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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](#).

## It's getting busy in Sacramento – and in Washington, D.C.

As you will be able to tell when you read this issue of our *Sacramento Update*, our legislative representatives are considering bills on a big range of issues that affect kids and schools. You'll find a quick rundown of some key issues here. Don't forget to visit our website's "[Current Legislation](#)" page (found in "Focus Areas" → "Advocacy") to view a full list of the bills that the California State PTA Legislation Team is following, and updates on the status of those bills. And watch your email for [Legislative Alerts](#) as well.

## Long-overdue reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) on the horizon?

In Washington, D.C., there at least *appears* to be progress on the long-awaited reauthorization of the ESEA (formerly known as No Child Left Behind). In the U.S. Senate, the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) was set to mark up the Senate version of ESEA reauthorization during the week of April 13. Click [here](#) for a summary of the bill. Things were moving more slowly in the House of Representatives, however.

On the Senate side, a number of outstanding issues were discussed before a bipartisan version of the bill was announced April 7. The inclusion of early childhood education was a particular focus. The Obama Administration and the ranking Democratic member of the Senate Committee, Patty Murray, wanted to create a new Title for early childhood education while the committee chairman, Lamar Alexander (R-Tennessee), did not. The bipartisan bill before the committee allows some use of Title I funds for early education. Senator Alexander had said he would rather see an examination of all federal early education funds before launching a new federal program.

In other provisions, states would still need to report testing results for subgroups of students including minorities, students from low-income families, English learners

and those with disabilities. States also would still report graduation rates. In a departure from current law, states could create their own accountability systems.

Meanwhile, the House of Representatives Committee on Education and the Workforce had previously marked up a Republican version of ESEA, the Student Success Act. However, a House floor vote was cancelled when committee chairman John Kline (R-Minnesota) concluded that he did not have enough votes to pass the bill. At this point, House leadership has not set their version of ESEA reauthorization for a vote.

National PTA has sponsored the Family Engagement in Education (FEE) Act to improve the capacity of schools to engage the families so their students have a greater chance of success. Ideally, the FEE Act would be included in the bill to reauthorize ESEA. Please ask your representative to become a co-sponsor of the bill.

When you sign up for the [\*\*\*PTA Takes Action Network\*\*\*](#), you can easily reach out to your representative and two senators to urge their action on National PTA-supported positions.

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

## **State funding for school construction is up for debate**

Parents, educators and school leaders all over California are listening intently as leaders in Sacramento debate the future of state assistance for new school construction and existing school modernization.

Last August, the popular [\*\*AB 2235 \(Buchanan\)\*\*](#) — the Kindergarten-University Public Education Facilities Bond Act of 2014 — died despite support from the Superintendent of Public Instruction, California State PTA and a long list of education stakeholders. Even though the bill received no negative votes in six legislative committees, Governor Jerry Brown's opposition to such a bond appearing on the November 2014 ballot was well-known.

The need for a statewide bond persists as state coffers for facilities funding support are virtually dry. Several legislative measures have been introduced this year to put such a bond on a near-future ballot.

- Senator Carol Liu introduced [\*\*SB 114\*\*](#), patterned on Buchanan's 2014 bill.
- Assembly Member Holden introduced two bills on the subject, [\*\*AB 148\*\*](#) to do basically the same thing as the Liu bill, and [\*\*AB 1372\*\*](#), which states the intent of the Legislature to adopt a long-term funding solution for facilities.
- Assembly Education Committee Chair Patrick O'Donnell's [\*\*AB 1088\*\*](#) is currently a spot bill lacking specifics about when the bond should be on the ballot.

- Concurrently, California's Legislative Analyst's Office and the California Department of Finance suggest the role of the state in assisting with facilities improvements should look very different from how it appears now.

In addition, the building industry submitted a ballot initiative in January to the Attorney General's Office for title and summary. This initiative, which would place a bond on the statewide ballot, is now in the signature-gathering phase. California State PTA has not yet conducted an analysis of this potential measure.

Clearly, it will be quite a wide-ranging debate as we continue to study and engage with the various proposals and approaches being put forward to address the critical need for state funding for new and modernized school facilities. California State PTA will be paying close attention to this important issue and keep *Sacramento Update* readers posted.

