



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

February 1, 2021

The mission of the YPI Charter Schools (YPICS) is to prepare students for academic success in high school, as well as post--secondary education; prepare students to be responsible and active participants in their community; and enable students to become life-long learners. Students at YPI Charter Schools will become active citizens who characterize the ideals of a diverse and democratic society. Students will provide service to their community, take responsibility for their own learning, and develop the habits of mind and body that will empower them to be successful in high school and beyond.

National:

From School Services of California –

“Trillion Dollar Relief Package”

On the evening of Thursday, January 14, 2021, officials from President Joe Biden’s Administration unveiled the details of their touted \$1.9 trillion rescue package that they are asking Congress to enact within the next several weeks.

Billed the “American Rescue Plan,” the relief package would provide an additional \$170 billion for education, which would be allocated in the following way:

- \$130 billion to support K–12 schools in safely reopening. This proposed funding is flexible and could be used for reducing class sizes, modifying classrooms for social distancing, improving ventilation, providing personal protective equipment, implementing mitigation and cleaning measures, hiring of nurses and counselors, expanding community schools, providing summer school, and closing the digital divide. A portion of this funding would be reserved for a COVID19 Educational Equity Challenge Grant, which would support state and local governments in partnerships with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to respond to educational challenges under COVID-19.
- \$35 billion for the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund. This funding could be used to implement public health protocols, execute distance learning plans, and provide emergency grants to students in need.
- \$5 billion for the Hardest Hit Education Fund. Governors could use this funding to support educational programs and the learning needs of students significantly impacted by COVID-19. Governors would have discretion to use this funding for early childhood education, K–12 schools, or higher education.

The rescue package calls for a \$20 billion investment to mount a national vaccination program whereby the federal government would partner with state and local governments to launch community vaccination centers and deploy mobile vaccination units to rural communities. Additionally, the plan proposes \$50 billion to expand testing capacity and support schools and local governments in implementing regular testing protocols to ensure a safe reopening of schools and businesses.

The relief package also asks Congress to provide \$350 billion in emergency funding for state and local governments to ensure that they can keep front line public workers employed, assist with vaccine distribution, expand testing capacity, help with reopening schools, and maintain other essential services. Republicans opposed providing aid to state and local governments in the \$900 billion relief package that was approved in December and likely will not support this proposed investment in the plan. Another proposal that Republicans are likely to oppose is President Biden asking Congress to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour, which would more than double the current federal rate of \$7.25 per hour.

The “American Rescue Plan” will be the Biden Administration’s first real test of the narrow Democratic control of Congress. While the plan likely won’t face many roadblocks in clearing the House of Representatives, the Senate is a different story as there are more procedural hurdles to overcome in approving legislation. Additionally, Democrats will not be able to afford any defecting votes from their party in the Senate unless they can get a Republican vote in return, and some fiscally conservative Democrats may have reservations about the plan’s price tag and its more progressive proposals such as more than doubling the current federal minimum wage and providing \$1,400 stimulus checks to Americans.

“National Alliance Statement on New Education Secretary Nominee Cardona”

Washington, D.C. - Nina Rees, president and CEO of the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, issued the following statement in response to the nomination of Miguel Cardona as Secretary of Education:

“The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools congratulates Miguel Cardona on his historic nomination for U.S. Secretary of Education, serving under President-elect Joe Biden. As the new Secretary of Education, he will assume office at one of the most turbulent times in recent history.

While our nation continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, both K-12 and postsecondary education systems are grappling with issues such as the safe reopening of schools, looming budget shortfalls, learning loss, crippling student debt and boiling racial tensions. At this time especially, we need a Secretary of Education who will unify the country and model collaborative leadership.

In his most recent role as Connecticut’s Commissioner of Education, Cardona showed a commitment to equity, accountability, and high standards. We are hopeful he will continue to embrace these ideals as Secretary. Further, we call upon him to place students and families first and to be agnostic about PreK12 instructional delivery and governance models, so long as they are effective and meet the needs of all students. The Secretary must be committed to supporting the entire public-school ecosystem – both district and charter.

Parents want more and better options, and they need a Secretary of Education who will fight for them. A record number of parents enrolled their students in charter schools this year; it would be devastating to move us backward by harming their educational options. These innovative public schools particularly appeal to parents who are concerned about whether their children’s needs will be met during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

We look forward to working with Secretary Cardona and his team to ensure the voices of parents are heard, and every student has access to a high-quality public education. Black and Latino parents overwhelmingly support charter schools, and we expect Cardona’s commitment to educational equity will include protecting their ability to access these schools. Charter schools are an important part of the public education ecosystem, serving nearly 3.3 million students. Further, nearly five million more students would attend a charter school if one were available to them. Charter schools offer a combination of flexibility, tailored instruction, social-emotional support, and rigorous coursework that make our overall public education system stronger.”

