

**THE 2004 STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD ON LEGISLATION IN EDUCATION
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COMMENDATIONS

The Student Advisory Board on Legislation in Education, a program of the California Association of Student Councils, would like to extend the following commendations:

CASC commends Senator John Vasconcellos, both for his support for the SABLE program and for his decades of service to the people and students of California. He will be missed here next year.

CASC commends Assemblywoman Jackie Goldberg for her support in facilitating this program's first ever presentation to the Assembly Committee on Education.

CASC commends Senator Dede Alpert for laying the groundwork for the first SABLE hearing with the Senate Committee on Education four years ago.

CASC commends the members of this distinguished panel for taking the time to consider a perspective that is often lost in the education policy debate.

CASC commends Richard Riordan, California's new Secretary for Education, who has quickly established himself as a supporter of the SABLE program and the California Association of Student Councils.

CASC commends Brent Godfrey, the Student Member of the California State Board of Education, for his continued assistance in sharing the student outlook with decision-makers throughout Sacramento.



Teacher Quality

PRESENTERS: Jonathon Peterson, Lower Lake High School; Elyse Verhofstadt, Holtville High School; Schuyler Hall, Mt. Eden High School; Kevin O’Herin La Mirada High School; Cyndi Bringle, Holtville High School; Tejas Manchandia, Troy High School; Quyen Ngo, Piedmont Middle School.

OUR VISION FOR CALIFORNIA EDUCATION:

All teachers are sensitive to special learning needs and provide comfortable learning environments for every student. All teachers approach different types of students with a variety of teaching methods so that the required content reaches every student. All students learn and understand the state standards, which are aligned with the class content so that all students graduate.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

Teacher training methods

Actions Recommended:

- Support legislation that requires the establishment of internship programs in each district to provide additional on-the-job training to potential teachers.
- Re-evaluate the teacher credentialing process and consider creating a tiered process to ensure that a greater number of educators can begin to teach in their chosen area of interest with less hassle.
- Support SB 81, which would create an Educational Studies major at all public institutes of higher learning.
- Support SB 45, which would allow recently retired teachers to return to their vocation without the hassle of re-credentialing.

Evaluation of teachers

Actions Recommended:

- Establish a statewide evaluation system for teachers that includes an objective and written response from students. Student responses would be submitted to a neutral third party, which would configure the data and return feedback with recommendations to each teacher.

Standards for Teacher Credentialing

Actions Recommended

- Give all credentialing authority to one organization.
- Place more emphasis on teaching methods in credentialing standards and assessment.
- Recommend ongoing mentoring for new teachers.

- Implement a more rigorous student teaching process, including periodic evaluations by students and teachers for student teachers.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

The major costs of this proposal consist of funding for professional development. We recommend that the proposed workshops and seminars (with their new emphases) replace rather than add to the existing professional development programs at the district level. The students that evaluate teachers and assist at seminars would be volunteers who want help their teachers improve. There are also costs involved with setting up a statewide evaluation system. However, these costs are relatively negligible if the system is setup as an online database that is maintained by the state government.

RATIONALE:

Our proposal ensures that all students learn effectively. 26,061 out of the 309,773 teachers in California during the 2002-2003 school year (8.4%) were teaching on emergency credentials. Last year 12% of all teachers, including interns and teachers on waivers, were not credentialed. This lack of fully qualified teachers in the classroom could be detrimental to the advancement of students with diverse learning styles, but even a credentialed teacher is not necessarily a qualified one. Currently, teachers are given the resources needed to learn the content, but have not had the resources necessary to address diverse student learning styles. As a result, many teacher credentialing programs fall short of preparing teachers to teach effectively. Teachers require better training in order to meet the diverse needs of their students. Increasing student input in teacher training programs will enable teachers to better understand the variety of student needs. The students need a voice in the evaluation of teachers in order for teachers to acquire a greater understanding of their students' needs, so that they can in turn be better prepared to accommodate the various learning styles of the classroom and improve the quality of California instruction overall.

SUMMARY OF SOURCES CONSULTED:

- Cori Easterling, California Teacher's Association
- Bryn Sullivan, Office of Senator Karnette



Career Technical Education

PRESENTERS: Jacy LeDuc, Serrano High School; Jennifer Luu, Piedmont Middle School

OUR VISION FOR CALIFORNIA EDUCATION:

Career Technical Education (CTE) plays one of the largest roles in a student's education. All forms of CTE are available to all high school students, giving them endless options and motivating them to ultimate levels within themselves and in their lives. This plethora of options equips them for a future in college and career fields. Because of this high school preparation, all businesses have superbly skilled and experienced workers available in all fields of business and trade. This excellent CTE program leads to an end of unemployment and a vastly improved economy.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

CTE Standards

Actions Recommended:

- Direct the State Board of Education to create a CTE committee comprised of students, educators, and businesses to establish and implement CTE standards.