For more information, please contact Director of Legislation Kathy Moffat at [legislation@capta.org](mailto:legislation@capta.org).

## **Maintaining integrity of Proposition 98 will be vital as state revenue increases**

Thanks to higher-than-expected state revenues and the Proposition 98 minimum guarantee, schools are likely to get some good news about funding when Governor Brown releases the May revision of his 2015-16 budget proposal.

In the first three months of the year, state revenues were already \$1.3 billion above the assumptions in the governor's January budget proposal. Current estimates predict increases between \$2.5 and \$4 billion when all revenues come in.

What does that mean for schools?

Schools should receive an increase in funding both this year and next. Proposition 98 guarantees K-12 and community colleges receive the largest share of the increased revenue. This is crucial to maintain momentum since overall funding for schools is finally on the rise after so many years of cuts. The discussion in the Capitol right now is about just how much the increase for schools will be.

Many non-education groups are lobbying for bigger increases to the non-Prop. 98 side of the budget. The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) has also suggested that the increases in education funding guaranteed by Prop 98 could ultimately mean a loss for other state programs.

The LAO has just come out with a report entitled "[Possible May Revision Scenarios](#)" that discusses the possible negative impacts on non-education programs in the next budget year if schools receive all of the current revenue increases that are guaranteed by Prop 98. The report makes several suggestions related to the calculation of the Prop. 98 guarantee in order to mitigate that situation. California

State PTA and other education groups are advocating that education took most of the cuts during the recession so should now receive most of the increased revenues.

These are just some of the factors that will come into play as the Legislature and governor conclude the budget negotiations for the 2015-16 budget year. The May revision signals the start of serious negotiations and the budget is required to be completed and signed by the end of June.

For more information, please contact Budget & Education Finance Advocate Shayne Silva at [ssilva@capta.org](mailto:ssilva@capta.org).

## **Board of Directors votes to co-sponsor SB 636 to support homeless children, and AB 80 to improve educational and life outcomes for boys and young men of color**

California State PTA is co-sponsoring [Senate Bill 636 \(Liu\)](#), a bill that would combine public and private funds to provide the most basic unmet material needs to homeless children and youth. PTA joins another nonprofit organization, [K to College](#), in sponsoring the bill, which would establish the Homeless Youth Basic Material Needs Assistance Program.

The bill would leverage state and federal funds with matching resources from existing nonprofits to ensure all children and youth identified as homeless in public schools have their basic material needs met so they can attend school on a more equal playing field with their peers. The bill defines basic materials as school supplies, dental supplies, socks and shoes, and hygienic products.

There were 297,617 public school students identified as homeless during the 2013-2014 school year. According to a survey of homeless liaisons representing more than 70 percent of these homeless children and youth, an overwhelming majority did not have their basic material needs met.

Co-sponsor K to College is a nonprofit organization whose goal is to address the unmet material needs of homeless and other impoverished children and adults working toward self-sufficiency. As the executive director of K to College said, "All we are trying to do is get shoes and socks on the feet of homeless children."

Participating nonprofits would be required to provide a 25 percent match for all funds received and need to have a demonstrated ability to provide basic material needs assistance to homeless or low-income youth by working with local education agencies. SB 636 (Liu) is a bill that fulfills the PTA goal of "supporting the needs of vulnerable children."

**UPDATE:** With a 5-0 vote, Senate Health and Human Service Committee members passed SB 636. The bill will now go before the Senate Appropriations Committee for consideration.

California State PTA also is co-sponsoring [\*\*AB 80 \(Campos\)\*\*](#), which would:

- 1) Establish an Interagency Task Force on the Status of Boys and Men of Color as required by the federal initiative, My Brother's Keeper (introduced in February 2014), and create a Task Force Fund
- 2) Improve educational and life outcomes and address the persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color (Black, Hispanic and Native Americans).

The intent of the bill fits well with PTA's mission, priorities and goals and aligns with program and outreach activities this term with groups such as CAAASA, NAACP, CSU Fresno – Center for Leadership Equity and Research (CLEAR) and Univision.

For more information, please contact Community Concerns Advocate Shereen Walter at [swalter@capta.org](mailto:swalter@capta.org), and Family Engagement Advocate Dianna MacDonald at [dmacdonald@capta.org](mailto:dmacdonald@capta.org).

