money for education? A: It's anticipated that marijuana taxes will bring in \$22 million by 2020, but how that is spent is still to be worked out.

The above were her points when talking to our group as a whole. However, in the meeting with her constituents in her office, she did an about face, and indicated she was not supportive of PTA's top priorities, and excused herself from the meeting.

Assembly member Rocky Chavez, 76th District

Assembly member Chávez opened by asking everyone to pay attention to the transition from Governor Brown to the new governor. Some things may change, so be vigilant. His message to all parents was to stay involved in your child's education and life.

Prop. 98 is tied to the general fund and is getting as much funding this year that it will ever get. We should look for other ways to increase revenue. Prop 51 (school facilities bond) was approved by the voters, but the governor is releasing the funds slowly. Schools that were built after World War II used the same plans and all look alike. Currently about one-third of the cost of schools is architect fees and state permitting and approval, because each school district has its own style. We could save money by using the same design again.

Career Technical Education (CTE) is a very valuable program and schools need that. UCs are hubs of innovation in our state and they stimulate the economy. But not all kids will go to a UC. We need CTE to train plumbers, electricians, sheet metal workers, carpenters, etc. CTE students graduate high school and can go into an apprentice position, then journeyman, and make very good wages in a few years. Technology is evolving and the world we live in won't be the same, just look at electric cars and technology. Chavez co-authored a bipartisan bill with Assembly Member Patrick O'Donnell, AB1743, would provide \$5 billion in matching funds for districts investing in CTE. Districts should partner with trade unions and industries to help organize and support these programs.

Q: Isn't that bill going back to categoricals? A: No, it's seed money and one time funding that would increase funding outside of Prop 98.

AB2878: He is sponsoring CAPTA's bill to define family engagement. The bill doesn't ask for funding but it may be sent to the Appropriations Committee, where Chavez predicts it will die. Some of the teacher associations don't want parents to be involved at school.

"Nothing we do in Sacramento is more important than the development of a young child to reach their educational potential."

Q: How do we make the UC system more accessible to California students? A: Governor talked about putting UC system online. Chavez supports a better junior college to university matriculation pathway. The issue with out-of-state students coming to California schools is a red herring, because lots of kids from California go out of state too. "I don't think it's good to say my state's better than your state. I think we should recognize the value of diversity."

Q: Why is kindergarten still optional? A: Some parents still don't want to do it. But I agree it's valuable.

Senator Anthony Portantino, 25th District

Senator Portantino spoke passionately about his bill, SB328, which would require middle and high schools to start classes no earlier than 8:30 a.m. Thirty years of research on the brains of teenagers shows that because their levels of melatonin are different they don't fall asleep until 11 p.m. They need 10 hours of sleep and the most valuable sleep is during the early morning. Schools that have switched to

later start times find that test scores, academic performance, attendance and graduation rates go up while obesity, smoking, sexual promiscuity, criminal activity, car accidents and suicide go down. There is no evidence to show that later start times cost districts any money.

CAPTA supports this bill.

The California School Board Association and Assembly Member Patrick O'Donnell (chair of the Assembly Education Committee) are the biggest opponents, arguing that this should be a local control decision. Portantino's response is that this is a public health issue. "We are killing our teenagers by sleep-depriving them."

School districts in Boston, Seattle, San Diego, Fresno, and Davis have changed to later start times and have seen immediate benefits.

What about working parents? There is an assumption that there is a perfect time for every working parents, but someone will always be inconvenienced. Children in working family households, or single parent children, are the most sleep deprived kids and statistically receive the most benefit from the change in start time and additional sleep.

Portantino's research on this subject can be found at <http://sd25.senate.ca.gov/legislation>

School funding: The Senate has a proposal to increase the LCFF base amount by \$2 billion on an ongoing basis. This is a 2.3 percent increase over the governor's proposal. To find out what the increase would mean for your school district, contact tara.mcgee@sen.ca.gov