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Governor Declares 2008 Year of Education Reform

Batten down the hatches, fasten your seat belts and hang on. A perfect storm may be brewing in Sacramento! Since the release last spring of the Stanford University studies *Getting Down to Facts* and the declaration by the Governor that 2008 would be the “Year of Education Reform,” there has been a flood of activity surrounding educational reform. Numerous committees, commissions, organizations, coalitions and elected officials are looking at this issue.

Spearheading the Governor’s effort is the Committee on Education Excellence. The Governor requested the committee to look at four interrelated K-12 policy issues; governance, finance, teacher recruitment and training and preparation and retention of school administrators. Recently the committee hosted a series of community forums around the state seeking input from local communities on ways to improve K-12 education in California. The committee’s report was to be released in mid-October. Now the release date is rumored to be sometime in December. For additional information about the work of the committee go to the Committee’s website <http://www.everychildprepared.org/>.

Also, providing the Governor with insight about possible reforms to educational policy issues is Secretary of Education David Long. Secretary Long held several regional meetings throughout California. Attendees were asked to respond to a series of

questions relating to policy issues that affect public schools in California.

The State PTA was represented at the Committee on Education Excellence forums and Secretary of Education’s regional meetings. PTA also submitted a document, “What Matters Most for Students” identifying PTA priorities that were developed as a guide to help shape future school finance and reform efforts in the state to both entities.

Concern that *Getting Down to Facts* might be put on a shelf and forgotten led the foundations that funded the research to ask EdSource to host an Education Policy Convening. (See box on page 3.) PTA submitted a policy brief outlining parents’ priorities for school finance and education reform. It was one of forty-seven briefs reflecting the opinions and perspectives related to education reform issues submitted by organizations. President Pam Brady was also invited to participate in one of the panels, Community Priorities, along with CSBA and PICO California.

Other events related to educational reform in California include State Superintendent of Instruction Jack O’Connell’s upcoming Achievement Gap Summit, as well as hearings and forums hosted by members of the Assembly and Senate.

Will 2008 be the year of Educational Reform or at least the beginning of a serious, calm, rational dis-

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cussion about the K-12 education system in California? Only time will tell.

The magnitude of the effort suggests that this is going to be a multi-year effort. Building consensus among state policymakers, business and community leaders, education leaders and parents will require time and effort. If efforts underway to develop the consensus among the various stakeholders fail, there is truly a perfect storm brewing in Sacramento!

Pat Dingsdale
Director of Legislation

Preschool on Education Reform Agenda

In the wake of the defeat of the Preschool For All Initiative (Proposition 82, June 2006), only modest progress has been made in expanding quality preschool access for California's pre-kindergarten age children.

Last year, the Governor signaled his willingness to give preschool expansion a certain degree of priority through his Targeted Preschool Initiative. Chapter, Statutes of 2006 (AB 172, Chan) implemented Governor Schwarzenegger's May 2006 proposal to invest \$50 million in ongoing Proposition 98 monies to increase preschool enrollment. This program, commonly referred to as Pre-Kindergarten and Family Literacy (PKFL) program, will provide up to 12,667 new preschool slots targeted toward low-income families located in enrollment areas of elementary schools in the lowest three deciles of the 2005 Academic Performance Index. Included in the funding is a new family literacy component designed to teach parents the skills needed to help their children succeed in school. Last year's legislation also provided \$5 million in one time money for wrap around child care services for this targeted preschool program.

With the addition of the slots and funding provided by the Governor's Targeted Preschool initiative, the total funding for state preschool was up to almost \$400 million and the total participation was up to approximately 110,000 children in 2006-07.

The Governor and Legislature continued to demonstrate a commitment to preschool by agreeing in the recently enacted 07/08 state budget to continue the \$50 million ongoing funding for PKFL and for the wrap-around program funding as ongoing rather

than one-time funding. The budget also includes a 4.5 percent increase in per-child funding for all child development programs, including state pre-kindergarten.

Looking forward to 2008, California State PTA has taken **Support** positions on two important preschool bills that are still working their way through the legislature.

AB 571, authored by Assembly Member **Dave Jones**, would require access to voluntary state preschool programs for all three- and four-year-old children from low-income families by 2011-12 and would establish a system of professional development for pre-kindergarten teachers and staff.

AB 1236, (**Mullin**) would move up the date by three months by which a child must be five years old to enroll in kindergarten and 6 years old to enroll in first grade beginning in 2011-12. It would also make kindergarten compulsory, beginning in 2010-11 and establish the Kindergarten Readiness Program, (a preschool program) beginning in 2011-12.

