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## Our Purpose

To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.

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From the Director of Legislation

## PTA launches three-pronged approach to California education funding crisis

By Debbie Look

Director of Legislation

In response to the Governor's budget proposal to cut a further \$2.5 billion from education funding and the ongoing chronic underfunding of California's public schools, California State PTA is undertaking a three-pronged plan for action.

First, we recently launched our **"9 Million Reasons To Speak Up"** advocacy campaign, calling on our members to speak up on behalf of California's more than 9 million children. We are urging PTA members to write letters, call, and visit their state representatives to let them know that further cuts to education and children's services are unacceptable. We will be building public support through letters to the editor, local rallies, and e-mail campaigns to bring about reform to our state budget process, and to emphasize the need to adequately fund education. We invite our members throughout the state to join together for a rally on the steps of the Capitol on Thursday, April 29, during our annual PTA convention. Go to [www.capta.org](http://www.capta.org) for more information.

Secondly, California State PTA is leading a petition drive for the **"Local Control of Local Classrooms Funding Act,"** to qualify this measure for the November 2010 ballot. This would reduce the threshold to pass local school funding measures from the current two-thirds vote to a 55 percent vote, if certain conditions are met. Go to [www.improvedschoolfunding.com](http://www.improvedschoolfunding.com) for more information.

Lastly, we are planning to file a **lawsuit against the state of California.** California State PTA is joining with the California School Boards Association (CSBA) and the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) as principal plaintiffs in a claim that the current system of funding education in the state of California is unconstitutional. We anticipate the case will be filed this spring.

We urge you to speak up for *every child* in California with *one voice* by supporting these efforts.

[Join PTA today!](#)

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*Parcel tax initiative*

## Will PTA be the first to qualify an all-volunteer initiative

*By Debbie Look  
Director of Legislation*

It's a widely accepted fact of political life that qualifying an initiative for the ballot in California cannot be accomplished without using paid signature gatherers. But we're hoping to defy the conventional wisdom and break new ground by relying on volunteer power alone to qualify an initiative for the November 2010 ballot.

California State PTA has partnered with the Californians for Improved School Funding campaign to qualify the "Local Control of Local Classrooms Funding Act" for the November 2010 ballot.

If passed, this measure would make it easier for communities to raise money to support local schools by reducing the threshold to pass a parcel tax from the current two-thirds vote to 55 percent. PTA is mobilizing its almost 1 million volunteer members to collect the 1 million signatures needed by early April.

At our 2008 convention, PTA members overwhelmingly supported a resolution to reduce the parcel tax threshold, so we are excited to support this crucial measure. We do not believe that parcel taxes are the final solution for the chronic underfunding of our schools. However, until Sacramento upholds its responsibility to provide adequate funding for our public schools, a parcel tax is one way that a local community can raise dedicated revenues for specified educational programs. In 2000, California voters passed Proposition 39, which lowered to 55 percent the threshold for passing local education facility bond measures. This measure would bring the parcel tax threshold to the same level.

For more information on the initiative, to sign the petition, or to learn how you can become involved in signature gathering, go to [www.improvedschoolfunding.com](http://www.improvedschoolfunding.com). We need your help now!

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*Education*

## PTA supports exciting new programs for engaging and preparing students for careers and college

*By Nancy Vandell  
Legislative Advocate – Education*

In the midst of tightening budgets, providing a high-caliber education that links learning to careers and college is a priority for the California State PTA. Two efforts with related goals deserve our attention: Career-Technical Education, and Multiple Pathways.

California State PTA has taken a support position on **AB 35 (Furutani)**, a bill that instructs three state agencies to work together to develop a strategic plan for workforce development and career-technical education. California's workforce development training is a loose conglomeration of programs offered by diverse providers, including the California Community Colleges, high school career technical programs, partnership academies, and a variety of private and nonprofit training centers. Currently, there is no coherent plan to educate the many students who leave high school unprepared for meaningful employment or higher education.

The other effort gaining momentum is *Multiple Pathways*, exciting transformational multi-year programs that create a new vision for the organization of high schools. The goal is to create an education that engages and prepares all students for 21<sup>st</sup> century college and careers, and closes the achievement gap. California State PTA is a member of the Coalition for Multiple Pathways, and supported **AB 2648 (Bass)**. This bill required recommendations to the legislature on how best to design and implement a plan that covers four main areas:

- An integrated core academic curriculum
- An integrated core technical curriculum
- A series of work-based learning opportunities
- Student support services.

