

## LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT:

### *Mr. Todd Finnell—Imperial County Superintendent of Schools*



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

I've been fortunate in my career to always find myself in a position where I can serve the needs of others. While in college, I worked for the Probation

Department in our local juvenile detention facility. It was there that I began to see myself working with youth and helping them to see a better life for themselves. After finishing college, it was an easy transition for me to begin teaching in the court school program operated by the County Office of Education. It was there that I discovered my passion for the "craft" of teaching. I went on to teach at the elementary, middle, and high school levels before returning to the county office of education. After serving in various administrative roles at the County Office, I left in 2010 to serve as a Vice President for our local community college. This experience was extremely rewarding and provided me with a comprehensive and renewed view of "college readiness" and "college and career" for our schools and students entering higher education. Becoming County Superintendent was never something that I considered until I was approached by people in the education and business community who expressed a need for change. I was honored and humbled to learn that they felt I was the person to bring about this change.

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

I'm driven each day by the desire to make Imperial County a better place to live, learn, and work. When I took office in January, there were some immediate priorities for the organization that needed our collective focus. At the top of the list was stabilizing the budget and addressing the largest deficit in the history of the organization. Just behind this priority was working with our districts, our community, and our employees to redefine our mission and values as an organization. On these two priorities, we are extremely proud to be where we are in only six short months.

Looking ahead to the next several months, we aim to work closely with our community to build out our services and programs to focus on improving the quality of life in our community by

promoting strong families and students who are prepared for life, college, and career. In order to achieve this, we've outlined the following strategic priorities for our organization:

**College and Career Readiness** - Ensuring our students are ready to work and learn in the global economy.

**Comprehensive Student Success** - Meeting the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of our children.

**Promoting healthy families** - Providing programs and services that enrich the capacity of families to improve their quality of life and contribute to our community.

**Positive inter-agency relationships leading to meaningful collaboration** - Partnering with local and other agencies to strengthen our impact in areas of common purpose.

**Technology in support of teaching, learning, and community advancement** - Establishing technology-rich practices and approaches in support of our efforts.

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

The last few years, as I was completing my doctoral studies, I felt as though many of my interests, hobbies, and "free time" had gone into hibernation. Thankfully, I am just now beginning to reawaken my interests, which include performing music with my country and classic rock bands, DIY building and construction projects, travel, exercise, and supporting my youngest daughter who plays year-round club soccer and has begun searching for colleges.

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

My wife of 25 years, Lillian, has been my best friend and strongest supporter. She makes me a better person each and every day. My three children Kayla, Jonathan, and Camryn (23, 19, and 15) give me purpose and passion for life, and are true reflections of the values and character we had hoped to develop in each of them. Most importantly, my faith keeps me grounded and focused on the things that matter. I am truly blessed to serve as County Superintendent, and am fortunate to be surrounded by others who encourage, challenge, and believe in creating better opportunities for others.

## FROM THE DESK OF:

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

A new report seems to come out almost weekly on LCAPs or the LCAP process. Of all the interested parties, however, it is county superintendents who are truly at "ground zero" of the LCAP process. County superintendents don't just review a sample of LCAPs, and they don't focus on just one issue area or one student population.

Right now we have the unique advantage of county offices throughout the state reviewing school district LCAPs and identifying real-time, real world issues and questions regarding LCAPs and the LCAP process. This information is very important to us, and to the many state policy makers who are seeking CCSESA's perspectives. As you and your staffs identify problems and concerns, and successes, it would be very helpful if you could share those experiences with me, or with Efrain Mercado, who is coordinating our work in this area. I can be reached at [pbirdsall@ccsesa.org](mailto:pbirdsall@ccsesa.org). Efrain can be reached at [emercado@ccsesa.org](mailto:emercado@ccsesa.org).

CCSESA is working on multiple fronts to make sure we both perform our LCAP review role in a consistent, high quality manner, and at the same time move the system toward its intended purpose of a locally-driven system of continuous improvement. These efforts include:

- Ongoing conversations with the State Board of Education, Governor's staff, the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, and other interested groups about the current LCAP process and needed improvements,
- Working with various foundations to create and support professional networks,
- Development of the LCAP Approval Manual,
- Calibration workshops for county office staff, and
- Formation of the CCSESA LCAP Coordinating Committee, consisting of county superintendents and members from three CCSESA Steering Committees (BASC, CISC, and SPSSC).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

**JCCASAC Mini Conference:**  
The Juvenile Court, Community and Alternative School Administrators will hold its annual Mini Conference on October 8-9 in Yosemite. To register, click [here](#). Contact Patricia Gutierrez in the Fresno County Office of Education with any questions: [pgutierrez@fcoe.org](mailto:pgutierrez@fcoe.org).

