

LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT:

Ms. Sheila Jordan—Alameda County Superintendent of Schools



What led you to become County Superintendent?

When I speak at Career Days at our high schools, I remind the students to always be open to new opportunities. No one I know grew up thinking, "Oh, I want to be a County Superintendent when I grow up." But when an unexpected door opens, walk through it.

My advice is to be active in your community and follow your passion. In my case those passions are working with children with special needs and doing public service.

What inspired you to enter the field of education?

Back in the day, women were slotted into two professional fields, teaching and nursing. I knew early I was not good with blood. That left teaching. I always loved gathering my childhood friends and their younger brothers and sisters in a circle and playing "school." Throughout my education-- public school in the Bronx, New York, high school in New Jersey, and then Rutgers University on scholarship -- I never changed my mind. Majoring in English and Psychology was a great preparation for a life's work as educator.

Do you have a particular goal that drives you?

I grew up in the projects of the Bronx. At that time they were not scary. There was a diverse mix of working class Jews, Puerto Ricans and African-Americans. Everybody got along. From this background it was a natural step for me to participate in the civil rights movement. As a college student I was active in leadership, and got on the bus to the great 1963 March on Washington. I've never looked back. Starting at Lockwood Preschool in East Oakland, my work in education has been driven by the aim of achieving social justice and equity.

What objectives do you hope to achieve?

After 16 years, I will hand over to my successor a County Office with an outstanding management team that has won respect and

participation from our districts. I was the first elected woman County Superintendent in California, and my associate superintendent, Karen Monroe (if elected to succeed me) will be the first African-American woman elected to this position. It is a source of great pride for me to have assembled such a strong and competent leadership team.

Long before it became a cliché, our office recognized the problem of the achievement gap and started programs to address it. One key measure was to bring the arts back into the schools, and we have achieved not only statewide but national recognition for our *Art Is Education* programs. Another move, based on my experience with the *Writing Project*, was to move away from fill-in-the-bubbles classwork toward an integrated curriculum. It has been a privilege to lead the office in the introduction and implementation of Common Core and the opportunities and rewards it offers for nurturing creativity and problem solving for every child. I have learned that you never accomplish everything you want to do, but I am leaving office with the certainty that we have made progress and that we have a clear vision of where we need to go.

What are your interests?

I love to be outside, to hike and bike, and discover the wonders of our natural world. My husband Marty and I often take our grandson, Antonio, who loves to join us for our adventures.

Who are the special people in your life?

The special people in my life are my families -- my relatives by blood and marriage, and my families at work: Team ACOE and all the folks of CCSESA who have stood by me over the years. In retirement, I plan to refresh and renew my friendships with many lovely people whom I have neglected over the years because I have submerged myself in work.

And Marty, my partner and best friend, who is impatiently waiting for me to come up for air and smell the roses.

FROM THE DESK OF:

Peter Birdsall, CCSESA Executive Director

This edition of the CCSESA newsletter highlights a number of recent reports on issues of importance to county superintendents. It seems that fall is the time to release policy reports and recommendations in California. This timing is probably intended to influence the Governor's budget proposal that gets released each year in January, and to provide ideas for state legislators who introduce bills early each year.

In today's political environment, the "agenda" of issues and potential solutions is framed in part by the policy discussion that takes place in advance of legislation being introduced. There is perhaps no clearer example of this than the impact a wide range of studies had on the formulation and enactment of the Local Control Funding Formula.

To help engage in these discussions, the CCSESA Board has approved the formation of a Research Committee, to be chaired by San Mateo County Superintendent Anne Campbell. The Board has asked each region to appoint a representative to this new committee. The 2014-15 CCSESA budget also included a small amount to contract for literature reviews and/or surveys on issues of concern to county superintendents. This work will also be guided by the Research Committee.

An update on the work of the Research Committee will be provided at each CCSESA Board meeting. Please contact me if you have ideas or recommendations concerning this new effort by CCSESA.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CDE to Host Webinar on Chronic Absenteeism:

On Thursday, November 13 from 3:30pm—5pm, the California Department of Education will host a webinar to address chronic absenteeism and its relationship to the Local Control and Accountability Plan. For more information, click [here](#).

