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*Advocacy news from the California State PTA Legislation Team*

To learn more about the California State PTA positions on bills currently before the California Legislature, click [HERE](#).

## Spring is here and PTA's legislative activity on behalf of children is in high gear

In Sacramento, policy hearings have begun in the State Capitol and many important bills are moving. Some focus on implementation of the [Local Control Funding Formula \(LCFF\)](#) and the [Local Control and Accountability Plans \(LCAP\)](#), as well as refinements in state testing, which is transitioning to the Smarter Balanced test. We also see bills on computer science as an important curricular element, teacher suspension and dismissal for egregious misconduct, student nutrition, and the continuing discussion of extending transitional kindergarten opportunities for four-year-olds in California.

Meanwhile, state budget discussions with education stakeholders center on the expectation of revenues significantly in excess of forecasts. The governor has called a special session of the legislature to develop a constitutional amendment creating a rainy day reserve, a notion that has drawn mixed reviews. California State PTA will be studying the proposal closely to determine its impact on education. We place a high priority on the repayment of debt owed to schools due to years of state borrowing, and on support for implementation of Common Core State Standards and new testing, especially at this time when schools and districts are just beginning to recover from years of devastating cuts.

As of this writing, [SB 837 \(Steinberg\)](#) has cleared its first legislative hurdle, passing out of the Senate Education Committee. We are pleased that Senator Steinberg amended the bill to address State PTA concerns, thus clearing the way for us to adopt a position of support for it. **SB 837**, which is extraordinarily far-reaching in its scope, cost and effects, is Senator Steinberg's top legislative priority, and is one of the highest profile issues in the legislature this year. The author's office expects the bill to be vigorously debated and amended many times before all is said and done.

PTA's support for **SB 837** is based on our strong and long-held belief in the importance of high quality early education as a "game changer" for children. Research shows that quality early learning can eliminate or at least moderate pre-

literacy deficits that children without these opportunities might otherwise carry with them into kindergarten. Despite years of extensive efforts within K-12 education to close the achievement gap, it still persists.

Now, with the introduction of **SB 837**, California State PTA sees a chance for all of California's children to have the solid start they need to succeed in school. We will continue to work with Senator Steinberg's office as additional important issues are discussed and debated with the goal of achieving the best possible plan for our four-year-olds.

For more information, please contact Director of Legislation, Kathy Moffat at [legislation@capta.org](mailto:legislation@capta.org). For more information on **SB 837**, please contact Family Engagement Advocate, Dianna MacDonald at [dmacdonald@capta.org](mailto:dmacdonald@capta.org).

## **National PTA Legislation Conference, and four important national issues**

California State PTA President Colleen A.R. You and Federal Advocate Brian Bonner represented our association at the recent National PTA Legislative Conference in Arlington, Virginia, just across the river from Capitol Hill. During the conference we attended workshops covering subjects from local advocacy to child nutrition programs. In addition, we received training on how to conduct meetings with our elected representatives. The two days of training led up to the main activity of making visits to our senators and representatives.

President You and Brian Bonner visited the offices of Sen. Diane Feinstein, Sen. Barbara Boxer and Representative Juan Vargas. We also met personally with Representative Julia Brownley. We urged our elected officials to become cosponsors of the [Family Engagement in Education Act](#). We used the School Smarts program as an example of meaningful family engagement programs that would be supported and encouraged by the Family Engagement in Education Act. Representative Vargas is already a cosponsor, and Representative Brownley agreed to become a cosponsor about ten days after our visit. Pictures of our visit were posted to [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

We strongly urge you to join the [PTA Takes Action Network](#) so that you can stay up to date on issues that are important to National PTA. Click [here](#) to join this great advocacy tool.

Here is a current list of high priority legislative issues for National PTA:

- **High-Quality Early Education Programs**

Just as the California State PTA places a high-priority on early education, National PTA urges you to support early education for all students by asking your elected officials in Congress to cosponsor the bipartisan [Strong Start for America's Children Act](#).

