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## Our Purpose

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

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## Worth Mentioning

Resources for more information on the budget:

- Jo A.S. Loss' [statement](#) in response to the Governor's

From the Director of Legislation

## Attend the California State PTA Legislation Conference

*Your voice is needed now more than ever!*

By Debbie Look  
Director of Legislation

The ever-increasing economic pressures and rising state budget deficit are continuing to undercut public education and critical children's services in California. Our education system, once among the top in the nation, is floundering. California ranks among the bottom five states in the per-student number of teachers, counselors, librarians and school principals. The more than 9 million children of California need all of us to speak up on their behalf. We must ensure that our elected officials understand the critical importance of investing in children, to ensure not only their future, but the economic prosperity of our state.

Join us in Sacramento February 7-8 for the California State PTA Legislation Conference. You'll hear directly from key experts about the latest on the state budget, education reform efforts, and the importance of investing in the whole child. We'll be talking about how PTA plans to take action on key issues affecting public education and the children and families of California.

You'll also hear about the legislative agenda of the newly elected Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Torlakson. Find out how he hopes to shape the public education system in California in the coming years.

Visit your legislators on the second day of the conference to let them know that you and the people in your community care about the future of public education and value the investments that we make now in our children and our schools.

This is especially important this year. There are many new members of the Assembly and Senate who were elected this past November; they may not be familiar with PTA and the work that we do. We must ensure that every member of the Legislature hears our message as they prepare to cast critical votes on the state budget and accompanying revenue measures. Help us to carry that message to them!

With the information we will provide, the networking with your PTA colleagues from around the state, and the conversations with your legislators, you'll go

proposed budget.

- California Budget Project: [www.cbp.org](http://www.cbp.org).
- EdSource: [www.edsource.org](http://www.edsource.org).

## Become a PTA Member



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home inspired and armed with an action plan to advocate for the funding that is essential to provide the education and services children in your community rely on.

Click [here](#) to sign up today!

State Budget

## Hearings begin on Governor's 2011-12 budget proposal

By Cecelia Mansfield

Education and Budget Advocate

The Legislature has already held hearings on Governor Brown's proposed 2011-12 budget, which was released January 10. The first hearings on January 13 provided the Assembly and Senate budget committees with an overview of the proposal, presented by the Department of Finance and the Legislative Analyst. Budget subcommittees began their work the week of January 24, much earlier than usual, in order to meet the goal of having a legislative framework for implementation of the Governor's budget proposals in place by March 1, in preparation for a statewide special election in June. This framework will include a comprehensive realignment of how and where a wide range of services will be delivered.

The Governor's Proposed Budget can be found at [www.ebudget.ca.gov](http://www.ebudget.ca.gov). The Legislative Analyst's Office Budget Overview can be found at [www.lao.ca.gov](http://www.lao.ca.gov).

The Governor proposes \$26.4 billion in solutions to close the projected shortfall for the remaining months of the current fiscal year and for the 2011-12 fiscal year that begins on July 1. The proposal also includes provisions for a \$1 billion budget reserve. In a departure from the recent past, the administration has attempted to balance cuts with additional revenues. However, the Governor's proposal makes deep cuts to higher education, and to health and human service programs, including CalWORKs and Healthy Families. Despite efforts to limit cuts to K-12 education, the budget proposes to defer into 2012-13 the payment of \$2 billion that schools are supposed to receive in 2011-12, creating an extreme hardship for many school districts. Over the last several years alone, more than \$7 billion in funding owed to K-12 students has already been deferred.

Some of the Governor's proposals to generate needed revenues would phase out community redevelopment funds, eliminate the enterprise zone program, extend temporary tax increases enacted in 2009, and shift funds raised by Proposition 10 of 1998. The last two proposals would be submitted to the voters for approval in June of this year.

Achieving the two-thirds vote of the Legislature needed to place the proposed five-year extension of the temporary tax increases on a statewide ballot will be challenging, since most Republican members of the Legislature have indicated they will not provide the necessary votes. Extending the existing temporary taxes is crucial, to avoid even deeper cuts, totaling at least \$10 billion. Without these additional revenues, school funding will likely be cut by an additional \$2 billion, or approximately \$335 per student.

