

FULL REPORT from California Adventure – May 26 & 27, 2009

27 schools were represented:

5 High Schools – Aliso Niguel, Dana Hills, San Clemente, San Juan Hills, & Tesoro

6 Middle Schools – Arroyo Vista, Marco Forster, Las Flores, Newhart,
Niguel Hills, & Shorecliffs

16 Elementary Schools – Arroyo Vista, Bergeson, Castille, Chaparral, Ladera Ranch, Las Flores, Las Palmas, Clarence Lobo, Malcom, Marblehead, Moulton, Oso Grande, Palisades, San Juan, Wagon Wheel, & George White

29 Attendees:

(All are unit Legislative Chairs unless otherwise noted)

Kim Anderson – CUCPTSA Legislative Chair
Dana Hills HS & Niguel Hills MS

Lori Abbott – CUCPTSA California Adventure Chair
Wagon Wheel Elementary

Kara Ahmann – Niguel Hills MS

Marilyn Amato – Dana Hills HS (PTA President)

Becky Butler – Castille Elementary

Ankie Camacho – San Juan Elementary

Carla Crehin – Oso Grande Elementary

Ingrin Currie – Clarence Lobo Elementary

Sue Dennis – Newhart MS

Kathy Fischer – Aliso Niguel HS

Linda Fong – Moulton Elementary

Jodie Goodwin – Palisades Elementary

Gail Grigaux – Chaparral Elementary

Christine Kerst – Arroyo Vista K-8

Erin Kutnick – San Juan Hills HS

Maureen Lynds – Bergeson Elementary

Alli Maier – Malcom Elementary/Marco Forster MS

Laurie Masotto – Marblehead Elementary

Kathy Masters – Shorecliffs MS/San Clemente HS

Trish McCauley – Wagon Wheel Elementary/Las Flores MS (EVP)

Lori McClaskey – Ladera Ranch Elementary

Julie Pstotka – Las Palmas Elementary

Lisa Scharmann – CUCPTSA President

Fran Sdao – Tesoro HS

Kathy Spencer – Arroyo Vista K-8

Cheryl Stein – Moulton Elementary

Kathi Thomas – Las Flores Elementary

Dawn Urbanek – Las Palmas Elementary

Julia Walsh – George White Elementary/Niguel Hills MS

Tuesday, May 26, 2009

Lunch Meeting with CA State PTA

Report by Sue Dennis, Newhart Legislative Chair

Presenter #1: Jo Loss – Incoming State PTA President

May 26 was Education Coalition meeting with Governor at Governor's request; normally meet once a month.

Things have changed for education in the State after the election on May 19.

School districts should not be counting on any form of Federal Stimulus money.

May Revise had Plan B, but it looks like there may be a Plan C.

State PTA strategy for education has always been a balanced approach; Governor Schwarzenegger wants to focus on cuts; PTA has never looked at specific cuts as cuts hurt the children.

There is currently a lawsuit in California by a school district over the idea that if the State won't supply enough money to run the schools, then the local school boards should be allowed to decide how much money should be raised and where it should be spent.

Talk to our local school PTA members and tell them they need to call their legislators:

- Hard copy letter and e-mail are the least effective
- Phone calls are very effective (even calling "after hours" is a great way to get your opinion heard without spending a lot of time)
- Going into office is most effective

Come up with creative ways to reach Legislators – birthday cakes, etc.

PTA hasn't done enough networking and should begin to take advantage of opportunities coming our way.

Presenter #2: Barbara Ledterman – Vice President of Education

Was glad to see CUSD Legislative Team in Sacramento; we can keep pressure on local legislators at home too (lots of other groups don't do that); we hold them accountable; we know more than the legislators know.

Suggested taking CUSD budget to legislators' local offices; show them where the money is going and tell personal stories; tell them that the State can't keep doing this to the children.

20% of California voters have children in public schools.

PTA needs to remain an advocacy organization, not a bank account.

Presenter #3: Brian Bonner – Legislation Team

Meeting in the Governor's office and Department of Education was guarded; there did not seem to be full disclosure.

\$2.5B = Governor's proposed cuts by the end of the '09 school year

\$3.3B = Governor's proposed cuts for the '09-'10 school year

SCA 6 is a bill to allow parcel tax elections to pass with a 55% vote.

CA. will eventually have to raise taxes.

Not all school districts are able to lobby like CUSD does.

Presenter #4: Suzan Solomon – Legislation Team

Meet with the Legislators directly; don't meet with staffers as there is not as much impact.

Presenter #5: Pat Dingsdale – Director of Legislation

In Education Coalition meeting on May 26, Governor Schwarzenegger said it was not a good time for education. He asked for suggestions of where cuts should be made; wants to cut education

with least effect on kids; wants to keep teachers; suggested contracting out custodians, etc.; he said it would be helpful if the Education Coalition made suggestions, otherwise it would be left up to the Legislators.

Governor thinks people are not interested in any new taxes, based on the recent election results of May 19; PTA disagrees.

Parcel tax suggestion got no reaction from Governor.

If revenue isn't raised, then the only thing left is cuts.

Federal Stimulus money is tied to budget adoption process.

Something has to happen to wake the people up.

There are "behind the scenes discussions to get the budget passage voting requirement in the Legislature changed from 2/3 to 51%.

Governor wanted to close schools early, but all union contracts have to be renegotiated, so it can't happen until years from now; unions won't budge.

Legislature likes to give local control when taking away money but wants to act like a school board when there is money.

Presenter #6: Paul Richman – Executive Director

Don't let the Governor and Legislature define the last election as the way voters think; it's not that they want cuts only.

