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This is a critical time

From the Director of Legislation

CUT\$ HURT KIDS

By Debbie Look
Director of Legislation

Although summer vacation is looming, now is not the time to let up the pressure on the Legislature to pass a timely budget. Introduced on May 16, the Governor's revised budget proposal provides a balanced approach that attempts to address the state's ongoing deficits. The \$3 billion increase in K-14 funding over the January budget that the Governor proposed means that rather than facing another large deferral, school districts will receive their payments on time. In effect, K-12 education funding remains virtually unchanged from the current school year. Given that students and schools have faced more than \$20 billion in cuts over the past three years, this is welcome news.

However, this May Revise, as it is commonly called in the Capitol, is only a proposal and relies on the extension of some of the temporary taxes put into place in 2009. A two-thirds vote of the Legislature is needed to secure these revenues. Should all Democrats vote for the tax extension, two additional votes in both the Senate and Assembly are needed to reach the two-thirds threshold. PTA is urging both sides of the aisle to put aside their differences and reach an agreement quickly to ensure that all students are protected. Without these additional revenues, education is likely to be further cut \$5 billion or \$847 per student.

As school districts must present balanced budgets by June 30, time is running out. Without assurances that these additional revenues will be in place, districts will likely submit budgets based on a worst-case scenario. It has been estimated that class sizes could increase by an additional 20 percent, and the school year could be shortened by 17 days. These cuts will hurt kids. Increasing class sizes, reducing instructional time and cutting critical academic support services will only widen the achievement gap. Failure to pass these temporary tax extensions will also have severe consequences on critical children's healthcare and social service programs.

Another key change with the May Revise proposal is the way mental health services are to be provided to special education students. See the article in this issue, *Update on mental health services for children*, by Shayne Silva, Health Advocate, for more information.

One troubling action, taken by the Governor, is to suspend all of the funding

for all of us to speak up on behalf of children. Be sure to forward the link to PTA's [Cut\\$ Hurt Kids Facebook](#) page to encourage everyone you know to join.

Our Purpose

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



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

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for the statewide longitudinal pupil data system, CALPADS, and the teacher data system, CALTIDES, pending a review of data collection needs. California State PTA signed on to a letter with Children NOW, Public Advocates, PICO California, the Bay Area Council and other advocacy organizations urging the budget subcommittees to continue funding these important data systems. In recent actions, both the Assembly and Senate budget subcommittees have restored some or all of the funding.

We urge all of our members to continue to be vocal in speaking up for the more than 9 million children of California.

For more information, go to:

California State PTA www.capta.org

California Budget Project: www.cbp.org

Legislative Analyst's Office: www.lao.ca.gov

Department of Finance: www.dof.ca.gov/budget/

Health

Update on mental health services for children

By Shayne Silva
Health Advocate

In the last issue of *Sacramento Update*, we discussed the suspension of funding for **AB 3632**, a bill passed 25 years ago, addressing mental health services for children. Children have been receiving mental health services, but school districts have had to fund them out of already slim budgets. Although some money has been provided to school districts for this year, the proposed budget for next year shifts the responsibility for the program completely to school districts, and increases the Prop. 98 limit to provide funding. The Governor has allocated \$389 million for this proposal. The Legislative Analyst supports the proposal stating it, "Refocuses emphasis on students' educational needs, strengthens program accountability and encourages cost-effective provision of services."

Other budget proposals that impact children's health include the proposal regarding the Healthy Families Program (HFP). HFP provides health insurance for about 892,000 children, up to age 19, in families with incomes above the thresholds needed to qualify for Medi-Cal and up to 250 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). According to the Legislative Analyst's Office: "Coverage is through a managed care arrangement by contracting with health plans that provide health, dental and vision benefits. Generally, families pay a monthly premium for each child enrolled in HFP and the state and federal government pay the remaining costs."

In the Governor's proposed budget, he is recommending moving the Healthy Families Program to the Medi-Cal program. He believes the state will save money by consolidating health care costs. The chief drawback in this proposal for children is the potential for reduced access to health care providers. For instance, currently, children in the (HFP) have access to dentists, but that access would be at risk as most dentists do not accept Medi-Cal patients. Dental disease is now the most common chronic disease for children. It is estimated that more than half a million children in California miss at least one

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day of school because of a dental problem, and 40 percent of these children miss two or more days of school. Children could be the losers in this budget proposal.

Community Concerns

California State PTA supports bullying prevention efforts

By Patty Christiansen
Community Concerns Advocate

Is bullying only a harmless rite of passage? Is it just an inevitable part of growing up? California State PTA says no! Bullying is no longer just the bigger kids on the playground pushing down the smaller ones that you might remember from your childhood. Times have changed, and so has bullying. Bullying can be verbal or physical, and has now extended to new technologies such as the Internet and mobile phones.

By definition, bullying is treating another person in an overbearing or intimidating way. It is aggressive behavior that is intentional and that involves an imbalance of power or strength. Teasing and bullying were first on the minds of most children when asked what threatens their safety and emotional well-being (*see footnote below*). According to a recent report by the National Center for Education Statistics, about 32 percent of students report being bullied at school.