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Education

## Budget deficit continues to threaten crucial programs for students

By Nancy Vandell  
Education Advocate

As legislators begin work on the new two-year bill cycle, the overwhelming budget deficit hangs like a cloud over attempts for needed reforms. How will the deficit affect higher education or the linked learning programs used at the high school level? What effect will the deficit have on the arts, physical education and class size reduction?

In these early weeks of the legislative season, several bills focus on access to higher education. This is an area of interest to the PTA as closing the achievement gap is a priority for our association, and the rate at which underrepresented minority students receive some form of higher education is one measure of that gap. Last year, the Legislature began work on updating the *Master Plan for Higher Education*. A key component of the updated plan is preparing all students for the 21<sup>st</sup> century global economy, and increasing attendance and graduation rates for disadvantaged students.

California State PTA advocates will be watching bills related to Linked Learning, formerly known as Multiple Pathways. The California Department of Education released a major report, *Multiple Pathways to Student Success, Envisioning the New California High School*, last May. The report calls for a transformation of high schools from the traditional structure to one focused on preparing each student for higher education and 21<sup>st</sup> century careers. Linked Learning combines the principles of career-technical education with rigorous and relevant academics, based on the proposition that all students need both. Legislative bills in this session are expected to implement the recommendations in the report. View the report at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/gs/hs/mpfgen.asp>.

With the monumental budget deficit, many of the programs that PTA cares about are threatened. The arts, PE standards and class size reduction take a back seat. Last year, few bills in these areas were brought forward – and none passed. We must continue to aggressively advocate for these programs that provide critical support to a child’s development. PTA voices count.

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Education

## Education issues remain the same

By Patty Scriptor  
Education Advocate

It may be a new legislative session with many new legislators, but the issues in education remain much the same. Open enrollment and a “parent trigger” were addressed in legislation in 2010. Apparently these issues will be back in 2011.

Open enrollment and “parent trigger” legislation were part of the state’s Race to the Top efforts. Both programs became statute and were the subject of

regulations by the State Board of Education (SBE). The open enrollment statute and subsequent SBE regulations had the lofty goal of allowing students in the state's 1,000 chronically lowest performing schools to transfer to higher performing schools. The challenge was this: Due to the way the legislation was written, more than half of the 1,000 schools on the list would not really be considered low performing, with Academic Performance Index (API) scores ranging from more than 700 to 807. The lowest performing schools list included California Distinguished Schools and Title 1 High Performing Schools which led to a plethora of waiver applications from school districts seeking to have their schools removed from the list. A newly introduced bill, AB 47 (Huffman), would change the requirement for a list of 1,000 schools to a list of *no more than* 1,000 schools. PTA will be reviewing this bill and closely watching its progress.

Parent empowerment regulations governing the "parent trigger" – which allows a majority of parents at a low-performing school to sign a petition imposing one of several turnaround strategies at the school – were close to being adopted in their final form when newly elected Gov. Jerry Brown replaced seven members of the State Board of Education. The result was that the final regulations were pulled from the January SBE agenda. This will allow time for the Legislature to consider a cleanup bill to address the flaws in the current statute. PTA is working with legislators on these efforts.

The limitations became evident when the first application of the "parent trigger" was implemented in Compton at McKinley Elementary School. That signature-gathering campaign has shed light on the problems with the current process; PTA will push for changes in the law. Last January, PTA and other parent groups repeatedly called for public meetings and a more open, transparent process; we will continue to advocate for these goals. We believe the process should not only empower parents, but also enable parents and communities to build working relationships with school districts and school boards through an open, transparent and collaborative process. Read a California State PTA [statement](#) on the "parent trigger" issue.

Two recurring issues we will be watching are teacher evaluations and assessments. There seems to be broad agreement that the current teacher evaluation system needs reform, but there is considerable disagreement among education stakeholders as to what form any modifications should take. Many seem to believe that student achievement must be considered in evaluating teacher effectiveness. This is another issue in which PTA will be actively involved.

The last big issue on the current horizon is California's progress toward implementing the Common Core Standards and Assessments that were adopted last August. In light of the current budget situation, the challenges of adoption will be great. Only time will tell how quickly California will be able to implement these.

