



CSBA
2017
Year-in-Review



csba Year-in-Review

2017 was a special year for CSBA, one in which we exerted our influence more effectively than at any point in recent history. This past year will be remembered as an inflection point for the organization, the time when our ability to drive the education agenda really took flight.



Vernon M. Billy
CEO & Executive Director



Nowhere is that more evident than in the passage of Senate Bill 751, the CSBA-sponsored legislation to fix the reserve cap. That achievement validated years of hard work and silenced the critics who questioned whether we could prevail against opponents with deep pockets and political connections. Through years of advocacy, and more than a couple setbacks, we never wavered because we understood how important this issue was to our members. In the end, we scored a signature victory for local control, restored financial flexibility for school districts, allowed our members to save for a rainy day and helped mitigate the prospect of layoffs or programmatic cuts during tough financial times.

The reserve cap triumph made policymakers here in Sacramento and across the state stand up and take notice. Yet, it was just one of several legislative highlights that demonstrated CSBA's growing influence. We used our strength during the debate over SB 328 — a bill that would have mandated school start times statewide — to maintain local flexibility around school start times. This was one of the most highly publicized and hotly debated bills of the session. Throughout, CSBA vigorously defended the principle of local control, supporting the authority of school boards to adopt later start times — if they chose — while opposing a universal start time mandate. Our campaign was persuasive as SB 328 stalled in the Legislature without ever coming to a vote.

Even on issues where we didn't get the desired result, we advanced the conversation and set the stage for future progress. A perfect example of this was SB 527, which sought to add an annual, statutory cost-of-living adjustment for home-to-school transportation,



a measure that would offer financial relief for many districts and county offices, especially small and rural ones. Our message was well-received as SB 527 passed the Legislature unanimously only to be vetoed at the Governor's desk. That was a disappointment, but a temporary one. As we did with the reserve cap fix, we will continue to press the issue until we reduce the financial pressure associated with mounting transportation costs.

Of course, transportation is just one facet of a complicated financial picture, one that includes rising benefit and healthcare costs, higher expenses for special education and skyrocketing pension contributions. In 2017, CSBA documented the pension crisis in a special report: *The Impact of Pension Cost Increases on California's Schools*. Drawing on data from a 2017 survey of school board members across California, we found that 43 percent of respondents have already cut programs that are included in their Local Control and Accountability Plan and that 52 percent are using reserves to cover rising pension costs. We distributed these findings to every member of the Legislature to raise awareness about the threat that escalating pension costs pose to public schools and to set

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the stage for legislative action in 2018. The effort generated substantial media coverage and positioned CSBA as the leading voice calling for pension relief.

The pension crisis underscores the challenging financial environment that many districts and county offices face. And while we raised our voices about pensions, we used our extensive experience in legislative advocacy to stop a raft of bills that would have cost school districts and COEs more than \$500 million. We also worked with other education management groups to eliminate proposals that would have withheld or deferred between \$1.7 and \$2.7 billion in one-time monies and Proposition 98 payments from this year's education budget. That's between \$275 and \$435 per average daily attendance.

Every dollar is important because, while our state ranks first nationally in gross domestic product, we are only 41st in per-student allocations to public schools, far beneath the level needed to prepare all students for college, career and civic life. This disparity was a major theme of the 2017 CSBA Roadshow in which CSBA staff went to each of our regions to highlight the funding gap, hear how it's impacting your communities and discuss solutions to your most pressing local problems.

The input we received at the Roadshows helped inform the ongoing rollout of CSBA's strategic initiatives as we refined our work to meet the Association's priorities around increased grassroots advocacy, expanded membership training and full and fair funding to address opportunity and achievement gaps.

In 2017, CSBA began onboarding our new Public Affairs and Community Engagement Representatives (PACERs), establishing a grassroots system that can mobilize members, maximize our political capital and help drive the education policy agenda to ensure access to high-quality education for every student.

Our ability to provide that access is largely contingent on funding, but also is a function of how schools spend the money they currently receive. To aid governing boards in determining the most efficient use of funds, CSBA produced a pair of research-based reports that

documented the relationship between effective school boards and academic achievement and identified eight high-leverage strategies to improve student outcomes.

