

acsa's top issues for 2011

Education Funding and State Budget

In the last three years alone, funding for schools has been cut by more than \$18 billion, or about \$3,000 per student, and the provisions of the final 2011-12 state education budget leave a lot to be desired. Again public schools face the ongoing manipulation of Proposition 98. In addition, the state budget is attempting to dictate local decision making by requiring school districts to ignore possible mid-year cuts and keep existing staff levels. If mid-year cuts are triggered, the school year would be reduced. ACSA is contemplating the legality of the 2011-12 state education budget and continues to fight for both an overhaul of that system and an ongoing commitment from lawmakers to protect school funding. In addition, ACSA recently created a task force on categorical reform to help lead policy direction at the Capitol.

Protecting Pensions

With unprecedented political debate about pension costs and the need to control government spending, ACSA continues to work to educate policymakers and the public about the role of educational leaders in public schools. Throughout our history, protecting and enhancing retirement benefits has been a priority. ACSA is supportive of instituting a uniform set of laws for all public retirement systems, but we strongly oppose reforms that penalize educators for long term-service in public education.

Leadership Matters

In 2011, ACSA's Leadership Matters project entered a new phase as state budget cuts increasingly threaten school administration. ACSA efforts aim to share a common message about school leadership and how further cuts would undermine education programs. New polling data points to the need to highlight the role of school principals in efforts to improve student achievement. Among administrators, school principals have a significantly better image than other administrative categories.

School principals are front and center in the quest to do more for our students with fewer resources. One of ACSA's Leadership Matters goals is to communicate why great principals need strong educational support networks. California ranks 47th nationally in number of school administrators to students, and 45th in the number of principals and assistant principals per student. ACSA's Leadership Matters project will continue to assist ACSA and its key communicators as they work to inform lawmakers, the media and education stakeholders.

Common Core, Assessment and Accountability

ACSA is a leader in the state's transition to Common Core Standards, and our members are actively engaged in discussions about how to improve teaching and learning through this 21st century approach. Timing is critical because educators need the financial resources, instructional materials, and professional development support before transitioning to a new testing and accountability system. As lawmakers review legislation aimed to help districts implement Common Core, ACSA is advocating for a statewide communications campaign, a comprehensive and realistic implementation plan, available resources for teachers and others at the local level and a seven-year Common Core master plan to ensure a smooth transition to and implementation of these 21st century standards.

ESEA Reauthorization

ACSA continues to take the lead on issues related to the reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, including the need for a growth model that will measure student achievement based on an individual student's growth over time. The work of an ACSA ESEA task force has led to ACSA policy positions on effective teachers and leaders; effective teacher evaluations; effective principal evaluations; teacher and leadership pathways; and college and career readiness goals. Other policy positions to guide ESEA reauthorization will focus on equity and opportunity for all students, SES and school choice, and measuring and supporting schools, districts and states. ACSA's goal is to inform state and federal policymakers about how to improve the law to improve instruction and learning for all students.

acsa's top issues for 2011

Policy and Political Leadership

ACSA's Vision Statement proclaims our goal to be the most influential, respected, student-focused and service-oriented educational association in existence. During the last decade, ACSA changed its PAC contribution process to afford the organization a heightened role in initiative and candidate campaigns. ACSA was part of the coalition that helped pass Propositions 11 and 14, and ACSA continues to advocate for a less partisan and more functional state government. In preparation for the open primary election process in 2012, ACSA members are actively engaged in an all-new, thoughtful and engaging evaluation and endorsement process for candidates seeking political office. Our recent support for Larry Aceves' bid for State Superintendent helped expand the reach of the association and highlight the need for educational leaders to have a strong voice in policy decisions about public schools. ACSA's work with the State Board of Education on issues including parental involvement and school accountability also has led to substantial changes in not only the membership of the Board but also its policy direction on issues most important to our membership.

Achievement Gap

ACSA efforts to close the achievement gap include our school finance lawsuit, professional learning programs aimed at building cultural responsiveness, ongoing efforts to ensure that all students can see themselves in the instructional materials that are used, advocacy for an improved Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and support of newer administrators and administrators new to a position through in-depth coaching. In addition, ACSA continues to lead efforts to alter the federal and state labels of failing to a role of support for closing the achievement gap.

Diversity

It has been five years since the Board adopted its Diversity Action Plan and statistics show definite rates of success. The ACSA Board of Directors recently expressed its continued commitment to diversity and has called for an expanded, new diversity action plan to ensure sufficient diversity in ACSA's membership and leadership. Ongoing initiatives to promote ACSA diversity include building cultural competency; developing a mentoring support program; equipping members of color to take leadership roles within the organization; increasing recruitment of underserved administrators; collecting and analyzing data to inform the organization; and increasing awareness of issues regarding membership diversity and ACSA's efforts to promote equity in standards-based systems. ACSA committee appointments are now more in line with membership demographics, and demographics for ACSA leadership have improved. Council president demographics have improved to 25 percent diverse and the current Board of Directors is very ethnically and generationally diverse.

Women's Leadership Network

The Women's Leadership Network began at the state level when women in ACSA leadership roles expressed strong interest in an organized system to recruit women to ACSA leadership roles, to support female administrators and to provide greater networking opportunities in local areas. A WLN Task Force was formed to set goals, which included developing a framework for the establishment of local networks at the region and charter levels. The ACSA Women's Leadership Network continues to build upon that goal, with events established in nearly all ACSA regions. Within the WLN Task Force's mission was defining top issues and barriers faced by women in educational leadership. Task force members agreed that balancing life and career, the need for mentoring and networking, the existence of stereotypes and the need for enhanced career skills are among critical issues for females in leadership roles. Plans are underway for an inaugural WLN conference in fall 2011.

School Finance Lawsuit

In May 2010, ACSA, CSBA, California State PTA and others filed the Robles-Wong v. California lawsuit to address the deficiencies of the current school finance system. Our lawsuit seeks to remedy the broken school finance system by (1) declaring that it is unconstitutional and (2) requiring state lawmakers to uphold their constitutional duty to design and implement a school finance system that provides all students equal access to the required educational program. The suit has been amended and refiled to address initial concerns and questions raised by the judge.