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Parent Involvement

## Significant changes in the law will benefit foster care youth

By Michael Butler

Parent Involvement Advocate

A significant bill was passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor in the recently concluded 2010 legislative session. This legislation will provide greater stability for foster youth as they "age out" of the foster care system.

AB 12 (Beall and Bass, Chapter 559, Statutes of 2010) will provide extended support and benefits for foster youth from the age of 18 until 21, if they are working or going to school, or if they are medically unable to engage in those activities. This legislation is due to be phased in from 2012-2014.

"The futures of many of our most vulnerable young people are much brighter as a result of this historic legislation, and we in the judicial branch are committed to implementing AB 12 in a manner that will ensure improved outcomes for these youth," said Justice Carlos R. Moreno of the California Supreme Court. Moreno chairs the California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care.

AB 12 allows California to take advantage of federal child welfare legislation passed in 2008. This legislation provides federal funds for California's Kinship Guardianship Assistance Program, as well as federal funding to support foster youth from age 18 to 21.

On average, foster children spend three years in the foster care system, bouncing around among five different temporary placements before finding a permanent foster home. At the age of 18, they are "emancipated," ready or not. Fewer than 3 percent ever get a college degree, more than half will be homeless, institutionalized, or dead within five years of leaving the system. In other states, youth who stayed in foster care past age 18 were: two times more likely to be working toward completion of a high school diploma; three times more likely to be enrolled in college; 65 percent less likely to have been arrested; and 54 percent less likely to have been incarcerated than those who exited foster care at age 18. By extending foster care benefits to youths up to age 21, better outcomes will be realized.

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Parent Involvement

## Parents with young children – take note!

By Michael Butler

Parent Involvement Advocate

If you have a kindergartener or children who will soon be going to kindergarten, we have important news for you! The kindergarten admission birth date is changing gradually over the next three years.

SB 1381 (Simitian, Chapter 705, Statutes of 2010) will, over a period of three years, phase in a change in the admission birth date from Dec. 2 for entry into kindergarten. Beginning in the fall of 2012, children must be 5 years old by Nov.1 to enroll in kindergarten. In the fall of 2013, they must be 5 years

old by Oct. 1; and in the fall of 2014, they must be 5 years old by September 1. Under the legislation, a child born after September 1 may still be admitted to kindergarten on a case-by-case basis, if the parent or guardian applies for early admission, and the school district agrees it would be in the best interests of the child.

This legislation also requires school districts to establish Transitional Kindergarten programs, using modified kindergarten curricula for those “young fives” displaced by the change in the age of admission. All too often, children who start kindergarten at the age of 4 have been shown to have negative progress academically later in school. Transitional Kindergarten is intended to build a bridge between preschool years and traditional kindergarten.

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Community Concerns

## New laws aimed at keeping California’s children safe

By Patty Christiansen  
Community Concerns Advocate

Safety is fundamental to a child’s health and growth. Children raised in safe environments are more likely to be successful in school, to be engaged in their communities, and to grow into productive adults. Since the 2010 legislative session has come to a close, it is time to ask, “Did our legislators craft and pass bills aimed at keeping California’s more than 9 million children safe?”

While bills to ensure Internet safety did not make it through the Legislature, three new laws went into effect that should make California a safer place for children. “Chelsea’s Law” was signed by Gov. Schwarzenegger last September. This legislation, AB 1844 (Fletcher), stemmed from the sexual assaults and murders of Chelsea King and Amber Dubois, both teenagers in the San Diego area. Aimed at cracking down on child sexual predators, “Chelsea’s Law” increases prison sentences for offenders who victimize and brutalize children. Currently, there are about 2,800 high-risk sex offenders on parole or probation in California.

You may know that state law prohibits liquor stores and bars from being located within 600 feet of a school, but did you know that there has been no state restriction on marijuana dispensaries located near schools? AB 2650 (Buchanan), which was signed into law, will prevent medical marijuana dispensaries from being located within 600 feet of a K-12 school. The one exception to this new law is licensed residential medical or elder-care facilities that dispense marijuana for medical purposes.

