







BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

FEBRUARY 28, 2025

TO: Members of the Board of Education
FROM: Interim Superintendent, Mao Misty Her

	Page
1. SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE - Mao Misty Her	
1.1 Interim Superintendent Calendar Highlights Interim Superintendent Calendar Highlights.docx 	3
2. CHIEF OF STAFF - Ambra O'Connor	
3. BUSINESS & FINANCIAL SERVICES - Patrick Jensen, Chief Financial Officer	
3.1 Credit Card Bill Pay Program Credit Card Bill Pay Program.docx 	4
3.2 General Fund Legal Services by Vendor - Confidential	
3.3 Legal Service by Category Fiscal Year 2025 Legal Service by Category FY25.docx 	5
3.4 Legal Services Liability Worker's Comp Fund - Confidential	
3.5 Other Post Employment Benefits Other Post Employment Benefits.docx 	6 - 13

[Other Post Employment Benefits-BACKUP.pdf](#) 

3.6 School Services of California Weekly Update Report for February 21, 14 - 25

[SSCs Weekly Update Report February 21.docx](#) 

[SSCs Weekly Update Report February 21-BACKUP.pdf](#) 

4. COMMUNICATIONS - Nikki Henry, Chief Officer

5. ENGAGEMENT & EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS - Wendy McCulley, Chief Officer

6. HUMAN RESOURCES - David Chavez, Chief Officer

7. INSTRUCTIONAL DIVISION - Carlos Castillo, Interim Chief Academic Officer

7.1 Current Attendance Data 26 - 27

[Current Attendance Data.docx](#) 

[Current Attendance Data Back-up.docx](#) 

8. OPERATIONAL SERVICES - Paul Idsvoog, Chief Officer

9. TECHNOLOGY SERVICES - Tami Lundberg, Chief Officer

Board Communications Approved by: Interim Superintendent Mao Misty Her



Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Mao Misty Her, Interim Superintendent

Date: February 28, 2025
Phone Number: 457-3884

Regarding: Interim Superintendent Calendar Highlights

The purpose of this communication is to inform the Board of notable calendar items:

- Site visit at Phoenix Elementary to congratulate site for being named a Model Community Day School by the California Department of Education
- Walked four classrooms while at site visit
- Met with Executive Cabinet
- Attended the Dailey Board Meeting
- Participated in the Harvard Leading During Turbulent Times monthly check in meeting
- Attended Urban Education Dialogue meeting


If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Misty Her at 457-3884

Cabinet Approval:



Name and Title: Mao Misty Her, Interim Superintendent

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Kim Kelstrom, Chief Executive 

Date: February 28, 2025

Phone Number: 457-3907

Regarding: Credit Card Bill Pay Program Update

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board an update on the credit card program approved by the Board of Education on April 10, 2013. Fresno Unified School District utilizes Commerce Bank which allows the district to pay vendors electronically and receive rebates.

Since the program began in July 2013, staff have provided an annual board communication updating the Board on how the district continues to work with Commerce Bank enrolling vendors and maximizing rebates. The chart below provides a historical picture of the program, which shows the number of vendors enrolled, the total amount paid, and the total rebates received by calendar year.

Calendar Year	Active Vendors	Accounts Payable	
		Volume (in millions)	Rebates
2013	148	\$7.10	\$97,000
2014	349	\$15.40	\$211,000
2015	512	\$17.30	\$246,000
2016	710	\$19.40	\$301,000
2017	821	\$25.50	\$343,000
2018	832	\$28.90	\$367,000
2019	882	\$26.80	\$350,000
2020	912	\$18.90	\$240,000
2021	941	\$29.60	\$392,000
2022	893	\$37.20	\$426,000
2023	522	\$33.22	\$366,000
2024	561	\$37.19	\$415,000

The total rebates collected since the inception of this program are \$3.8 million.

The district is currently reaching out to vendors to provide them with the opportunity to enroll in the district's credit card payment program. Participation provides electronic payment delivery to enrolled vendors rather than having vendor checks processed and mailed. There has been a change to vendors accepting the option for the credit card program due to increased fees.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Kim Kelstrom at 457-3907.