State:

From School Services of California –

“Legislation Introduced to Require School Re-openings”

On Monday, December 7, 2020, the state Legislature officially convened the 2021–22 Legislative Session. While the Assembly and Senate floor sessions were primarily organizational, lawmakers also used this opportunity to introduce legislation that represents their highest priorities, including several noteworthy education bills.

Perhaps the most notable education measure introduced was Assembly Bill (AB) 10, which specifies that local educational agencies (LEAs) may continue to offer distance learning after March 1, 2021, if a public health order requires their campuses to remain closed. However, the bill would also require LEAs to adopt plans that offer in-person instruction, or a hybrid model of in-person and virtual learning, within two weeks of their county moving off of the most restrictive tier in the state’s reopening framework. This means that, beginning next March, any LEA that is not in the most restrictive purple tier (those that reside in the red, orange, or yellow tiers) would have two weeks to adopt and implement a school reopening plan that offers a form of in-person instruction.

In addition to its focus on school reopening, AB 10 also includes a requirement to address the learning loss of vulnerable students. By March 1, 2021, LEAs would be required to implement a plan for tiered reengagement for all unduplicated pupils that are performing below grade level. The reengagement plan must include offering in-person instruction to the identified students and outreach to the student to identify student needs, such as health and social services.

AB 10 has been introduced as an urgency bill, which means that the measure would go into effect immediately upon signature by Governor Gavin Newsom, should it reach his desk. However, an

urgency bill needs to clear a higher vote threshold (two-thirds) in the Legislature before it can go to the Governor for his consideration.

Having influential coauthors gives the bill a stronger chance of clearing the supermajority threshold, so it is beneficial that the bill was introduced by Assemblymembers Phil Ting (D-San Francisco), chair of the Assembly Budget Committee; Kevin McCarty (D-Sacramento), chair of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Education Finance; Patrick O'Donnell (D-Long Beach), chair of the Assembly Education Committee; and Lorena Gonzalez (D-San Diego), chair of the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Proponents of AB 10 will need to address several implications of this measure as introduced. Currently, the bill infringes upon school district autonomy and local control decision-making by mandating a timeline for in-person instruction to resume. It also leaves LEAs vulnerable to COVID19-related litigation, as it does not offer any liability protections for schools should they experience an outbreak after reopening their doors.

While the issue of reopening schools will be a top priority for the Legislature when it returns on January 4, 2021, the bill introduced last week could look significantly different from the version that makes it out of the legislative process, should it survive. The bill still needs to go through policy and fiscal committees in both houses, and also needs to survive a two-thirds floor vote in both the Assembly and Senate before it can go to Governor Newsom. We will be sure to provide consistent updates and analysis on this measure as it is vetted by lawmakers and education stakeholders via the policy making process.

“Governor Newsom Selects Alex Padilla for U.S. Senate”

On Tuesday, December 22, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom announced that he has selected California Secretary of State Alex Padilla to fill the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Vice President-elect Kamala Harris. Padilla will become the first Latino to represent California in the nation's upper chamber and the first Southern Californian in nearly three decades.

Padilla's appointment to the U.S. Senate is likely to set off a game of musical chairs for gubernatorial appointments and special elections as the selection comes on the heels of President-elect Joe Biden announcing his intention to nominate California Attorney General Xavier Becerra to be the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services. If Becerra's nomination is approved by the U.S. Senate, it gives Governor Newsom two statewide seats to fill: Secretary of State and Attorney General.

There are a number of qualified candidates for Newsom to consider to fill these seats and many of the rumored candidates currently serve in the state Legislature. If the Governor taps a legislator to serve as the next Secretary of State or Attorney General, it will then trigger a special election to fill that vacant seat. Since these are both coveted statewide positions, it would not be surprising to see the Governor choose legislative leadership or a member who chairs a powerful committee, which could have a significant effect on the priorities of the state's lawmaking body.

“Estimated ESSER Allocations”

There’s no catchy title, but the latest round of federal stimulus that was signed into law by the President on December 27, 2020, provides additional funding for schools nationwide. As reported in the December 2020 Fiscal Report article “Congress Reaches Agreement on Stimulus and 2021 Spending Plan,” the federal stimulus includes \$54.3 billion for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund, which was established with the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Funding will once again be allocated to states who are then required to allocate the funds to schools in proportion to their Title I, Part A funding. Similar to the first round, this second round of funding also requires the state to allocate no less than 90% of the overall allocation to local educational agencies (LEAs), though the state does have discretion of the final 10%, which could impact the actual funding received by LEAs.

Although official numbers for the latest round of ESSER funding have not been released, the first round of ESSER funding was \$13.5 billion, with California receiving nearly \$1.65 billion (12.2%). Using the same methodology, California is estimated to receive approximately \$6.64 billion, which equates to four times more funding than the first round.

