



VENTURA COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Stanley C. Mantooth, County Superintendent of Schools

IMMERSED IN CHANGE

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This is a period of dramatic change in California education with educators, parents, and Board members grappling with the new paradigm shifts of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), and the new Common Core State Standards which provide new perspective and methods of teaching students the four Cs: Communication, Collaboration, Creativity and Critical thinking.

We have actually been engaged in significant change for a number of years. Although the Common Core State Standards are now a universal mandate in California, its roots can be found in the principles of 21st Century Learning; whose applications have been practiced in Ventura County classrooms for many years. It might be more accurate to think of these new developments as simply additional milestones in an already established process of educational evolution.

At both the State and local level, we often find ourselves interpreting and learning as we go along. A prime example would be the advent of approved regulatory guidelines for the LCFF and LCAP which since their draft rollout in November have undergone many revisions in anticipation of their adoption at the January State Board of Education meeting. At issue in this debate is the polarity of true local control vs. a traditional and abiding interest in verification and oversight from the State. It is also likely that as the future unfolds the statute and attendant specifics will undergo additional modification, yet hopefully still maintain a balance between accountability and our need to write our own script for our children's needs. We should also not forget that the proposed eight year cycle of restorative funding under the LCFF may be uncertain at best considering California's history of economic ups and downs.

In addition to the monetary commitment embedded in the LCFF, much debate is occurring relative to an anticipated surplus in revenues in both the current and succeeding years, with the Governor and the Legislature considering the continued retirement of deferral debt, an additional cycle of Common Core support funding and the possibility of transitional kindergarten expansion. At the same time, there are many who believe that additional revenue should be earmarked to augment base funding on an accelerated schedule for the benefit of ALL California's students.

As these events play out in Sacramento, the Federal government and Congress continue to allow the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – better known as NCLB – to languish without either reauthorization or revision. On the brighter side, federal matching funding for the implementation of preschool has been embedded in the newly proposed "Strong Start for Children Act" which addresses not only capacity but real quality in early learning. While promising, the continuing pattern of gridlock in our nation's capitol may make the manifestation of such well-intended and necessary action tentative at best.

We face a mixed bag of opportunity and challenge in acquiring and utilizing the resources we sorely need to realize the fulfillment of our mission on behalf of the children we serve. The changes we encounter and overcome are steps along the path to achieving that objective.

Stanley C. Mantooth, Ventura County Superintendent of Schools