- **Support Effective Family Engagement Policy**

The evidence is clear: schools need parents to help close the achievement gap, and PTA stands ready to help! Ask Congress to strengthen family engagement as a cornerstone of the [Elementary and Secondary Education Act](#).

- **Support Improved Access to Mental Health Services in Schools**

Urge your Members of Congress to cosponsor the [Mental Health in Schools Act](#), legislation that has been introduced in the last several Congresses, and would establish a grant program to school districts to expand access to mental health services. By providing vital assistance to utilize innovative and effective community partnerships in training school staff, volunteers, families, and other members of the community learn to recognize the signs of child and adolescent behavioral health problems and refer them for appropriate service.

- **Oppose Vouchers in 2014!**

California State PTA recently issued a [legislative alert](#) to oppose voucher legislation in Congress. Recent proposed legislation would place nearly all federal education funds into vouchers. Both National PTA and California State PTA have long opposed the use of vouchers and tax credits to move money away from public education. Our representatives need to hear from their constituents that these bills are bad policy.

For more information, please contact Federal Advocate, Brian Bonner at [bbonner@capta.org](mailto:bbonner@capta.org).

## PTA supports bill to prevent “double-testing”

[AB 2057 \(Bonilla\)](#) allows schools this year (2013-14) to choose to administer either a pilot test (a test which is similar to the Smarter Balanced tests) or the alternative assessment (the CAPA) given to students with significant cognitive disabilities who cannot participate in the statewide assessment program. It clarifies that the pilot test will not be used as an accountability measure. It prevents schools from double testing their special needs students this year.

We originally took a “watch” position on this bill because it violated the waiver given by the US Department of Education that allows our state to avoid double testing our regular education students. Special education students were not included in the waiver. However, a new amendment has been proposed to take care of this problem. We have therefore changed our position to **SUPPORT**. **AB 2057** has passed the Assembly Education Committee and Assembly Appropriations and is headed for the full Assembly for a third reading.

## Education bills to watch

One of the positions the Legislation Action Committee takes on bills is “watch.” A watch position means that we consider the legislation important, but the bill may not be complete; the author may be considering amendments, or the bill had not been “vetted” completely by the various legislative committees, other education organizations, the State Department of Education, or the State Board of Education.

We have voted to **WATCH** the following education bills:

- **[SB 843 \(Correa\)](#)** – This bill will streamline the dismissal process for teachers accused of serious and egregious conduct by eliminating the 60 day deadline for commencement of the hearing and set a 12-month time limit for completion of the hearing. It will also allow introduction of evidence over four years old, allow notice of dismissal to be served at any time, require the school board to pay the costs of the hearing regardless of the outcome and prohibit a district from entering into an agreement to remove evidence of egregious conduct from personnel files.

Last year we supported **[AB 375 \(Buchanan\)](#)** which had a similar intent as this bill. **AB 375** was vetoed by the Governor. **SB 843** is an attempt to address the concerns the Governor mentioned in his veto message and is sponsored by the California School Boards Association which opposed **AB 375**. This is a very important issue for PTA, and we are watching this bill for amendments. We are hopeful that the educational organizations who are working for and against the bill can come together and find compromises which both groups support. This bill is scheduled to be heard in the Senate Education Committee on April 23.

Recently, Assembly Member Buchanan introduced a new bill, **[AB 215](#)**, supported by the California Teachers Association and by EdVoice, that is also designed to streamline the dismissal process and ensure student safety, while protecting the due process rights of educators. We will be taking up this bill at our next California State PTA Legislation Action meeting later in April.

- **[SB 1185 \(Huff\)](#)** – This bill will protect specialized teachers in career pathway programs from layoffs. It allows schools to exempt these teachers from seniority-based rules. We support career pathways programs and believe in the concept of this bill. We are watching it for future amendments. This bill will be heard in the Senate Education Committee on April 23.

