

CCSESA FOCUS

A Weekly Update to County Superintendents of Schools

Friday, May 30, 2014

Major Changes in the Works for Transitional Kindergarten?

Throughout this year's state budget deliberations, it has been apparent that an important priority to Senate Democratic leadership has been expansion of early education opportunities. Yesterday the State Senate passed SB 837 by a partisan vote of 26-10.

Introduced by the President of Senate, Darrell Steinberg, the measure would both expand preschool and dramatically re-cast transitional kindergarten programs starting in 2015-16. In press reports, Steinberg was quoted as saying: "This is at the top of the list. I can't think of anything more important."

A key component of the bill is redirection of the existing Transitional Kindergarten program and its estimated \$900 million in funding to pay for pre-kindergarten programs for all low-income four-year olds. Specifically, SB 837 would require, beginning in 2015-16, that each elementary and unified school district provide "prekindergarten" for every child who is eligible for free or reduced-price meal who turns four on or before September 1 of that school year.

SB 837 would also add access to "quality preschool opportunities" as a state priority to be addressed in each school district's Local Control and Accountability Plan.

Indications are that there are substantive conversations taking place between legislative leadership and the Governor about the state's commitment to early education. This was a topic of keen interest at CCSESA's May Board of Directors meeting. An extended discussion of these issues is being scheduled as part of the agenda for our upcoming June General Membership meeting.

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