Offering support for board members as you perform the daily work needed to strengthen schools is an essential part of the services CSBA provides. Equally important are the services we provide in times of crisis, such as the wildfires that ravaged the state during the latter months of 2017. Like all Californians, we watched in horror as communities were ravaged by the fires and want to assist in the rebuilding process. To that end, CSBA is working to introduce legislation in 2018 that will provide financial relief for districts that suffered damage or lost attendance due to the fires and will continue to work with legislators to find other means of supporting affected communities.

On a less dramatic, but still significant level, CSBA is working to make the lives of governing board members easier through innovation. In 2017, this goal was exemplified through the development of Agenda Online 2.0, cutting-edge meeting management software designed by top engineers from Silicon Valley. Agenda Online 2.0 is a transformational product that shares the name of its predecessor and little else. Boasting a rich feature set, greatly expanded functionality, enhanced stability and robust customer service, Agenda Online 2.0 is the intelligent solution for governing boards.

It's not often you get a best-in-class solution at a fraction of the price offered by the competition, but its characteristic of the course we charted over the past year. We were resourceful, we innovated and we moved ahead of the curve. That spirit of innovation is a quintessential part of the California experience and it's the lifeblood of CSBA. In 2017, we were bolder and better than before and the best is yet to come.

Sincerely,



Vernon M. Billy

Policy Services

Policy & Programs

- **Published *The School Board Role in Creating the Conditions for Student Achievement: A Review of the Research***, a report which synthesizes district improvement research and demonstrates how school boards can positively impact student outcomes.



➤ Download the reports at www.csba.org

- **Collaborated with the Education Legal Alliance on *Meeting California's Challenge: Access, Opportunity, and Achievement, Key Ingredients for Student Success***, the second report in a series on California's school-funding challenges.
- **Drafted and revised more than 100 sample policies, regulations, bylaws and/or exhibits** that members can use to support student success, govern effectively and comply with state and federal laws.
- **Publicized the critical role of governing board members** in the LCAP development process with a survey of the Delegate Assembly and a subsequent report, *Local Control and Accountability Plans: Survey of School Board Member Involvement*. The report demonstrated that most school board members are deeply involved in key aspects of LCAP development such as setting vision and goals, and provided CSBA with direction for how to support members who would like additional tools and information to increase their engagement.
- **Published 20 policy briefs and fact sheets to help inform governing board members and assist them in decision-making** on critical issues affecting academic achievement, equity and the well-being of students. Specific topics included:
 - » California Education Finance
 - » Recruiting and Retaining African-American Teachers

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The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character — that is the goal of true education.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.



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- » Creating Effective Local Control and Accountability Plans
 - » Charter School Oversight
 - » English Learner Education after Proposition 58
 - » Competition Cheer
- **Created a multimedia suite of materials on summer learning as a strategy for closing opportunity and achievement gaps** that tend to broaden during the summer break. Materials include a needs-assessment tool, how-to manual, regional guides, videos of summer learning programs in action and a board study session slide deck. All of these materials will be posted to CSBA's website and used in CSBA's member training activities.



➤ Download the summer learning guide: www.csba.org/summerlearning

- **Worked with the State School Attendance Review Board (SARB)** as it developed the State's sample policy and regulation on attendance supervision.

Policy & Governance Technology Services

- **Developed a new Agenda Online platform** with added features that are more robust, more innovative and more user-friendly than both the previous version and competitive offerings. Customer service and support was expanded and upgraded to better support the broader platform and increase in users.
- **Published five issues of Policy News**, addressing topics including the teacher shortage, the use of personal electronic devices for school business, lunch shaming, concussion and cardiac arrest awareness, suicide prevention, and the impact of federal governance on undocumented students and transgender students in California.
- **Processed a record 2,800 Manual Maintenance requests**, facilitated 50 Policy Development Workshops and produced comprehensive policy manual updates for more than 70 school districts and county offices of education.
- **Helped subscribers to CSBA's GAMUT Online policy information service** and Manual Maintenance policy processing and consulting service stay abreast of important developments, respond to critical issues and implement streamlined policy updates.



