

## LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT:

### **Mr. Brock Falkenberg—Lake County Superintendent of Schools**



#### ***What led you to become County Superintendent?***

I appreciate this question, because it reminds me of the most important aspect of my job, kids. It reminds me of learning. It reminds me of growth.

When I entered education, I never considered the prospect of leaving the classroom and moving into administration. I planned to teach and coach until retirement. However, I soon took on leadership opportunities such as department chair, athletic director, etc. In a short period of time I had made the decision to pursue administration and expand my impact. It seems that with advancement, administrators get further away from kids. So I have always strived to remind my colleagues and coworkers that regardless of what your job is, if you work for an education agency, the bottom line is that your job is about supporting kids. This is what has led me to County Superintendency; to support kids.

#### ***What inspired you to enter the field of education?***

I had a career in manufacturing prior to entering education. I was a lead manager at a mid-size manufacturing facility on the North Bay. I enjoyed my job. In my opinion, one of the key characteristics of a good manager is the ability to teach others. This might be what I enjoyed most about my job. When the company decided to relocate the facility, I decided that my roots in the community were too strong to move. So I took stock of my situation and my career path and decided to change direction and pursue a teaching credential. I am still proud to call myself a teacher.

#### ***Do you have a particular goal that drives you?***

If I were to choose one core value, it is that every child can learn and succeed. This is true in every classroom and school in the county. However, although every child can learn and succeed, they cannot do this in the same way on the same day. As such, I am advocating for rich, relevant, and diverse learning opportunities, meaningful access to technology, and outstanding teachers for all students.

#### ***What objectives do you hope to achieve?***

As I am just beginning my first term as a County Superintendent, I am still in the process of forming the specifics around some of my objectives, but in a nutshell I plan to focus on a few key areas:

1. Student Readiness: Kids need to be ready for transitions in schooling. They should be ready to start kindergarten; transition to middle school and high school successfully; and upon graduation, be career and college ready.
2. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills: I hope to support our teachers and schools to assure our students learn the skills they need to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
3. Partnership and Collaboration: As the County Superintendent, I hope to work alongside schools and districts to share and coordinate resources that support student growth and continuous improvement.
4. Accountability: I hope to support schools in closing the achievement gap by supporting realistic yet challenging local accountability plans.

#### ***What are your interests?***

I enjoy woodworking and construction. I always have a project or two going. Of interest might be the fact that my wife and I (with some assistance from family and friends) built the house we live in. We did everything from foundation to finish. It took a few weekends, but we finished in time for the family to move in before I left for my final deployment in 2008.

#### ***Who are the special people in your life?***

The special people in my life are my colleagues and coworkers during my 22 years in education and the fellow soldiers whom I served alongside during my 21 years in the Army. The LCOE team continues to provide outstanding support to the community, the schools, and the kids of Lake County, as well as to me. Of special note is my wife of 18 years, Joni, and our sons Cord, Nate, and Bron.

## FROM THE DESK OF:

### **Peter Birdsall, CCSESA Executive Director**

On behalf of CCSESA, and CCSESA staff, I want to welcome the newly elected county superintendents who took office this January. At the upcoming General Membership meeting in Monterey, I am confident you will experience the extraordinary collaborative spirit of county superintendents, plus our active engagement in a wide range of important educational issues.

Although there are many issues of concern to county superintendents, three are particularly exciting as we begin the new year: ESEA reauthorization, school accountability and career technical education.

It appears that Congress will seriously address the issue of ESEA reauthorization for the first time in years. After our recent success on increasing E-Rate funding, we are organizing to make sure CCSESA has a strong voice in the debate over the future of federal K-12 education policy.

The article in this newsletter about the recent State Board of Education meeting makes it clear that school accountability is moving to the forefront of the education policy debate. On Wednesday morning of the General Membership meeting, State Board member Sue Burr will meet with the county superintendents to discuss these issues further.

The Governor's budget proposal to appropriate \$250 million per year for three years for CTE transition grants provides a remarkable opportunity to build and protect quality CTE programs, while allowing county superintendents to successfully transition to the new funding model without an ROCP maintenance of effort requirement. Both in terms of the legislative proposal and program implementation, this will be an important issue for county superintendents across the state.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

**January Quarterly Meeting:**  
The next Quarterly Meeting will take place at the Intercontinental Hotel in Monterey from January 26—28. Please contact JaConya Merchant with any questions at [jmerchant@ccsesa.org](mailto:jmerchant@ccsesa.org).

