



February 27, 2014

Dear President Kirst, Members of the State Board of Education and State Superintendent Torlakson:

On behalf of the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA) and the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), we are writing to urge you to adopt a process and timeline to establish the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence and make it operational as soon as feasible. Our strong recommendation is that you develop a timeline that will allow State Board of Education approval of a fiscal agent for the Collaborative at the State Board's May, 2014 meeting.

The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence is established by Education Code Section 52074. That section says "the purpose of the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence is to advise and assist school districts, county superintendents of schools, and charter schools in achieving the goals set forth in a local control and accountability plan adopted pursuant to this article."

School districts, county superintendents and charter schools are now deeply engaged in the first ever development and adoption of local control and accountability plans (LCAPs). We believe the Collaborative should play a central role in facilitating the identification of best practices and sharing of these practices with local education agencies (LEAs).

Specifically, we urge the State Board and the Department to work cooperatively to ensure that a fiscal agent, as specified in Section 52074, is selected by this May. This fall county superintendents will be reviewing approximately 1,000 LCAPs, and it will be an enormous benefit to have the Collaborative available to help support consistency in the review of LCAPs, assist districts that have failed to meet the full requirements of the LCAPs, and begin the work of identifying and sharing exemplary models.

Further, we strongly urge that the selection process for a fiscal agent focus on establishing a model that is practitioner-driven. The key premise of the Collaborative is that it provide a system of support to LEAs and as such, its development, design, and implementation should be driven by school practitioners currently working in the field. It is worth noting that the board that governs the work of the Collaborative is defined in law to include a majority of local practitioners—a county superintendent, a school district superintendent, and a teacher. This reflects the reality that the success of the LCAPs, and of the Collaborative, will rely on local educators sharing best practices and supporting each other to improve educational opportunity.

As you move forward to select a fiscal agent to provide staff support for the Collaborative, we urge you to evaluate proposals primarily on the basis of the following three criteria:

1. How would the Collaborative be organized to conduct its day-to-day work including involving other local agencies in a meaningful way to identify needs, provide technical assistance, share exemplary practices, and review the quality of services provided by the Collaborative;
2. What level of funding is projected as necessary to support a core staff to ensure financial integrity and strong standards of quality and consistency across services provided and/or funded by the Collaborative, including the need to provide staff support to the Collaborative governing board, to manage numerous contacts across the state, and to evaluate the performance of contractors;
3. What qualifications and experience does that agency have that demonstrates its capacity to successfully develop and support the purposes of the Collaborative?

CCSESA and ACSA are strongly committed to this new school finance model that blends local flexibility with local accountability. We believe that the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence offers an extraordinary opportunity to move away from the punitive accountability system LEAs have endured over the last 10 years under federal law and instead create a system of accountability rooted in practitioner-lead support that will enable school districts, county superintendents, and charter schools to systematically build on their collective experiences and promote consistent, successful LCFF implementation in all parts of the state.

As practitioner member organizations, we stand ready to assist the State Board and the Department in all aspects of this process. Please contact either of us if we can provide additional information or assistance regarding this important matter.

Sincerely,



Peter Birdsall  
Executive Director  
CCSESA



Wesley Smith  
Executive Director  
ACSA