Delegate Assembly Report

csba

THE RESOURCE GUIDE

May 2021

CONTENTS

TURNING CRISIS INTO OPPORTUNITY

RESOURCES FOR BOARD MEMBERS PLANNING FOR THE 2021–22 YEAR AND BEYOND

As they discussed preparations for summer school, the return to full-time, in-person instruction for the fall and future school years, Delegates at the May Assembly identified several pressing topics that warrant prompt attention and practical resources. This Delegate Assembly Resource Guide is a companion to the May 2021 Delegate Assembly Report and will provide board members with a collection of timely resources, recent research and evidence-based practices to help address the most important topics that were identified by Delegates.

MENTAL AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL HEALTH OF STUDENTS AND STAFF

Supporting the mental health of students and staff has been at the forefront of conversations with school leaders throughout the pandemic. During the May meeting, Delegates described the isolation, loneliness and stress caused by the pandemic. They also highlighted the importance of private and public partnerships, expanding social-emotional learning in their districts' curriculums, assessing the mental well-being of both students and staff, and increasing access to mental health services.

The social and emotional well-being of students and staff impact students' ability to learn, and Delegates also reported concerns about teacher burnout. Board members should consider how their local educational agencies will allocate resources to support mental health. CSBA recently joined 38 other educational organizations and researchers in signing onto the brief, Reimagine and Rebuild: Restarting School with Equity at the Center, which highlights the importance of centering relationships as more of California's students return to in-person instruction.

In addition to strengthening relationships to re-engage and support students' well-being, Assembly Bill 86 required districts receiving Expanded Learning Opportunities Grants to submit plans for addressing learning recovery by June 1, including addressing the social-emotional well-being of students. These plans may be amended as needs are identified or evolve, and there are several questions board members can ask district staff to help their LEAs develop and revise their approach to mental and social-emotional health.

Questions to consider

1. What mental health supports does my LEA currently have in place for both students and staff?

2. How are we assessing the social and emotional state of students returning to school?

3. What public and private partnerships are available to best support the social-emotional health of my school community? Consider nearby institutions of higher education and local community, nonprofit and faith-based groups.

4. How are we working with our community to better understand local mental health support needs and to address possible stigma around the topic? Consider options that provide opportunities for student, family and staff input.

Resources

The resources below can be useful tools in helping to address issues around the mental health of students and staff.

Evidence-Based Practices for Assessing Students' Social and Emotional Well-Being from Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) provides K-12 decision makers with help identifying best practices for assessing social and emotional well-being. In addition to describing effective strategies, the brief offers questions to consider, strategies to avoid, examples of validated assessments and hyperlinks to additional resources.

Addressing Trauma in Educational Settings, developed by the U.S. Department of Education, addresses understanding trauma's impacts on schools, multi-tiered approaches to addressing trauma, and how to develop trauma-informed classroom supports. Module 2 discusses building connections with communities that may be reluctant to address mental health issues, an issue raised by CSBA Delegates and other members, and offers several examples of how school districts have tackled this issue.

As school leaders begin to assess the trauma of their students and staff, it may be helpful to have a research-based guide as a starting point. The California School-Based Health Alliance put together a comprehensive assessment tool that helps leaders assess their district's foundational understandings of trauma and their current offerings for trauma-informed supports for school communities.

CDE and other mental health-focused organizations created the California Student Mental Health Implementation Guide to support LEAs in creating more robust mental health supports. The guide recommends a holistic, anti-racist approach to mental health and includes ways that LEAs can train staff, perform needs assessments and fund more sustainable mental health supports.

Board members might be looking for an all-encompassing approach to addressing the many challenges presented by the pandemic. Community schools are a promising evidence-based strategy that promotes a "whole child" approach to learning through integrated student supports. The Learning Policy Institute created a brief on community schools that explains the system and details two California counties leveraging it to meet the challenges presented by the pandemic.

