

Fourth District Legislative Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

MAY 2012

California Prepares for Common Core State Standards

California is preparing to implement the new state standards, and this will create a new set of terms and acronyms for all of us to learn.

The first one is **Common Core State Standards** or **CCSS**. These are the K-12 education standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics that were adopted by 45 states (plus Minnesota, which adopted only the English standards). CCSS will replace the California state academic standards in place since 1997.

Implementing the CCSS will take a number of years and will require new curriculum frameworks, new instructional materials, teacher training and a testing system aligned with the standards.

The new ELA standards include literacy in history/social studies, science and technical subjects. "Students who master the standards will be fluent readers, critical thinkers, informative writers, effective speakers, and engaged listeners," according to the California Department of Education (CDE). "They also will use technology as a source of information and a means of communication."

ELA standards are arranged in four **strands**: reading, writing, language, and speaking and learning. Students will learn all of those strands throughout their schooling, going through a progression of instruction from Kindergarten through 12th grade.

The current state standards for math have been described as "an inch deep and a mile wide." The new CCSS for math cover fewer concepts, but in more depth, and are designed to assure that students understand and can accomplish a mathematical operation before they move on to the next concept.

Some math concepts will shift to different grade levels. For example, adding and subtracting fractions will be taught in fourth grade, instead of third, and probability will be introduced in seventh grade, rather than third.

New textbooks for the CCSS probably won't be complete until 2015. The CDE is developing a list of **supplemental instructional materials** (or **bridge materials**) that schools may use in the meantime.

The CCSS will be assessed through a new testing system being developed with 27 other states in the **SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium**

Calendar of Events

California State PTA Convention

May 9 to 12

Anaheim Convention Center

EdSource Conference

Wednesday, May 9, 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Anaheim Convention Center

PTA Role in Elections

Advocacy Session, 4th District PTA Spring Workshops

Wednesday May 30, 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

National University

Primary Election

Tuesday, June 5

Last date to register to vote: May 21.

(SBAC). Instead of paper-and-pencil tests, students will use computer programs that adjust the difficulty of questions throughout the assessment. A student who answers a question correctly will receive a more challenging item, while an incorrect answer generates an easier question. This presentation of individually tailored questions will quickly identify which skills the students have mastered, according to the CDE.

This new assessment system will be tested from 2012 to 2014. Full implementation is expected in the 2014-15 school year.

More information is available at the following sites:

- www.cde.ca.gov
- www.corestandards.org
- www.smarterbalanced.org

California Education by the Numbers

- Per pupil funding in 2012-13 if cost of living adjustments were funded since 2007-08.....\$6,742
- Actual per pupil funding in 2012-13.....\$5,281
(If the governor's initiative fails: \$4,911)
- Number of teachers in 2007.....300,000
- Number of teachers now260,000
- Number of teachers who could be paid if the federal government fully funded IDEA.....23,000

Source: Ron Bennett, School Services of California

Preliminary Ruling on Prop. 98 Lawsuit Upholds State's Actions

The lawsuit aiming to protect Prop. 98 education funding had a setback recently when a Superior Court judge issued a preliminary ruling that it is legal for the state to shift money out of the state General Fund, thereby reducing the amount of funding designated for public schools.

"Nothing in the language of Prop. 98 or its ballot materials precludes the Legislature from assigning revenue to a special fund that previously had been deposited in the General Fund," wrote Judge Harold Kahn on March 28. He was expected to issue his final ruling within 30 days.

The lawsuit, filed by a coalition of California education groups, contends that the Governor and Legislature acted illegally last year when they agreed to divert \$5.1

million in sales tax revenues to counties to pay for responsibilities that were being shifted to local governments. This reduction in the General Fund reduced the Prop. 98 guarantee for that year by \$2.1 billion.

"There will be no such thing as a minimum guarantee if the state can manipulate it for political purposes," said attorney Deborah Caplan in presenting the case.

Prop. 98 generally guarantees that K-14 public education will receive 40 percent of the General Fund. When money is shifted out of that pie, it reduces the size of the slice that goes to public schools.

If the lawsuit fails, wrote John Fensterwald on TOP-Ed.com, "the Governor and Legislature could create special funds at will to ignore voters' stated priorities by reducing the General Fund and guarantee for schools."

He also predicts that if the suit fails, Governor Brown would use that as a justification to cut \$5 billion from K-14 education if his tax increase initiative fails.

"In that case, Brown is proposing a different manipulation: shifting \$2.4 billion in school construction bond payments from the non-Prop. 98 portion of the General Fund into Prop. 98 — essentially a school funding cut," Fensterwald wrote.

The lawsuit was filed in San Francisco Superior Court by the California School Boards Association, the Association of California School Administrators, and the Los Angeles, San Francisco and Turlock unified school districts.

Fensterwald's article can be found at TOP-Ed.org.

Plan Now for Fall Forums

Many school districts will hold school board elections during the general election in November.

PTA is non-partisan and never supports or opposes candidates for public office. However, PTA should be actively involved in helping voters make informed decisions on school board candidates. Many PTAs do this by hosting candidate forums.

Election information and vote-by-mail ballots will be mailed soon after the school year starts, so if your PTA intends to sponsor a candidate forum in the fall, the time to start planning is now.

Here are some things you can do to get ready:

- Form a committee to organize the forums.
- Review the information on candidate forums in the *California State PTA Toolkit*. (Section 4.3.2)
- Identify and reserve one or more locations and dates for the forums.
- Develop a plan to publicize the events.
- Set up a timeline and assign tasks.
- Estimate costs and include them in your PTA's budget for next year.

Planning ahead will allow you to quickly and efficiently set up your candidate forums in the fall.

More information about holding candidate forums and PTA's role in elections will be presented in the advocacy session at the Fourth District PTA Spring Workshops on May 30 at National University. The advocacy session will be held only in the evening, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

For more information and registration, go to www.fourthdistrictpta.org.

CAPTA Supports Tobacco Tax

California State PTA supports Prop. 29, an initiative that will increase California's cigarette tax by \$1 a pack to fund cancer research and tobacco prevention programs. The initiative is on the June 5 primary election ballot.

"Prop. 29 raises money for cancer research and will help keep kids from smoking. We believe it is important to prevent youth and young adults from starting a harmful habit that impacts everyone," said CAPTA President Carol Kocivar. She also said that the proposition "doesn't reduce school funding by one nickel."

According to a recent report from the US Surgeon General, tobacco companies spend almost \$30 million a day on advertising and marketing. The report also states that more than 600,000 middle school students and 3 million high school students smoke cigarettes. Furthermore, 34,000 kids start smoking every year.