State PTA supports AB 8 which would convene a committee to look at school finance reform.

Rtumble.com is a clipping service; every morning it will have articles from any newspaper that's published anything about CA. policies.

Gerry Shelton, Chief Consultant, Assembly Committee on Education

Report by Kathi Thomas, Las Flores Elementary Legislative Chair

Since 2002, the legislators cannot discuss education without talking about the budget. Originally, the budget shortfall in February was \$15 billion but now California has approximately a \$24 billion shortfall. The Schwarzenegger administration is proposing the following to close the budget gap in the May revise: 1) eliminating CalWORKS; 2) reducing aid to low-income elderly, blind or disabled; 3) selling state property; and 4) limiting services to the most needy. However, this puts a bigger burden on the 2009-10 fiscal year; therefore, the state will count on deferral funds. The state will need to consider doing a "funds swap" (i.e. borrow from transportation to pay for education expenses).

Governor's office will claim at least \$2 billion and it will be tough to get away with another \$4 billion to \$5 billion more in cuts. Education makes up forty percent of the state budget. Governor Schwarzenegger proposed revenue limit funding which would make up discretionary funding for school districts and backfilling the funding with federal stimulus money. The state may need to rely more on categoricals which may mean looking into school closures, dropping elective courses and increasing class sizes. Categorical funding would be determined at the local level. Since the education budget is not completely finalized, the Assembly Committee on Education is working on some new policies. Assembly Member Julia Brownley, Education Committee Chairperson, looked at the school finance system and school governance. She believes that the bills should be transparent and she wants to design changes in the budget. Brownley authored the following bills that involve education finance and governance:

- AB 8: Education Finance

To write a process on developing a working group made up of staff members from Department of Education and Legislative Analyst Office, teachers, parents and taking high level research to give input on school finance in a simplified and understandable manner. Shelton referred to this as

“empowering democracy”. It is hoped that this will help the school districts in the planning process for school finance.

- **AB 851: Revenue Limit Add-Ons**

LAO has repeatedly suggested changes to the complex school finance system to make it more transparent and less costly to administer. This measure will simplify the process by removing some arcane sections of the law on how school districts are funded and narrowing the number of revenue streams to just two fixed adjustments in each district’s total funding. Currently, the base revenue limit varies from school district to school district based on history. (i.e. Basic Aid district, low wealth district, etc.). This bill supports looking at the true cost of education rather than equalization funding. The bill is currently in the Senate.

- **AB314: Instructional Materials**

This measure will give school districts greater participation in adopting instructional materials and greater flexibility in purchasing them. The education committee panels will be made up of education specialists and teachers to review and edit the education materials. This bill will provide more transparency by requiring approved instructional materials to be made available to the school district and the public on the Internet. Publishers are against this bill.

- **AB 572 Charter School Governing Boards**

There have been reports of a small number of charter school board members engaging in inappropriate financial mismanagement. There was a recent charter school audit that found that one couple pocketed \$4 million. Currently charter schools exist under no conflict of interests codes. There is no financial oversight. These charter schools are allowed to hold “closed” meetings and can operate as a company for profit. The meetings are attended by people who are financially interested. Charter schools aim for students who are “at-risk” of dropping out. These charter schools do not charge tuition but public funds are used. The purpose of this bill is to require school governing boards to adopt a conflict of interest policy that is similar to ones on governing school district boards.

Jean Ross – Executive Director, California Budget Project

Report by Becky Butler, Castille Elementary Legislative Chair

a.. California currently has its highest unemployment rate since we began keeping statistics

b.. Our current \$21-24 billion budget hole is due mostly to the bad economy (\$15 billion) and partly to the propositions failing (\$6 billion)

c.. Prop 1A and 1B had no effect on current revenues

d.. Prop 1C was the biggest money prop. It dealt with money from the lottery.

e.. Prop 1D and 1E were worth about \$1 billion and dealt with moving money from earmarked places to the general fund.

f.. Prop 58 (passed in 2004) required state legislature to pass a balanced budget every year and created a reserve fund called the Budget Stabilization Account in case of future financial trouble.

g.. California is selling off assets to help with the current budget problem. Assets include OC Fairgrounds, Coliseum and Del Mar. These won’t generate much revenue because of current down market.

h.. Prop 98 tends to work well in good years but not so well in bad. There will be \$1.6 billion cut this year and \$3.6 billion next year. If they don’t lower the minimum this year, it will hurt more next year.

- i.. Prop 98 spending must be cut by midnight of 6/30/09
- j.. California has a severe cash flow problem. We generally borrow money in July and August and repay when taxes are paid but with our bad credit rating this might not be possible.
- k.. The governor has proposed to:
 - 1.. Lower Prop 98 education spending to the minimum level allowed.
 - 2.. Eliminate Cal Works program (welfare work program)
 - 3.. Eliminate Cal Fire (rural fire units)
 - 4.. Eliminate Cal Grant program
 - 5.. No money for state parks
- l.. PTA needs to advocate with legislators by telling personal stories.
- m.. How did we get here?
 - 1.. In the past year, legislature has given \$2.5 billion in tax cuts to large corporations, with \$12 billion in last 5 years.
 - 2.. California doesn't tax services. These services can be a potential large source of revenue.
 - 3.. California doesn't tax internet purchases. Items sold in California but no taxes are paid.
 - 4.. We have guaranteed pensions instead of giving pay raises to state employees. This is now costing California more.