Preschool advocates believe that pre-kindergarten programs will be part of the discussion on education reform in 2008 and will be shaped by themes that include targeted populations, budgetary constraints, and competition for Proposition 98 dollars.

Michael Butler
Parent Involvement Advocate

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A California Education Policy Convening: *Getting from Facts to Policy*

On October 19, 2007 EdSource hosted a day-long forum for the presentation and sharing of research-based education policy options submitted by a broad and diverse range of K-12 organization and opinion leaders in California.

Much recent research, including the "Getting Down to Facts" studies overseen by Stanford University, have identified factors across the state that hinder school success and ultimately, student outcomes. Because the governor has deemed 2008 the "Year of Education Reform," the Convening aimed to stimulate dialogue about these factors in order to increase understanding and facilitate the work of policymakers developing comprehensive, meaningful, research-based policy reforms.

The over 350 attendees included top-level business and civic leaders, researchers, education professionals, community and reform advocates, and state officials. The Convening focused on research-based policy options related to: education governance, school finance, personnel and leadership, and education data systems.

The 47 ground-breaking policy briefs submitted for this Convening are now available on the EdSource California School Finance website, at <http://www.californiaschoolfinance.org/tabid/169/Default.aspx>. The briefs will be searchable by keyword and downloadable individually.

In 2007 State lawmakers introduced 3,063 pieces of legislation. This includes 2,802 regular bills, 22 constitutional amendments and 239 resolutions. (The California State PTA took position on 133 of these bills.) 1,055 bills made it through the legislative process and to the Governor's desk. October 14 was the deadline for the Governor to sign or veto bills.

Education Advocates Divide Bills

To better handle the bill load in the area of education, education bills have been divided between the three Education Advocates as follows:

Brian Bonner

School Finance/Equalization
School Facilities
School Governance
Charter Schools
Postsecondary/Higher Education
Class Size Reduction

Cecelia Mansfield

Student Assessment/Accountability/Standards
Low Performing Schools
Curriculum/Instructional Materials
Teacher Preparation/Professional Development
Libraries

Suzan Solomon

Arts Education
Special Education
Career Technical Education
Education Technology
English Language Learners
Counseling

Governor Signs Charter Schools, College Opportunity Bills, Vetoes California Dream Act

During the first year of the 2007-08 session of the legislature, the Legislation Action Committee took positions on 19 bills affecting policy areas assigned to me. The Governor signed four of those bills and vetoed one. Six bills are "two-year" bills that must move out of the house of origin by January 31, 2008, and the remaining bills died.

SB 170 (Denham) was signed in July. It extends the sunset date until June 30, 2012 of the provision in the Education Code that authorizes a school district in which a parent or legal guardian of a student is employed to allow the pupil to attend a school in that district.

SB 537 (Simitian) requires the California Research Bureau (CRB) to prepare a report on the key elements and actual costs of charter school oversight in consultation with an advisory panel to ensure technical accuracy. The California State PTA supported SB 537 because it would provide data needed

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to assure that chartering agencies have consistent oversight criteria and sufficient resources to provide oversight of charter school performance.

AB 428 (Carter) requires each school district that has high schools to include information about UC-CSU college entrance requirements, including a list of Internet Web sites that offer information about college admission requirements and courses satisfying those requirements, as well as information about meeting with school counselors. The California State PTA supported the bill because it will include parents/guardians in decisions that affect the education and well-being of their children, and promote their involvement in their children's education and schools.

AB 668 (Portantino) establishes a process to inform all community college enrollees about financial aid opportunities. California Community College (CCC) students participate in the Federal Pell Grant student aid program at a rate far below community college students in other states. Improving access to information on postsecondary financial aid should help lower the barriers to postsecondary that financial hardships create.

Senator Gil Cedillo amended the language of the **California Dream Act**, introduced as **SB 160** into **SB 1** late in the session. This process, known as "gut and amend" is common during the days prior to adjournment. The bill would have allowed undocumented students who are eligible for in-state fees and tuition to apply for state financial aid available to other in-state California students. The Governor issued the following veto message: *"At a time when segments of California public higher education, the University of California and the California State University, are raising fees on all students attending college in order to maintain the quality of education provided, it would not be prudent to place additional strain on the General Fund to accord the new benefit of providing state subsidized financial aid to students without lawful immigration status."*

It is expected that 2008 will bring sweeping and significant legislative proposals. At this point, it is not clear how the Legislature will handle the two-year bills supported by the California State PTA as the Legislature begins to digest the proposals for education reform.

