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# A STRATEGIC FUTURE for California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA)

Strategic Plan: 2022–2026

Prepared by Fern Tiger Associates. October 2021



## Executive Summary

*“Education creates the voice  
through which human  
rights can be claimed and  
protected.”*

Universal Declaration of  
Human Rights

**T**his is an exciting time for CCSESA. But it is also a moment filled with challenges—some beyond CCSESA’s control. As a statewide organization, it is primed to take a vocal leadership role in articulating an educational vision for California; yet, as a small member-based organization, its capacity to drive a bold vision requires the oft-fraught support of, and attention to, the particular nuances of 58 diverse, elected and appointed officials—nearly all of whom manage organizations much larger and with far greater resources than CCSESA.

Collectively CCSESA’s membership oversees about 1,000 school districts educating more than 6 million students from pre-K through high school. Each superintendent and their county office reflect the strengths, priorities, goals, and challenges of their unique region. And while each share particular mandates set by the state, they each operate other programs that respond to the needs of their diverse communities.

While it is CCSESA’s responsibility to understand both the successes and the “pain points” of each county office, CCSESA as an organization faces its own challenges. While it seeks to build its voice and create programs to support the success of county offices of education, it functions with limited resources, comprised primarily of member dues. CCSESA’s role is complicated—and it sits within an equally complex landscape of public agencies, statewide organizations, professional associations, constituency-based advocacy groups, and governmental bodies. To ensure the success of its members as well as CCSESA’s own success, the organization determined the time was ripe to develop a bold vision and a comprehensive plan for the future.

The Strategic Plan is intended to serve as a visionary guide for CCSESA over the next five years (2022–2026). This Plan is the culmination of approximately 11 months of work, which included an in-depth overview of the organization, the roles of county offices of education, and the statewide context in which CCSESA operates. Part of the process involved the development of a *guiding vision* and a *revised*

*“Vision without action  
is a daydream. Action  
without vision is a  
nightmare.”*

Japanese Proverb

*mission statement*, along with clearly articulated *values* to guide CCSESA into the future. The Plan positions CCSESA to support county offices of education to meet diverse challenges, while also strengthening its own role as an important and respected voice in education circles and to capitalize on opportunities as they present themselves. In many ways, CCSESA is a catalyst for developing a stronger, more integrated system of education in the state.

The Plan is organized into discrete, but interconnected sections. *Introduction* provides the context to understand the rationale for the goals, strategies, and recommended actions. It includes a foundational narrative, “*California Public Education and CCSESA at a Crossroad*,” as well as an explanation of the methodology that was used to develop the plan, outlining the tasks and activities that comprised the scope of the consultant’s work. In addition, this section includes a set of *Assumptions*, which were developed in conjunction with CCSESA’s Strategic Planning Committee and the county superintendents. These assumptions represent an educated “best guess” about trends over the next five years in a range of topic areas, including California’s population, economy, and politics; public education; technology; and health and well-being.

*CCSESA’s Strategic Plan* lays out a set of three *Program Goals*, which represent areas where CCSESA hopes to influence change and create positive outcomes for county superintendents, county offices, and children. Each goal is set within a broad conceptual framework and narrative. Together, the goals should be understood as purposefully intersecting and overlapping. The program goals include:

- Partnerships that enhance CCSESA’s advocacy goals
- Policies that put children first.
- 58 California county superintendents who work with 1,000 school districts to improve student outcomes

A set of three *Management Goals* which are part of an internal document focus on the structural and operational functions that enable CCSESA to accomplish its work and are intended to support progress.

CCSESA is in an unusually strong position to mobilize its new leadership, staff talents, and the experience and knowledge of its members, as it moves to put this Plan into action over the next five years. CCSESA is ready to advance its vision of *California as a state with high quality education where children thrive and communities prosper*.



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# THE CCSESA STRATEGIC PLAN 2022–2026



## Vision<sup>1</sup>

*California, a state with high-quality education where all children thrive and all communities prosper.*

## Mission Statement<sup>2</sup>

*Promote, influence, and advocate for an educational system that supports all students.*

## Tag Line

*To be adapted from mission*

*e.g. CCSESA: Promoting, influencing, and advocating for high-quality education*

## Organizational Values and Principles<sup>3</sup>

The California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA), with its membership of county superintendents of schools is:

- **courageous** in advocating for *all* children
- **committed** to innovation and excellence
- **collaborative** in pursuit of an equitable and effective public education system

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1 Adopted September 2021

2 Adopted September 2021

3 See next page for details





## Goals at a Glance

*“You have to have a big vision and take very small steps to get there. You have to be humble as you execute but visionary and gigantic in terms of your aspiration... It’s not about grand innovation, it’s about a lot of little innovations: every day, every week, every month, making something a little bit better.”*

Jason Calacanis

**T**o move its vision forward in the coming years, CCSESA’s efforts will focus on three broad goals and strategies which have been developed to support the organization’s mission.

### **Collaborate to influence public systems that impact children.**

**Focus on advocacy.** Advocate for transformative efforts to ensure an integrated system of public education that supports all children, youth, families, schools, and communities.