## California State PTA supports vaccination bill

California State PTA supports [\*\*SB 277 \(Pan\)\*\*](#) in eliminating an exemption for required vaccines. Children currently entering the school system or child care must be immunized against various communicable diseases unless they medically cannot receive immunizations, or parents certify that immunization is contrary to their personal beliefs. **SB 277** would eliminate the personal-beliefs exemption.

Both nationally and in California, PTA has been a strong supporter of vaccinations. Beginning in 1925, National PTA was a driving force behind providing check-ups to identify health problems in 5- to 6-year-olds entering school for the first time. This became the main vehicle for immunizing children against diseases. In 1976, California State PTA adopted a resolution on immunization of preschool children and, in 1990, adopted one on the measles, mumps and rubella vaccination.

The members of California State PTA have adopted two resolutions — *Immunization Awareness and Education Programs* and *Measles (Rubeola\*), Mumps and Rubella Vaccinations* — that give the authority to support SB 277.

We know this decision is controversial among some of our members and we took their concerns on family medical choice seriously. We also looked at the following evidence:

- The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention states that immunizations today are extremely safe and one of the most effective public-health measures.
- Rob Ring, the Chief Science officer for "Autism Speaks," an advocacy organization supporting those affected by autism, states, "Over the last two decades, extensive research has asked whether there is any link between

childhood vaccinations and autism. The results of this research are clear: Vaccines do not cause autism. We urge that all children be fully vaccinated.”

A recent *Los Angeles Times* article cited research from Johns Hopkins, MIT and Boston Children’s Hospital showing that the recent spread of measles across Southern California was fueled by the increasing number of vaccine refusals. The more people who refuse vaccines, the more likely it is that highly contagious, preventable diseases will take hold in our communities. On the other hand, if over 96 percent of medically eligible people receive vaccines, our community or “herd” is protected. Herd immunity decreases the possibility that a pathogen can find a human host to infect, thus stopping the spread of disease. This herd immunity protects our youngest, those who medically cannot get vaccinated and those whose immune systems are compromised.

We strengthen the herd and protect the most vulnerable by requiring all medically eligible children to be vaccinated against diseases like measles, mumps, polio and whooping cough before they enter school. It is our public duty to do so.

**UPDATE:** With a 7-2 vote, Senate Education Committee members passed SB 277 to help protect vulnerable children. The bill will now go before the Senate Judiciary Committee for consideration. We’ll keep you posted on its progress, as the bill still faces a long road ahead toward ultimate passage.

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

## California State PTA supports repeal of CalWORKS Maximum Family Grant rule

California State PTA is supporting [SB 23 \(Mitchell\)](#), which would repeal the Maximum Family Grant (MFG) rule in the California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Children (CalWORKs) program. The current rule denies assistance to infants born into needy families by prohibiting parents from receiving a basic needs grant for any child born to the household while any member of the household is receiving assistance through the CalWORKs program.

SB 23 protects newborns’ health and safety while prohibiting the state from inserting itself into the private reproductive and medical decisions of families just because they are poor.

The measure would eliminate the CalWORKs MFG rule, which endangers the health and well-being of infants born into poverty, while purposely limiting the reproductive choices and violating the privacy of poor women. Under this rule, some infants are denied basic needs assistance, which leads to poorer outcomes and ultimately increased costs to the state.



Research indicates that preventing families from receiving basic necessities by reducing welfare benefits can lead to greater family poverty, which in turn contributes to poorer health, developmental and social outcomes for children. Research has shown that children who experience the toxic stress of deep poverty are more likely to experience health and physiological problems than those who do not. These children may be burdened with cognitive deficits and a reduced ability to cope with challenging situations.

At the Early Childhood Education Water Cooler Conference in March, Dr. Judy Cameron stated, "Children who grow up in toxic stress create higher levels of cortisol, epinephrine and norepinephrine even when they are sleeping. Brain architecture is shaped by early life stresses ... **early stress changes the way you see the world.**"

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

## **AB 1369 seeks to make dyslexia more visible to parents and schools**

California State PTA has taken a support position on [AB 1369 \(Frazier\)](#), which would require dyslexia screenings for students in grades K-3 and take other measures to support students with this often invisible disability.