Brian Bonner
Education Advocate

Bill Allowing Students Classroom Credit for Service as Precinct Workers Vetoed Again

AB 466 (Hancock) would have allowed students to serve as a members of a local precinct board without the school district losing ADA, was vetoed by the Governor. PTA supported AB 466 and two previous bills, also vetoed. The Governor's veto message follows: *"I vetoed substantively similar bills in prior years. This bill would allow schools to receive funding for times when students are volunteering as elections precinct board members through independent study programs. While civic and other volunteer activities can offer many educational opportunities to students, these activities should be in addition to, and not in place of, valuable classroom learning time with a teacher. Independent study programs are intended to help schools address the needs of students who are unable to attend school in a traditional classroom setting for an extended period of time, not to be used as means to circumvent the fulfillment of criteria for instruction required in order to receive school funding."*

Suzan Solomon
Education Advocate

School Accountability Report Card Reform Bill Signed Into Law

AB 1061 (Mullin), Chapter 530, Statutes of 2007, was signed by the Governor on October 12. **SB 835 (Scott)**, a bill similar to AB 1061, was dropped earlier by the author. Senators Scott and Romero became Principal Co-authors on AB 1061.

AB 1061 deletes 13 items from the list of information that schools and school districts are required to report in the School Accountability Report Card. These items are either obsolete, vary little across time or schools, or are reported in more detail in information available directly from the Department of Education (CDE) or the University of California. It also requires the Department of Education to report on the feasibility of combining elements and on alternatives for improving its usability and readability by February 1, 2008.

Making the SARC more useful to parents and the community was one of PTA's highest priorities for this legislative session.

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Dropout Prevention, CAHSEE Bills

Two of the four bills introduced by Senator Darrel Steinberg in response to the dropout crisis in California were signed, **SB 219, Chapter 731, Statutes of 2007**, and **SB 405, Chapter 732, Statutes of 2007**. The chaptered version of **SB 219** would direct the SPI and the SBE to modify the Academic Performance Index (API) to include information on students most at risk of dropping out. Another bill that proposed incorporating multiple measures into the API, **AB 400 (Nunez)**, was vetoed. PTA supports basing the accountability system on a variety of indicators in addition to test scores.

SB 405, introduced as the College and Career Opportunity Act, was amended to establish the Middle and High School Supplemental Counseling Program to provide additional counseling services to pupils in grades 7 to 12.

Another important bill signed in the final days is **AB 347 (Nava), Chapter 526, Statutes of 2007**. It implements the terms of the settlement of *Valenzuela v. O'Connell* and requires school districts to provide intensive instruction to pupils who have not passed the high school exit examination by the end of twelfth grade for up to two years. Two other CAHSEE bills supported by PTA, **AB 1379 (Brownley)** and **SB 123 (Romero)**, were vetoed.

Sixteen of my twenty-nine bills on which PTA took a position went to the Governor. Nine were signed and seven were vetoed. The remaining bills either died or have become two-year bills.

Cecelia Mansfield
Education Advocate

Traffic Safety Bills Signed

Three traffic safety bills strongly supported by PTA were signed by the Governor. **AB 321 (Nava)** allows cities or counties to set school zone speed limits at 15 mph within 500 feet of schools in residential areas. PTA believes this is a very important element in protecting the lives and safety of children traveling to and from school, since there is a definite link between vehicle speed and severity of injuries to pedestrians. Pedestrian fatalities are the third leading cause of injury death for children under 15.

AB 57 (Soto) establishes a process for the allocation of federal and state funding for the "Safe Routes to School" program. When safe routes to school exist, children are encouraged to walk or bike to school and, thereby, improve their health and well-being.

SB 33 (Simitian) will prohibit youth under 18 from using any type of cell phone or wireless device while driving, effective July 1, 2008. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of teen fatalities, accounting for 44 per cent of teen deaths. Teen drivers are significantly more likely to be distracted than adult drivers by cell phone use.

Anti-discrimination Measures Signed

SB 518 (Migden) establishes the "Youth Bill of Rights" specifying 15 rights for incarcerated youth, including protection from discrimination. The bill specifies that all juvenile justice facilities must ensure the safety and dignity of all youth in their care and provide care, placement and services to youth without discrimination.

SB 777 (Kuehl) revises the list of prohibited bases of discrimination and kinds of prohibited instruction, activities and instructional materials in the Education Code and, instead, refers to the definition of protected characteristics contained in the Penal Code's definition of hate crimes. PTA supported this bill as we believe in equal rights and protection for all youth. We believe that every child is entitled to a safe and positive school climate.