Business-sponsored internship programs

Actions Recommended:

- Create new business-sponsored internship programs in high schools statewide.
- Promote potential economic benefits of CTE to entice business participation.
- Encourage all districts to work with local chambers of commerce and similar organizations to implement community-friendly programs.

Schoolwide CTE programs

Actions Recommended:

- Create programs that work with the needs of businesses throughout the communities
- Create a variety of CTE programs listed and approved by the CTE committee that are available to all students.
- Promote CTE programs to younger age students, specifically those in middle and high school.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

State funding will be specifically allocated to districts to implement CTE standards. Student internships in the community will provide hands-on training that cannot be reproduced in the classroom and will be provided at a relatively low cost. Businesses would provide the supervision free of charge in exchange for services provided by students. More importantly, if students leave high school with skills to enable them to start and hold a job, the benefits of the programs and a strengthened economy will outweigh the cost in the long run.

RATIONALE:

In the past thirty years, sixty percent of CTE has disappeared despite the fact that the need for skilled workers has increased. The lack of qualified workers currently poses a significant challenge to employers. With an increase of CTE programs in schools, businesses will benefit from the increased productivity resulting from workers who are well trained and adequately prepared to do their job effectively. These programs have been proven effective and are already benefiting companies such as Hewlett Packard and the California Contractors Alliance. Additionally, similar successful programs already exist in Sacramento and San Francisco counties, as well as in other states.

Promoting CTE at younger ages will increase student interest and participation in CTE in high school. From this, a greater understanding of expectations and direction will emerge, giving students the necessary tools to succeed in life. CTE will provide students with more options after graduation and multiple directions for post high school education. This form of education also benefits students with different learning styles. Moreover, in a study conducted by John Hopkins University, CTE was proven to decrease overall high school dropout rates. With more CTE opportunities, students will broaden their horizons by gaining hands-on experience in the real world. This will increase youth participation in communities through internship programs, contributing to community growth and development.

SUMMARY OF SOURCES CONSULTED:

- James Westbrook, Office of Senator Vincent
- Penny Honda, Office of Assemblymember Hancock



Student Input in School Administration

PRESENTERS: Jose Alejandro, Castlemont High School; Francisco Vargas, Holtville High School; Alyssa Kronick, Rio Americano High School; Joy Natwick, Holtville High School

OUR VISION FOR CALIFORNIA EDUCATION:

Power on all levels is equally distributed between students and educators. All school boards in districts with one or more high schools have a student board member with preferential voting rights, as well as the power to make and second motions. Every student board member is sufficiently qualified and prepared to effectively represent students' concerns. Board members embrace their student counterparts as equals by sharing their knowledge and experience. The position of student board member on the local level is recognized as a vital conduit for effective student dialogue and representation on the important policy issues affecting a district's student population. Students and educators work together as mutual partners for the betterment of California's education system.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

Amendment of Existing Statute

Actions Recommended:

- Amend Section 35012 (d) of the California Education Code to ensure that every school board has a student board member with preferential voting rights.

Student Awareness of the Student Board Member Position and Relevant Education Code

Actions Recommended:

- Request that the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) and the California School Boards Association (CSBA) publicize section 35012 of the Education Code through their respective newsletters and websites.
- Encourage superintendents in every district to relay information on the existing statute to individual high school administrators and teachers through a website and/or e-mail.
- Encourage administrators and teachers to pass this information on to their students.

Student Involvement

Actions Recommended:

- Encourage districts to hold monthly open forums between board members, administrators, and students from each high school.
- Encourage districts to facilitate monthly meetings between student board member(s) and representatives from each high school.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

Increasing the number of student board members at the district level is cost effective when one considers the benefits of the proposal. Minimal expenses will be incurred by each district for the cost of paper, envelopes, and additional materials that will need to be given to the student member. For this negligible price, our proposal will positively affect California students and educators now and in years to come.