**Susanna Cooper, Principal Education Consultant to Senate President
Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg (Democrat)**

Report by Dawn Urbanek, Las Palmas Elementary Legislative Chair

The recent defeat of Propositions 1A - 1E was a clear message from the people of California that it is time to ... "Slay the Beast of Government". Acting upon that message Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger just proposed an additional \$ 5.5 billion in cuts. The cuts included the elimination of CalWORKS, (the State's welfare to work program which would affect 500,000 families) and the termination of the Healthy Families Program, which provides health care coverage for almost 1 million children in the State of California. The Governor also proposed the elimination of the CalGrant program, which provides financial aid to college students. Susanna also stated that she expected the Governor to announce further massive hits to education and social services.

Election results stemmed from an overall distaste for the Big 5 "backroom" budget negotiations and the lack of transparency through the budget process.

In addition to the total dismantling of California's education and welfare programs, the biggest issue facing the State is the impending cash flow issues facing California in July. The budget problems must be solved by July in order for the State to avoid bankruptcy.

When asked about the Federal stimulus money and the \$2 Billion dollar accounting error and its affect upon the "Maintenance of Effort Requirement" she stated that it would pass muster.

Assembly Member Chuck DeVore

Report by Marilyn Amato, PTA President, Dana Hills HS

- Confronting an unprecedented budget problem
- Three basic scenarios
 1. Democrats wish to cut education and health
 2. Proposed higher gas taxes, oil severance, etc.
 - a. This would make CA the highest taxed state in the nation.
 3. Obama may come to the rescue
- Assemblyman DeVore has been warning CA for the past three years that the budget shortfall is coming.
- Referred to our Founding Fathers ideals
 - To give a common floor of education
 - To make information useful
 - To teach virtue and to be good citizens
- He added another layer
 - Prepares our children to be productive citizens
 - Create opportunity – including “career technology”
- Assemblyman DeVore says we’ve worked our way into a corner
 - Majority trying to set same rules
 - New ideas need competition
- Stress of budget creates opportunity
 - Maybe the public can make their voice heard
- Off-shore drilling proposed
 - Governor made an agreement to protect coastline
 - 1st new lease was turned down
 - Income could have been \$130 million a year
 - Could open up coast to set up slant drilling
 - This could securitize level of oil
 - Creates a new asset
 - Could put \$5 ½ billion into the state right like that.
- California pays three times the national average for welfare recipients.
- Whenever one has a purely property tax district, not all children get equal education.
 - High property tax areas = good schools and the converse
 - Poor schools – 50% drop out rate
- Ultimate solution for equalization
 - Initiative???
 - L.A. = most legislators
 - District that will be willing to tax.
 - State takes it away and gives it to other districts
 - (note: Paul Navarro said this has never happened)

Assembly Member Jeff Miller

Report by Kathy Spencer, Arroyo Vista Legislative Chair

“These guys messed it all up, I am here to fix it.”
His children went through public schools.

Frustrating as it is, he is honored to be in Sacramento.

How do we fix the problem?

The State has been behaving badly for years.

There are a lot of people that need government services.

If you have criticisms, come to the table with 2 solutions.

Because republicans are in the minority, they don't have the ability to "move the ball forward" in a big way.

Q: What do they envision as the role of public schools with the revenue limitations that we have?

Per Chuck: As developed by our forefathers, public education was a floor of learning to read, write and teach virtue. Need education system to provide education to compete in world we have today. Our state has worked its way into a corner, limited choice, clamping down on charter schools. School would benefit from competition.

Tremendous stress opens up opportunities. He has been here for 5 years, cast of characters not very high.

Jeff: Local school boards will do a better job managing their money. In order to move forward so locals can do their jobs, the legislators have sold their souls. Being in minority party, hard to make changes.

Chuck proposed backfilling education cuts with off shore drilling.

The Governor said that the California coasts are off limits. The first new oil lease in a long time was turned down by the State Land Commission. The Gov. is asking to revisit at least this lease. The securitizing slant drilling of oil could put \$5.5B back in the budget.

Q: A chance for revision of Prop. 13?:

Texas court ruled that it puts poor children at a disadvantage.

We are doing o.k., even though we don't get the money from the state. The money needs to go to the districts that need it. Sacramento won't take money from LA and give it to CUSD. If districts like ours tax ourselves, Sacramento would then give our money to LA.

Paul Navarro, Deputy Legislative Secretary to Governor Schwarzenegger

Report by Fran Sdao, Tesoro HS Legislative Chair

Mr. Navarro declared the Governor a "friend" to education today. The Governor had met with members of the Education Coalition, including State PTA, earlier in the day. Additional budget cuts need to be made and, on this day, the Governor made a political and policy decision to not touch education.

He asked for recommendations for future cuts but none were brought forward in the meeting. A suggestion was made by the State PTA to reconsider a balanced approach with revenue enhancements, similar to those discussed last December, in addition to cuts; however, that suggestion was not welcomed based on the results of the May 19th special election. The Governor is convinced that the voters will not accept any type of tax increase. Navarro repeated that no one will go for a tax increase right now and that the State PTA needs to move on.

On Tuesday, a proposal was made to eliminate the CalWORKS (California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids), the state's welfare to work program, and the Healthy Families program which provides health insurance to almost a million low income children. Other proposed cuts impact prisons, state parks, and the UC and Cal State systems.

Navarro stated:

- The Legislators may value health and human services more and may recommend a cut back to the federal level bare minimum; California currently has a more generous eligibility and benefits program than the feds require
- Education cuts are exacerbated at the local level by declining enrollment throughout the state. CUSD is one of only a few districts that is experiencing actual enrollment growth
- Requests for health and human services have been increasing over the past 10 years
- Any compromise will be an “ugly hybrid”
- The health and human services advocates state that children will die if these programs are eliminated
- Kim stated that children are suffering in schools and cited the two recent student suicides that may have been prevented if our schools had more counselors available
- The Governor did ask the Education Coalition to come back with their recommendations for further cuts to specific programs
- The Governor could mandate school closings but there are issues with reaching agreements with the various unions
- Kim reminded us that PTA does not take a position regarding union negotiations

Dinner Meeting with

Robert Miyashiro, Vice President of School Services of California, Inc.