In March 2011, President Obama and the first lady called for a united effort to address bullying at the White House Conference on Bullying Prevention. National PTA responded to this call by launching "Connect for Respect," a campaign aimed at encouraging parents to talk to their children about bullying, and to advocate for policies and practices that create a safe school climate for all children. To access this information on the National PTA website, go to <http://www.pta.org/bullying.asp>.

California State PTA is supporting this work by sponsoring **Assembly Bill 1156 (Eng)**. Besides providing an amended definition of bullying, this bill would require that school site personnel be trained in the prevention of bullying, as a component of the school safety plan. It would also allow victims of bullying to transfer to another school, should they so choose.

California State PTA has also taken a support position on **Assembly Bill 9 (Ammiano)**. AB 9 would ensure that school districts include bullying in their non-discrimination policies, and that these policies be posted prominently for students and parents to read. It would also mandate a uniform complaint procedure for bullying, and require that any bullying incident and consequences be handled in a timely manner.

We know that bullying happens anywhere and to any child. We also know that students who are bullied are more likely to take a weapon to school for protection, more likely to get involved in a physical fight, more likely to receive lower grades than students who are not being bullied, and more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression, health problems, and mental health issues.

President Obama stated: "Bullying can have destructive consequences for our young people. And it's not something we have to accept. As parents and students, teachers and communities, we can take steps that will help prevent bullying and create a climate in our schools in which all of our children can feel safe." California State PTA agrees, and we are actively moving forward to support these efforts.

Footnote: Kaiser Family Foundation & Children Now, 2001; Schoenberg et al., 2003.

Education

PTA focuses on teacher evaluations

By Patty Scriptor
Education Advocate

Research is increasingly reinforcing what all parents know – that having an effective teacher in the classroom makes a critical difference in how well their children do in school. This focus on teacher effectiveness and its impact on student progress, coupled with current budget constraints leading to districts statewide laying off teachers, has created a firestorm of public discourse on how we evaluate and lay off teachers.

California State PTA recently adopted a position statement that reads: "The California State PTA believes that every student deserves highly qualified and effective teachers, so that all students can learn and develop critical skills that prepare them to be college- and workforce-ready. The California State PTA believes that the evaluation of teachers should measure both student-learning and teacher effectiveness."

School districts and communities are dealing with the issues of teacher/staff layoffs as budgets continue to be cut; **however, PTA believes our teacher evaluation system must be a policy discussion – not a budget discussion.** We believe: 1) that any teacher evaluation system should contain rigorous standards that clearly detail expectations of teacher performance; 2) that student achievement, based on multiple measures and multi-year data, should comprise a portion of evaluations; 3) that teacher evaluations should include multiple evaluations throughout the year conducted by trained administrators and peer evaluators; 4) that the purpose should include ongoing feedback and support; and 5) that teacher evaluations should include a mechanism for parent and student input.

Based on this new position statement, we will be reviewing several bills that change the way teachers are evaluated. The Stull Act of 1971 is the current basis for teacher evaluation in California, along with locally bargained teacher contracts. Since teacher contracts are negotiated by individual school districts, there is variation across the state in what is included in evaluations, when evaluations take place, who conducts evaluations, and what the impact of evaluations is on employment status.

There are several bills in the current legislature that seek to change how districts evaluate teachers. **Assembly Bill 5 (Fuentes)** would repeal the Stull Act and **require** districts to implement a best practices teacher evaluation system with specific components, such as the use of local and state assessment data and multiple observations. While these components are currently available under existing law, AB 5 would require their inclusion in

teacher contracts. **Senate Bill 257 (Liu)** addresses the need for a more meaningful evaluation system by **encouraging** school districts to include information relating to subject-specific best teaching practices and by authorizing school districts to include specified data in the evaluation process. Again, although school districts already have the ability under the Stull Act to include these components in their contracts, Sen. Carol Liu believes that this bill could provide a framework for districts to establish evaluation systems that present clear expectations, increase transparency in the evaluation process, and would create a more meaningful evaluation system that strengthens teacher quality. While both bills tackle improvement of teacher evaluations systems, AB 5 **requires** the changes in teacher evaluations while SB 257 **encourages** the changes. In the current budget situation, bills that include cost pressures frequently fail.

For more information, EdSource has a newly released report, "*Envisioning New Directions in Teacher Evaluation*," available at www.edsource.org.

Parent Involvement

California students to have a greater opportunity to become financially savvy

By Michael Butler
Parent Involvement Advocate

The recent economic crisis has highlighted how essential it is that individuals and families have the information, education, and tools they need to make good financial decisions in an increasingly complex U.S. and global financial system.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson has launched a financial literacy awareness campaign to provide schools, teachers, students and parents with access to supplemental resources that can help students develop knowledge and understanding of money management. The goal of this initiative is to provide access to supplemental resources that can help students develop a keen understanding of responsible money management and increase their overall financial literacy. The California Department of Education is partnering with financial institutions, consumer groups, and other government agencies in this effort. Currently, there are more than 35 links on the California Department of Education's website (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/fl/finlitk12.asp>) to financial literacy resources.