RATIONALE:

Because students occupy the classrooms across the state, their invaluable input improves the quality of the education policy debate by offering a rarely heard view. We understand that many school and district administrations are willing to listen, but without representation, students are not able to effectively express their opinions. Students need input with respect to their futures in the education system; without a guarantee of certain rights or knowledge of those rights, such input is severely restricted. Currently, many policymakers are unaware of the benefits that a student perspective can provide. This failing system should be replaced with one that fosters effective communication between the policymakers and students. Without student input, there is an important perspective missing when decisions regarding educational law and enforcement are made. As the consumers of education, students feel that their outlook on the education system deserves recognition and attention.

SUMMARY OF SOURCES CONSULTED:

- California Education Code Sections 35010 & 35012
- Daniel Roth, Office of Assemblymember Reyes



Cultural Education

PRESENTERS: Jesse Lee, Dana Middle School; Kevin O’Herin, La Mirada High School; Rubina Dhani, Poway High School; Julie Mills, Notre Dame High School

OUR VISION FOR CALIFORNIA EDUCATION:

All California students, regardless of their race, creed, sex, affiliation, disability, or sexual orientation, are embraced by their fellow students and educators. All students embrace a feeling of unity and openly discuss issues pertaining to diversity in the classroom. The teachers support and provide a forum for such discussions, allowing for a safe and comfortable atmosphere to be available for any student to put forth their ideas and feelings. The atmosphere created by the availability of the faculty and the students is safe and focused on academics and extra-curricular activities.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

9th Grade Social Science Standards

Actions Recommended:

- Create a cultural studies course in the social science standards for 9th grade.
- Include the beliefs, lifestyles, traditions, and histories of various California cultures in this course.
- Provide for instruction time to discuss multi-cultural themes.

Integration of cultural issues into English/Language Arts and Social Science standards

Actions Recommended:

- Direct the State Board of Education to integrate cultural issues into existing English/Language Arts and Social Science standards.
- Include materials that present different cultural perspectives in the reading lists.
- Include materials written by authors who are members of a variety of cultural groups.
- Provide for instruction time to discuss the multicultural themes presented in the new material.

Teacher diversity/sensitivity

Actions Recommended:

- Create a professional development program to train educators to manage racial tensions/issues within the classroom.
- Evaluate the current educators and their sensitivity towards diverse students and issues.
- Train teachers to handle diversity issues within the classroom before conflict escalates into hate, violence, or fear.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

Although there are costs associated with instituting the revised cultural education standards, these one-time costs will be more than offset by the benefits of the increased focus on cultural education. Creating a cultural education curriculum will enable students to gain a greater appreciation for the diversity of the campus population. This increased awareness will result in less race-based school violence, which will in turn make students feel safer at school. Safer schools will result in less expenditures on school safety equipment and personnel, increased average daily attendance funding, and increased federal funding from higher API scores.

RATIONALE:

The students of California today lack the cultural exposure they need to truly understand the students around them. This lack of knowledge combined with misunderstanding promotes stereotypes, prejudices, and self-segregation of many diverse groups on school campuses. Such circumstances are a recipe for violence and cause fear in schools that inhibits students' ability to learn in a comfortable atmosphere. The current lack of cultural exposure significantly impairs the students' power to learn, participate, and reach their goals.

The ultimate goal of the California Association of Student Councils is to promote individual student achievement and at the same time increase the success of the entire school.

The fear caused by violence ultimately hurts the school as a whole. It results in decreased attendance, leading to a decrease in ADA, a vital part of school funding. Not only are the students not attending school, they are also not learning the material presented—material on which they are subsequently evaluated in standardized testing. Poor performance on these tests reflects poorly on a school, which is then reflected in their funding. As students of California, we feel that the state needs to get involved to promote the positive side of diversity rather than allowing current tensions to metastasize into conflict that is greater and more problematic.

SUMMARY OF SOURCES CONSULTED:

- Gibbons, Dylan from the office of Assemblymember Garcia
- McFadden, Brent from the Association of California School Administrators



School Starting Time

PRESENTERS: Alexandra Gness, Montgomery High School; Ben Sumarnkant, Troy High School; Rhett Dornbach-Bender, Granite Hills High School, Gabriel Zacarias, Santa Maria High School; Alyssa Benavidez, Dana Middle School; Alex Lemberg, Half Moon Bay High School

OUR VISION FOR CALIFORNIA EDUCATION:

Schools begin at a healthy hour for both students and staff. All students are well rested for school, allowing them to fully take advantage of their education. Schools facilitate better learning for all students and create an environment conducive to success.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

Biological sleeping cycle of adolescents

Actions Recommended:

- Promote school start time awareness and recommend that school districts throughout California adopt a school start time of 8:40 AM.
- Support and promote federal House Concurrent Resolution 135
- Implement pilot programs for later school start times throughout California.
- Seek feedback about effectiveness of programs from local districts.

