



September 8, 2016

Michael Kirst, president  
California State Board of Education  
1430 N Street, Suite 5111  
Sacramento, CA 95814

*Response to California State Board of Education Agenda Items #1 Developing an Integrated Local, State, and Federal Accountability and Continuous Improvement System and #2 Update on the Development of the California State Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act*

Dear President Kirst and members of the California State Board of Education,

We applaud your continued leadership in establishing one coherent school accountability system. To support and inform your ongoing work, the CORE Districts are proposing to serve as a research pilot so we can continue to innovate locally and test measures of improvement and accountability for local, state, and federal purposes.

Implicit in recently adopted education policies is the notion that local leaders must be responsible for driving school improvement. We take this responsibility seriously. We are continuing our efforts as the CORE Districts because we recognize the capacity of our large districts to share successes and failures, promote innovation, and bring new strategies to scale.

We have worked together for six years, and we have built a multiple measures accountability and improvement system that reflects priorities identified by local educators. It is similar to the state's emerging system in important ways including its use of state-collected data on test scores, graduation rates, chronic absenteeism, suspension rates, and information about English learners. In addition to these, our system also accounts for growth in student performance over time, the extent to which 8<sup>th</sup> graders are ready to enter high school, and measures of students' social emotional skills and of a school's overall culture climate. We believe these additional measures provide a more complete picture of overall school performance.

A partnership with Policy Analysis in California Education (PACE) helps us look at state and locally-generated data in multiple ways. Together we can pinpoint the needs of students, learn more about schools that are excelling and the strategies they are using, and work collectively to support schools that need additional help.

As California proceeds with its new accountability system, we desire to contribute to its success. When the new system is introduced, we strongly believe our districts should be held accountable for all of the state adopted indicators, plus the locally-driven indicators on growth, high school readiness and social-emotional learning/culture-climate the CORE Districts now measure. Our research shows that these specific initiatives are leading to school and student improvement locally, and we need to count them, not just locally, but also for state accountability purposes.

The ability of the CORE Districts to continue this important work on school improvement will be undermined if these locally developed measures are discounted when California's new accountability system is introduced. Continuous improvement relies on coherence at all levels, and if the state's new system ignores these local-driven measures and thus reports different outcomes at the school level or identifies schools for support and intervention using different metrics than our districts, it will deter the deep work currently underway for 1 million students, lead to confusion for both educators and parents, and miss a tremendous opportunity for the state and the nation to learn about the efficacy of the CORE Districts local measures on growth, 8<sup>th</sup> grade readiness and social-emotional learning/culture-climate.

We concur that patience, persistence, and participation will be required as the state's new accountability system evolves. We look forward to sharing our internal capacity as a research pilot to further explore how local and state indicators of improvement interact and to help ensure that students graduate ready for college and careers. Together, we can help inform improvement and accountability decision-making on all levels.

Sincerely,



José Banda, Superintendent  
Sacramento City Unified School District



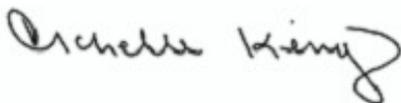
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Garden Grove Unified School District



Michael Hanson, Superintendent  
Fresno Unified School District



Stefanie Phillips, Superintendent  
Santa Ana Unified School District



Michelle King, Superintendent  
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