Advocacy

- **Fixed the reserve cap with CSBA-sponsored legislation, Senate Bill 751 (Hill & Glazer)**, earning a victory for local control, restoring needed financial flexibility for school districts, improving the ability of districts to save for a rainy day and mitigating the need for staffing and programmatic cuts in tough financial times. SB 751 fixed the reserve cap law by exempting all small school districts of less than 2,501 average daily attendance and all basic aid districts from the reserve cap, raising the level of the statutory reserve limit to 10 percent and adding a new “trigger,” making it much less likely that the reserve cap would ever become active.
- **Rejected an attempt to impose a mandate on school start times.** SB 328 (Portantino, D-La Cañada Flintridge) would have prohibited all middle and high schools in California from beginning classes before 8:30 a.m. CSBA’s effort helped preserve local control over school start times.
- **Passed CSBA-sponsored Local Control Funding Formula “cleanup” bill, Assembly Bill 1354** (Kiley, R-Roseville), which was signed by Gov. Jerry Brown in July. AB 1354 was the fourth such CSBA-sponsored bill passed by the Legislature in as many years, eliminating more than 80 obsolete categorical programs and repealing hundreds of unnecessary Education Code sections no longer necessary under LCFF.
- **Hosted Legislative Action Day, attracting 200 school district and county board members to the Capitol** for meetings on critical topics with 110 of California’s 120 Senators and Assemblymembers.
- **Met with U.S. Department of Education staff and Congressional leadership staff in Washington, D.C., to provide information on school choice in California** and advocate for reauthorization of the Secure Rural Schools Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Higher Education Act and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act. CSBA also advocated for sound federal budget issues including the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and supported the extension of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

Learning is not attained by chance, it must be sought for with ardor and attended to with diligence.”

— Abigail Adams



ADVOCACY



- **Represented the interests of governing boards at the State Board of Education** and informed development of the California School Dashboard, providing key input and voicing concerns on behalf of school districts and county offices of education statewide.

Communications



➤ Read *California Schools* and *California School News* at www.csba.org/newsroom

- **Quoted or referenced in more than 1,200 news stories.** Advocated for California public schools and CSBA membership in media outlets including the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Sacramento Bee*, *San Diego Union-Tribune*, *San Jose Mercury-News*, *East Bay Times*, *Education Week*, *EdSource*, *Politico* and *NPR*.
- **Launched the *Education Insights* video series** exploring important developments and hot topics in public education with some of the State's top subject matter experts.



- **Published quarterly issues of *California Schools* magazine** covering topics such as the digital divide, the growing influence of money in school board elections, the journey to fixing the reserve cap and efforts to combat chronic absenteeism, along with 11 newsletters, 50 weekly blasts, 30 “In the News” compilations of the week’s best education stories, and reports on the pension crisis, California public school funding, the key ingredients to school success and the role of school board members in accelerating academic achievement.



An investment in knowledge
pays the best interest.”

— Ben Franklin

Full & Fair Funding

- **Emerged as a vocal advocate on employer pension costs** by distributing information to policymakers in Sacramento and urging a legislative solution to the issue. CSBA provided a report on the impact of rising pension costs to every member of the Legislature to help set the stage for increased advocacy on the issue in 2018.
- **Saved school districts and county offices of education more than \$500 million** (about \$80 per average daily attendance) by advocating against and helping to halt several bills carrying costly mandates, including: AB 761 (Mullin, D-South San Francisco), which called for new testing requirements for history and social science; AB 1469 (Grayson, D-Concord), which would have directed hundreds of millions in Title I funding to provide mandatory transportation services; SB 7 (Moorlach, R-Costa Mesa), which would have required detailed plans for facilities bonds, costing \$100,000 per district on average; and AB 1253 (Cooley, D-Rancho Cordova), which would have expanded duties of school facilities bond oversight committees, costing hundreds of millions in Proposition 98 and General Fund dollars.
- **Lobbied to eliminate State budget proposals** to withhold one-time money until 2019 and to defer certain Proposition 98 payments. Taken together, the reduction in K-12 education from both proposals would have been anywhere between \$1.7 billion and \$2.7 billion (or between \$275 and \$435 per ADA).
- **Fought to add a cost-of-living adjustment for home-to-school transportation** with CSBA-sponsored bill SB 527 (Galgiani, D-Stockton). The bill received unanimous votes in every committee and floor vote in the Legislature in 2017, but was vetoed by Gov. Brown.