What happens when a child in foster care is arrested and placed in a juvenile justice facility? Is the child welfare system or the juvenile justice system responsible for the child? Children who fall under two government systems are called “dual status” youth. According to current law, foster care youth receive transition services when they “age out” of foster care. Yet, if these children happen to be in a juvenile justice facility, transition services are often forgotten due to confusion over which government system oversees the child. With the passage of SB 945 (Liu) into law, incarcerated foster care youth will

be ensured foster care transitional services. These services include programs to help with housing, college planning and financing, and job and financial counseling.

While there is still much to be done to ensure the safety of California's more than 9 million children, these three new laws have made substantial steps forward in protecting them.

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Health

## Mental health services to children endangered

By Shayne Silva  
Health Advocate

Mental health services for children have been put at risk by the actions of former Gov. Schwarzenegger. AB 3632 was passed by the Legislature more than 25 years ago to ensure children with mental health issues would receive adequate treatment. The law made the state's Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Secretary of Health and Human Services jointly responsible for providing mental health services related to education. The state's Mental Health Department is the provider of mental health services for students in general and special education. These services include individual and family counseling, mental health treatment programs on school campuses, and funding for residential treatment programs.

When the current budget was signed, Gov. Schwarzenegger vetoed the funding for these services. However, the requirement to provide the services did not disappear when the funding disappeared. The federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) requires providing mental health services to students in special education who need them. H.D. Palmer, spokesperson for the California Department of Finance, said that even though the state will no longer provide such services, it will expect local agencies to do so.

What does this mean from a practical perspective? According to the California Department of Education, "While it continues to be the CDE's position that the Governor lacked the authority to suspend the AB 3632 mandate, which therefore remains in effect, and to veto the funding, the CDE emphasizes that it is essential that all LEAs (local education agencies) take immediate and urgent steps to secure and ensure the continued provision of services for their special education students without interruption."

In other words, school districts will now have to pay for services formerly paid for by county mental health departments. Presently, several lawsuits have been filed to challenge the former Governor's action, and PTA has submitted a letter in support of one of the lawsuits.

Our letter says, in part: "The 'suspension' of the AB 3632 mandate puts severely emotionally disturbed children at greater risk because critical mental health services could be disrupted or delayed as schools assume responsibility for funding those services. School districts, which have already suffered billions of dollars in budget cuts, will need to reduce existing services to fund mental health services they are mandated to provide to these vulnerable children."

PTA and others are advocating strongly for the restoration of this funding for the current school year and beyond. Stay tuned for more details.

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Federal

## Student meals healthier, but at a cost

By Kayla Plourde

Federal Advocate

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack calls it a historic victory for our nation's youngsters, referring to the "Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act" that was signed into law in December 2010. The purpose of this legislation is to address the nutritional needs of low-income children, and to ensure that more children from all income levels adopt the kind of healthful eating habits and lifestyles that will enable them to live longer, more productive lives. The law raises nutritional standards, increases the number of school meals to be served, increases reimbursement rates to school districts, and makes it easier for children and families to qualify to receive free or reduced-cost student meals.

The law's most prominent feature is its focus on raising nutritional standards for school breakfasts and lunches. Organizations such as the Institute of Medicine have advocated for change for many years. More information on the institute's recommendations can be found at

<http://iom.edu/Reports/2008/Nutrition-Standards-and-Meal-Requirements-for-National-School-Lunch-and-Breakfast-Programs-Phase-I-Proposed-Approach-for-Recommend-ing-Revisions.aspx> and <http://iom.edu/Reports/2009/School-Meals-Building-Blocks-for-Healthy-Children.aspx>.

The "Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act" provides for as many as 21 million additional students to be served a meal each year in after-school programs by allowing the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) reimbursement for after-school meals. It also provides the first noninflationary increase (6 cents per meal) for school lunches in more than 30 years. Currently, school districts are reimbursed \$2.72 for each free school lunch they provide. Part of the child-nutrition law has been funded by a \$2 billion cut to the nation's food-stamp program. The administration gave assurances that it will work to recover the funding for the food-stamp program. In September 2010, about 42.9 million people, or 14 percent of the nation's population, received food stamps.

Additional training of food service staff may be easier for larger school districts. In small or rural school districts, where school employees may be assigned additional duties in food services, the training requirement may be difficult in both cost and scheduling.

The California State PTA and National PTA fully supported the bill.

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