**Practice Like Pros Football Clinic:** On February 4 and 5, NFL Hall of Famers will headline a *Practice Like Pros* football clinic, presented by Safe Kids Worldwide. The clinic, endorsed by the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) will demonstrate progressive techniques to the high school football community. Click [here](#) for more information.

**Equity Leaderships for Superintendents:** CAAASA will present a professional development series for district superintendents and selected school district leadership. For more information about the events, and to register, click [here](#).

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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION UPDATE

The State Board of Education meeting on January 14 provided initial indications of the future of school accountability in California. The discussions on the following items highlighted the initial steps towards building the accountability system.

**Item 2** on the agenda dealt with CDE’s recommended amendments to the state’s Federal Accountability Workbook for 2015 AYP determinations. While there were seven recommended amendments, two generated the most discussion:

- Replace STAR Program Assessments with Smarter Balanced Assessments for Grades Three Through Eight (Workbook Critical Element 1.3, pages 12–13)
- Replace the Grade Ten CAHSEE with the Grade Eleven Smarter Balanced Assessment (Critical Element 6.1, page 48)

**Item 3** was an Update on Developing a New Accountability System Using Multiple Measures consistent with Education Code Sections 52052

through 52052.9. This item led to a lengthy discussion regarding the following topics:

- Options for moving the state accountability system from a single index to using multiple measures that parallel the state priorities;
- Options for an alternative point scale for the new accountability system; and
- A recommendation on the appropriate timing for the release of the next accountability reporting cycle.

Ultimately the discussion points towards a shift from a single measure/index (current API model) to a system that uses multiple measures aligned with the state priorities. At this time the State Board has asked for recommendations on the three topics outlined above at the March State Board of Education meeting. These efforts are the initial steps on the path to a coherent statewide accountability system.

If you have any comments or questions please contact Efrain Mercado at [emercado@ccsesa.org](mailto:emercado@ccsesa.org).

CCSESA ARTS INITIATIVE -  
UPCOMING EVENTS IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

**CREATE CA Convening:** Arts leaders, creative economy business partners, and community arts advocates will be convening on January 30 and 31 in Oakland at the Oakland School of the Arts for the CREATE CA convening entitled *Destination: Creative Schools from Blueprint to Action*. Participants will receive the soon to be released *California Blueprint for Creative Schools* and hear from a wide variety of arts and education leaders. Governor Brown will be one of the featured speakers, along with Randy Nelson from Apple University. The event will include breakout sessions featuring a wide range of arts related topics. Hear about new developments in the field, new collaborative opportunities, and deepened cross-organizational relationships. To register, click [here](#).

**Creativity at the Core Convening:** Join us for a one-day convening in Sacramento to be held at the Sacramento Sheraton hotel on March 17. Regional Arts Leads and their identified arts organization partners will share the modules that they have been developing and piloting in 2014-15 as part of the new Creativity at the Core program funded by the California Arts Council and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Hear from exciting keynote speakers, participate in powerful breakout sessions provided by regional arts leads and partners. Student performer, Sean Oliu, and children’s author Maya Gonzales will also be presenting. For more information on the event, and to register, click [here](#).

BIIG WINNERS AROUND THE STATE

The California Department of Education (CDE) and K-12 High Speed Network (K12HSN) recently announced that 227 school sites have been awarded Broadband Infrastructure Improvement Grants (BIIG) to enhance their network connectivity. These school sites will share in almost \$27 million for this work.

As a result of the Smarter Balanced field testing last spring, the state identified approximately 300 school sites that needed additional infrastructure to be able to leverage technology for teaching and learning and specifically to allow their students to engage in the new computer adaptive California assessments.

At this time, the K12HSN is continuing to explore connectivity solutions for the remaining

sites that were not funded. Many of these did not receive bids from service providers and thus could not receive an award at this time.

Dr. Todd Finnell, Imperial County Superintendent of Schools, was quoted in CDE’s press release stating that, "While school sites with the most need were selected to receive the grants, this process has provided further data to help those schools that didn't receive funding at this time." Dr. Finnell also stated, "Additional work is needed to secure funding and identify possible solutions for these schools." The K12HSN is administered by the Imperial County Office of Education.

The list of awardees can be found [here](#). The list of sites that didn't receive a bid can be found [here](#).