Report by Jodie Goodwin, Palisades Elementary Legislative Chair

Mr. Miyashiro's topic for the evening was the California budget mess. He referenced the book, “Outliers” by Malcolm Gladwell. Mr. Miyashiro stated that rather than consider California a paragon, it could be considered an “outlier.” He talked about how the book speaks to Opportunity, Timing, Culture, Process and Talent and how that relates to the state of the current budget. How did we get here? Term Limits? Redistricting? Many things have contributed to the meltdown.

In the 1990's during another budget problem, we moved away from the process of budgeting, there were the Big 5, Subcommittees and Conference Committees. And then there were the political issues. Governor Gray Davis and Speaker Willie Brown knew a lot about issues.

Now our political issues are defined by:

- Term Limits - have eviscerated policy memory, Committee Chairs have limited knowledge, limited experience and leaders can't be expected to know all the answers.
- Redistricting – the political means of drawing boundaries, means “safe” districts for both Democrats and Republicans and all are vulnerable at the time of reelection. Compromise on any issue means political suicide and results in “recall” as we are currently seeing.
- 2/3 Majority Vote for the Budget – This may be a small reason and this has been around for 70 years, but it makes it hard to hold parties accountable.
- Abandonment of Open Process to the Big 5 – No one got a chance to speak on the budget. Legislators who didn't know better were handicapped by inexperience.

Add to the problem the down turn in the economy, and all the pieces have come together and made for a disaster.

Small things create opportunity; this can be a disadvantage or an advantage.

Staff doesn't get to vote, but wise council can influence.

Wednesday, May 27, 2009

Breakfast Meeting with Rick Simpson, Deputy Chief of Staff to Speaker Karen Bass

Report by Kara Ahmann, Niguel Hills MS Legislative Chair

Budget

- Last week the governor announced an additional \$5½ billion in cuts and proposed issuing RAWs (Revenue Anticipation Warrants) to borrow across the fiscal year in order to address the budget deficit.
- Drastic cuts to Healthy Families Program, Cal Grants, and mental health services as well as elimination of Cal WORKS, a support program for low income.
- Governor plans to be announcing an additional \$3 billion in cuts.
- Sacramento will be focusing on the budget crisis and decisions will be made relatively quickly before July 1.

Bills – Not a year that we will be seeing major legislation due to the budget crisis

- AB 8 by Assembly Member Brownley (D) – convene a working group to look at the education finance system.
- AB 97 by Assembly Member Torlakson (D) – establish a process to review and revise academic standards adopted by the State Board of Education in the late 1990's.
- AB 343 by Assembly Member Saldano (D) – help military children transition between California and out-of-state schools by participating in an interstate compact with eighteen other states.
 - Applies to about 61,000 (1% of CA students)
 - Believes it will pass and be signed after some changes are negotiated – specifically if language is changed so that compact rules and regulations, involving course content, grading, and scheduling, do not trump state laws
- SB 381 by Senator Wright (D) – require high schools to offer more career technical courses to match an increase in University of California A – G requirements

Testing Issues – 2010 could be a big year:

- STAR sunsets in July of 2011 – during 2010 will be looking at reauthorization of state's testing.
- High School Exit Exam –Stanford study reports that it is not doing the right thing for all kids, discriminates against women and colored people, and provides misleading information for employers.
- Purpose of state testing – accountability, track individual student's progress, and decide state policies and allocation of resources.
- Perhaps don't need as expensive tests.
Example: CAP program of the late 1980's, before CLASS, used sample matrixes to provide in depth information in the aggregate and no individual took entire test – may be good enough information on all the standards

Class Size – raised statewide as districts continue to anguish over the budget

- Gives opportunity to evaluate CSR – haven't been able to evaluate in the past due to other school reforms initiated at the same time and lack of pre- and post- comparative tests

- Will now be able to compare outcomes within a district between CSR and post CSR, and between similar districts with varying class sizes of 20, 24, and 30:1
- Does not think that CSR is dead forever – change in penalties will only last for a couple years
- Does not believe California has enough qualified teachers, physical space, or the approximate \$6 billion needed to extend CSR to grades 4-12 in the future

Parcel Taxes

- SCA 6 by Senator Simitian (D) – allow local school districts to approve a local parcel tax with a 55% majority rather than a 2/3 majority currently required
Would re-empower local school boards to raise taxes as prior to Prop 13
Believes will not pass again – half dozen previous attempts have failed – Republicans will not vote for it because they are against taxes more than they are for local control
- Prop 13 - constitutional amendment, passed at 64.7% in 1978
Required 2/3 vote for new local taxes
Protected property tax cut and lowered property tax rate to 1%
Local property taxes no longer major source of school funding – shift to funding from state general fund and state allocation of local property taxes to schools
- Prop 39 – constitutional amendment, passed in 2000
Allowed school bonds to pass with 55% vote
Transformed school construction and modernization of school buildings
- Some school districts (mostly upper income) have managed to pass local parcel taxes with a 2/3 majority, and the state has not changed their level of funding, just as it has not changed funding to districts with strong PTA financial support

Conclusion – CA has disinvested in government since the Reagan administration

Getting Down to Facts Research, about 3 years ago

CA among most ambitious in standards and would need about 40% more (about \$25 billion more) than it is spending today to meet these standards

If CA taxed businesses more, extended sales tax to services, doubled the cigarette tax, and raised all taxes, it would only add up to about half of this amount

CA has moved from a goods economy to a service economy

Still taxes only goods

Upper income probably spends more on services than lower who spend more on basic goods

Options:

Lower sales tax rate, but broaden base

Raise taxes

Tax services

Create split roll tax to treat non-residential, income-raising property different than other property

Fallout from lack of funding is going to be devastating to the success of education even when the economy recovers because one “doesn’t get a second chance at second grade.”