For more information, please contact Education Advocate, Donna Artukovic at [dartukovic@capta.org](mailto:dartukovic@capta.org)

## **OMG – The science of computers**

Our kids’ world is filled with phones and tablets and computers. They spend millions of hours texting and posting and blogging and playing games. These kids may be digital natives yet many do not know the science and math related to

understanding how these technologies actually work.

A slew of bills are under consideration this legislative session to help kids make sense out of the science of computers.

Thus far in the legislative session, the California State PTA is supporting [\*\*AB 2110 \(Ting\)\*\*](#), which would require the State Board of Education to incorporate foundational concepts in computer science into curriculum frameworks. This would integrate basic skills in technology with simple ideas about computational thinking, communication, collaboration, and being responsible citizens in a changing digital world.

Should you have some question about what "computational thinking" means, here is some more info:

- Using technology resources to solve age-appropriate problems;
- Understanding and using basic steps of algorithmic problem solving with computer-free exercises;
- Demonstrating that a string of bits can be used to represent alphanumeric information;
- Recognizing that software is created to control computer operations; and
- Understanding the connections between computer science and other fields.

Got it?

For your further edification, "computers and communication devices" includes understanding the pervasiveness of computers in daily life (...no kiddin...) and identifying factors that distinguish humans from machines. (That, we assume, is once you can separate your child from the computer.)

Among other bills pending in this area are:

- [\*\*AB 1530 \(Chau\)\*\*](#) Model Curriculum Computer Science
- [\*\*AB 1539 \(Hagman\)\*\*](#) Content Standards Computer Science
- [\*\*AB 1540 \(Hagman\)\*\*](#) Concurrent enrollment in secondary school and community college
- [\*\*AB 1764 \(Olsen\)\*\*](#) School Curriculum, mathematics, computer science
- [\*\*SB 1200 \(Padilla\)\*\*](#) Post-secondary education, academic standards

For more information, please contact Education Advocate, Carol Kocivar at [ckocivar@capta.org](mailto:ckocivar@capta.org).

## **State Board of Education receives updates on the Local Control Funding Formula**

On the State Board of Education's (SBE) agenda for March 12, 2014 was an

information item on the [Local Control Funding Formula \(LCFF\) and Local Control and Accountability Plan \(LCAP\)](#).

A presentation by the Merced County Office of Education and the Sylvan Union School District included resources and promising practices. The California Alliance for Arts Education presented their Toolkit intended to highlight the benefits of arts education, and ways schools and districts can integrate the arts into their LCFF and LCAP planning. Oscar Cruz of Families in Schools spoke on the LCFF and LCAP, as did Children Now.

During public testimony, Cecelia Mansfield, California State PTA liaison to the SBE, reported that successful implementation of the LCFF is state PTA's highest organizational priority. We are working hard to inform parents about the LCFF and LCAP. Many new fliers and other resources have been developed and are posted on California State PTA's website at <http://www.capta.org/lcff>, with translations now available in Spanish, Chinese and Russian. PTA leaders are also conducting "train-the-trainer" sessions regionally throughout the state.

In addition, the newly updated [PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships Assessment Guide](#) for California is now available. The guide provides a framework for how families, schools and communities can work together to support student success.

The [PTA National Standards for Family-School Partnerships Assessment Guide](#) is based on extensive research over the past 20 years. It was developed with the guidance and support of prominent education leaders and practitioners in the field of family engagement. It provides specific goals for each of six accepted family engagement standards, as well as indicators for measuring whether those goals are being met.

[Download the complete Assessment Guide.](#)  
[Download the summary of the Guide.](#)

More resources are available at <http://pta.org/nationalstandards>.

California State PTA recommends that every school district's LCAP seek to address each of the standards, and that the various indicators be used to facilitate local conversations among parents and educators about how best to build stronger family-school partnerships and measure progress based on the priorities and needs of the community.