A draft report has been issued and can be viewed at

[http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/cs/mps/print/htdocs/mps/report\\_draft.htm](http://www.schoolsmovingup.net/cs/mps/print/htdocs/mps/report_draft.htm)

The legislature will respond to the report's recommendations with **AB 2172 (Carter)**, which PTA is watching closely. For more information, see the EdSource report, *Multiple Pathways in California: An Emerging Option for High School Reform*: <http://www.edsource.org/pub/multiplepathways.html> .

Another area we are watching is higher education, currently a priority for the Education Commission. Like K-12 education, California's unparalleled university systems and community colleges are facing huge budget cuts at a time when they are needed more than ever for a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. The Assembly Committee on Higher Education is holding hearings examining what is needed to prepare enough students adequately to compete in the global economy. Watch for more information in future issues of *Sacramento Update*.

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### *Community Concerns*

## Should we be concerned about teen violence?

*By Patty Christiansen*

*Legislative Advocate - Community Concerns*

She was 16 years old and attending her high school homecoming dance when she became a statistic of teen violence. The school courtyard was dark, but she ventured across it anyway to reach the pay phone to call her dad for a ride home. She never made it to the phone.

At midnight, in October 2009, police discovered her, unconscious and in critical

condition, lying naked beneath a cement bench. She had been gang raped for 2 ½ hours, beaten, and left for dead. Reports say that 20 people either participated in or witnessed the rape, **but nobody reported it to authorities.** Existing law mandates that any violent crime against a child 14 years of age or younger be reported to a police officer. This victim was 16, and, therefore, the witnesses to this crime fell under no mandate.

California State PTA has taken a position of support on **SB 840 (Yee)**, a bill that would expand existing law to victims under 18 years of age. Senator Leland Yee's office reports, "It is unconscionable someone could turn a back to a minor being assaulted; this bill is an attempt to reassert the collective duty to protect our children." Certain exemptions from mandated reporting are listed in the bill, including the exemption of children under 12 and co-victims.

**Teen dating violence** is another serious and growing concern throughout California. Although dating, domestic, and sexual violence affects women of all ages, teens and young women are especially vulnerable. Approximately one in three adolescent girls in the United States is a victim of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner.

In a study of California high school pupils, 7 percent of 11<sup>th</sup> graders indicated that they were victims of teenage dating violence within the last 12 months. Digital abuse and "sexting," the electronic distribution of pictures, videos, or text messages that are sexually explicit, are becoming new frontiers for teen dating abuse.

Two legislative resolutions, **ACR 100 (Jones)** and **HR 24 (Galgiani)**, named February 2010 as "National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month." The goal of these resolutions is to raise awareness of and encourage programs in prevention of teen dating violence. California State PTA voted to support both of these resolutions.

Youth violence has always been a problem in the United States, peaking in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as more and more young people began to carry weapons. The good news: The tide is beginning to turn. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, juvenile crime and arrests have dropped dramatically. Considerable progress has been made as youth crime prevention programs have been created and society as a whole has been made more aware.

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### *Parent Involvement*

## **Alcohol and babies: A deadly combination**

*By Michael Butler*

*Legislative Advocate - Parent Involvement*

**Fetal alcohol syndrome**, caused by drinking during pregnancy, is a major cause of developmental disabilities and birth defects in the United States. And it is completely preventable.

Such defects and disabilities are more common than Down syndrome or spina bifida, and are the leading cause of mental retardation. While prenatal alcohol exposure does not automatically result in fetal alcohol syndrome, the United States Surgeon General advises pregnant women to abstain from alcohol use due to the risk of the syndrome.

Exposure to alcohol and other drugs can severely damage the development, structure and functioning of the fetal brain. Nationwide, one in 12 pregnant women reported consuming alcohol; one in 30 said they had engaged in binge drinking.

Studies show that between 40 percent and 80 percent of children who enter child welfare services (such as foster care) are affected by their parents' or caretakers' alcohol and substance abuse.

