

**State PTA Legislation Conference: February 21- 22, 2010
Sacramento, California**

Connecting the Dots: From Issues to Advocacy

Capistrano Unified Council PTSA (CUCPTSA) Attendees:

Lori Abbott – CUCPTSA Legislative Co-Chair; Las Flores M.S. Legislative Co-Chair
Kim Anderson - CUCPTSA Legislative Co-Chair; Dana Hills H.S. Legislative Co-Chair
Alli Maier – Sacramento Advocacy Chair; Marco M.S. Legislative Chair & Malcom
Elementary Legislative Chair

Total attendees: approximately 160

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2010 – Embassy Suites Hotel

Opening remarks by California State PTA President, Jo Loss

By: Kim Anderson

State PTA is taking a three pronged approach in its advocacy currently by:

1. Opposing the Governor's proposed budget for 2010-11 which further cuts education and critical children's services.
2. Supporting qualifying the "Local Control of Local Classrooms Funding Act" which would lower the threshold for passage of local school funding measures to 55% (just like school bond measures) from the current 2/3 and also urging PTA members to sign the petition and to actively participate in gathering signatures.
3. Joining the school finance lawsuit against the State of California, along with the California School Boards Association and the Association of California School Administrators. The premise is that the funding mechanism for Education is fundamentally unconstitutional.

Scott Plotkin, Executive Director of California School Boards Association

By: Alli Maier

(On the way up to the podium) "I just found a quarter on the floor & I want you all to know that this is step #1 in funding our state budget. You are here at an extraordinarily difficult time. It is so important that you are here and it's a huge testimony that you're coming here for the kids of California."

- Biggest problem: lack of sense of reality of impact of decisions being made in public schools today.
- Witnessing, first hand, the disintegration of the support system for children.
- We need to tell our legislators – "I don't care that you signed a 'no new taxes' pledge – your hands are not tied behind your back."
- Read Scott Folsom's blog: www.4LAKids.com devoted to a broader view of what is going on in our education system – here & nationwide.
- We are in catastrophic times & running out of words to describe the situation.
- Our schools are experiencing Depression-Era cuts. These cuts are real & having an actual, real life impact. From 1929-1935, a 6-year period at the height of The Depression, the per-pupil spending went down 25%. In the last 2 years, the per-pupil spending has gone down **18%**.
- We have long since lost any rational ratios of student to staff (i.e. librarians, nurses, custodians, etc.).
- Basic Aid districts will feel it in the categorical cuts and more "fair share" cuts are to come.

- In the Governor's State of the State Address, in January, we listened to him say he would protect Education, then he whacked \$2.4 billion right out from underneath us.
- Prop 98, as a funding mechanism, has been so manipulated; it has become practically worthless to the education community as a safety net.
- The Governor has artificially manipulated the Prop 98 floor guarantee so he can justify whacking us this year.
- Most of the money he is capturing right now, in the current year, comes from districts that did not implement CSR this year.

ARRA & RTTT Funding

- RTTT has a 500-point rubric of prerequisites & the state has only met 10 of them.
- Requirements for eligibility included: 1. eliminating the "firewall" between teacher performance & student test scores. 2. Charter School availability.
- These eligibility requirements passed in bills that, "And stand by for an editorial comment here, but it became about chasing the money & making it easier to create Charter Schools."
- There was also an MOE requirement. In the middle of this last year, the Governor recalculated the 2005-06 numbers to lower than the amount that would have to be paid back to Education. This led to the first waiver request, by the Governor, during the May 19, 2009 Special Election (prop's 1A, 1B & 1C). While we were all supposed to be voting, the Governor was in D.C. asking the President for his support on this waiver request. Arnie Duncan did not support it, but the President overrode the decision with a phone call. "People in high places make very bad decisions." Now the Governor has sent in a second waiver request...