Effects of school starting time on student performance

Actions Recommended:

- Emphasize the positive impact of a later school starting time on student performance to local school districts.
- Distribute school start time research to all school districts.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

Adjusting school start times would be an investment in our future. While there would be initial one-time costs, this schedule change will benefit school districts and the state of CA in the long run. Attendance rates will increase (resulting in more ADA money for schools) and test scores will rise. Higher test scores (API) will insure greater levels of federal funding. Most costs at the state level would be incurred as a result of pilot programs. Pilot programs and their corresponding budgets would be completely at the discretion of the state. However, even with the implementation of state-sponsored pilot programs, the costs will be far outweighed by the benefits of the program.

RATIONALE:

Students are negatively affected by early start times with regard to attendance, academic performance, and behavioral problems. Under our current system, school schedules seem to be designed around logistical problems rather than the students' best interests. Students are unable to attain their full academic potential because their physical strength is not up to par. Disrupting the sleep cycle by forcing an early wake up time in order to go to school is more detrimental to the students' health than a general lack of sleep. When students are well rested, their academic performance will improve, resulting in higher test scores for the increased API and federal funding which can improve per student spending. Students will be more alert and attentive during school. Students will more likely learn more because they will approach school with a more positive attitude. With this positive attitude, students' apathy towards school will decrease.

The creation of a pilot program in California schools would be extremely beneficial. Such programs have been conducted in many districts in 19 different states and have all been successful. In addition, the currently implemented programs have shown that after-school programs are not significantly affected by a later starting time.

SUMMARY OF SOURCES CONSULTED:

- Evans, Gail E. Chief of Staff to Senator Jack Scott. February 3, 2004.
- Gibbons, Dillon P. Legislative Aide to Assemblymember Bonnie Garcia. February 3, 2004.
- Giroux, Lisa J. Consultant to Senator Dede Alpert. February 3, 2004.
- Honda, Penny. Legislative Aide to Assemblymember Loni Hancock. February 3, 2004.
- House Concurrent Resolution 135, sponsored by Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren. April 2, 2003.
- Kantrowitz, Barbara and Karen Springen. "Why Sleep Matters." Newsweek. September 22, 2003.
- Minneapolis Public Schools Start Time Study.
<http://education.umn.edu/CAREI/Programs/start_time/ExecutiveSum.pdf> November 1998.
- Norman, Janus L. Senior Consultant to Assemblymember Darrell Steinberg. February 3, 2004.
- Ramirez, Josefina. Legislative Aide to Assemblymember Jackie Goldberg. February 3, 2004.
- Reid, Lee Angela. Legislative Aide to Senator McPherson. February 3, 2004.
- School Start Times: More Information. Anchorage School District.
<<http://www.asdk12.org/starttimes/info.asp>> November 6, 2003.
- Solov, Nate. Legislative Aide to Assemblymember Fran Pavley. February 3, 2004.
- Springen, Karen. "Hitting Snooze." Teen Newsweek. November 4, 2003.
- Sullivan, Bryn. Legislative Aide to Senator Karnette. February 3, 2004.
- Wanke, Jessica. "A Later School Day Start?" The Arizona Republic. September 5, 2003.



Standardized Testing

PRESENTERS: Colette Hinckley, San Ramon Valley High School; Lyndsey Matthews, College Park High School; Jack Montgomery, Lower Lake High School; Amanda Rose, Orestimba High School; Amanda Schroeder, Thousand Oaks High School; Christopher Wihlidal, A.A. Stagg High School

OUR VISION FOR CALIFORNIA EDUCATION:

California standardized testing conforms to California state standards and accurately reflects the curriculum that is taught in the classroom. All students are motivated and excited to partake in the testing process which accurately reflects their knowledge. Students' care for the education system in California inspires them to exert maximum effort on the exams, regardless of incentives. However, students are acknowledged for their successful completion of the testing and rewarded for outstanding performance. Teachers feel that the STAR test is beneficial both to their students and to their teaching methods; they are eager to devote class time to the implementation of the exam. Parents are well informed of the benefits of standardized testing and take an active role in supporting student achievement. There are no longer any schools in financial need because the accuracy of the test results has allowed for a focused flow of aid to those schools in greatest need.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

Test Performance Incentives

Actions Recommended:

- Encourage local businesses to provide rewards in an effort to increase student motivation to excel on standardized exams. Rewards will be given to students who either excel on the exam or significantly improve their scores. Small businesses will provide their products and/or scholarship money as student incentives. In return, the local businesses would receive positive publicity and be recognized as benevolent organizations. This positive publicity will be visible via media, logos on parent/teacher reports or in school newsletters. Furthermore, these businesses will earn tax deductions for their donations.
- Encourage school districts to organize intra-scholastic competitions in which different classes will compete with each other on the exam. This will create a spirit of competition that will motivate students to excel. This will also foster positive peer pressure, as students will have an incentive to encourage those around them to take the test seriously. Possible rewards for a class who scores well are a pizza party or a day off of school.
- Create pilot programs in a few select, diverse school districts in which rewards are provided for students who improve their test scores.
- Develop and implement a study in which it is determined whether or not school districts which have created incentives have experienced higher test scores.

Test Result Distribution

Actions Recommended:

- Direct the state test providers to send teachers the individual results of each of the respective teachers' students from the previous year. These individual results must provide detailed categorical information on test performance so that teachers can adapt their teaching methods appropriately.

Information Distribution

Actions Recommended

- Create and distribute information pamphlets to parents. The pamphlets will concisely show the importance of the tests and will encourage parents to motivate their children to perform well on the exams.
- Distribute information conveying the importance of California's standardized testing system to teachers so that they will communicate the importance of the exams to their students.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

Creating a report for teachers to review the aggregate of their students' test scores in detail will enable teachers to better assess their teaching performance in the classroom. The costs associated with this restructuring include the administrative costs of reformatting the results that the teachers receive and the costs associated with providing the reports to the teachers. However, the newly formatted results teachers receive will greatly aid teachers' efforts to improve the quality of their teaching.

In order to publicize the importance of the exam to parents and teachers, we will need to develop new informational pamphlets that help parents and communities to inspire students to excel on the tests.

Given that students are likely to perform better on standardized tests when provided with incentives that reward success on the exams, we should implement incentive programs with this end in mind. In order to assess the effects of these programs, we should begin with pilot programs which, if successful, would be expanded across the state. While incentive programs would ideally be publicly funded, we understand that current budgetary constraints limit the public funds available to such programs. With this in mind, we suggest the use of private funds. Businesses and corporations are likely to show interest in supporting education and establishing positive relations with students and educators. While there are potential drawbacks to relying upon private and corporate funds in public education, these drawbacks can be reduced by setting guidelines that inhibit private sector actors from exercising undue influence on public schools. It should be noted that, while there is a significant cost associated with the proposed programs, it is a small price to pay to reap the return on the massive investments in testing infrastructure that have already been made.

RATIONALE:

The entire system of standardized testing is predicated on the assumption that all students put their best effort forward on test day. To the extent that this assumption does not hold, test scores become a useless measurement for the performance of the schools and districts that serve each student. Over-reliance on data that has been biased by differential levels of student effort can distort our policy perspective more

than a reliance on no data at all. In order for the current testing system to function as the signaling mechanism that it was intended to be, it is imperative that we take steps to provide all students with incentives to take these tests seriously. In the meantime, there is clear evidence that the market considers the current system a poor signal of student achievement; few if any employers or colleges take these test scores into account in evaluating student applicants because they know, as we do, that the data will not be valid until there is reason to believe that the test scores reflect every student's best effort and true ability. We have invested an incredible amount of time and energy to put this accountability infrastructure into place. We encourage the legislature to fix this infrastructure through student incentives so that students and educators can finally begin reaping the returns of this investment.

If we can be certain that students are all exerting their best effort on these tests, there is also the question of how the test score data is used to improve the performance of schools and districts. Beyond the incentive programs and general API-based accountability structure, the test score data can be used to provide teachers with useful information that will allow them to individually improve their own effectiveness in the classroom. Although this data is currently available to teachers on a student-by-student basis, teachers never receive a score report that effectively aggregates the performance of the students that they have served. Such a score report would be invaluable in allowing a teacher to assess her/his overall performance and to understand his/her major areas for improvement. It has the added benefit of empowering the teacher to let the test scores drive her/his performance without heavy-handed oversight from the state. Test scores are meant to provide educators with a measurable and quantifiable system for evaluation, feedback, and eventual improvement in the classroom. By adopting this modest proposal for sensible reporting of test score data to teachers, we can go a long way towards fulfilling the basic promises of our burgeoning accountability system.

SUMMARY OF SOURCES CONSULTED:

- Lisa Giroux, Office of Senator Alpert
- Bryn Sullivan, Office of Senator Karnette