And substance abuse cuts across all socioeconomic strata; 9 percent of all U.S. children live in a home where one or more parent is chemically dependent on alcohol or illegal drugs. It's likely that the incidence of white, middle income women using alcohol during pregnancy is higher (reaching 10 percent to 12 percent) than that of low-income women.

California State PTA believes that early identification and education of pregnant women regarding use and/or abuse of substances can make a dramatic difference to the outcome of their pregnancies. California State PTA has taken a support position on **AB 1599, (Beall)**, a bill which would allow county funds to be used as the state match to draw down Medi-Cal federal funding for brief screening and intervention programs targeted toward low-income women at risk of alcohol and drug abuse during pregnancy.

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### *Health*

## Governor takes action to fight obesity in children

*By Shayne Silva  
Legislative Advocate - Health*

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger announced his commitment to fight childhood obesity at his *Governor's 2010 Summit on Health, Nutrition and Obesity: Actions for Healthy Living*. During the conference, he stated that his top priorities are the health and well-being of our children and all Californians.

There is growing data to support the idea that physical well-being contributes to educational success. With this in mind, the Governor has proposed several bills to support the fight against obesity.

**SB 1413 (Leno)** requires the availability of fresh, free drinking water in school cafeterias. Previous legislation authored by then-Assembly Member Leno, **AB 2704**, though similar in purpose and supported by PTA, was vetoed by the Governor.

**SB 1255 (Padilla)** would eliminate electrolyte replacement beverages, commonly known as "sports drinks," from being sold during the day in public middle and high schools. The increased consumption of these drinks in schools is believed to contribute to increases in diabetes and obesity in children.

**AB 2705 (Hall)** would require that 50 percent of the time that children participate in public school physical education classes be devoted to moderate to vigorous exercise, and that after-school programs, under the After School

Education and Safety Program, provide 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise daily to participating children.

We welcome the Governor's focus on childhood obesity, which is one of the California State PTA Health Commission's priorities, and we will be working during this session of the legislature to facilitate the passage of these bills into law.

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*Education*

## STEM: A critical new acronym for California's future

*By Patty Scriptor*

*Legislative Advocate - Education*

Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is an acronym that draws strong statements, such as the following: "Without strong steps to improve support for STEM, the quality of life in California is threatened."

This observation comes from "**High Stakes: STEM Education,**" a November 2008 report, which also states that improving STEM education will be a key component for future economic prosperity in this state.

But the statistics are not promising. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2006):

- Fewer than one-third of U.S. eighth-grade students performed at or above the "proficient" level in mathematics, with "proficiency" defined as the ability to exhibit competence with subject matter.
- In 2000, 93 percent of students in grades five through eight were taught physical science by a teacher who had not majored in the physical sciences (chemistry, geology, general science or physics).
- In 1970, the U.S. produced more than 50 percent of the world's science and engineering doctorates. If current trends continue, by 2010 the U.S. will produce only about 15 percent.

In order to reverse these trends, attention, resources and efforts must be focused on developing a plan to increase the number of students taking STEM courses, the number of highly qualified teachers teaching these subjects, and the number of graduates in these fields. [The America Competes Act \(part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009\)](#), states: "A well-educated population is essential to retaining America's competitiveness in the global economy," and calls for the development of programs that integrate STEM best practices throughout all levels of education, from elementary through postsecondary. Legislation recently passed as part of California's Race to the Top efforts also called for establishing alternative pathways to teacher credentialing in STEM subject areas, and increasing the emphasis on science and math in the calculation of California's Academic Performance Index (API) with the goal of identifying STEM as an education priority in the state.

All of this and more will be required to shift the perception that STEM is reserved for advanced, college-bound students. The projected 6 million potential STEM job openings will be available not just to scientists and

engineers with advanced degrees, but also to technicians prepared with career-technical education. However, fewer high school students are interested in preparing for and obtaining degrees in STEM fields. Ongoing cuts to education have meant the loss of exciting hands-on, rich, science and math lab curriculum, and more students taking classes from teachers working outside their subjects of expertise, teaching with a lack of confidence in their math and science skills.

Due to globalization, our workforce is competing with workers who are just a mouse click away. California is losing its competitive edge, in part, because of a lack of coordinated investment in STEM education to produce a workforce that supports both technical industries and research.