In the early years of schooling, many young people struggle learning to read, write and spell. Often these students, who can be highly intelligent, are dyslexic. There is nothing wrong with their brain; it's just that it takes longer to decode and match letters with sounds. Some students read relatively well at first but in fourth or fifth grade, when more complex language skills are needed, they run into a brick wall.

Dyslexia isn't rare — 15 to 20 percent of the population may have some of the symptoms of dyslexia.

Many children with dyslexia are not initially identified. Parents and teachers just urge these students to try harder, and although the students may be given extra help, it usually does not address the problem. Some pupils are denied assistance because of their higher-level cognitive skills. A Special Education Enrollment by Grade and Disability Statewide Report from the California Department of Education shows early intervention is not taking place and the number of children with dyslexia increases at each grade level. Teachers are not given specific training in identifying dyslexia and a child may toil unnecessarily for many years until the issue becomes clear. Children often give up and may become frustrated and frightened by their inability to do what the other students are doing. They think they are different or stupid.

AB 1369, sponsored by Decoding Dyslexia – California, addresses the evident invisibility of childhood dyslexia. This bill would require dyslexia screening for students in grades K-3. Schools would then have to notify a pupil's parents of an

identified dyslexia dysfunction. In addition, the bill includes a requirement for local in-service teacher training focused on the recognition of dyslexia and teaching methodologies for addressing it. The bill also requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop program guidelines to be used to assist teachers and parents in identifying, providing, evaluating and improving the educational services for dyslexic pupils.

**UPDATE:** On April 22, Assembly Education Committee members passed AB 1369. The bill will now go before the Assembly Appropriations Committee for consideration.

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

## Got P.E.?

That's the question school districts may have to answer since recent lawsuits have helped push the subject of physical education onto the agenda of the California Legislature and California State PTA.

In far too many districts, budget cuts and an emphasis on high-stakes subjects has meant lots of kids have not been getting the physical education minutes required by law.

That's right. Minutes required by law.

Unlike other subjects, the California education code specifies exactly how many minutes of physical education is required.

Want to guess how many minutes are required for grades 1 to 6? Take the quiz:

- A. 30 minutes every day
- B. 200 minutes each 10 school days—including recess
- C. 200 minutes each 10 school days—exclusive of recesses and lunch period.

**The answer is C:** 200 minutes each 10 school days—exclusive of recesses and lunch period.

An article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* summarized a recent lawsuit on this issue:

***"Lawyer plays hardball with school districts over P.E. requirement. Three dozen California school districts are looking to settle an unprecedented class — action lawsuit over the time students spend in gym class — a battle that has cost taxpayers \$1.1 million in fees paid to an Albany attorney, in addition to untold millions in legal costs incurred by the districts."***

Lawsuits frequently bring legislative action. And in this case, California State PTA supports two pending bills: [\*\*AB 1391 \(Gomez\)\*\*](#) and [\*\*AB 412 \(Chavez\)\*\*](#). These bills would extend an existing complaint resolution process and apply it to allegations



that a school district or county office of education failed to provide the minimum amount of physical education (P.E.) instruction for pupils in grades 1 to 6.

And here is just one last quiz!

**Question:**

How many daily minutes of physical education do the U.S. Surgeon General, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Association for Sport and Physical Education recommend?

**Answer:**

A minimum of 30 minutes of physical education, by accredited professional instructors, every school day for every elementary and secondary school student.

- Source: National PTA Resolution on [Physical Education in Schools](#)

You can find more research on the importance of physical education in [Lesson 6.9](#) at [www.Ed100.org](http://www.Ed100.org).

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

## **Hone your advocacy skills at our annual convention April 30 to May 3 in Sacramento**

At the PTA convention in Sacramento, you can hone your advocacy skills and learn more about the issues by attending one or more of the advocacy workshops the Legislation Team is presenting, including:

- Hot Topics in Sacramento
- Creating Powerful Advocacy Leaders: Step-by-Step Strategies
- Advocacy in Action: Learn from PTA Success Stories
- Be A Hero for Arts Education
- Suicide Prevention Begins with Policy – this is both a workshop and a Table Talk

Find out more and [REGISTER TODAY!](#)

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

California State PTA Legislation Action Committee (LAC) meets during the legislative session and takes action on pending state and federal legislation based on 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 [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 California State PTA, contact the director of legislation at [legislation@capta.org](mailto:legislation@capta.org).

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