Practical Guide for Financing Social, Emotional, and Mental Health in Schools is a resource for districts concerned about the sustainability of funding for mental health supports. Board members might inquire of staff whether this is an appropriate strategy to improve access to mental health services for students (if not currently incorporated into district practice).

In this winter 2020 article in *California Schools* magazine, several districts and county offices of education share how they are funding mental health initiatives and partnering with community organizations to provide services to students.

CSBA sample policies

› BP/AR 5141.52 - Suicide Prevention

› BP 5030 - Student Wellness

› BP 5141.5 - Mental Health

› BP 1400 - Relations Between Other Governmental Agencies and the Schools

› BP 1700 - Relations Between Private Industry and the Schools

› BP 5137 - Positive School Climate

› BP 6164.2 - Guidance/Counseling Services

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/ NEW HIRE TRAINING

During the May Delegate Assembly breakouts, many participants noted their districts will be investing heavily in professional learning during the coming year. This can be an effective use of one-time funding such as California's Expanded Learning Opportunities Grants.

Given the time and resources required for professional development, it is important for board members to consider what types of professional learning have sustained impact. In a brief examining the results from 35 research studies that found a link between professional development, instructional practices and student outcomes, the Learning Policy Institute identified the following key features associated with effective professional learning:

1. A focus on content;

2. An active learning approach incorporating adult learning theory;

3. Support for collaboration, especially in job-embedded contexts;

4. Use of models and modeling of effective practice;

5. Coaching and expert support;

6. Opportunities for feedback and reflection; and

7. Sustained duration.

Professional development plans can include classified and certificated staff, as well as trainings for people providing learning recovery support for students (e.g., tutors, volunteers). Delegates participating in the May Assembly noted their LEAs will offer a range of professional development providers: instructional coaches, teachers, county office of education staff, and outside consultants or organizations. Topics identified include social-emotional and trauma-informed practices, intervention strategies, equity-centered trainings such as restorative practices and implicit bias trainings, and health and safety protocols. The pandemic also highlighted the importance of understanding how to integrate technology effectively into instruction.

Questions to consider

1. How is our LEA identifying relevant professional learning needs? How have staff been involved in those conversations?

2. Are our professional learning plans consistent with evidence-based practices (described above)?

3. How do our professional learning plans align with our LCAP goals and Expanded Learning Opportunities Grant strategies?

4. If we are working with new partners or volunteers, how will we provide support so they can be effective in their roles?

Resources

Selecting professional learning options

The return to in-person instruction presents an opportunity for expanded professional development. Board members may be wondering how to evaluate what types of professional learning will be the most effective. In addition to the key features of effective professional learning described on page 6, *Edutopia* published an article on six things to consider when planning professional development. Chief among these considerations is surveying teachers on what they feel would be most impactful and offering choices aligned with their professional goals.

Social-emotional learning and trauma

The CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL Essentials uses research-based approaches to help school districts become communities of social and emotional learning. The guide uses clear goals and assessments through a systemic approach to SEL and incorporates them into every aspect of the school community. By focusing on a systemic approach, leaders can develop more accepting schoolwide mental health norms.

Support for Teachers Affected by Trauma is a free resource with five online learning modules that explain secondary traumatic stress (STS), including risk factors associated with susceptibility to secondary trauma, its impact and concrete skills for educators to use to prevent and address STS.

Restorative justice and implicit bias training

Learning for Justice provides free resources to educators and school leaders to supplement curriculum and promote equity-oriented professional development. The professional learning resources include workshops, facilitator guides, webinars and podcasts. LEAs can also request in-person training.

Technology

The pandemic has enhanced the prominence of technology in education and has made effective professional development around tech even more critical. The *Education Week* article, How to Fix 7 Fatal Flaws in Tech Professional Development, discusses what to look for in good technology professional development proposals and, just as importantly, what to avoid.