Education Legal Alliance

- **Continued the ELA effort to hold the state accountable for shortchanging the Proposition 98 minimum guarantee** (*CSBA v. Cohen*). After a lower court ruled in CSBA's favor, the State filed an appeal after the 2016 decision which held that the State improperly excluded most childcare costs from Proposition 98 by deleting those costs from the calculations that would count toward the Proposition 98 minimum guarantee.
- **Filed 11 amicus briefs, requests for publication and letters in support of petitions for review on matters of significant statewide interest to school districts.** These ELA efforts included amicus briefs in support of a lower court's decision dismissing a lawsuit against the Orange County Department of Education based on its sovereign immunity as an arm of the state (*Sato v. Orange County Department of Education*), fighting against additional burdensome restrictions on districts' ability to assess Level 1 fees (*Summerhill Winchester, LLC v. Campbell Union School District*) and supporting districts' ability to reach developer-fee agreements to mitigate the impact of new housing construction on local schools, potentially impacting agreements throughout the state totaling hundreds of millions of dollars (*Burbank Housing Development Corp., et al. v. Bellevue Union School District & City of Santa Rosa High School District*).
- **Published six legal guidances through the Office of General Counsel,** including guidances on the impact of Senate Bill 415 (Hueso, D-San Diego) on school board elections, on the governing board responsibilities under the California Public Records Act and on providing all children equal access to education, regardless of immigration status.
- **Produced *Meeting California's Challenge, Access, Opportunity, and Achievement, Key Ingredients for Student Success*,** the second report in a series on California's school-funding challenges. The Education Legal Alliance Adequacy Committee report explores the key opportunities that are essential for student success and examines how an appropriately funded education system would provide these opportunities for all California students.

All who have meditated on the art of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends on the education of youth.”

— Aristotle





Member Services & Professional Development

- **Conducted 55 training sessions at various locations throughout the state.** The sessions included: Orientation for New Trustees, Legal Symposium, Board Presidents Workshop, Brown Act, Institute for New and First-Term Board Members and Training for Executive Assistants, as well as seasonal informational webcasts. The Masters in Governance program was offered at two locations statewide in addition to regional offerings in Riverside, Marin and San Luis Obispo counties.
- **Held personalized Governance Consulting Workshops** for governing boards throughout California that helped boards from small, medium and large districts increase their effectiveness.
- **Launched two Local Control Funding Formula professional learning networks**, one of which focused on the unique challenges faced by small school districts. CSBA secured supplemental resources for the networks from the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) through a competitive grant process.
- **Concluded the groundbreaking efforts of the LCFF Collaborative Working Group** (CWG) and produced two research reports highlighting the important role of school board members in the Local Control and Accountability Plan process and a set of recommendations for the State Board of Education on the LCAP tool and process. The group identified eight promising peer practices that have positively impacted student academic outcomes and stakeholder perceptions of the LCAP process. The work of the CWG contributed to a statewide system of improvement through feedback to the State Board of Education, California Department of Education and the CCEE regarding the value and importance of professional learning networks, particularly for governing board members.

The principle goal of education in the schools should be creating men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done.”

— Jean Piaget



TRAINING



- **CSBA's Charter School Task Force developed a report for release in 2018 with recommendations for the State such as providing more support for governing boards in charter oversight** and improving the procedures for dealing with charter expulsions, charter petition appeals and other charter oversight costs.
- **Hosted CSBA's Annual Education Conference and Trade Show (AEC)**, the largest and most comprehensive education conference offered in California, attracting approximately 5,000 school board members, superintendents, faculty, staff and education advocates to the 2017 conference. For the first time in CSBA's history, the conference included a gubernatorial panel featuring the top six contenders for California's highest office and presentations from the two candidates for State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The 2017 AEC included more than 120 breakout sessions and specifically designed conference strands dedicated to equity, adequacy and opportunity, and school climate and engagement.
- **Recognized 56 outstanding programs and governance practices in school districts and county offices of education** in California through CSBA's 38th annual Golden Bell Awards. These exemplary programs reflect the depth and breadth of education approaches throughout the State.
- **Conducted 23 presentations of the "Investing in Education, Empowering Local Communities" Roadshow** to receive member input, discuss CSBA strategy and address topics of local importance in every part of the State.
- **Nearly 97 percent of all school districts and county offices of education in California** are CSBA members — representing 99.9 percent of student enrollment in our State's public schools.