

January 18, 2012

TO: ACSA Leadership and members

FR: Adonai Mack, Legislative Advocate

RE: Governor Brown's State of the State

This morning Governor Brown addressed the Legislature providing his annual State of the State. The governor used his usually comedic charm and wit to begin his speech noting that the Republican Leaders, Senator Huff and Assembly member Conway must be clairvoyant because they released statements about his speech yesterday before it was completed and 24 hours before he actually spoke.

The governor discussed a variety of issues starting with his accomplishments from last year including reducing the state deficit and moving decision making for state programs back to local governments. He also addressed his continued goal of implementing a state budget that is balanced with cuts and revenues. While he was unsuccessful in procuring the Republican votes to accomplish this last year, he mentioned his intention to pursue a ballot initiative to increase taxes and to "finish the job of bringing spending into balance with revenues."

While staying optimistic and disclaiming the rumors that California is facing demise, the governor laid out his top priorities for 2012. These include stimulating job growth, building renewable energy, reducing pollution and greenhouse gasses, launching the high-speed rail system, designing a plan to fix the water issues in the Delta, reforming pensions, continuing prison realignment and improving California schools.

The governor spent some time detailing his plan for education. Many of the proposals were included in his January Budget Proposal released last week. These include the creation of a new funding model (the weighted student formula proposal) and the elimination of state mandates. The governor added that "everyone thinks they know something about education" but that it does not "stop experts and academics and foundation consultants from offering their ideas" or "reforms" on how to educate children better. The governor noted that there must be clear lines between the levels of power in the educational system and where the decision making is most critical. To this end, the governor stated that it is time to depend on local school boards, principals, and teachers to educate the state's children and for the state to "set broad goals and have a good accountability system."

The governor continued by outlining a plan that would reduce not only the number of tests, but also provide a method to ensure that the test results data is provided in a timely manner for superintendents, principals and teachers. The governor mentioned the need to have quality data for principals and superintendents in order for them to "better mentor and guide teachers as well as make sound evaluations of their performance." Further, the governor acknowledged that the state needs a qualitative system of assessments that included classroom visits and observations.

While the governor acknowledged that his proposals will divide the power brokers in public education, he believes that his role is to not choose a side but lead. He finished by saying he

believed that “principals and teachers know the most, but I’ll take good ideas from wherever they come.”

ACSA Perspective

It is clear from the State of the State that the governor has some additional policy proposals that he is going to pursue. State testing, teacher/principal evaluations, and accountability are all items that we can expect to hear about in the coming months. The testing reform in particular fits in nicely with ACSA’s sponsored legislation on testing. ACSA is pursuing legislation to do the following: 1) Make secondary assessments more meaningful to students, especially high school students, 2) Eliminate and reduce tests and testing time, and, 3) Create partnerships with postsecondary and career training institutions to recognize high school assessments as one measure of entry. It appears ACSA could have a partner in the governor to pursue similar testing reforms.

It should also be noted that the governor mentioned principals consistently throughout his speech. It is clear that he is looking toward school leaders for advice and ideas on methods to improve the quality of public education.