Mary Hudler, Director Special Education Division, CDE

Report by Kathy Masters, Shorecliffs MS & San Clemente HS Legislative Chair

Focused Monitoring and Technical Assistance

CUSD is represented in Region 1 of the Special Education Division's "Focused Monitoring and Technical Assistance" (FMTA) units, in which Ralph Scott is the administrator. FMTA is the monitor of school districts to ensure they are maintaining federal compliance with the law of IDEA. They are also the source for special education questions. The unit provides support for data and assessment.

Demographics

For the year 2007-08, the total number of students receiving services has dropped from years prior. The age range of special education students birth through age 22 receiving services is 677,875. Of those students, 616,364 (or 9.8%) are students enrolled in K-12. The group of children from birth to 3 years of age is directed under the Department of Developmental Services. After that time period they are transitioned into the school system. The largest disability category is Specific Learning Disability (SLD) at 43%, followed by Speech Language Impairment at 25.5%. These top categories are considered "unseen disabilities". Autism, the highest growing disability over the past couple years, is the third largest category at 7.8%. The other categories consist of mental retardation, orthopedic impairment, emotional disturbance, health impairments and others.

University of California, Davis M.I.N.D. Institute is the international center for special education research.

Education Services

There are primarily 10 top services the department provides. Specialized academic instruction being the largest at 48.6%. Language and speech services are next at 27.7%. Other services available range from occupational therapy, behavior intervention, career awareness, to psychological services.

Accountability

The federal government is focused on outcomes for Special Education and indicators of performance under NCLB and IDEA. The most current law of 2004 is the State Performance Plan (SPP). The law requires each state to submit a six-year plan that identifies baseline data, targets, benchmarks, and improvement activities for 20 indicators specified by the Office of Special Education Programs. Keeping in mind how the state will improve such implementation, an ongoing evaluating process under an "Annual Performance Report Card".

Closing the Achievement Gap

The guiding principles that our state superintendent, Jack O'Connell, has presented are:

- Special education is a service, not a place
- Special educators and general educators work collaboratively to teach all students
- All students are considered to be general education students first

No longer is the special education student isolated from the general education but rather placed in the least restrictive environment and entitled to the core curriculum. Response to Intervention (RtI2) is the process that addresses the learning challenges of all students, regardless of a disability designation. It includes support and accommodations to accelerate student learning. Schools can no longer be required to use the "discrepancy model" in establishing eligibility.

Autism Challenges

The increase in cases of autism in California has motivated three major public policy efforts:

AB 2513 Superintendent's Autism Advisory Committee guides schools on how to better serve students with autism spectrum disorders.

The state Legislature's Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism provides findings and recommendations on children and adults with ASD.

The Department of Developmental Services provides information on evidence-based treatments and interventions for people with ASD, their families, and professionals.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

In 2009 California will receive \$1.26 billion for efforts to implement IDEA '04 Part B. This money will be distributed under formula grants with half being sent out now and the other portion in November 09. The feds have not distributed the all the guidelines, however the word is to spend it quickly, invest in one time use, transparency reporting, and improve student achievement. States have until 2011 to spend the money but then it goes away. Examples on how our district can use this money are:

- purchase assistive technology
- expand professional development
- fund staff certifications for speech pathology
- employ secondary transition staff to improve post-school outcomes (graduation rate, drop out rate, job placement).

Rick Miller: Deputy Superintendant for Policy Development, CDE

Report by Ingrin Currie, Clarence Lobo Elementary Legislative Chair

He sees these massive cuts as an enormous opportunity to learn how to spend less and become more efficient simultaneously. Federal Government has asked us to be efficient.

He says that regarding bridging the achievement gap, four areas make sense:

1) Standards and assessments: Many standards set bar too low. Feds want to change that. California's are rigorous. Our standards are not globally equal. Our standards are said to be "a mile wide and an inch thick". Deputy Miller thinks that our key focus areas of study, for example should be all of the presidents of the U.S., especially Lincoln and Roosevelt. These are standards which should map back to kindergarten. There is a national movement to have our standards nationally normed and internationally benched.

2) Data information matters. We should have a continuous learning system, which tests different students on different things at different times throughout their school careers. Miller believes that this gives a better overall picture of understanding and achievement. He said we should use this data to decide what is needed to educate children.

3) Miller believes that we should also focus on the teachers in the classrooms in regards to their teaching and their learning. We should be grooming kids to become teachers and also we should be getting rid of poor teachers.

4) Regarding consistently low-performing schools, the feds want us to think radically. Miller thinks that doing so will get California thinking in a different way.

Regarding the maintenance of effort requirement placed upon the state by the feds in relation to our stimulus \$, Miller says the state chose a year for a base. We want to raise the numbers to set a higher funding amount as the standard for federal funding.

Regarding lower-performing schools, Miller said that it may be because they're not getting served well. Serving well looks like the following: Implementing systemic changes; raising expectations; etc.; Changing the culture of the school, meaning changing expectations of educators.

Charter schools generally don't differ from regular public schools. Some do, however, and we should figure out what is working for those that do work well and implement those things in regular public schools (share the info.).