The Pending Lawsuit – PTA, CSBA, ACSA vs. the State of CA

- The premise: the funding mechanism for Education is fundamentally unconstitutional.
- Problems they ran into: early filing was put off by, "Oh I have connections to the Governor" by potential participants. Then the Governor snowed them & convinced the early partners not to participate.
- The Governors position is going to be "The Public Schools are getting all the funding they need, were it not for all the waste, fraud, & abuse." Scott editorializes here with "Well, my friends, that is pure, unadulterated horse hockey."
- We are not planning to ask the judge to make a decision on our case. We want the courts to tell the world that the way our state's public schools are being funded is unconstitutional.
- We want a locally funded system, not a state funded system. We are one of the only school systems in the nation funded this way. Everyone else is funded locally through property taxes.
- One of the reason's PTA is here, in this lawsuit, is because of their vast resources: the parents. We can help make real connections through our parents. "Don't take the State PTA for granted."
- We must convey the message that everyone in the Education Coalition – most especially PTA – are in this for no personal gain. We are only in it to benefit children.
- CTA & CSEA are not in it. They are informed & have not tried to become part of it because they recognize that it will be seen as a battle between CTA vs. the Governor and we want to change that conversation.

More Existing Issues

- Term limits are a contributing factor. The benefit is that term limits have had the effect of getting more women & minorities in place. A downside is losing good people who were not afraid of making decisions in the best interest of all people – across the aisle. The revolving door continues with 8 years allowed in the Senate & 6 years in the Assembly.
- Other states are actively recruiting our teachers. Our youngest & brightest are being laid off & they will not be back & with the growing bubble of retiring teachers building, we will not have the pipeline.

- The press is as careless & cynical as anyone is. They get the focus all wrong. However, the local press is starting to get it.
- The partisanship is so sharp-edged.
- The message we need to convey: A sense of reality, of purpose & demand that members of the legislature put aside their partisan bickering & work together for the common good.
- He ended with “There was a day that people came to Sacramento to make a deal – no agenda – and no partisanship – just the spirit of true negotiation.”

PTA Priority Issue Small Group Discussions

By: Kim Anderson

Legislative Conference attendees divided up into six groups. California State PTA Subject Matter Vice Presidents and Legislative Advocates went round to all the groups and shared the priorities of their particular areas. Topics discussed were:

1. Community Concerns: a) Teen Driving Safety and Safe Routes To School b) Assistance to Families in Need c) Achievement Gap
2. Education: a) Assessment & testing b) STEM c) Data d) Arts e) CTE f) Special Education
3. Health: Chronic disease b) Healthy Lifestyles c) Oral health
4. Parent Involvement: a) Foster youth transition to adulthood b) Transitional housing for foster youth
5. Budget/Finance: a) State Budget proposal b) Reducing the local parcel tax threshold c) Vote requirement for the Calif state budget
6. Federal: a) ESEA reauthorization b) Child Nutrition Act reauthorization

Panel Discussion: Impact of the Budget on the Whole Child

Jean Ross, Director, California Budget Project
 Tim Hodson, Executive Director of the Center for California Studies
 Ron Bennett, President and CEO of School Services of California

By: Lori Abbott

Jean Ross:

- Once again we are facing a budget crisis as bad as ever. Even though the dollar amount of the deficit is smaller this year, it will be even tougher to bridge the gap, because all solutions have been used up.
- We're at a tipping point – families and children are seeing the impact.
- The state has cut the budget by 20% since November 2004. However, prison spending is up by approx 1/3 from the projections of November 2004, and infrastructure spending is up a little from the projections of November 2004.
- Long term reason for the crisis is the passage of Proposition 13, and the short term reason is the economy.
- Assembly and Senate are finishing up the current extraordinary session to find places to cut a few billion dollars from this year's budget.
- Reducing eligibility for the Healthy Families program or even eliminating it is a potential consequence of not receiving the federal money built into the budget proposal.
- There has been a reduction in cash assistance programs to the point where it is less than 1989.

Tim Hodson:

- Talked briefly about his leg-school Project, a high school civic education program.

- California ranks 47th in state employees per capita; we have one of the leanest state work forces in the United States.
- The percentage of the budget deficit vs. the state budget is worse in Arizona, Nevada, and New York.
- Business/Venture Capitalists are still investing in California
- The cumulative effect of budget cuts on CSU and UC is that CSU is capping enrollment. Egalitarian views (everyone who qualifies gets a college education) are being swept by the wayside.
- Revenues: vulnerable to the ups and downs of the marketplace, dependent on sales, and the sources are unstable
- Expenditures: money spent to backfill the tax break due to the VLF cut, health care, the Three Strikes Law is causing the building of more prisons
- There is no scholarly evidence for grades 1-3 CSR.
- The 2/3 vote to pass a budget is a big problem, especially with the Assembly Republicans willing to hold the line.