### **Cultivate student success.**

**Focus on children.** Promote policies and seek resources that put the needs of students first.

### **Connect California’s 58 county superintendents.**

**Focus on CCSESA members.** Support county superintendents as they work to improve outcomes for all children and as they champion educators and schools.

### **CCSESA’s Organizational/Management Goals<sup>1</sup>**

*Strengthen CCSESA by ensuring strategic decisionmaking that maximizes the organization’s effectiveness as it refines its role, expands its voice, and meets the needs of California’s County Superintendents.*

*Improve and expand CCSESA’s activities to meet the organization’s mission and vision, and to prepare for the future.*

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<sup>1</sup> Management Goals include: An Effective Organization (*Structure, Staffing, Stability*); A Sustainable Organization (*Funding, Fiscal Management, Forecasting*); An Influential Organization (*Image, Visibility, Communications*)



**PROGRAM**

**GOAL ONE**

**Advocacy through Partnerships**



**Goal One: Advocacy—Collaborate to influence public systems that impact children. Advocate for transformative efforts to insure an integrated system of public education that supports all schools, students, families, and communities.**

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#### **SUBGOALS AND STRATEGIES: ADVOCACY**

**Mobilize California’s 58 county superintendents, who form the membership of CCSESA, to be proactive and strategic in statewide discussions on public education and issues that support children, youth, schools, families, and communities.**

**Articulate and actively pursue an advocacy and policy role on statewide issues impacting children and students of all ages.**

Focus on “systems transformation” with equity, inclusivity, and racial justice as a critical lens throughout the work of CCSESA.

**Create a meaningful and proactive annual public policy agenda to direct legislative and other governmental actions that ensures a strong and equitable public education system that benefits children and families throughout California, and builds public will to support schools.**

Utilize a set of three focus areas to guide the work of CCSESA each year, as it develops legislative priorities, professional development, and thematic meetings.

#### **SUBGOALS AND STRATEGIES: PARTNERSHIPS**

**Foster robust relationships with state leaders and colleagues while enhancing their understanding of CCSESA.**

Take the lead in identifying vacancies on state commissions, committees, and organizations; promote representation by county superintendents; maintain an up-to-date database of participation; encourage CCSESA members on these committees to provide updates at general membership meetings, and to act as liaisons between CCSESA and these committees .

**Actively participate in the Ed Coalition and with its member organizations (ACSA, CASBO, CFT/AFL-CIO, CSBA, CalPTA, CSEA, CTA, and SEIU)<sup>1</sup>.**

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<sup>1</sup> Association of California School Administrators; California Association of School Business Officials; California Federation of Teachers/ American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations; California School Boards Association; California State Parent Teacher Association; California School Employees Association; California Teachers Association; and Service Employees International Union

**Goal One: Advocacy—Collaborate to influence public systems that impact children.** *Advocate for transformative efforts to insure an integrated system of public education that supports all schools, students, families, and communities.*

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Develop strong, ongoing connections with key state legislators and their senior staff—especially the chairs of the education and budget committees of the California State Senate and Assembly to ensure awareness of and support for the CCSESA Policy Agenda; and to understand the comprehensive role of county offices of education;<sup>2</sup> create effective presentations and materials for meetings with state leaders.

**Build statewide support for public education as a key component of vibrant sustainable communities through advocacy, engagement, and public information that promotes quality education, builds trust in California public schools, and supports the advancement of all children.**

**Initiate transformative conversations about public education and advocate for effective educational policies at state and national arenas.**

Maintain membership and involvement in AESA; participate in AESA’s efforts especially as they relate to California.

**Identify initiatives that require, or could benefit from, the collective effort of multiple county offices.**

**Partner with non-education statewide organizations (e.g. housing, health, mental health, child welfare) to develop a collaborative approach to address the comprehensive needs of children, families, and communities.**

Encourage non-education organizations and agencies to understand why education should be a critical concern for them and to help CCSESA understand how these agencies can support education issues

**Access opportunities to build statewide efforts to amplify the choice of education as a university major and a lifetime profession.**

Build relationships with the statewide higher education system to ensure collaboration with K-12 schools and to enhance the pipeline for teacher recruitment.

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2 The California Education Code (EdCode) uses the terms “county superintendent(s) of schools”[county superintendent(s)] and “county office(s) of education” interchangeably. Similarly, this strategic plan for CCSESA (the organization of 58 county superintendents) also uses the terms interchangeably throughout this document

**PROGRAM**

**GOAL TWO**

**Student Success**





**Goal Two: Children—Cultivate student success.** *Promote policies and seek resources that put the needs of students first.*

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#### **SUBGOALS AND STRATEGIES**

**Prioritize the development of state policies and professional development for county superintendents related to the education of special populations including children in foster care, homeless youth, English Language Learners, young refugees and asylum seekers, LGBTQ youth, and those in the juvenile justice system.**

Meet regularly with appropriate state agencies that serve special populations<sup>1</sup>.

