



October 28, 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 Item #3 - Developing an Integrated Local, State and Federal Accountability and Continuous Improvement System: Approval of the Performance Standards for the Academic Indicator; Review of Recommendations on the Process for Local Educational Agencies to Evaluate and Report Progress on Local Performance Indicators

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

We appreciate the California State Board of Education's ongoing work to establish a comprehensive accountability system for our schools and districts. To support these efforts, we are continuing to improve and expand locally-driven data available for school improvement and accountability purposes. We urge the Board to consider the many ways the CORE Districts' experience, data and ongoing research can inform ongoing policy decisions. Specifically:

The CORE Districts recently launched a growth model that is helping us determine which schools within our districts are moving students further faster. This academic growth model provides a more complete picture of school improvement than anything previously available to California educators. It ensures that schools serving students with different prior achievement levels and characteristics have an equal chance of showing high growth. It not only allows us to see school level progress, but it also provides information about average growth by grade level and by groups of students. Results are available for grades 4 through 8 for English and math. To account for differences among students, the model adjusts for prior test history; economic disadvantaged status; disability status (and severity level); English learner status; homelessness status; and foster status at the individual student and school average levels. The data helps us look at the variance around systems in our districts. In large urban districts like Fresno, Los Angeles, Long Beach, Oakland, San Francisco, Sacramento, Santa Ana and Garden Grove, this is especially important as achievement gains or widenings of gaps often are masked by other factors.

We urge state policymakers to work with the CORE Districts to ensure adequate space in the evaluation rubrics to report this locally-driven data on growth, social-emotional learning and high school readiness. This locally-generated data provides a unique opportunity to help educators and their school communities understand the impact they are having on student improvement relative to schools working with similar youth. That way, local educators can better utilize the evaluation rubrics to communicate how these measures influence student outcomes, and policymakers can decide whether they should be used statewide for accountability purposes.

To help inform local improvement efforts, the CORE Districts data and improvement network now is open to all local educational agencies. This voluntary locally-driven network is growing and now includes urban, rural and suburban districts and charter management organizations serving 1.8 million students. Our partnership with Policy Analysis in California Education (PACE) is helping us look at state and locally-generated data in multiple ways. Together we are learning more about data not available from or collected by the state and identifying schools that are excelling and the strategies they are using.

By being able to compare schools' performance on multiple measures to the performance of similar schools throughout the state, educators are able to get a clearer picture of our strengths and challenge areas. Individual data elements no longer stand alone, but now connect data such as academic growth, social emotional learning and high school readiness to test scores so educators know what is working and how to improve. Collaboration across this expanding network is helping districts learn from one another and ensuring more students are college and career ready when they graduate. We urge state policymakers to consider the many ways this growing data and improvement network can inform accountability decisions.

We look forward to further exploring how our ongoing improvement efforts, locally-driven data and CORE-PACE research can inform evolving state and federal school accountability decisions.

Sincerely,



Michael E. Hanson
President of the CORE Districts and superintendent of Fresno Unified School District

- Cc:
- Members of the California State Board of Education
 - Karen Stapf Walters, Executive Director, California State Board of Education
 - David Sapp, Deputy Policy Director, California State Board of Education
 - Tom Torlakson, California State Superintendent of Public Instruction
 - Glen Price, Chief Deputy, California Department of Education
 - Keric Ashley, Deputy Superintendent, California Department of Education
 - Brent Malicote, Division Director, California Department of Education