CSBA sample policies

› BP 4131 - Staff Development (Certificated Staff)

› BP 4331 - Staff Development (Classified Staff)

› BP 6163.4 - Student Use of Technology

› BP 6161.11 - Supplementary Instructional Materials

› BP 0415 - Equity

› BP 3600 - Consultants

› BP/AR 1240 - Volunteer Assistance

› BP/AR 4112.21 - Interns

USE OF ONE-TIME FUNDS

The challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic have led to historic investments in education from both the state and federal government. However, as noted by Delegates, these are one-time sources of funding that do not address long-term spending inequities or budgetary concerns that pre-dated the pandemic.

Using one-time sources of funding for long-term expenditures can lead to financial difficulties in the future. At the May meeting, Delegates discussed how they have already used some of this aid and how they plan to use it in the future. Professional development (see page 6) was one of the most cited investments of one-time funding. Other short-term expenditures could include investments in ventilation or building maintenance, updating district technology, and bringing in mental health professionals to address trauma.

Rather than ongoing pay increases, some districts reported offering stipends for bilingual and biliterate staff to provide expanded learning opportunities before and after school. Other strategies might include stipends to hire retired or aspiring teachers to provide tutoring on an hourly basis or offering microgrants to community organizations to provide student academic or social-emotional supports.

Questions to consider

1. How can short-term funding be used to create long-term structures for student success?

2. What are some immediate needs that one-time funding could help to address in our LEA? Are there other expenditures that could be staggered over the course of the year?

3. How do our planned expenditures align with the overall goals of the district?

4. How are we collaborating with students and staff to identify supports that they consider priorities?

5. How will we communicate with stakeholders about the short-term nature of several relief packages (e.g., ELO grants, the American Recovery Plan and other federal aid)?

Resources

CSBA's webinar Expanded Learning: Governance for Developing Effective Learning Recovery Plans (slide deck here) outlined additional considerations for using the one-time funding, including recommendations from WestEd and PACE researchers, as well as school board members.

The California Department of Education Guide on Learning Loss Mitigation Funding was created to help LEAs understand both state and federal COVID-19 aid funding. The guide includes ways that LEAs can use the aid, reporting requirements, state and federal compliance guidelines, and other useful information.

The CDE also created the Federal Stimulus Funding page to help LEAs navigate the different federal recovery acts that have been passed by Congress over the past year. The page contains important federal funding information, links to federal reporting applications, a schedule of important reporting dates, and capital expenditure applications.

CSBA sample policies

› BP/AR 3100 - Budget

› BP 3110 - Transfer of Funds

› BP/AR 3230 - Federal Grant Funds

LEARNING RECOVERY

As more students return to in-person instruction, schools will begin to assess where those students are academically. Research coming out of the pandemic has demonstrated that, for a host of reasons, there are substantial disparities in the learning attained by students over the past year. A recent CSBA brief, Supporting Students in a Time of Crisis, explores a range of barriers to learning that students experienced during the pandemic and how some California LEAs have addressed them.

Districts can use a Multi-Tiered System of Supports approach to meet students' learning needs. Tier 1 supports are useful for all students (often called "universal supports"). Tier 2 supports are targeted to students who need some supplemental resources and services, and Tier 3 supports are for students with the most intensive needs. To determine how much support each student needs — and in what areas — districts will need to use a range of formal and informal assessments (while not at the expense of instructional time). Options can range from diagnostic and formative assessments to consultation with families and teacher observation.

Once student needs are identified, districts can consider a range of strategies. While not an exhaustive list, common evidence-based strategies for learning recovery include:

1. Summer learning programs (note that the Expanding Learning Opportunities Grant can be used to support programs for 2022, and summer learning experts recommend beginning the planning process in the fall)

2. High-dosage tutoring (individual or small-group tutoring, 3-5 days per week)

3. Before- and after-school programs

While the above are particularly useful strategies for Tier 2 and Tier 3 targeted supports, "acceleration" is a strategy that can be integrated into universal supports. In the context of learning recovery, acceleration does not mean simply moving *faster* through the curriculum. It refers to strategies for ensuring students can successfully participate in grade-level work by assessing what knowledge or skills students will need to understand current grade-level instruction and front-loading that content immediately prior to new material. This approach is discussed in detail in the Learning Acceleration Guide provided by The New Teacher Project (see page 11).