Cabinet Approval: 
Name and Title: Patrick Jensen, Chief Financial Officer

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Kim Kelstrom, Chief Executive

Date: February 28, 2025
Phone Number: 457-3907

Regarding: Legal Services by Category

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board an update on legal services by category for the 2024/25 fiscal year.

**General Fund Legal Services by Category
July 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024**

Departments

Board of Education	\$12,159
Charter School	27,807
External Partnerships	3,476
Facilities Management & Planning	26,561
Human Resources	280,713
Labor Relations	26,656
Legal Services	152,947
Management-Special Education	61,949
Prevention & Intervention	27,130
Total	\$619,398


**Other Funds Legal Services by Category
July 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024**

Fund	
Liability	\$677,953
Workers' Compensation	232,602
Total	\$910,555

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Kim Kelstrom at 457-3907.

Cabinet Approval: 
Name and Title: Patrick Jensen, Chief Financial Officer

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Kim Kelstrom, Chief Executive 

Date: February 28, 2025

Phone Number: 457-3907

Regarding: Other Post-Employment Benefits

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board an update on the California Employers' Retiree Benefit Trust, also known as Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB).

On September 25, 2013, the Board of Education approved participation in the California Employers' Retiree Benefit Trust (CERBT) administered by CalPERS. Since that time, the district has contributed \$58.0 million, with \$1.75 million contributed in 2024/25 and an additional \$1.75 million planned by June 30, 2025.

CalPERS provided an annual update on January 15, 2025. They shared the annual internal rate of return was 5.09% since the first contribution in February 2014 and had earnings of \$26.2 million. If these same funds had remained with the County Treasurer, the district would have earned \$7.2 million. On June 30, 2024, district resources are approximately \$19.0 million higher due to these deposits being held in the irrevocable trust.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Kim Kelstrom at 457-3907.

Cabinet Approval: 
Name and Title: Patrick Jensen, Chief Financial Officer

CERBT Account Update Summary

Fresno Unified School District

as of December 31, 2024



OPEB Valuation Report Summary

OPEB Actuarial Valuation Report by Foster & Foster Consulting Actuaries, Inc.	
Valuation Date	6/30/2024
Measurement Date	6/30/2024
Total OPEB Liability (TOL)	\$799,817,355
Valuation Assets	\$79,155,106
Net OPEB Liability (NOL)	\$720,662,249
Funded Status	10%
Actuarially Determined Contribution (ADC)	\$75,585,636
CERBT Asset Allocation Strategy	Strategy 2
Discount Rate	5.75%

CERBT Account Summary

As of December 31, 2024	Strategy 2
Initial contribution (02/06/2014)	\$20,252,177
Additional contributions	\$37,750,000
Disbursements	\$0
CERBT expenses	(\$459,373)
Investment earnings	\$26,153,971
Total assets	\$83,696,774
Annualized net rate of return* (02/06/2014-12/31/2024 = 10.90 years)	5.09%

*Net rate of return is unaudited and includes rounding variances.

Cash Flow Summary by Fiscal Year

Fiscal Year	Contributions	Disbursements	Cumulative Investment Gains (Losses)	Cumulative Fees	Cumulative Ending Assets
2006-07	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2007-08	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2008-09	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2009-10	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2010-11	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2011-12	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2012-13	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2013-14	\$21,252,177	\$0	\$1,688,793	(\$10,434)	\$22,930,536
2014-15	\$3,500,000	\$0	\$1,529,463	(\$34,008)	\$26,247,632
2015-16	\$3,500,000	\$0	\$2,384,782	(\$56,354)	\$30,580,605
2016-17	\$3,500,000	\$0	\$4,690,412	(\$83,763)	\$36,358,826
2017-18	\$3,500,000	\$0	\$6,941,380	(\$116,913)	\$42,076,644
2018-19	\$3,500,000	\$0	\$10,113,530	(\$154,056)	\$48,711,652
2019-20	\$3,500,000	\$0	\$12,799,314	(\$197,401)	\$54,854,091
2020-21	\$3,500,000	\$0	\$23,922,982	(\$250,234)	\$69,424,925
2021-22	\$3,500,000	\$0	\$14,937,752	(\$309,521)	\$63,880,407
2022-23	\$3,500,000	\$0	\$17,385,791	(\$365,096)	\$69,772,872
2023-24	\$3,500,000	\$0	\$23,329,777	(\$426,848)	\$79,155,106
as of 12/31/2024	\$1,750,000	\$0	\$26,153,971	(\$459,373)	\$83,696,774