Ron Bennett:

- Good years set California up for the current disaster.
- We are happy to have the extra revenues from January.
- The budget decrease over the past 2 years is the same percentage decrease that schools have taken)
- Compared to the national average in per student funding: California was down \$700 last year, down \$1700 this year, and will be down approx. \$1950 next year.
- We are behind and falling further behind and have the largest class sizes in the nation.
- Ancillary programs are gone and class sizes are increasing.
- What can we do locally?
 - Parent time needs to supplement teacher time
 - Encourage parents to band together to affect policy
 - Big chunks of money don't come from bake sales, but they can come from parcel taxes; PTA can take the lead.
 - Pull Californians together to look for solutions; tackle the common economic enemy.

Questions to the Panel:

1. What kind of structural changes are we looking for in terms of the budget?
 - Jean Ross: This is not going to be the year of reform. Legislators will exclude ways to make it easier to raise money. Now we need to go back to local communities to educate – change the vote for budget/taxes, then hold the legislature accountable. It will probably be 2-4 years in the future before things are better.
 - Ron Bennett: Bad economics win. Low and volatile revenues to schools; we do not rely on property taxes (a more stable source), but rather on sales and income taxes. We wouldn't have dramatic swings in the budget if we relied more on property taxes. A reform to Proposition 13 is needed.
 - Tim Hodson: The 2/3 vote for budget/taxes is terrible. The Federalist Papers from the Founding Fathers talked about this type of situation which leads to minority rule.
2. Should we try for a parcel tax in June or November?
 - Ron Bennett: Any time is a good time whenever you can pass one! Of the ones on the ballot, 60% passed, but most were renewals. Normally 20% of new ones pass. This isn't the climate to look for one to pass.

Carrying the PTA Message to Your Legislator
California State PTA Legislation Team

By: Lori Abbott

- We need more college educated people
- There have been \$17 billion in cuts to education since 2008
- The Governor is proposing \$2.4 billion additional cuts to education
- Money you don't spend now will cost you double or triple down the road
- How can we totally cut health care from needy families
- Investing in children benefits all taxpayers
- Over 2/3 of voters would protect funding to schools
- Get rid of the 2/3 vote for budget and taxes
- Time for action is now – we are losing a generation of children
- Provide additional revenues in the 2010/2011 budget
- No areas can sustain cuts

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2010
State Capitol, Committee Hearing Room 4202

Key Issues Overview 1 – Race to the Top/Education Reform

Lupita Cortez Alcala – CDE Deputy Superintendent, Governmental Affairs
Assembly Member Julia Brownley – Chair, Assembly Education Committee
("ASM Brownley")

Patty Scriptor – California State PTA, Education Advocate ("Scripter")

By: Alli Maier

ASM Julia Brownley:

- Regarding RTTT Funding: still unknown if California will get any money in the first round – we'll find out in April. Concerned that if we have to apply in Round 2 that everyone will be very busy with the budget, policy areas etc.
- We tried to meet the requirements without a plan & approached it a bit backwards. We moved forward with legislation but not until the end of the deadline did we see the Governor's reform plan.
- She has 3 main concerns:
- One concern she has with the plan is the worry that persistently low & lowest performing schools will not get the money disbursement from RTTT – which did not comply with the spirit of RTTT & is still not in compliance.
- Another concern is the Parent Trigger component. She worked with PTA to get a parent engagement piece tied to this reform. She feels this legislation has potential hazardous consequences with 75% of lowest performing schools having the power to dictate change with 50% of parent participation. The ultimate concern here being the question of parents getting the right information to make informed decisions. Needs to be grounded more.
- #3 – the Choice piece. Written to possibly create a 2-tiered system where some students will be able to choose and others will not – in terms of moving schools. The 1,000 lowest achieving schools are eligible, but have exemptions for the non-lowest deciles schools.
- ASM Brownley also worries the SIG's (school improvement grants) & Transportation dollars for Title 1 schools can be siphoned off then will not be available for the kids who need it most.

