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**Election update: Joint Assembly hearing highlights ongoing digital divide concerns and possible solutions**



After four days of vote counting and an election year like no other, the President-elect of the United States is Joseph R. Biden. Current President Donald Trump is expected to continue challenging several aspects of vote counting in courts following the call by the *Associated Press* on Saturday, Nov. 7. As the education community looks toward a new presidency, **questions swirl around who will be the next U.S. Secretary of Education and just how much a**

**Democratic president and Republican Senate can accomplish together.**

Meanwhile, in [California-specific results](#), education-related propositions on the ballot did not fare well. As reported in last week’s update, **Proposition 16, which would have repealed the state’s ban on affirmative action, failed.** As of Tuesday, Nov. 10, **Proposition 18, which would have allowed 17-year-olds who will be 18 at the time of the general election to vote in the state primary and special elections, also failed.** And **Proposition 15, which would expand the tax base by assessing commercial property tax based on market value for businesses that own California property worth more than \$3 million, was trailing with 51.8 percent ‘no’ votes.**

Good news for local educational agencies across the state continued for local bond passage, however. In a marked turn of events from the March 2020 election, **a CSBA analysis of the current state of 56 school bond measures finds that about 80 percent are on track for approval.**

**COVID-19 update: State releases playbook for community-based testing sites; no specific guidance or funding for schools**



The California Department of Public Health on Nov. 4 released the **“Playbook to stand up community-based testing sites,”** which offers a **guide on how organizations, including schools, can partner with the new Valencia Regional Laboratory (VRL) to ramp-up capacity of COVID-19 testing.** The laboratory will have results within 48 hours.

**While the state will pay for processing the tests and purchasing at least some of the tests, that is all they are offering.** Organization responsibilities include assessing testing demand within your community; requesting kits through state vendor; providing physical space for testing; gathering patient data and submitting via web platform; collecting sample at the testing site; transport sample in-person or via courier to VRL within 24-hours of collection; **paying for essential site costs: e.g., courier service, staff, outreach programs, materials etc.** The playbook notes that “you should consider partnering with other local organizations who can meet collection needs including community testing sites, pharmacies, clinics, etc.”

A **Nov. 4 letter** to school leaders from California Health and Human Services Agency Secretary Mark Ghaly stated that **“LEAs will be able to secure tests at a fraction of the market rate, and the state will front costs and seek reimbursement through health plans.”** The letter also said that “LEAs may use the 5.3 billion in additional funds allocated in the Governor’s 2020–21 Budget to pay for testing-related expenses.”

CSBA embraces the call for robust school testing but has **concerns about the current blueprint and the burden it places on school districts without providing the funding, staffing, resources and logistical support to properly implement on-site testing.** CSBA will continue to advocate for more support from the state in these and other critical areas related to the safe and successful reopening of California public schools.

## Register for new CSBA webinar on educational equity during the pandemic



Join CSBA for **“Equitable Support for California Students During the COVID-19 Crisis: Strategies for School Board Members” on Thursday, Nov. 19 at 1 p.m.** This webinar brings together California leaders to share their insights on education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The panelists will draw on their **expertise as practitioners and researchers who focus on school reopening plans, school finance, the digital divide and best practices for English**

**learners.** The webinar will also preview a series of CSBA briefs focusing on strategies to promote learning for all California students during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly students most likely to be impacted by disparities in access. [Register today »](#)

## Fire Management Assistance Grant deadline this Friday



Local educational agencies **impacted by wildfires in the counties that are part of the September 2020 wildfires major disaster declaration (FEMA-4569-DR-CA)** are encouraged to attend Applicants’ Briefings and submit a Request for Public Assistance (RPA). **The briefings are for LEAs that provided an essential social service related to the fires** in Fresno, Los Angeles, Madera, Mendocino, Napa, San Bernardino, San Diego, Shasta, Siskiyou and Sonoma counties. **The RPA deadline is Nov. 13, 2020.** [Learn more »](#)

## AEC spotlight: Hadi Partovi, founder and CEO of code.org



CSBA’s 2020 Annual Education Conference will be presented in a **virtual format — giving attendees access to critical expertise and perspective from the comfort of their home or office.** The conference takes place Dec. 3–4, with virtual preconference activities happening from Nov. 30–Dec. 2. **Registration closes Nov. 24.** [Register here »](#)

The always dynamic and inspiring General Session speakers provide one of the highlights of AEC. CSBA spoke with **General Session speaker Hadi Partovi about the importance of digital literacy** during distance learning, **closing the digital divide** and what progress the leading provider of K-12 computer science curriculum has made in making the subject **more accessible for all students.** [Read the interview »](#)

## State Board approves shorter Smarter Balanced assessments



The State Board of Education in its November meeting **approved a shorter version of the 2020–21 Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**, shortening the exams that students in grades 3-8 and 11 are required to take in math and English language arts by nearly half.

The board also **approved detailed indicators** for the implementation of Assembly Bills **1505** and **1507** that **define “verified data,”** defined as “assessment data from nationally-recognized, valid, peer-reviewed, and reliable sources that are externally produced,” **for renewals of charter schools that fall within the low-performing and middle-performing categories.**

State Board of Education President Linda Darling-Hammond also acknowledged the challenges facing the state’s schools and shared news indicating that, while there is a long way to go, more students are engaged in learning. **as of the end of October, there were about 750,000 students attending in-person classes in 21 mostly rural counties. In 20 counties serving about 1.7 million students, there is a mix of districts offering in-person instruction and distance learning.** Now, only 17 counties, serve about 3.6 million students, report they will remain in full distance learning models until at least through Jan. 1, 2021. [Read the full report »](#)

### California Latino School Boards Association Unity Conference begins Nov. 12



**CLSBA’s Annual Unity Conference will bring together school board members** from across the state for **candid discussions about what education leaders and elected officials are doing to remain resilient and thrive in this challenging environment.** This year’s theme is *Resistance and Resilience: La Lucha Sigue* and features three half days of insights and networking with California’s champions of equity, ethnicity studies and PK-12

education — at no cost. **The Saturday, Nov. 14 panel, "Uplifting Communities through Civic Engagement,"** includes CSBA President Xilonin Cruz-Gonzalez. [Learn more and register »](#)

### Help balance your budget with the California Cash Reserve Program



The **2020–21 state budget relies heavily on deferrals** to continue funding K-12 education at the same level as last year. To help local educational agencies balance budgets, **CSBA offers support through the California School Cash Reserve Program.** The program, provided in partnership with Dale Scott & Company; Piper Sandler; and Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe, creates an additional cash reserve to the general fund, helping guard against

temporary cash flow shortages in a safe, cost-effective way. **Participants issue Tax and Revenue Anticipation Notes (TRANs) through a streamlined, pooled process so that districts don’t have to shoulder the burden alone.** LEAs that would like to be included in the **February pool must apply by Nov. 20, 2020.** [Learn more and apply »](#)

### COVID-19 resources

Stay up to date with the latest news and resources related to COVID-19 on [CSBA's dedicated webpage](#) and with articles frequently posted on the newly redesigned [CSBA blog](#).

[View complete calendar](#)

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