Track numbers of special child populations served by county offices.

Gather stories of children and families served directly by county offices of education programs.

**Promote and advocate for funding opportunities and programs that help all children and youth to succeed.**

Assess impact of 2020 Census data on public education.

Endorse and take a lead on state ballot measures that provide funding and address the needs of all children.

Support the *California Master Plan for Early Learning and Care: California for All Kids* which focuses on expansion of early learning, family engagement, and streamlining the ECE system, etc.

**Promote and endorse policies and funding for innovative school efforts that address the comprehensive needs of children and families (e.g. schools as community hubs, family engagement, wrap-around supports, etc.).**

**Partner with statewide advocacy organizations<sup>2</sup> to support and promote the prioritization of children and youth (in state budgets, in policies, and in legislation.)**

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1 Regional Center, Department of Social Services, Division of Juvenile Justice, and those that address the homeless youth crisis

2 E.g. Children Now, Parent Voices, Alliance for Children's Rights, Children's Movement, etc.

**Goal Two: Children—Cultivate student success.** *Promote policies and seek resources that put the needs of students first.*

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**Encourage and support county offices to expand non-mandated services and programs that benefit children and youth.**

**Maintain and expand both the Arts Initiative and relations with the foundations that support the Initiative.**

Identify potential funding streams to pilot statewide education initiative that focus on improving outcomes for children. (e.g. parent engagement; community navigators)

**Encourage the development of career tech programs that link to the new California economy (especially at regional levels) and to new careers spurred by global challenges such as climate change, health delivery systems, etc.**

**PROGRAM**  
**GOAL THREE**

**County Superintendents**



**Goal Three: CCSESA Members—Connect California’s 58 county superintendents.**  
*Support county superintendents as they work to improve outcomes for all children, and as they champion educators and schools.*

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#### **SUBGOALS AND STRATEGIES: COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS**

**Invest in building cohesion and trust among the 58 diverse county superintendents and in articulating CCSESA’s value to county offices of education.**

**Build a stellar reputation statewide and nationally, such that CCSESA is “invited to the table” and considered a partner of choice on critical initiatives and legislative issues.**

**Thread “equity” and “kids” throughout all aspects of CCSESA’s work and conversations; ensure that equity and children drive the work of the steering committees.**

**Create general membership meeting structure and annual calendar (frequency of meetings) to encourage participation and engagement of members through carefully designed agendas and meeting content.**

Restructure annual meeting calendar to include no more than three in-person general membership meetings per year, with three regularly scheduled, topic-focused Zoom meetings (critical race theory, school policing, etc.; invite experts to discussions).

**Engage members in strategic thinking and pro-active problem solving discussions around education issues that result in action (i.e. legislation, outreach, partnerships, etc.)**

Assess implementation, success, and challenges of state-driven programs such as SoS.

#### **SUBGOALS AND STRATEGIES: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Enhance and expand professional development training for county superintendents and their leadership teams (cabinets).**

**Develop innovative resource and networking opportunities for cross-fertilization of issues important to county superintendents and county office leaders.**

Design and host a biennial *CCSESA Conference* to bring together content from all steering committees into a single, coordinated event for staff at all COEs—as a way to discuss important issues that impact county offices, overlap multiple committees, and encourage deep discussion of issues that do not fit neatly into current steering committee silos (e.g. anti-racism, democracy education, mental health, declining student enrollment, etc.). Promote cross-fertilization of ideas and issues. Brand the event as CCSESA. Additionally, provide professional development for county office leaders to participate in tracks specific to their departments (curriculum, finance, etc.)

**Goal Three: CCSESA Members—Connect California’s 58 county superintendents.**  
*Support county superintendents as they work to improve outcomes for all children, and as they champion educators and schools.*

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Seek graduate students (masters and doctoral) in education and related focus areas (e.g. sociology, social work, anthropology, community planning, community development) as summer or year-long interns; maintain a list of potential theses topics that could benefit the work of CCSESA and county offices.

Act as a repository of best practices, statewide and nationally—enabling county offices and county superintendents to use CCSESA as a resource<sup>1</sup>; share this information through accessible on-line blogs, workshops, responses to county office queries, etc.

Support and expand the work of the Small County Caucus.

Promote “shared learning experiences” particularly those related to equity; convene conversations across counties.

**Support cross-collaboration between and among county offices and CCSESA’s regions.**

#### **SUBGOALS AND STRATEGIES: STEERING COMMITTEES**

**Redefine the structure of the “steering committees” to better reflect the integration of CCSESA’s priorities and goal.**

Create a committee, comprised of the chairs of the five current steering committees and CCSESA’s executive director, along with the president-elect and the chair-elects to meet regularly to break down silos and to align with CCSESA’s mission and priority goals. Consider naming this small committee “the steering committee,” transforming the current steering committees into “expert work groups” or “committees” (e.g. Curriculum Committee, Tech Committee, etc.)

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<sup>1</sup> Topics could include parent engagement strategies, democracy education, schools as community hubs, etc.