Questions to consider

1. How is my district planning to assess learning progress for students returning to in-person instruction?

2. What strategies does my district have in place to disaggregate student data to develop appropriate, targeted supports?

3. What resources does my district need to address academic disparities between students returning to in-person instruction, and how can we use relief funding to address those issues?

4. What existing and potential partnerships can we develop or strengthen to support learning recovery?

5. How will we evaluate the effectiveness of our learning recovery strategies? Consider a periodic review of implementation to allow for adjustments throughout the year.

Resources

The toolkits and guides below were designed to help LEAs develop assessment plans, effectively collect and analyze student data, and implement learning recovery programs.

Assessment

A recent CSBA brief, Understanding and Addressing Disruptions to Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic, includes an overview of the benefits of acceleration over remediation and provides other learning recovery considerations tailored to board members.

The Toolkit for Assessing Learning Changes from the U.S. Department of Education's Regional Educational Labs is designed for district-level researchers; however, it also walks readers through the steps of data collection and analysis. District leaders will find best practices for decision-making, data collection, data evaluation and identifying appropriate supports for students based on the data.

Summer learning

CSBA's webinar School's in for Summer: Strategies for Successful Summer Programs and Beyond, and its slide deck, offer a summary of research on effective summer learning programs, concrete recommendations for implementing summer learning, and examples from California board members.

The Summer Technical Assistance Hub from the Partnership for Children and Youth offers resources for planning summer learning, including matching with expert members of their technical assistance network for free support.

Tutoring

In line with other research, EdResearch for Recovery's Accelerating Student Learning with High-Dosage Tutoring guide recommends high doses of small group instruction conducted frequently throughout the week (while acknowledging and offering suggestions for districts where this may prove difficult). This guide is a part of an extensive series of resources aggregated by Brown University to address a wide range of educational concerns.

Targeted Intensive Tutoring: Strategies for Addressing Unfinished Learning from EdTrust–West provides strategies for targeted intensive tutoring to help school districts address unfinished learning for students. Targeted tutoring is effective for all students, though the guide mentions that it can be particularly helpful with smaller groups for younger students in mathematics.

Proven Tutoring from Johns Hopkins University researchers identifies effective programs capable of being widely scaled up to serve a significant number of students in need of tutoring.

Extended learning programs

Addressing the range of student and staff needs following the pandemic will demand significant resources. To meet the full breadth of needs, LEAs may find it necessary to collaborate with expanded learning partners. PACE developed a policy brief that explores how expanded learning programs can better support students during this moment. The brief outlines three fundamental principles: collaboratively planning integrated services, providing integrated supports that reflect the science of learning and development, and prioritizing equity.

The California Afterschool Network offers a wealth of resources related to extended learning programs. Board members can access self-assessments for existing options, promising practices for programs at all grade spans, and publications that focus specifically on extended learning in rural communities.

Acceleration

The New Teacher Project (TNTP) Learning Acceleration Guide was designed to help LEAs think through short- and long-term acceleration goals and the most effective types of data to reach those goals. Goals encompass partnerships, assignments, staffing, student attendance and more. TNTP's work on learning acceleration was featured in a July 2020 online seminar by the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence and will be featured in CSBA's summer issue of *California Schools* magazine.

Supports for students with disabilities

The National Center for Learning Disabilities developed a four-part report focused on learning recovery and acceleration for students with disabilities. Parts One and Two may be of most use to board members. Part One offers strategies for learning acceleration while considering the needs of students with the most severe cognitive disabilities. Part Two offers implementation guidance and stresses the importance of inclusion of students with disabilities in an accelerated learning environment.