The allowable uses for the second round of ESSER funding will be the same as the first round with two explicit additions:

- School facility repairs and improvements to enable operation of schools to reduce risk of virus transmission and exposure to environmental health hazards, and to support student health needs
- Inspection, testing, maintenance, repair, replacement, and upgrade projects to improve the indoor air quality in school facilities, including mechanical and non-mechanical heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, filtering, purification and other air cleaning, fans, control systems, and window and door repair and replacement

School Services of California Inc. has prepared a look-up tool (see below) so that LEAs may search for their estimated allocation determined using the methodology above. The tool uses 2020–21 Title I, Part A allocations so not all LEAs will see a four-fold increase, as the first round of funding was based on 2019–20 Title I, Part A allocations. Once official numbers are published, the look-up tool will be replaced with a link to the final allocation schedule.

“School Energy Efficiency Stimulus Program”

In September 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill (AB) 841 (Chapter 372/2020), which created the School Energy Efficiency Stimulus Program (SEES Program)—established to fund critical school improvements, support efforts to reopen schools consistent with COVID-19 guidance, and provide jobs. The SEES Program consists of two grant programs that will be funded by electrical companies with 250,000 customer accounts and gas companies with 400,000 or more customer accounts in the state. Funding for the two grants will be split 75/25 as noted below:

1. The School Reopening Ventilation and Energy Efficiency Verification and Repair Program—75% of the funds will be allocated to this grant program—will award grants to school districts and charter schools to “reopen schools with functional ventilation systems that are tested, adjusted, and, if necessary or cost effective, repaired, upgraded, or replaced to increase efficiency and performance.” Priority will be given to schools in underserved communities.
2. The School Noncompliant Plumbing Fixture and Appliance Program—25% of the funds will be allocated to this grant program—will award grants to state agencies, school districts, and charter schools to “replace noncompliant plumbing fixtures and appliances that fail to meet water efficiency standards and waste potable water and the energy used to convey that water, with water conserving plumbing fixtures and appliances.” Appliances include commercial dishwashers, ice makers, and clothes washers. Once again, priority will be given to facilities in underserved communities.

Per AB 841, the California Energy Commission (CEC) will administer the SEES Program, and grant applications will be available by April 1, 2021. The CEC is required to adopt regulations and guidelines no later than May 1, 2021, and grant applications will be approved upon adoption of the regulations. Funding for the programs will be available for three years, 2021–2023, with any unspent funds from each year being carried over to the following year until the SEES Program ends in 2023.

“Expanded Learning Time Grant Proposal Details Released”

On January 19, 2021, the Department of Finance released the draft language for Governor Gavin Newsom’s proposed Expanded Learning Time and Academic Intervention Grants (Expanded Learning Grants). The grants were included in the 2021–22 Governor’s Budget that was released earlier this month.

Governor Newsom proposes using \$4.6 billion one-time Proposition 98 funds to support academic achievement by expanding instructional time and providing targeted academic intervention, with priority for vulnerable students. Local educational agencies (LEAs) would receive \$1,000 for each of their homeless students that are enrolled this school year. After funding state special schools, remaining dollars would be allocated to LEAs in proportion to their Local Control Funding Formula entitlement, using 2020–21 First Principal Apportionment data for this calculation. Included below is a tool that provides each LEA’s estimated grant amount using 2019–20 Second Principal Apportionment data since data for 2020–21 is not yet available. Grants would be distributed in equal portions in March and July 2021, and funds would be available for expenditure through June 30, 2022.

As proposed, the Expanded Learning Grants may be used for various strategies to accelerate learning and address student needs, such as extended learning time, professional development, programs to address social-emotional learning, and access to school meals. While no application would be required to access the grants, LEAs must complete a new addendum to their 2021–22 Local Control and Accountability Plan that describes how the funds are used. A template would be available through the California Department of Education by March 1, 2021, and LEA governing boards must adopt the addendum by June 1, 2021.

The Newsom Administration has indicated that they have asked the Legislature to expedite consideration of the Expanded Learning Grants so that they are finalized in advance of the normal State Budget process. We will share updates on the proposal as it proceeds through the Legislature.

LAUSD:

The Charter Schools Division has scheduled the following dates for oversight visits:

School	Dates
Bert Corona Charter School	Thursday, April 29, 2021
Bert Corona Charter High School	Thursday, April 22, 2021
Monseñor Oscar Romero Charter School	Thursday, May 6, 2021

All visits will be conducted via Zoom and or Google Meets and if board members are interested in joining, please let us know and we will arrange for you to participate in the discussion and review.

YPICS:

Addition to Executive Administrator Team – Congratulations to Kevin Myers who officially rejoined the Executive Team on January 1st. Bringing recognized experience and skill directly to Bert Corona Charter School and to YPICS Overall. YPICS is now able to have Ruben Duenas focus on one position, Chief Operations Officer. The team is now able to work collectively to support all three schools and individually at their respective sites. We welcome Mr. Myers back to the place he began as a founding teacher at BCCS in September 2004.