

Fourth District PTA Advocacy Communicator



FOURTH DISTRICT PTA ADVOCACY TEAM

MAY 2019

Sacramento takes another look at charter school reform

Charter schools are a hot topic in Sacramento as legislators and education experts consider whether the laws regulating these non-traditional schools should be overhauled. One bill relating to charter schools was quickly passed and signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom. Several others are under consideration. Meanwhile, Tony Thurmond, the new state superintendent, is working with a Charter Task Force to examine the issue in depth.

A charter school is a tax-funded public school that operates separately from a school district and is exempt from many of the state laws and regulations that apply to traditional schools. California authorized the establishment of charter schools in 1992 as an experiment designed to offer alternatives to public schools and provide opportunities to explore innovative educational programs that could be brought back to traditional schools.

New charters can be authorized by a school district board of trustees, a county board of education, or the state board of education. Charter applicants who are denied by a district can appeal to the county and then the state. The “authorizer” is expected to provide oversight of the school. Charters must be renewed every five years.

Most of the first charters were existing schools that were converted as a joint effort by school staff and parents. Later, non-profits and businesses began to set up and run charter schools. Some of these schools were set up outside school district boundaries, or were created as “online” schools, making oversight difficult, especially for school districts with smaller administrative staffs.

Before long, unintended consequences arose. When children transferred to newly-created charter schools, state funding followed them, leaving less money for improvements in their home schools. Some charter organizations that were rejected by school districts found easy approval at the county or state level.

Some of the charter school businesses were more interested in making money for the owners than educating children. A number of for-profit charter schools were closed for fiscal mismanagement.

Very small districts facing budget problems discovered they could raise money by approving charter schools, some located in other districts, and then charging those schools for oversight services. The actual oversight

was lax, again leaving the door open for abuses.

In 2018, Gov. Brown signed a law that forbids for-profit organizations from establishing or renewing a charter. Other efforts to reform the system failed in the legislature or were vetoed by the governor.

This year there is renewed interest in making changes. SB126, which requires charter school boards to follow open meeting and transparency laws, was passed by lawmakers and signed by the governor in a matter of weeks.

Other proposed bills are:

Charter School Facts

- In 2017-18, there were 1,254 charter schools in California.
- About 630,000 students (10.3 percent of public school students) attend charter schools.
- About 85 percent of charter schools are start-ups, rather than conversions.
- Charter schools receive 10.5 percent of total funding from the Local Control Funding Formula.

Source: Legislative Analyst's Office

Other proposed bills are:

- **AB 1505**, which would remove the ability of the State Board of Education to approve a charter application that was denied by a local school district or county board of education. It would also allow a district to consider the possible negative financial impact of a charter school on the district when considering a charter application. (California State PTA has a “watch”

position on this bill.)

- **AB 1506**, which would cap the number of charter schools in the state at the number in operation on January 1, 2020. (CAPTA has not yet taken a position on this.)
- **AB 1507**, which would prohibit charter schools from opening outside the boundaries of the school district that approves the charter. (CAPTA supports this bill.)
- **SB 756**, which would prohibit the approval of any new charter school until June 30, 2024, unless specific policies are enacted by January 1, 2020, that would regulate where a charter school can be located, allow school district considerations in approving a charter, and cap the number of charters statewide and in school districts. The Legislative Analyst's Office would be required to produce a report answering specific questions about charter schools. (CAPTA has not yet taken a position on this bill.)

While the lawmakers are working on these bills, Superintendent Tony Thurmond is examining some of the same issues with an 11-member Charter Task Force, which was requested by Gov. Newsom. The group includes school district administrators, members of teacher and school staff unions, and representatives from charter school organizations. They have been meeting regularly and listening to experts with a variety of viewpoints. The final report is due on July 1.

What does the California Healthy Youth Act require?

The California Healthy Youth Act, which requires California school districts to provide comprehensive sexual health education and information about HIV prevention, has stirred up controversy throughout the state, much of it fueled by misperceptions and misinformation.

Prior to the passage of the law (SB 532) in 2015, student participation in sexual education courses was voluntary. At that time, nearly all school districts offered such courses, but there was a lot of variation regarding the particular topics that were covered. In many school districts, students did not participate unless their parents signed an “opt in” permission slip.

SB 532, which was supported by California State PTA, mandates that instruction on sexual health and HIV be provided at least once in high school and once in mid-

Get ready for a new year of advocacy

Advocating for children, families and public education is central to PTA’s mission. Make sure your PTA is ready to participate in this important role next year.

What can you do now to get ready?

- **Make sure your PTA picks an advocacy representative.** This can be an elected office or an appointed position.
- **Attend the Advocacy Session at the Fourth District PTA Annual Spring Workshops on June 1.** The workshop is open to all interested PTA members. To register, go to www.fourthdistrictpta.org/trainingworkshops
- **Educate your advocacy representative about Fourth District PTA resources that make the job easy.** These include this newsletter, talking points to present at PTA meetings, free informative Advocacy Forums, the Advocacy Resource Notebook, a speakers bureau and more!
- **Include advocacy in your PTA budget for next year.**
- **Plan to send a representative to Sacramento Safari,** scheduled for February 24 and 25 in 2020. Include about \$650 in your PTA budget for the trip.

CAPTA Advocacy Conference Call

The next California State PTA advocacy conference call is scheduled for Monday, May 28, at 7 p.m.

Call-in Directions:

- Conference Dial-In Number: 1 (605) 313-4821
- Participant Access Code: 604265#
- To mute or unmute during the session, press *6.

dle school, beginning with the 2019-20 school year. Districts may also offer age-appropriate sexual health education in earlier grades if they choose to do so. Parents can opt out their children from any of the programs.

The law sets out a list of topics that must be covered, but districts determine their own curriculum. In other words, the law says what must be included but not how it is taught.

Instruction and materials must meet a number of guidelines. For example, they must be age-appropriate, medically accurate and objective, and appropriate for use with pupils of all races, genders, sexual orientations, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. They also must affirmatively recognize different sexual orientations and be inclusive of same-sex relationships in discussions; teach about gender, gender expression, gender identity and the harm of negative gender stereotypes; and teach the value of committed relationships such as marriage.

“Instruction and materials shall provide pupils with knowledge and skills for making and implementing healthy decisions about sexuality, including negotiation and refusal skills to assist pupils in overcoming peer pressure and using effective decision-making skills to avoid high-risk activities,” the law states.

Students must also be taught that “abstinence from sexual activity and injection drug use is the only certain way to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted infections and abstinence from sexual intercourse is the only certain way to prevent unintended pregnancy. Instruction shall provide information about the value of delaying sexual activity while also providing medically accurate information on other methods of preventing HIV and other sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy.”

Answers to six questions about the California Healthy Youth Act, and a link to the text of the law, can be found at the Orange County Department of Education website: ocde.us.

LAO offers Cal Facts about schools

Every two years the state Legislative Analyst's Office publishes **Cal Facts**, a visual guide to California with information about the state's economy, revenues, and major program trends presented through a variety of colorful charts.

This year's edition of Cal Facts includes 11 pages about education, including K-12 enrollment trends, funding levels, student achievement data, and information about higher education.

To find Cal Facts, go to:
<https://lao.ca.gov/reports/2018/3905/calfacts-2018.pdf>