December Board of Directors Meeting:

The next CCSESA Board meeting is scheduled for December 8 at the SELF Building in Sacramento. There will be a luncheon immediately following the meeting. CCSESA will also welcome new Board members whose terms officially begin in January 2015 to the December meeting.

January Quarterly Meeting:

The next Quarterly Meeting will take place at the Intercontinental Hotel in Monterey from January 26—28. For questions regarding agenda items, hotel reservations or travel, contact JaConya Merchant: jmerchant@ccsesa.org.

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POLICY REPORTS—A FALL OVERVIEW

The month of October has been flush with education-related policy reports that draw attention to several important topics. Three of these reports are described below.

[Rethinking School Accountability](#)

PPIC'S Report, *Designing California's Next School Accountability Program*, offers a number of specific recommendations organized around the objective of aligning the state accountability measures with the Local Control and Accountability Plan process.

The report further recommends that the state should greatly expand the program of technical assistance to school districts. Of specific interest to county superintendents, the report concludes: "...using county offices of education to act as a quality check for districts also represents an important innovation. Indeed, in this large and diverse state, county offices seem to be the most logical avenue for providing annual high-quality feedback and technical assistance that many districts need to function more effectively."

The full report is available [here](#).

[Early Implementation of LCFF](#)

The Stuart Foundation recently released a brief report titled *Early Implementation of California's Local Control Funding Formula*. The report reflects studies of LCFF implementation by ten school districts, plus the review of 40 district LCAPs and interviews with a total of 20 county offices of education.

Overall, the researchers heard positive things

about the LCAP process. One concern they heard and reflected in their report was, "First, they [districts and counties] fear the state will change the system before it has time to mature. One refrain sounded over and over in the interviews was, 'Please leave it alone. Give us time to get used to it, to learn how to work with it, and to make it work for us.'"

With regard to county offices, the report comments, "COE officials reported that the new LCFF responsibilities, which came without new resources from the state, have stretched them beyond thin... Many COE officials expressed deep concern that the kind of patchwork arrangement they were able to put together this year cannot be sustained without an infusion of resources."

The report is available [here](#).

[Preparing California's Teaching Workforce](#)

In EdSource's *Preparing World-Class Teachers*, the authors describe seven unique challenges California faces when training and retaining new teachers (such as uneven access to high-quality induction programs), along with possible solutions to the various challenges (such as renewed state support for beginning teacher preparation). As prominent providers of several teacher preparation programs across the state, county offices of education should be active in all discussions about possible reforms to the existing structure of teacher preparation.

The full report is available [here](#).

CCSESA ARTS INITIATIVE UPDATE

On November 17, the CCSESA Arts Initiative will host a luncheon and forum at the Sacramento Convention Center for arts, education and legislative leaders. The outcomes for the event include the following:

- Provide perspectives on and support for arts learning in CA schools;
- Expand knowledge and understanding of creativity and of the importance of culturally/linguistically responsive arts education pedagogy for student 21st century success;

- Create more visibility and excitement around arts education, and specifically *Creativity at the Core*, as an investment in building California's capacity for creativity and innovation; and
- Engage legislators/legislative staff, policy makers, and other influential leaders in experiencing how *Creativity at the Core* is resulting in powerful impact on students in school and beyond.

View the event flyer [here](#), and you may register [here](#). *Creativity at the Core* was recently mentioned in a Huffington Post article, available [here](#).

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES—THE YEAR AHEAD

The State and Federal Legislative Committee is currently working on the Legislative Priorities for 2015, and we are seeking input from county superintendents.

The Legislative Priorities are intended to provide direction to both the Legislative Committee as it takes actions on proposed legislation, and to CCSESA staff as they represent the interests of the Association in state and federal policy discussions. The 2014 CCSESA Legislative priorities may be viewed [here](#) (located under

"Documents"). Proposed new or revised legislative priorities will be reviewed and amended by the Legislative Committee in December, and presented for approval to the Board of Directors and general membership in January.

Given that the legislative priorities are currently a work in progress, now is the time to reach out and put your issues on the radar. Contact Kenn Young at kyoung@rcoe.us, or Sandra Morales at smorales@ccsesa.org.