Patty Scriptor:

- Conveyed that it is hard to condense the last 5 months of RTTT. PTA looked at RTTT as an opportunity to discuss education reform & positive policy changes that we have wanted for a long time.
- PTA brought the viewpoint of what is good for students and families.
- Parent Empowerment = Parent Trigger. PTA has concerns with the access to information for parents making high stakes decisions.
- Many times PTA is the only volunteer group testifying.

Q & A

Q1. Regarding the implementation of the laws in these bills – what if we are not competitive? What happens?

A1. (Scripter) We do not know. Better data is the right reform. Giving resources to lowest performing schools is the right reform. Ongoing costs with data systems are a concern but it will not change from the system now, it will just be more efficient at providing better information.

A1. (ASM Brownley) If we do not prevail in RTTT, we now have imbedded new laws that will affect us in one way or another.

A1. (Scripter) ESEA is moving this direction anyway, so these types of changes were going to happen at some point.

Q2. (Paraphrased) Related to the reauthorization of NCLB.

A2. (ASM Brownley) Common Core Standards will be implemented. We have high standards in CA & we're competitive globally. Our existing system is set up to commit to reviewing & replenishing with new materials (i.e. textbooks) every 8 years. In terms of NCLB reauthorization, based on the AYP trajectory, we will all be in P.I. (program improvement) eventually, so it is important for CA to implement methodology to measure growth & assessment over time. We do not have it now, but we are approaching an interesting, exciting time now in CA. As soon as Healthcare is resolved, Education will move to the forefront. These issues will be debated & vetted fully. CA will be involved in these discussions & Obama's administration will drive this movement to reauthorize forward.

Q3. You said you were concerned about the distribution of money going to high performing schools, but we have low performing students and high performing schools. Is there any discussion about the money following low performing students?

A3. (ASM Brownley) When we are dealing with a small bucket of money & how to disperse that most effectively – I still maintain that we need to drive that money into low performing schools. We are cutting to the bone here and I get that, but generally feel that the focus needs to go to the schools that cannot provide the tools needed to help these children. Closing the Achievement Gap is my focus.

Q4. AB8 (Brownley – an attempt to establish a working group to tackle CA finance system as it pertains to education funding reform) was vetoed by the Governor – why? In addition, the Jobs for Main Street Act allocate approximately \$26 billion towards hiring & retraining teachers – would you consider advocating for this?

A4. (ASM Brownley) CA's finance system is so convoluted & we cannot understand how the money is being distributed, so she has reintroduced the bill this year & wants PTA's input of how to do it, because "the devil is in the details."

Q5. What can we do to tackle partisanship?

A5. (ASM Brownley) In Sacramento, we are faced with this terrible gridlock. Education is treated as a bipartisan issue. We are very dependent on you & other education groups. We also need to focus on creating messages at the local level. "All politics are local." The louder & clearer the message is heard at the grass roots level, the better.

A5. (Scripter) We have to get out of our comfort zone from having conversations in the PTA room to having them in all our public forums.

A5. (ASM Brownley) "Education is a moral issue, a civil rights issue, & an economic issue." The business community understands that, to a certain extent, but everybody has to be giving the same message.

Lupita Cortez Alcala – RE: the SPI’s (Superintendent of Public Instruction, Jack O’Connell) view on RTTT.

- We were in unprecedented collaboration with everyone on this.
- On March 1, we will find out if we are on the list of finalist has to receive any RTTT funding.
- “If anything, it was a great drill”
- ESEA reauthorization will have the same type of drill.
- The SPI appreciates PTA’s support, even though the entire Education Coalition was not supportive.
- Parent Involvement is important to improving schools.
- They are still fleshing out the Parent Trigger & other aspects of these bills.
- The SPI’s goal was to close the Achievement Gap. RTTT is centered on the closing the Achievement Gap & Student Achievement.
- It has a local control perspective.
- We will be required to turn around low performing schools regardless of whether we get RTTT funding or not.