CERBT/CEPPT Investment Returns

Periods ended November 30, 2024

Fund	Assets	1 Month	3 Months	FYTD	1 Year	3 Years	5 Years	10 Years	ITD
CERBT Strategy 1 (Inception June 1, 2007)	\$20,243,751,704	2.80%	2.02%	7.90%	19.16%	2.90%	6.89%	6.50%	5.63%
Benchmark		2.76%	1.90%	7.77%	18.85%	2.67%	6.63%	6.17%	5.25%
CERBT Strategy 2 (Inception October 1, 2011)	\$2,156,511,746	2.43%	1.41%	7.06%	16.21%	1.13%	4.91%	5.22%	6.58%
Benchmark		2.36%	1.28%	6.92%	15.91%	0.97%	4.72%	4.94%	6.32%
CERBT Strategy 3 (Inception January 1, 2012)	\$811,063,838	2.10%	0.97%	6.30%	13.88%	0.22%	3.61%	4.15%	5.01%
Benchmark		2.03%	0.85%	6.16%	13.60%	0.09%	3.46%	3.92%	4.75%
CERBT Total	\$23,211,327,288								
CEPPT Strategy 1 (Inception October 1, 2019)	\$213,451,241	2.32%	1.51%	6.77%	15.58%	1.97%	5.04%	-	5.33%
Benchmark		2.27%	1.40%	6.69%	15.44%	1.78%	4.90%	-	5.21%
CEPPT Strategy 2 (Inception January 1, 2020)	\$67,862,206	1.79%	0.87%	5.54%	11.92%	0.46%	-	-	2.59%
Benchmark		1.72%	0.76%	5.42%	11.78%	0.36%	-	-	2.47%
CEPPT Total	\$281,313,447								

CERBT Portfolios

Portfolios	CERBT Strategy 1	CERBT Strategy 2	CERBT Strategy 3
Expected Return	6.4%	6.1%	5.8%
Standard Deviation	11.5%	9.5%	8.1%

CERBT Portfolio Details

Asset Classification	Benchmark	CERBT Strategy 1	CERBT Strategy 2	CERBT Strategy 3
Global Equity	MSCI All Country World Index IMI (Net)	49% ±5%	34% ±5%	23% ±5%
Fixed Income	Bloomberg Long Liability Index	23% ±5%	41% ±5%	51% ±5%
Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs)	FTSE EPRA/NAREIT Developed Index (Net)	20% ±5%	17% ±5%	14% ±5%
Treasury Inflation Protected Securities (TIPS)	Bloomberg US TIPS Index, Series L	5% ±3%	5% ±3%	9% ±3%
Commodities	S&P GSCI Total Return Index	3% ±3%	3% ±3%	3% ±3%
Cash	91-Day Treasury Bill	- +2%	- +2%	- +2%

Total Participation Cost Fee Rate

- Total all-inclusive cost of participation
 - Combines administrative, custodial, and investment fees
 - Separate trust funds
 - Self-funded, not-for-profit
 - Fee is applied daily to assets under management
 - 8.5 basis points - CERBT
 - 25 basis points - CEPPT

Financial Reporting

- CERBT provides audited and compliant GASB 75 report in a Schedule of Changes in Fiduciary Net Position (FNP)
 - Published in January each year


CERBT FNP Fiscal Year	Availability
2020-21 2021-22 2022-23	Available at https://www.calpers.ca.gov/cerbt

Questions? Where to Get Trust Fund Information?