California State PTA has adopted an **Approve** position on **Senate Bill 779 (Lieu)**. This bill would authorize a school district, in providing instruction in economics, to include instruction related to personal finances and would require the California Department of Education to consider developing a personal finances curriculum in the next adoption cycle of the history and social science curriculum framework, and its accompanying instructional materials.

Education

Career tech bills draw bipartisan support

By Nancy Vandell
Nancy Advocate

Despite this unprecedented budget crisis, **career technical education** (CTE) bills are surviving because they are supported by legislators from both parties and because there are private funding sources available. CTE is seen by legislators, the business community, and the Education Coalition as an opportunity to develop a 21st century workforce that can contribute to the state's economic recovery.

Now referred to as **Linked Learning**, CTE programs combine the principles of career technical education with rigorous and relevant academics, with team-based and project-oriented learning to develop required skills. These programs prevent dropouts and support all students, regardless of ability.

Many of the CTE/Linked Learning bills are aimed at developing standards, curriculum and teaching methodologies for high schools, as well as transition to higher education.

PTA is currently supporting six Linked Learning bills:

- **AB 790** (Furutani and Carter) Linked Learning pilot program
- **AB 1304** (Block) Linked Learning teacher credentialing and best practices resource
- **SB 500** (Hancock) Funding for partnership academies
- **SB 611** (Steinberg) Development of new model courses
- **SB 612** (Steinberg) Professional development for teachers
- **SB X1 1** (Steinberg) Funding for partnership academies that focus on clean technology and renewable energy job training

Parent Involvement

Are our schools preserving American democracy through civics education?

By Michael Butler
Parent Involvement Advocate

In 2006, delegates at the California State PTA convention adopted the *Support for the Civic Mission of Schools* resolution. PTA believes that civics and government should not be incidental to the education of American students, but should be a primary purpose of education, essential to the well-being of American constitutional democracy.

How have our students been doing when it comes to a civics education? *The Nation's Report Card: Civics 2010, National Assessment of Education Progress at Grades 4, 8, and 12*, was released on May 6, 2011. The report shows that fourth-graders increased their average scores at the *Basic* and *Proficient* levels, scoring higher than in 2006 and 1998. High school seniors, however, scored lower than in 2006. There was no significant change in the overall average score of eighth-graders compared to 2006 or 1998.

Grade	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
4	77%	27%	2%
8	72%	22%	1%
12	64%	24%	4%

Statistics for 2010 show, for example, that 24 percent of high school seniors scored at or above the *Proficient* level. Another way of looking at this is that nearly three-quarters of our nation's newest voters scored below the *Proficient* level. Typically, a score of *Proficient* at grade 12 would mean that a student could define "melting pot" and argue whether or not the phrase applied to the U.S.

The Nation's Report Card: Civics 2010, National Assessment of Educational Progress at Grades 4, 8, and 12 is available at www.nationsreportcard.gov. Additional information is available at www.nagb.org/civics.

Education

Bills strive to support English language learners

By Nancy Vandell
Education Advocate

Did you know that 25 percent of California's students are classified as English Language Learners (ELL)? It is in the best interest of these students to be taught English as quickly as possible. An important component of English language acquisition is to accurately assess English skills, as well as academic knowledge. Unfortunately, English Language Development (ELD) accountability and assessment systems can be problematic, and as a result, students often remain in ELD programs longer than they should.

The California State PTA believes English language learners must be provided an education that will allow them the opportunity to acquire the skills necessary to realize their full potential. The primary purpose of any language acquisition program for limited- and non-English speaking students should be to make a successful transition into English so they may progress well in a regular education program.

PTA supports the following English Language Development bills:

- **AB 124** (Fuentes) Establishes an advisory committee to align ELD standards to English language arts standards
 - **AB 532** (Perez) Identifies components of new accountability system that accurately measure knowledge of English, as well as academic subject matter
 - **SB 753** and **SB 754** (Padilla) changes the time of year and manner in which ELD assessments are made using existing tests.
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Federal

Family Engagement in Education Act introduced

By Kayla Plourde
Federal Advocate

Family engagement in a child's education is the single strongest thing we can do to maximize academic success. Last month, legislation largely written by National PTA was introduced in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate. This legislation gives schools and districts incentives to make family engagement more meaningful.

Research has repeatedly shown that family engagement in a child's education improves attendance, reduces the dropout rate, and increases student achievement. Some even go so far as to say that quality parent involvement has a value comparable to \$1,000 per child per year.

No Child Left Behind (the 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) for the first time required parent involvement. The Family Engagement in Education Act will strengthen those provisions.

The Family Engagement in Education Act was introduced in the House of Representatives by Rep. Todd Platts (R-Pa.) and Rep. Carolyn McCarthy (D-N.Y.) as **H.R.1821**; and in the Senate by Sen. Jack Reed (D-R.I.) and Sen. Christopher Coons (D-Del.) as **S.941**. More information can be found on the National PTA website, www.pta.org/4135.asp.

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