Key issues overview II – Health & Social Services/Foster Care

Anthony Adams - Assembly Member (R) Hesperia

Danny Alvarez – Staff Director, Senate Education Director

Mary Hayashi – Assembly Member (D) Hayward

By: Kim Anderson

Anthony Adams:

- He’s a product of the state’s “safety net.” He was raised by a single mom & it was a very difficult time
- Many factors can impact a kids education – for example, being hungry means they can’t concentrate in school
- Calif needs to lead the way in providing a healthy environment for our kids
- Calif is at a crossroad and we are doing the state a disservice if we only focus on the 3 R’s
- In the case of foster kids, the state becomes the defacto parent so the state has a social responsibility to step up and help

Mary Hayashi:

- Lives in Castro Valley – where Jo Loss lives and she also represents Pleasanton where Debbie Look (Director of Legislation) lives!
- Dental health issues: there is a program in place that serves 300,000 kids and she authored a bill to expand that
- Kids can die from dental disease
- For every \$1 spent on preventive care, it saves \$4 in treatment
- 500,000 kids misses school in 2009 because of dental health issues which was totally preventable & results in a loss of ADA
- She authored 3 bills: AB 509 which created a statewide office of suicide prevention; AB 108 which prohibited insurance companies from rescission (where insurance companies drop a client during treatment); and AB 238 which created mental health reimbursement from insurance companies. The latter two were signed into law last year.
- She has some other bills pending: re sports concussions & empowering high school coaches. Would love PTA’s support!!

Danny Alvarez:

- Acknowledged all the efforts of parents and teachers
- Schools are doing the best they can with such limited resources
- Economy is moving up again but as Prop 98 is 45% of General Fund, the solution to the budget deficit can't be without pain for schools
- In thinking about solutions in relation to our moral responsibility, that's very challenging
- Federal dollars are being slowly siphoned away and everybody has to be part of the solution
- What is the vision we have for our State? We want schools to be best they can be

Questions to the panel:

1. Have we considered legislation for dental sealants and vision screening?
 - Ø Mary Hayashi: AB 834 from several years ago did have sealants included. It had bi-partisan support but was vetoed due to cost pressures. Re vision screening, there was a vision program but it was cut last year.
2. How do we support the kids who are living in poverty and not getting enough to eat?
 - Ø Anthony Adams: problem is two-fold. 1) Calif does a terrible job with school financing. Prop 13 had unintended consequence of creating state funding rather than local funding for schools. Schools should be able to choose how to spend the dollars they have. 2) Have a lack of established priorities in our State. We should EXPECT our politicians to establish priorities and then link them together. Pay attention to what your legislators are doing *and hold their feet to the fire.*
3. How do we convince the Republican caucus to vote the way Anthony Adams has, which reflects constituent priorities?
 - Ø Anthony Adams: Members of his caucus have been very supportive but we have to change the dialogue. Lots of rhetoric from outside sources (Glen Beck, NPR) which avoids true dialogue. It also punishes people who try and make compromises...got to find a way to change that. Cannot sustain the current "primary" voting method – that has to change too.
4. Why did Anthony Adams vote against Julia Brownley's bill, ACR 54, which bring per pupil spending up to or beyond the national average and to a level that accounts for the actual cost of educating California's diverse pupil population?
 - Ø Anthony Adams: because he believes it's unfair to compare Calif to other states. Calif is twice size of Texas (which is the second largest state) and we have the most diverse state in the nation. Money isn't only factor in success. Adores Brownley but benchmark should be how school districts are funded and to get a better balance between state financing of schools & local funding...
5. What are your ideas for building revenues?
 - Ø Anthony Adams: The stronger we make our economy, the more revenues come in. Corporate profits are a balancing act because if we hit corporations too hard, we lose them. So, what do we do on the interim? Give more control back to locals; Make Higher Ed a priority; revisit Prop 98 model – it's OK in good years but hurts schools in bad years.
 - Ø Danny Alvarez: two-fold solution... 1) help local government aspect by changing parcel tax passage threshold from 2/3 to 55%. 2) have a discussion re Prop 98.