Governor Vetoes Two Child Safety Bills

The Governor vetoed two important child safety bills supported by PTA. **AB 81 (Torricco)** would have expanded the Safe Surrender Law provisions to allow a parent to voluntarily surrender custody of a child up to seven days old to a safe surrender site. With this veto, the current 72-hour Safe Surrender provisions will continue to apply. PTA believes that the extended time frame would save the lives of more newborns.

The Governor also vetoed **AB 881 (Mullin)** that would have required children eight and under to ride in booster seats in the rear seat of vehicles. Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death and disability in children over the age of one year. Using a booster seat with a seat belt, rather than a seat belt alone, reduces a child's risk of injury by 59 per cent. Similarly, a child's risk of injury is reduced by 33 per cent when the child is seated in the rear seat rather than the front seat of a vehicle. In his veto message, the Governor stated that it is more important to educate parents on the proper use of seat belts and child restraint systems, rather than to pass new laws.

Debbie Look
Community Concerns Advocate

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Year of Health Care Reform?

Early in 2007 the Governor declared 2007 the year of health care reform. By the end of the regular session in September nothing had been accomplished, and the Governor called a special legislative session. The Assembly Health Committee will hold hearings in late October on the Governor's proposal. In the meantime **AB 1 (Laird)**, a bill supported by PTA, passed both houses of the legislature. AB 1 would provide health care for children whose families make 300 per cent of the poverty line or below. The author requested that it become a 2-year bill.

Six bills PTA supported in the area of children's health were signed by the Governor. **AB 105 (Lieu)** would prohibit children under 14 from using ultraviolet tanning facilities and require written consent from a parent for children 14-18 to use such facilities. **AB 629 (Brownley)** requires groups that receive state grants for sexual health education programs to follow the same guidelines as public schools when educating children in sexual health.

The Governor vetoed **SB 120 (Padilla)** which PTA supported. It would have required chain restaurants to post nutritional information on menu and menu boards. In his veto the Governor states, "While I support providing people information to help them make healthy choices, this bill is impractical." Thanks to all of you who responded to the PTA legislation alert on this bill.

Shayne Silva
Health Advocate

DC Corner

SCHIP Veto Stands

On October 18 the House failed to reach the required two-thirds vote to override the October 3 presidential veto of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) bill. California State PTA President Pam Brady sent a letter to each California Congressional delegate requesting support for uninsured children, and PTA members responded to two Legislation Alerts by contacting their federal representatives. The Senate had enough votes to override the veto, but the House was 13 votes short. Without reauthorization, currently enrolled children will lose coverage. Lawmakers have pledged to quickly craft new bipartisan legislation to gain the required approval for submittal to the President, but the power struggle continues in Washington DC between Congress and the Administration. PTA will watch this

issue closely and alert our members when action is required.

The bill vetoed SCHIP bill would have expanded the program by spending \$35 billion over five years, paid for by a 61-cent cigarette tax increase, and enrolled another 4 million uninsured children by 2012. Today the program enrolls nearly 6.6 million children nationwide, 1.1 million in California, from low-income families not poor enough to qualify for Medicaid. Under the Administration's SCHIP plan, 200,000 to 400,000 California children would lose coverage by 2008.

Administrative Cut to Special Education

California public school districts stand to lose \$103 million in 2008-2009 federal funding for special education mandated services required in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act under a proposal presented by the Administration on September 7. Special education students receive health care services critical for their educational success for speech, physical or occupational therapy or some other medical service that assists a child's education. Current regulations permit reimbursement for transportation and services under Medicaid. Under the proposal schools would still be required to provide the services but receive no reimbursement. Nationally the loss to public education is projected to be \$635 million in the 2008-2009 school year. The public can comment on the proposed rule, CMS-2287-P, at www.cms.hhs.gov/eRulemaking_until_Nov_6.

No Child Left Behind Reauthorization

The House Education and Labor Committee posted three drafts and two summaries of their intent to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001, and some thoughtful suggestions are surfacing. The committee is marking up the bill and should introduce it on the floor of the House mid-October. The Senate, as of this writing, has not introduced its legislation or a draft, so the intent for early reauthorization of the Act and some relief to States and school districts may be delayed.

National PTA provided comments on the drafts to the House Committee on September 5 and 17, and California State PTA provided input at an Assembly Education Committee hearing on October 5 on the topics of Parent Involvement, Funding, and School Safety.

Visit www.capta.org/advocacy or the *new* Federal Legislation/NCLB webpage for late breaking news. Visit National PTA's www.pta.org, Issues and Action webpage, NCLB subpage.

Linda Mayo
Federal Advocate