

July 6, 2018

Dr. Michael W. Kirst, President
State Board of Education
1430 N Street, Suite #5111
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: July SBE Agenda Item #1: Recommended Action on the Student Growth Model

Dear President Kirst:

We represent organizations that advocate on behalf of students, parents, community members, and educators in our state's public schools. We are united by a common belief that our schools and districts must address long-standing inequities and offer every student an excellent education that prepares them for college, career, and civic life. **We write to you today to encourage the State Board of Education to adopt a student growth indicator as part of the Dashboard and the state accountability system.**

Growth measures can provide parents, educators, and the public with important information about students' academic progress, and about how well schools are doing at raising achievement for all kids. This matters a great deal for equity, because our schools must accelerate progress for low-income students, English learners, students of color, and other historically marginalized students if they are to close achievement gaps.

It is not sufficient to look at academic "Status" and "Change" over time, as our Dashboard currently does. Status is often a function of demographics, and Change fails to consider how individual students have progressed. In many cases, a Change measure can be wholly misleading, because it does not follow a common student cohort or control for fluctuations in school enrollment or demographics. In many schools and districts, these fluctuations are not trivial. Growth measures, on the other hand, tell us how much each individual student is learning and how much of that learning can be attributed to the school. Many researchers agree that growth is a superior measure for purposes of measuring how well schools are doing.¹

Our state will soon be identifying schools for assistance, and growth measures should be part of that decision. Consider two schools that are very low performing, both earning Red ratings in English language arts and math on the Dashboard. Both of those schools might be identified for assistance under the current system. Now suppose that in one of those schools, students are growing at a much faster rate than the state average—the school may still be Red, but students who started far below grade level are starting to catch up to grade level standards. In the other school, students are falling behind—perhaps gaining only 6 months of learning over the course of a 9-month school year. Clearly, those two schools require different kinds of assistance. Without growth data, we will be ill-suited to appropriately differentiate support.

The state is uniquely positioned to construct a student growth model and make this data available to schools and districts. This is something most districts cannot do on their own. In our view, the state bears a responsibility to make this information available and to use it to support continuous improvement and

¹ See, for example: Morgan Polikoff, "Beyond Proficiency: Toward a Better Measure for School Success," The Center on Standards, Alignment, Instruction, and Learning, January 2017; and Paul Warren, "California's K-12 Test Scores: What Can the Available Data Tell Us?" The Public Policy Institute of California, June 2018.

smarter accountability. Further, the state bears a responsibility to use data it already has, using methods that have already been vetted and applied in dozens of other states, to design a meaningful and fair accountability system, and to help districts and schools make the best decisions for their students.

The agenda item and accompanying memo claim that a growth measure is too complicated and too confusing. We disagree. We know that parents and educators alike want the most accurate information on student learning, they want to know the truth about how their schools are doing, and they want to be held accountable based on fair measures.

Now is not the time to delay in making this decision. This is not a new issue, and we have already had extensive public debate about it. As early as 2003 and multiple times since, the legislature has called on the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) Advisory Committee to make recommendations on the establishment of an individual academic performance growth model, or to consider such a model.² And over the last several years, as the State Board of Education has worked to design the new accountability system, there have been numerous board discussions about the growth measure. We have the information we need to move ahead. We urge you to take decisive action and finally give Californians a meaningful measure of student growth.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this critically important issue. We look forward to continuing working with the State Board of Education to select a student growth model and determine how to integrate it into our accountability system.

Sincerely,



The Education Trust—West



Teach Plus California



Abriendo Puertas/Opening
Doors

² In 2003, SB 257 (Alpert) required the PSAA Advisory Committee to make recommendations to the SSPI on the “appropriateness and feasibility of a methodology for generating a measurement of academic performance” based on individual student results. In 2009, AB 1130 (Solorio) declares legislative intent that the SSPI’s API advisory committee shall consider student growth measures. In 2013, AB 484 (Bonilla) established that when the state is reporting test scores, “when appropriate, the reports should include a measure of growth that describes a pupil’s current status in relation to past performance.”



Alliance for A Better Community



California Association of Bilingual Educators (CABE)



CAFE de California, Chicano Latino State Employees Association



California Charter Schools Association



California Latino School Board Association (CLSBA)



Californians Together

Center for Leadership Equity And Research



CLEAR - Center for Leadership Equity and Research



Cesar Chavez Foundation

CHILDREN NOW

Children Now



Community Coalition



Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement



Del Sol Group



Dolores Huerta Foundation



Educate 78



EdVoice



Families in Schools



Future is Now



GO Public Schools



GO Public Schools West Contra Costa



Great Public Schools Now



Green Dot Public Schools National



Innovate Public Schools



La Comadre Network



Latino and Latina Roundtable of the San Gabriel and Pomona Valley



Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund



Parent Revolution



Partnership for Children & Youth



Partnership for Los Angeles Schools



Reading and Beyond



Sacramento ACT



SBCUSD African American Advisory Council



SOMOS Mayfair



Southern California College Access Network



Speak UP



Stockton Scholars



Stockton Schools Initiative



The Village Method



UnidosUS

cc: Members of the California State Board of Education
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