

April 6, 2018

President Michael Kirst and Board Members
California State Board of Education
1430 N Street, Room #5111
Sacramento, CA 95814

Agenda Item #1: The California State Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Dear President Kirst and Board Members:

We write again to comment on California's ESSA plan. Although this plan and California's new system of accountability have been under development for over 30 months, they still fall short of the law's intention to "provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps," (Section 1001). As such, we maintain concerns that we have repeatedly raised:

1. **11th Grade Scores:** The California Department of Education's (Department) has finally recommended that Smarter Balanced scores for 11th grade ELA and math be used as the Academic Achievement indicator for 11th grade and high schools. This is basic compliance with federal law, and we support it. Nonetheless, we urge the Board to ensure this indicator also appears on the Dashboard as a standalone item that matters for California accountability, *not* solely for school identification under ESSA. The latter would add to the cloud of confusion that already surrounds the utility of the Dashboard for high school performance as well as promote bifurcated accountability systems – something the Board has said it doesn't want to do. Additionally, by ensuring this indicator appears distinctly on the Dashboard, parents can make better-informed decisions about how high schools are educating all students, including student subgroups, rather than having to parse out the components of the College/Career Indicator (which still appears as an "N/A" on the Dashboard).
2. **Lowest performing 5% of schools:** We are encouraged that the Department has proposed a mechanism to identify the lowest performing 5% of schools regardless of their LEA. This is a step in the right direction. We are highly concerned, however, that the only "step" that will be taken to help these schools and their students is a modification of the LCAP template, as was suggested in agenda item attachments. We urge the Board to clarify exactly what the state of California will do to help students in the lowest performing schools in the state.

The Board must take action to ensure California’s ESSA plan fulfills the intention of the law signed by President Obama and make meaningful use of the federal resources to close educational achievement gaps. The 6.2 million public school children of this state – where nearly 25% are learning English and nearly 60% are low-income – deserve it.

Respectfully,



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Executive Director



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