The LCFF offers an historic opportunity to usher in a new era of parent and family engagement in our schools and PTA is excited to be a part of this important effort.

For more information, please contact State Board of Education Liaison, Cecelia Mansfield at [cmansfield@capta.org](mailto:cmansfield@capta.org).

## Please sir, may I have some more?

Whether a student is in elementary, middle or high school, lunch is an integral and very important part of the day. Think of your own meals – a time to eat good food, share conversations with family and friends, laugh at a joke, or make a connection with a new acquaintance. Good things, yet for many students, time limits keep the school lunch from being a great experience.

Many lunch rooms are extremely busy and food service takes up too much of the lunch period. Middle and high school students find activities or disciplinary actions taking place during the lunch period may keep students from eating. For students receiving a free/reduced priced lunch, the limited points of access for their meals may make them choose not to take the school lunch or to avoid eating more fresh fruit and vegetables as required by the [Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act](#). These healthy foods take more time to consume. Think apple vs. applesauce.

Experts suggest people need about 20 minutes to eat their meal once it is served and they are seated. [AB 2449 \(Bocanegra\) Adequate Time to Eat: Lunchtime](#) supports learning and seeks to give students more time to eat lunch. Students would return to class after lunch, having eaten a nutritious meal and ready to think their way through afternoon classes with a longer attention span and no growling bellies. And as a bonus, less food goes to waste. California Food Policy Advocates have some ways to improve the “sit:eat” time without lengthening lunch periods.

California State PTA has taken a support position on the bill and it is moving through the California State Assembly.

For more information please contact Health Advocate, Cathy Hall at [chall@capta.org](mailto:chall@capta.org).

## California State PTA supports program for at-risk youth

[AB 1518 \(Eggman\)](#) addresses the important issues and challenges facing our at-risk youth. The [Military National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program](#) is a 22-week residential program run by the National Guard for at-risk high school students. This bill has a 12-month post-residential mentoring program and focuses on improving life skills, employment potential and college preparation for students aged 16 to 18 years old.

The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program has eight core components. The academies help to develop and demonstrate competence in areas of academic excellence, health and hygiene, job skills, leadership, life coping skills, physical fitness, responsible citizenship, and community service. Currently there are two ChalleNGe programs in California that have an extremely high success rate for at-risk youth.

This bill will allow the program to expand to regions in Northern California and allow

school districts and offices of education to contract with the National Guard to provide this program in their area. PTA believes that to function as a contributing member in a free democratic society, all children and youth should have access and the opportunity to complete their education in a setting conducive to what they need to succeed in school and in life. Having a well-rounded program that includes residency, and a one-year mentoring component, will allow at-risk students to apply these skills for day-to-day living while also receiving the support they desperately need. In order for us to have a thriving economy in California, the issue of California's dropout and graduation rates must be addressed. Added programs, such as the ChalleNGe program, provide an option and an opportunity for students to be successful at school and beyond.

For more information or questions please contact Family Engagement Advocate, Dianna MacDonald at [dmacdonald@capta.org](mailto:dmacdonald@capta.org).

## **California State PTA Legislation Action Committee**

The California State PTA Legislation Action Committee (LAC) meets during the legislative session, and takes action on pending state and federal legislation based on the PTA's priorities and adopted authorities.

The LAC includes the director of legislation, president, president-elect, executive director, vice presidents or representatives from the commissions for communications, community concerns, education, health, family engagement, two district presidents and others as may be appointed by the president. This committee shall meet on call upon the approval of the president.

For more information, please refer to the Advocacy section of the [California State PTA Toolkit](#). Click [here](#) to view currently adopted positions on legislation. For more information or to inquire if a bill is under consideration by the California State PTA, contact the Director of Legislation at [legislation@capta.org](mailto:legislation@capta.org).

**[www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org)**