Name	Title	E-mail	Desk	Mobile
Darren Lathrop	Outreach & Support Manager	Darren.Lathrop@calpers.ca.gov	(916) 795-0751	(916) 291-0391
Lee Lo	Section 115 Trusts & 457 Outreach Manager	Lee.Lo@calpers.ca.gov	(916) 795-4034	(916) 612-4128
Therese Luo	Outreach & Support Analyst	Therese.Luo@calpers.ca.gov	(916) 795-2983	(916) 213-2879
Danny Kaufman	Outreach & Support Analyst	Daniel.Kaufman@calpers.ca.gov	(916) 795-8278	(916) 440-3821
Katie Nguyen	Outreach & Support Analyst	Katie.Nguyen@calpers.ca.gov	(916) 795-8248	(916) 715-1911
Colleen Cain-Herrback	Program Manager	Colleen.Cain-Herrback@calpers.ca.gov	(916) 795-2474	(916) 505-2506
Robert Sharp	Assistant Division Chief	Robert.Sharp@calpers.ca.gov	(916) 795-3878	(916) 397-0756

Program E-mail Addresses	Prefunding Programs Webpages
CEPPT4U@calpers.ca.gov – Questions & Document Submittal	www.calpers.ca.gov/CEPPT
CERBT4U@calpers.ca.gov – Questions & Document Submittal	www.calpers.ca.gov/CERBT
CERBTACCOUNT@calpers.ca.gov – Online Record Keeping System	www.your-fundaccount.com/calpers

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Kim Kelstrom, Chief Executive 

Date: February 28, 2025

Phone Number: 457-3907

Regarding: School Services Weekly Update Reports for February 21, 2025

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board a copy of School Services of California's (SSC) Weekly Updates. Each week SSC provides an update and commentary on different educational fiscal issues. In addition, they include different articles related to education issues. The SSC Weekly Updates for February 21, 2025 are attached and include the following articles:

- State Cash Receipts Below Forecast for January – February 20, 2025
- Colleges, K-12 School Ordered by Trump Administration to Abolish DEI or Face Funding Cuts – February 17, 2025
- How Trump's Drastic K-12 Plans Will – and Won't – Change California Schools – February 14, 2025

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Kim Kelstrom at 457-3907.

Cabinet Approval: 
Name and Title: Patrick Jensen, Chief Financial Officer



1121 L Street

•
Suite 1060

•
Sacramento

•
California 95814

•
TEL: 916 . 446 . 7517

•
FAX: 916 . 446 . 2011

•
www.sscal.com

DATE: February 21, 2025

TO: Misty Her
Interim Superintendent

AT: Fresno Unified School District

FROM: Your SSC Governmental Relations Team

RE: ***SSC's Sacramento Weekly Update***

Bill Introduction Deadline

Today, Friday, February 21, 2025, is the deadline for legislators to introduce bills to be considered for the first year of the 2025-26 Legislative Session. The Capitol community has been sifting through the more than 1,500 measures that have been introduced for 2025.

Policy bills must be in print for 30 calendar days before they can be heard in a committee. With the introduction deadline passing, bills will be assigned to policy committees, and hearings will begin in March. The Assembly Education Committee has set their first hearing for Wednesday, March 12, 2025. The Senate Education Committee has yet to schedule their first hearing for the year.

Over the past several weeks, we have detailed a number of education bills that have been introduced. Over the course of the legislative year, culminating with Governor Gavin Newsom's action deadline of October 12, 2025, we will be using subsequent updates to highlight and provide our analysis on legislative issues that will be important for local educational agencies to follow.

LAO Brief on TK Budget Proposals

On Tuesday, February 18, 2025, the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), the Legislature's nonpartisan policy and fiscal advisor, released a [brief](#) providing an overview and analysis of the Governor's proposals for transitional kindergarten (TK).

Governor Newsom is proposing an increase of \$1.1 billion to implement the final year of TK expansion. This would provide additional funding through the Local Control Funding Formula for the anticipated increase in TK students and the higher add-on costs associated with maintaining a 1:12 adult-to-student ratio. The Governor also proposes to increase funding by \$746 million for school districts and charter schools to meet 1:10 staffing ratios in TK classrooms, which is the ratio requirement beginning in 2025-26.

The LAO argues that the Governor’s proposed add-on funding to meet the 1:10 staffing ratios is likely higher than the costs of the requirement. The LAO produced an analysis of the two main ways districts and charter schools can adapt to the new ratio requirements:

	Option 1	Option 2
Staffing Assumptions		
Class Size	24	20
Number of Adults	3	2
Cost Estimates		
Total add-on amount per average daily attendance	\$5,550	\$4,614
Incremental costs moving to 1:10 ratio	\$550 million	\$335 million
Savings relative to Governor’s proposal	\$196 million	\$410 million

The LAO recommends that the Legislature adopt one of the two options as either one would free up Proposition 98 dollars for other priorities.