It is clear that a lack of investment in STEM will result in a continued economic downturn for California, as we fail to produce well-trained citizens who can compete in the global economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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*California budget*

## Proposition 58 Special Session bills sent to Governor

*By Cecelia Mansfield*

*Legislative Advocate - Budget and Education Finance*

On Monday, February 22, the Proposition 58 Special Legislative Session called by the Governor in response to California's fiscal crisis passed a set of measures to narrow the state's budget gap. Actions taken in the 8<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Session met the requirements of Proposition 58 that the Legislature act within 45 days of the Governor's declaration of a fiscal emergency.

Education advocates were surprised by the passage of **ABX8 5** at virtually the last minute by both houses. The bill would defer \$2.5 billion in payments to schools, beginning July 2010. The deferrals will cost school districts approximately \$15 million to secure loans needed to bridge the cash gap. The package that was sent to the Governor contained no Proposition 98 actions other than these cash deferrals.

Many remaining issues will be covered through the normal budget process, including the proposed gas tax swap and deep cuts to reduce the Healthy Families Program.

The California State PTA is studying the following bills dealing with education finance.

**AB 142 (Hayashi)** is an urgency measure that proposes changes to the California State Lottery. It proposes to enhance funding benefits for education by increasing the prize payments for specified lottery games. Unlike previous legislation, AB 142 contains a trigger that would revert to current law if anticipated increases in benefits to schools do not materialize. This bill is supported by the Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell.

**AB 2335**, authored by Assembly member **Brownley**, would require the

Superintendent of Public Instruction to study topics relating to a school-based financial reporting system, and to make recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor by December 1, 2011. AB 2335 is similar to last year's **AB 8 (Brownley)** that was vetoed by the Governor.

**AB 2082**, introduced by the Assembly Committee on Education, would require that statutes creating a reimbursable state mandate on school districts be periodically reviewed, and that the Legislature consider recommendations on whether those statutes should be amended, repealed, or remain unchanged.

**AB 2090 (Coto)** proposes a study relating to weighted pupil funding formulas.

**AJR 31 (Buchanan)** is a resolution to urge Congress and the President of the U.S. to enact **H.R. 1102** or one of the other pending bills that would fully fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

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### *Federal issues*

## Reauthorization of ESEA - We need it now!

*By Kayla Plourde  
Federal Advocate*

**The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)** is overdue for reauthorization, and in its current state, continues to punish California's schools without giving them the tools to provide the education our children need.

ESEA was originally signed into law in 1965. It is best known for its first chapter, Title I, which designates increased funding to schools and districts with low-income students. As time has passed, parent involvement components have been added and removed. In 1994, a more comprehensive model of parental involvement in education was added to the law, including a requirement that Title I schools spend at least 1 percent of their Title I funds on parent involvement.

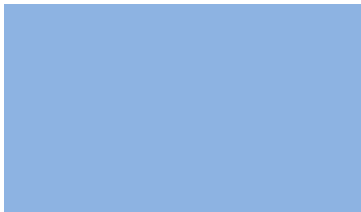
The newest version of ESEA, the **No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)**, which expired in 2007, provided even more comprehensive policies on parent involvement in education. In fact, parents are mentioned more than 300 times in the law! It set requirements for school collaboration with parents, and authorized Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs). Two PIRCs are now operating in California.

The PIRC program has recently undergone a substantial reorganization, expanding the centers' role to act as statewide centers for leadership, technical support, and financial support for parent involvement. The current administration's budget proposal for fiscal year 2011 removes the only federal funding for PIRCs. Visit

<http://capwiz.com/npta2/issues/alert/?alertid=14648931> to send an e-mail to President Obama, the U.S. Secretary of Education, your Senator, and your House Representative to express your concern about losing PIRCs.

Unfortunately, NCLB also has provisions that push California's schools and districts toward academic failure, with punitive consequences for failure to meet increasing performance targets.

ESEA was expected to come up for reauthorization in January 2010, but this legislation shows no signs of moving through Congress at this point. Stakeholders anticipate that the current administration will propose revisions



that emphasize improving teacher effectiveness and distribution, ensuring rigorous use of student data, turning around the lowest-performing schools, and implementing national core academic standards and student assessments.

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