Navigating the Capitol

Kevin Gordon, President, School Innovations and Advocacy
Rick Simpson, Deputy Chief of Staff to Assembly Speaker, Karen Bass/John Perez

By: Lori Abbott

Kevin Gordon:

- While the Governor put education reductions in the budget, other budget solutions are likely to fall apart. We want to minimize the cuts; it's one thing to put cuts on paper, it's another to follow through with them.
- Cuts in the past were written within Proposition 98 guidelines.
- The Governor is asking for a waiver for the Maintenance of Effort requirements for federal stimulus dollars. He wants to drop below the mandated level of 2005/2006 and still get the ARRA money.
- Urge your legislators to uphold the July 2009 budget agreement; cutting education by an additional \$2.4 billion is breaking the agreement/commitment.
- How deep of cuts can the legislators tolerate?
- There are a lot more problems for kids this year than just education.
- The Governor will often pit groups against each other like teachers vs. administrators.
- Republicans must be the guardians of local control they say they are and establish July as the base for Prop 98 funding and move forward.
- No new unfunded mandates.

Rick Simpson:

- "I've seen 32 state budgets in my career, half in the last 19 months"!!
- The "Four P's" for advocacy with your legislator:
 1. Policy – know the specifics of the issue and know the arguments of the other side.
 2. Process – The institution works on a strict calendar; know what "season" it is.
 3. Politics – This is a political institution and a partisan one. Understand that theology has a role in many issues: taxing vs spending for example
 4. People – This is a human institution; you can't make accurate generalizations; the more you know about the legislator the better; talks in the district/home office will often yield more time and be more relaxed.
- Legislature has to go back and change what they did in July. Prop 98 minimum guarantee for 2008/2009 was certified in July. Maintaining the integrity of the July deal would not allow the Governor to cut \$2.4 billion. How can you expect to be any part of an agreement if it doesn't stick?
- "Having 1 person's "no" vote bearing more weight than 1 person's "yes" vote, fundamentally offends me."

Questions:

1. Should we reexamine Propositions 98 and 13?
 - Rick Simpson: I voted against those 2 propositions. The ability to make decisions in the legislature is difficult because they are hamstrung. There should not be a vote on parcel taxes because there should be no vote at all. This is a republic and the elected representatives should have the authority to make that decision.
 - Kevin Gordon: If someone puts Prop 13 on the table, then it would be silly not to include Prop 98.

2. Shouldn't there be a discussion of criminal justice issues?
 - Rick Simpson: One of several issues to be looked at – politics come into play.
 - Kevin Gordon: Last year's budget was supposed to have much bigger cuts to this area than came to pass. Perhaps there is a connection between a kid dropping out of school and ending up committing a crime.
3. Some school districts pay millions in TRANS notes (short term borrowing) when a budget is not passed on time:
 - Kevin Gordon: The problem has gotten worse because polarization is so bad; legislators lose caucus leadership roles. Budget stalemate is worse which leads to real, unfortunate consequences and politics play a role.
 - Rick Simpson: We are one of 3 states that require a 2/3 vote to pass a budget. Pointing fingers isn't always accurate.
4. What is the most effective message to take to the legislators today?
 - Kevin Gordon: Acknowledge the huge budget cuts, but stick by the agreement of July; make that a starting point. People can't trust anything if the government abandons the agreement. Minimize the cuts to education in light of all the cuts previously taken by education.
 - Rick Simpson: Ask the legislators to avoid signing pledges. It boxes them into a corner. Be open to solutions. Say thank you and be the type of person they want to meet with again.

Legislator Visits

By: Kim Anderson

Senator Mark Wyland's Legislative Aide, Scott Seekatz

- Messages we delivered:
 - Ø Speaking on behalf of the 9 million children in California who have no voice of their own
 - Ø Honor the integrity of the July 2009 budget agreement
 - Ø Vote for additional revenues
 - Ø PTA is supporting the signature gathering on the Local School Funding ballot measure
- Comments from Scott:
 - Ø No education cuts likely for mid-year
 - Ø Could see deferred payments being made to schools as part of budget solution
 - Ø Education is very important to the Senator. Children need to find a college or career path, so CTE is big component
 - Ø Senator is looking for budget reform – a 2year budget cycle; having a budget in print for 5 days before voting on it
 - Ø Senator would not support lowering threshold for passing parcel tax

Assembly Member Diane Harkey

We met with her briefly on the Assembly floor as her house was in session during our appointment time.

- Our message was to honor the integrity of the July budget agreement and to be open to a balanced approach re the budget solution.
- She shared that Calif has a massive structural deficit that must be addressed. She's working with Democrats Joan Buchanen & Jean Fuller on this & she's also reached out to State Treasurer, Bill Lockyer & State Controller, John Chiang.