**August CCSESA Board of Directors Meeting:** The Board of Directors will meet on August 10 in Sacramento. Please contact JaConya Merchant if you have any questions: [jmerchant@ccsesa.org](mailto:jmerchant@ccsesa.org).

**Welcome to Amanda Taggart!** CCSESA is pleased to welcome our Communications Assistant, Amanda Taggart. Amanda will provide support on managing CCSESA's various communications platforms, including the website, email blasts, newsletter and other printed publications.

CCSESA STAFF

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ESEA REAUTHORIZATION BILLS PASS BOTH CHAMBERS

After nearly eight years of stalemate, the House and Senate both passed ESEA reauthorization bills this July. While this is certainly cause for celebration, there is still significant work to be done before the bills reach the President's desk. There are several controversial discrepancies between the Senate's Every Child Achieves Act (ECAA), the House's Student Success Act (SSA), and the President's positions on ESEA reauthorization. Still it is very encouraging that all involved parties appear to want to reach agreement this year. The bills are expected to go to conference in late August or September.

Overall, we are very pleased with the success of the reauthorization movement and the role that the CCSESA Federal Task Force played in moving it forward. Both ECAA and SSA abolish many of the burdensome federal regulations imposed by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and return control to where it belongs- the local level. Some of the more significant changes to NCLB would

include: elimination of the AYP and the mandate on 100% proficiency by 2013/14; elimination of federally prescribed intervention methods at low-performing schools; easing of mandatory "school-choice" and penalty provisions for low-performing schools; and flexibility for states to adopt their own standards and accountability systems.

Last year, CCSESA created the Federal Task Force in an effort to engage more effectively in D.C. policy making. Since forming, the Task Force has made two highly productive trips to Washington under the leadership of Chair, Gayle Garbolino-Mojica, to advocate for ESEA reauthorization and increased federal funding for schools. Next week, the Federal Task Force will meet to discuss the unresolved issues of ECAA and SSA and to plan CCSESA's next moves as the bills continue through conference negotiations. For additional information on ESEA reauthorization or other federal legislation, please contact Amanda Dickey, [adickey@ccsesa.org](mailto:adickey@ccsesa.org).

RUBRICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM DEVELOPED IN TANDEM

The most significant topic at the July State Board meeting was the deadline extension for the Evaluation Rubrics that was granted in the Budget Trailer bill. Not only will this provide more time to complete the rubrics, but it also allows the Rubric and New State Accountability system discussion to occur in parallel. This is beneficial to the state since indications are that the new accountability system will have the eight state priorities and the rubrics at its foundation.

shifted to key clusters (currently outlined as basic services, graduation, and college and career readiness). The concept is that there are indicators/ metrics that can be applied across many of the state priorities and serve as indicators of an LEA's progress towards the clusters.

The State Board expressed hope to have the policy framework for the Rubrics set by the November Board meeting and their alignment to the new state accountability system more clearly defined.

Reflecting the David Conley and Linda Darling Hammond presentations at the May State Board meeting, the discussion at the July meeting has

If you have further questions about the discussions at the July State Board meeting please contact Efrain Mercado, [emercado@ccsesa.org](mailto:emercado@ccsesa.org).

GRANT DOLLARS FLOW CCSESA ARTS INITIATIVE

On July 14, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation announced that it has authorized funding of a three-year grant in the amount of \$1,100,000. The funding will continue to support CCSESA Arts Initiative work at the national, state, and regional levels to strengthen and expand arts education. In addition, The California Arts Council committed \$150,000 to support the next phase of CCSESA's *Creativity at the Core* program. In addition, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation in a separate grant committed \$300,000 (\$100,000 for three years) to assist CCSESA Arts Initiative with dissemination of the recently released professional learning modules developed by regional arts lead county

offices of education in partnership with arts organizations from across California. Funding will be provided again to regional arts lead county offices and partner arts organizations.

**Summer Institute Registration Still Open!**  
CCSESA Arts Initiative is pleased to announce that it will offer a summer institute for teachers and administrators at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) on August 4-6. This 3-day institute will include presentations and workshops by California's arts and education leaders as part of CCSESA's *Creativity at the Core* program. For the informational flyer, click [here](#). To register, click [here](#).

REPORT IDENTIFIES LCAP EARLY IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS

During the LCAP discussion at the June Quarterly Meeting, many superintendents expressed frustration with the LCAP template and the size of LCAP plans. We thought you might be interested in a recent paper released by Michael Fullan on *Problems and Corrections* for the LCAP process,

which identifies three problem areas in early implementation of the LCAP process: 1) Making complexity complicated; 2) overdoing front-end process, and 3) making the plan the goal. The report is available for download [here](#).