The feds don't want to set the standards for education. They want national standards developed by states conferring together as to what works and sharing it. They want this done possibly within one year.

Dr. Anthony Monreal, Deputy Supt, Curriculum and Instruction, CDE

Report by Ankie Camacho, San Juan Elementary Legislative Chair

Dr. Monreal is a former superintendent of Selma Unified SD, a high poverty district. He strongly believes that these districts and schools need to change. It is his and his wife's mission to work with these students.

Dr. Monreal gave us an update of Cal's English Learner (EL) issues. There are 6 million students and 1.5 million are EL. EL students are predominantly, Hispanic but are not limited to this ethnicity. But there are also many students in California who do not have the language level to compete well in a university.

To determine if a student is EL the parents are given a language survey. This along with teacher observations will determine if the student is EL. Currently EL students are expected to be fluent in English after 3 years. But as Dr. Monreal points out we all have English throughout our K-12 experience and continue to improve on our skills. Three years may get students to "playground English". Teachers need to be equipped with the skills to deal with these special circumstances.

Dr. Monreal emphasizes that we need to use data for our decision making process. We need good assessment of positive and negative skills. We need to look at abilities.

Every child can learn what is necessary.

Rachel Ehlers — Policy Analyst LAO

Report by Erin Kutnick, San Juan Hills HS Legislative Chair

The budget is really depressing and getting worse everyday. The budget for 08/09 was originally passed in September (latest ever) and almost immediately the legislature had to go into special session to begin to fix the deficit and shortfalls because the budget was never right. After 3 special sessions, in February not only did they pass the 08/09 budget but they got a jump start on 09/10 and passed that as well.

That budget had \$15 billion in cuts. For education the cuts were split 50/50. Half from categorical and half from the general funds. But the deficit has grown. Revenue estimates were off and revenues are down. We lost \$5 billion because the voters rejected selling the lottery.

Prior to the May 19 election, the Governor presented two new budgets. Options A and B. Option A was assuming the props passed and Option B assumed they failed. In option B, the Governor had originally included \$5 billion in borrowing that it turns out wasn't possible which has led to Option C with another \$5 billion in cuts. (About \$3 billion more in cuts are proposed for Friday, May 29)

Option B is technically what we are working off of right now including the \$5 billion in additional cuts that were announced on Tuesday, May 26.

- No new cuts to education
- Eliminate healthy kids program
- Eliminate state park funding
- Eliminate Cal Works program (also loses us \$4 billion in Federal matching money)

There is talk of an option D which will try to address the estimated total budget deficit of \$25 billion. That is a \$25 billion hole out of a \$90 billion budget.

Federal stimulus money still anticipated going to help out education but it is one time money and districts are being cautioned not to use it for any long-term or on-going programs. There was a \$2 billion error on the application to the Federal government that is currently being addressed that will affect the amount of money. There is also concern about how the money is going to be spent and will it be spent wisely. Districts have 2-3 years to spend the one-time stimulus money.

New proposals being floated to help the budget crisis:

1. LAO advises looking at low-priority categorical cuts and giving even more flexibility
2. Governor proposing to shorten the school year by 7.5 days (this must be negotiated with the teachers)

Things aren't looking any better for 2010/2011. How bad is the budget?

- Personal income is down for the first time since 1938
- The short term tax increases approved in February will go away (along with the revenue)
- The next several years are expected to be just as bad

The state is anticipated to have a major cash flow crisis by July 1 and so there is a great deal of pressure to pass a budget by the end of June in order to borrow money to meet obligations.

Scott Plotkin, Executive Director of the California School Boards Association

Report by Carla Crehin, Oso Grande Elementary Legislative Chair

Mr. Plotkin discussed SCA6 (Senate Constitutional Amendment #6), authored by Senator Joseph Simitian (D-Palo Alto). The measure would place a constitutional amendment before the voters, which would lower the vote threshold to 55 percent (from the current 2/3 majority) for school districts, community college districts and county offices of education to pass local parcel taxes. This bill requires a two-thirds vote to get out of the legislature. The Republicans are against this, as they feel that the financial burden would be carried exclusively by property owners, and yet non-property owners would have a substantial impact on the vote. Therefore, the existing two-thirds majority vote requirement to pass a parcel tax would be more equitable for those ultimately footing the bill, in their estimation. Mr. Plotkin indicated Menlo Park had successfully passed a parcel tax measure under the existing two-thirds voter requirement to aid their schools in 1992 of

\$65/parcel (74.4% of the voters), renewed in 1995 (83.4%) and again in 2003 (74.4%). This income has allowed their school district to provide additional staff development, class size reduction in upper grades, nursing services, counseling, and program improvement. Parcel tax measures need to be initiated by the local school board.

The keys to success in passing a parcel tax include the following:

- Formation of a community oversight committee
- Clear spending plan, dedicated to specific purposes
- A set period of time
- No organized opposition

On Tuesday, May 26th, the Governor asked several organizations tied to education to meet with him, informing them that further cuts to education were looming and asking for input to lessen the impact to classrooms. The CSBA stated that maximum flexibility where cuts need to be made is the best way to handle any more reductions to education. Their (CSBA and others) feeling was that the initial hoopla about flexibility on categoricals was not as big a deal as had been touted by the legislators and that much more flexibility would be needed.

The Governor wants to earmark cuts with a reduction in school calendar days, 7.5 days for a three year period. This might look good on paper, or in a sound-bite about the government's willingness to help schools meet their budgets, but this is not viable as this involves negotiations with various unions and we don't have a statewide collective bargaining agreement where the Governor can dictate that the unions make these changes to their existing labor agreements the various unions have with their members.