Supports for English learners

Teaching and Learning During Uncertain Times: A Review of Learning Continuity Plans from Californians Together offers concrete areas for inclusion in ELO grants and LCAPs. Included in their recommendations is the importance of differentiating supports for dual language learners, newcomer students, and Long-Term English Learners, along with examples of promising practices from California districts.

Learning Acceleration: Support English Learners is a page on the CDE website that contains strategies for supporting English learners and has lesson-planning guides for social studies, math, science and other subjects for elementary and secondary students. For board members, the targeted strategies for engaging and communicating with the families of English learners are particularly relevant and timely.

CSBA sample policies

› BP 6162.5 - Student Assessments

› BP 6177 - Summer Learning Programs

› BP/AR 5148.2 - Before/After School Programs

› BP/AR 6164.5 - Student Success Teams

› BP 6179 - Supplemental Instruction

PROGRAM DELIVERY

When campuses closed for in-person instruction in March 2020, districts scrambled to adapt instructional strategies for students under extraordinary circumstances, and as the pandemic stretched on, education policymakers, LEA staff, families and students faced a host of challenges accessing high-quality instruction. In fact, due to the digital divide, many students across the state struggled to access instruction, period. Teachers had to pivot from the modes of instruction for which they were trained and try to engage and educate students during unprecedented conditions. While some students thrived, every LEA grappled with how to effectively meet the needs of students who were negatively impacted by both the pandemic and campus closures.

Since then, program delivery has been one of the most contentious educational topics. Even as the severity of the pandemic subsides, when and how to resume full-time, in-person instruction and to what degree, if any, remote learning should be offered in the 2021–22 school year and beyond remains hotly debated.

As of this writing, Gov. Gavin Newsom's administration and the Legislature have not finalized the 2021–22 state budget or other possible legislation that could alter the regulatory landscape for program delivery. This uncertainty has significant implications for remote instruction and the independent study statutes some LEAs are using as the basis for virtual academies catering to students whose families prefer online learning as the principal mode of program delivery.

Although Delegates at the May Assembly described preparing a range of program delivery options so they can serve differing student needs while reacting to a shifting regulatory environment, it remains unclear what options will be permissible, particularly in relation to independent study statutes. This may have an impact on the ability of LEAs to offer virtual academies for students whose families have requested continued distance learning as an option. Additionally, evolving public health guidelines might impact other aspects of program delivery. CSBA will share additional resources about program delivery as options are defined.

CSBA sample policies

› BP 6157 - Distance Learning

› BP/AR 6158 - Independent Study

› BP/AR 6145.2 - Athletic Competition

› BP/AR 6145 - Extracurricular and Cocurricular Activities

RETURN-TO-CAMPUS PROTOCOLS/ HEALTH AND SAFETY

As health and safety precautions surrounding COVID-19 have evolved over the past year, school leaders have had to stay at the forefront of expert guidance and protocols for the return to in-person instruction. Delegates mentioned several ongoing efforts to improve campus health and safety, including upgrading HVAC systems, regularly sanitizing classrooms, working with local health departments and reconsidering communal drinking fountains.

This section includes current guidance and resources from both state and federal sources, but as with all health guidance related to the pandemic, recommendations and requirements are subject to change.

Questions to consider

1. In line with the guidance of health professionals, what health protocols still need to be implemented or adapted for the summer and/or coming school year?

2. What health and safety concerns have families and staff expressed about in-person instruction? What plans do we have to address any lingering concerns?

3. How are we communicating our COVID-19 mitigation strategies to stakeholders so that they feel more comfortable with in-person instruction?

