

July 7, 2017

Dr. Michael Kirst  
President, State Board of Education  
1430 N Street, Room 5111  
Sacramento, CA 95814

*Sent via e-mail*

*Re: July Agenda Item #2 Developing an Integrated Statewide System of Support*

Dear President Kirst:

Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspectives and recommendations as the State Board of Education (Board) takes up key policy issues underlining the development of a statewide system of support. We are leaders of California-based nonprofit technical assistance providers dedicated to improving outcomes for our state's diverse student population. Equity is a core value in each of our organizations and our approach is underscored by partnering with local educational agencies and their communities. We estimate that taken together, our organizations have worked with the majority of the districts and county offices of education in California.

Our organizations work in low-income, low-resourced areas of the state, with communities of color and those with high proportions of English learner, foster youth, immigrant and low-income students. We are California-based and have track records of effectiveness in assistance and capacity-building to improve the educational outcomes of low-income students, system-involved youth and students of color and in addressing Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) priorities. We have extensive experience on-the-ground working in partnership with local educational agencies (LEAs) on implementation of LCFF and, more recently, ESSA. Our work reflects a strong equity lens in its design and implementation.

An effective state system of support is critical to affirming LCFF --and the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) process-- as a means of fostering continuous improvement approaches and building the capacity of LEAs to do so. We have come together to provide our initial recommendations and to offer to work with the Board and the California Department of Education (Department) as the state system is developed.

*Our relationships with clients are based upon partnership, trust and respect. We are experienced, nimble and effective. As the Board and Department continue to shape the state system of support, this body of knowledge and expertise will be vital to its success. We have not seen a clear role for the non-profit equity-focused sector articulated in the design of the system.*

We have identified and share here three design principles for you to consider:

- ***Recognize the value of high quality nonprofit, equity-focused technical assistance providers for schools, districts and county offices of education, whether this is generalized support for all schools and LEAs (Level 1), individualized assistance to address particular issues (Level 2), or intensive intervention to address persistent performance problems (Level 3).*** <sup>i</sup> LCFF and the LCAP process center improvement efforts at the local level in contrast to previous top-down approaches. Local stakeholder engagement and transparency are core components of LCFF implementation. Our organizations, and others, have established track

records working in this framework to assist LEAs in meeting LCFF goals and priorities for students. The role of high quality providers in the new system should be explicit.

- **Create a process that provides an assurance of quality yet supports diversity and a breadth of providers to meet the varying needs of local educational agencies.** An effective system of support will provide LEAs with opportunities to make sure the support fits with local context and is based on partnership and respect. LCFF and LCAP have created more open and collaborative approaches to change and improvement. We urge the Board to take an inclusive and not restrictive approach that leverages the breadth of expertise in our state. The capacity and reach of county offices of education and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence will be significantly enhanced by recognition and inclusion of the role of high quality nonprofit equity-focused technical assistance providers who reflect the diversity and diverse needs of California schools. Districts should be able to work with their choice of certified provider.
- **Authorize and establish vetting and approval of providers.** Quality of support and capacity building are key drivers to implementing and sustaining school and district improvement. One-size-fits-all externally imposed approaches won't work, especially in our large and diverse state. We recommend that as part of the new system, providers are vetted through the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence to ensure a level of consistent quality control. The vetting process should prioritize California-based non-profit providers and agencies with long-term experience, effective local district relationships and well-defined support in continuous improvement in the LCAP priority areas.

Thank you for considering these recommendations. We welcome continued opportunities to provide input to the development of the system of support. We also appreciate the outreach that Board and Department staff have undertaken in seeking feedback from a diverse group of stakeholders.

Please don't hesitate to contact any of us if you would like additional information.

Sincerely,

Oscar Cruz, Families in Schools  
Jeanne Fauci, Center for Powerful Public Schools  
Jesse Hahnel, National Center for Youth Law  
Taryn Ishida, Californians For Justice  
Joe Johnson, National Center for Urban School Transformation  
Theresa McEwen, College and Career Academy Support Network  
Derek Mitchell, Partners in School Innovation  
Arun Ramanathan, Pivot Learning Partners  
Brad Stam, ConnectEd

Letter to Dr. Michael Kirst  
July 7, 2017  
Page 3

Copy: Members, State Board of Education  
Hon. Tom Torlakson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction  
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Barbara Murchison, California Department of Education  
Carl Cohn, California Collaborative for Educational Excellence  
Josh Daniels, California Collaborative for Educational Excellence  
Sujie Shin, California Collaborative for Educational Excellence

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<sup>1</sup> See June 13, 2017 Information Memorandum, Developing an Integrated System of Support at page 2. Level 1 – Support for All LEAs and Schools; Level 2 – Differentiated Assistance in the form of individually designed assistance for LEAs and schools; Level 3 – Intensive Intervention directed by the State Superintendent or charter authorizer for LEAs and schools with persistent performance issues for a specified time period.