Mr. Plotkin indicated there is another date looming this summer of August 15th, on which additional teachers and staff could be laid off. This brings an important concern to the forefront relating to the safety of our children while at school, as there are less adults on campus, due to the steady decline of librarians, nurses, counselors, assistant principals and teachers. A question was raised about Mr. Plotkin's opinion of charter schools. Mr. Plotkin feels charter schools formed by school districts to address particular needs of the community are an asset. They are required to follow district rules and regulations. However, the CSBA is concerned about the entrepreneurial, independent charter schools as they use state funds, but don't have the same stringent financial and educational oversight. State Assemblywoman Julia Brownley is sponsoring AB 572 – Charter Schools Conflict of Interest, in response to recent news reports of a small number of charter school board members engaging in inappropriate financial mismanagement, which highlighted the need for charter school conflict of interest laws to be clarified. This bill will require charter school governing boards to adopt and comply with a conflict of interest policy similar to ones governing school district boards. Additionally, Mr. Plotkin advised us that a group called the Education Legal Alliance is preparing to file a lawsuit against the state to declare the current status of school financing unconstitutional. They anticipate successfully being able to bring about a major reform in how the state finances our schools.

Dan Walters, Syndicated Columnist, Sacramento Bee

Report by Maureen Lynds, Bergeson Elementary Legislative Chair

After an introduction, Dan Walters declined to make any opening remarks and instead, he spent the 30 minutes answering a few questions from our group.

Q. What is your take on yesterday's actions by the Governor?

A. Dan answered by reviewing status of budget, starting with the February deal. He explained how the deal that was struck was (wrongly) based on a rosy economic picture and an assumption that the May 19 measures would pass. Instead, economy has deteriorated swiftly, while measures were struck down by voters, which is why we now at a 21B deficit.

He further stated that we need a balanced budget by July 1st so state can successfully float new RAN's.

Dan simplified the #'s for us by saying that California budget is roughly \$114 billion and it looks like we'll only receive \$85 billion, which leaves us with a \$25-30 billion 'problem'.

Dan explained that the state budget situation changes constantly and it's "always just a snapshot". Right now he said California's economy is in a "freefall".

Q. How did we get here?

A. Dan explained that over time, the revenue system changed. Sales taxes decreased and income taxes rose. Problem with this is that income tax is very volatile. State became too dependent on higher income taxes and spent too much in the boom years.

Dan pointed out that 2001 is the last year that the state spent less than its total revenue.

The problem with our budget is that there is a 'structural deficit' that was created in 2001.

Dan went into the history of Prop. 13 and explained that pre-Prop. 13, California had the 3rd highest level of taxation in the country. Post Prop 13, California dropped to #27. He explained that while some think our taxes are too high, you have to look at the entire tax burden. With the recent adjustments in revenue, we're now dropping to approximately 9.5% tax rate, which is back to Prop. 13 levels.

Q. What's ahead?

A. Dan talked about two reform movements that are working on structural changes to address California's governance crisis.

1. **California Forward:** He called them the "incrementalists", led by Hirsberg and McKernon. (See summary notes on Jim Mayer's presentation)
2. **Bay Area Council:** Led by Jim Wunderman, a business leaders group that is advocating for a constitutional convention. They are working on 2 ballot measures on the 2010 ballot. The first is a measure allowing voters to call for a constitutional convention and the second (if #1 passes) is a call for a constitutional convention.

Dan Walters closed with the following:

"If we don't fix the "pass the buck system", we will continue down the path of political tribalism and continued loss of faith in the California Legislature."

Todd Moffitt, Chief of Staff to Assembly Member Roger Niello

Report by Laurie Masotto, Marblehead Elementary Legislative Chair

Assemblyman Niello was one of the few Republicans that voted in favor of the February budget, in response to a very grave financial situation.

They see this time as an opportunity to reform once the budget is done. He believes raising taxes is not currently an option, especially in light of the rejection of the propositions, and believes that a tax increase would have a worse effect on the economy.

He indicated that no studies exist that show that additional monies given to education do not necessarily correlate with improved performance.

He believes that providing school choice, such as by additional charter schools, or home schooling, would improve school performance. He also believes that school contracts should be contracted out so as to save expense. He also is in favor of tax credits (similar to vouchers) so as to give options to students in poor performing schools to attend other schools. He believes the public schools having a ‘monopoly’ on education need competition in order to have the incentive to improve.

He is in favor of more local control with respect to funding of public schools, and that state mandates should be reduced.

He is in favor of keeping 2/3 rather than reducing to 55% approval for local parcel taxes for use in schools, and that it is good protection, since reducing the percentage would cause more non-homeowners (i.e. renters) to have a say as to who pays property taxes.

Assembly Member Diane Harkey

Report by Lori McClaskey, Ladera Ranch Elementary Legislative Chair

- Good to meet with us; she misses the interaction with people from her district due to being in Sacramento so much. We need to remain close in times to come.
- She has a background in finance.
- The State is bankrupt. She gave the example of being maxed out on credit and not having an income.
- The State does not have the option of declaring bankruptcy. The state can turn itself over to Federal receivership but she does not know what that would entail.
- Earlier, O.C. went bankrupt but rebounded and is doing well now, one of the few counties doing well.
- Taxes are dropping which affects the budget, so we are upside down and cannot borrow, can't pay bills, not enough cash.
- The State has to get back into credit markets so they will loan to us.
- She distinguished between a budget problem and a cash flow crunch.
- She supported Props 1C, 1D & 1E to get immediate cash.
- The Controller is very cooperative and worried.
- The majority party sets the agenda and has the staff – very important.
- The minority party almost needs to get a Democrat to support their bills in order to move it forward.
- She wants to do a re-org., views it like a bankruptcy. We are running out of cash.
- Everyone now says no new taxes. The propositions did not pass in any county. Message: people don't want to pay more for services that they are not getting.
- Most (in the legislature) want the common good, but don't understand the difference between a budget and a bankruptcy, or just can't go there.
- With a 2/3 majority requirement, there is a lot more reasoning involved.
- The State will get \$46 billion in stimulus money, local will get up to \$90 billion. \$8 billion general funding, 4 billion to education in 2009. It was accepted in 2009, in a Section 28 Letter, which bypassed the legislature. Education was cut \$1.8 billion.
- Republicans will be working on reforms and hope they will be passed to get more local control and get more money to the classrooms.