4. How can we use COVID-19 relief funding to improve the health and safety of our district as students return to school?

Resources

The California Safe Schools for All site was developed by the CDE to be a "one-stop shop" for the most recent state guidance on safely returning to in-person instruction. The site includes the most recent guidance and resources from the California Department of Public Health and Cal/OSHA. Additional content includes interactive maps that have information on the reopening statuses of local districts, along with a range of reopening-related topics including summer learning support, vaccinations, ventilation improvement resources, and guidance on larger gatherings (such as graduations or sporting events).

The Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Prevention from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention contains a host of resources to help LEAs design return-to-campus protocols. These include essential elements of safe K-12 operations for in-person learning and health equity concerns. There are also strategies to reduce transmission of COVID-19 in schools, cleaning and building maintenance guidance, and indicators of community transmission. The CDC regularly updates this guide.

CSBA sample policies

› BP 0470 - COVID-19 Mitigation Plan

› BP/AR 3516 - Emergency and Disaster and Preparedness Plans

› BP/AR 4157/4257/4357 - Employee Safety

OTHER CHALLENGES IN FALL PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

As noted in the May Delegate Assembly report, Delegates raised additional challenges related to fall planning, as well as described some bright spots. Frequently cited were issues around communication and engagement, labor relations, questions about vaccines, and the challenges of planning in an environment with unclear or changing guidance. Planning for enrollment — which impacts staff assignments, facilities use and budgets — was also noted as a concern.

Even as schools continue or expand in-person instruction and COVID-19 conditions improve, health and safety factor into strategies for family engagement. Given how the pandemic has impacted vulnerable communities in more significant ways, outreach should be designed to be inclusive. One strategy to consider is using COVID-relief funding to pay stipends for family liaisons. Community members, including district parents and classified staff are an important resource, especially if they are multilingual. During the Delegate Assembly meeting, many participants noted that they hope many of the engagement strategies they developed to adapt to the virtual context will continue even after most students return to full-time, in-person instruction.

Resources

The National School Public Relations Association developed pandemic-related communication resources for districts, including a tip sheet with best practices.

CSBA has partnered with the Donovan Group to offer urgent and crisis communication services to public schools and districts across the state. The service, available as an annual subscription, includes live counsel over the phone, along with custom talking points, parent letters, news releases, social media posts and other written content — delivered at a moment's notice.

The CDE developed a Family Engagement Toolkit that emphasizes approaches using an equity lens. It includes concrete steps for developing family engagement teams, assessing current family engagement practices, and strategies for mapping community assets. The appendix also includes examples of practices and additional resources

In regional meetings with CSBA's PACERs (Public Affairs and Community Engagement Representatives), members have indicated they appreciate learning family engagement strategies from other districts and county offices. The California Community Engagement Initiative, operated by the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, has produced a series of webinars during the pandemic with district examples of innovative and equitable family engagement.

The Action Guide: Targeting Resources from the American Rescue Plan to Address the Needs of English Learners created by TheNext100, UnidosUS, and The Education Trust offers strategies for LEAs to use pandemic relief funding to engage linguistically diverse families,

such as partnering with community-based organizations, targeting the removal of barriers to information, and assigning district liaisons to work with students still learning remotely.

The COVID-19 Vaccine Toolkit for Staff in School Settings and Childcare Programs was developed by the CDC to help communicate with staff about vaccinations. While a toolkit has not yet been developed for district communication with families about student vaccinations for those eligible, the CDC toolkit for community-based organizations includes resources for communication about adolescent vaccines.

In the February edition of *California School News*, CSBA provided board members an informational item on student vaccines. CSBA will continue to monitor guidance and requirements relating to COVID-19 vaccinations.

CSBA sample policies

› AR 5141.31 - Immunizations

› BP 1100 - Communications with the Public

› BP/AR 1114 - District-Sponsored Social Media

› BP/AR 3552 - Summer Meal Program

› BP/AR 6020 - Parent Involvement

› BP/AR 1113 - District and School Websites

› BP 1112 - Media Relations