- Good news on the horizon: O.C. realtors are getting multi-offers on listings, therefore, housing prices probably are leveling out.
- We have stimulus money for projects that will be spent in our district; potentially job creating. She does not want the money tied up in studies.
- The problem with cutting legislator's salaries is that the money saved will go into the Speaker's slush fund. It was recommended that they instead write a check to a charitable agency. That is likely what she will do, in lieu of taking a pay cut.
- There has to be ways for people to help people, when government cannot.
- There will be difficult times coming in the future, but she advised us to enjoy life because this is not a dress rehearsal.

Jeff Zech, Legislative Aide to Senator Mimi Walters

Report by Gail Grigaux, Chaparral Elementary Legislative Chair

1. What Reforms are being made to Education?

Senator Walters supports Assembly Member Duvall's bill to get more money into classrooms by increasing funding to block grants and decreasing categoricals – this allows for more flexibility in spending allowing school districts to have a larger say in spending.

2. Since CA is cutting funding to certain programs will we lose our Fed Stimulus money?
Do not know the answer.

3. Will there be cuts to Transportation?
Yes, there will be cuts to everything.

4. How does budget conference committee work?
It is a way to make the process more public – not just Big 5.

5. Any Bills pending?
Many are being held-up at this moment. SB107 – bill to make it easier for non-profits to operate. Some other bills to help out auto industry.

Jim Mayer – Executive Director, California Forward

Report by Julia Walsh, George White Elementary & NHMS Legislative Chair

California Forward is a nonprofit organization engaged in a bipartisan government reform project in California. Their goal is to figure out how to change state government so that it functions in problem-solving mode and moves away from gridlock and missed deadlines. They are looking at reforming the budget process, reforming California's revenue system, assisting in the implementation of Prop. 11's redistricting commission, and developing regional partnerships among local governments.

A. Fiscal/Budget Reforms Ideas:

“Guardrails” that serve to keep the state from “going off the cliff” in the budget process.

- “Pay-Go” – Implementing “pay as you go” requirements in the budgeting process, so that if we decide to start a new program, we pay for it by creating new revenue stream or cutting existing program. This creates a “spending discipline that is more surgical than a spending cap.”
- Managing volatile revenue systems – Because of Prop. 13, and California’s extremely progressive income tax system, we are more dependent on income tax than most states, and need to develop a system to manage spikes in the revenue. California Forward is proposing a system that uses a formula to identify one-time tax revenue, and use it for one-time use, such as a tax rebate or a rainy day fund, rather than for ongoing tax cuts or programs.

Additional fiscal/budget reforms needed to create efficiency and reliability:

- Results-based budgeting – Virginia and Washington state have implemented programs similar to this proposal, where programs are continuously evaluated to determine whether they are working, and budget allocations are based on which programs are most effective.
- Multi-year budgets – California currently uses multiyear forecasts, but does not make them public so that they can become part of the public debate. California Forward proposes a 2 year rolling budget, in which we appropriate for one year, and think ahead for two years, to increase stability in the budgeting process.
- Tax Reforms - California Forward has been gathering information from focus groups around the state about what people think about taxes. They discovered that people want to talk about local control over revenue, and local control over whether taxes will be raised or lowered.

B. Political Process Reform

- Redistricting - California Forward is working to stay involved in the redistricting process set in motion by Prop. 11.
- Open Primaries – Senator Maldonado has gotten an open primary proposition on the ballot for June 2010. California Forward has not decided whether to support this or not – it could create an incentive for compromise, but the measure includes open primaries for Congress, which the congressional delegation will not support.
- Term Limit Reform - There is some recognition that legislators need time to develop relationships and expertise in order to solve big problems, but term limit reform is difficult right now because of significant public dissatisfaction with the legislature.

C. Government Reform

California is very large – the average senator represents 1 million people, and the average assemblyperson represents 500,000 people. These districts are many times larger than we see in other states, which separates leaders from the people they represent, and highlights the need for local control. We need to get government closer to the people. What should the role of local governments be? How do we give local governments autonomy? How do we preserve state standards?

- Local Control – We should give local communities more authority and more control over revenue.

- Shared Goals/Regional Approaches – We need to find a way for local entities such as schools, police, etc. to work together cooperatively to achieve regional goals.

MISC.

- Legislators are willing to carry California Forward’s proposed legislative platform. SB 777, which establishes performance-based budgeting, is one example (see <http://www.caforward.org/action/> for more information).
- We can learn from other states. Washington State and Florida have implemented result-based strategic planning as part of their budget process (see <http://www.caforward.org/action/BudgetLessonsfromOtherStates.pdf> for more information).
- Propositions – California has the ability to do almost anything through the ballot process that the legislation can do. Our system may be too easy to manipulate. The public is very frustrated with the proposition process, but we need to restore confidence in the legislature before implementing reforms, such as limiting the use of propositions or imposing sunset provisions on proposition measures.