LAO Brief on ELO-P

The LAO also posted a brief on the Governor’s proposal for the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELO-P) on Thursday, February 20, 2025. The Governor’s ELO-P proposal would increase funding by \$435 million and expand eligibility for the Tier 1 rate to school districts and charter schools with a 55% or more unduplicated pupil percentage.

The LAO notes the cost reasonableness of the Governor’s proposal but recommends delaying changes to the program requirements and associated funding until at least 2026-27 to provide school districts and charter schools time to make the necessary staffing and facilities changes to accommodate expansion. In addition, the LAO suggests addressing some key challenges of ELO-P programs before expansion. These include aligning ELO-P and After School Education and Safety funding, both of which serve similar purposes, and funding ELO-P based on actual program participation, which the LAO contends would more effectively distribute funding based on need and family interest.

The LAO also suggests setting a fixed Tier 2 rate to provide stability and reduce uncertainty around program decisions for school districts and charter schools funded at the Tier 2 rate each year.

Senate HELP Committee Advances McMahon’s Nomination

On Thursday, February 20, 2025, the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee voted 12-11 along partisan lines to advance Linda McMahon’s nomination to lead the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to the Senate floor.

McMahon is expected to be confirmed by the Senate as no Republicans have made any public objections to her nomination. The GOP currently holds 53 seats in the 100-seat chamber, meaning she can afford to lose three Republican votes and still clear the nomination hurdle with Vice President JD Vance casting the tie-breaking vote.

During her confirmation hearing last week, McMahon agreed with President Donald Trump that the ED should be shut down but also pledged that the Trump Administration is not looking to cut funding from schools appropriated by Congress. She believes that the department’s critical functions should be moved to

other federal agencies. She also acknowledged that the Administration would need congressional approval to dismantle the department.

The Senate is expected to vote on her nomination in the coming days.

Leilani Aguinaldo

State Cash Receipts Below Forecast for January

By Teddi Wentworth
 School Services of California Inc.’s *Fiscal Report*
 February 20, 2025

State General Fund cash receipts for the month of January 2025 were 1.5% below the most recent updated Governor’s Budget forecast. However, fiscal year-to-date, cash receipts are 2.0% above forecast as shown in the table below.

The bulk of the month’s shortfall was due largely to lower-than-forecasted personal income tax estimated payments that were down by \$825 million (9.0%) for January. This is due in part to the tax deadline delay as noted in the California Department of Finance’s (DOF) February 2025 Finance Bulletin and the exact impact will not be known until October. As the Governor’s Budget forecast was updated at the end of November 2024, it did not incorporate the impacts of the delayed tax deadlines for taxpayers in Los Angeles County.

Both corporation and sales and use tax revenues were down slightly on a year-to-date basis by 1.0% and 0.5%, respectively.

2024-25 Comparison of Actual and Forecast Agency General Fund Revenues Year-to-Date through January 2025 (Dollars in Millions)

Revenue Source	Forecast	Actual	Difference	Percent Difference
Personal Income	\$70,700	\$72,780	\$2,080	2.9%
Corporation	\$17,775	\$17,589	-\$186	-1.0%
Sales and Use	\$18,714	\$18,618	-\$96	-0.5%
Total*	\$112,080	\$114,314	\$2,234	2.0%

*Includes other agency cash receipts

Regarding labor market conditions, the DOF noted that California’s unemployment rate rose by 0.1% in December 2024 to 5.5%. The annual unemployment rate for 2024 was 5.3%, up from 4.3% in 2023 and 4.7% in 2022. The U.S. unemployment rate decreased by 0.1% in January to 4.0%.

In California, construction is an important economic driver and leading economic indicator. Building activity continues to slow down with the number of building permits down 10.6% from 2023. Permits for 2024 consisted of 61,000 single-family homes and 39,000 multi-family units for a total of 100,000 compared to a total of 112,000 in 2023.

With the Governor’s Budget proposal just a month old, we will be monitoring and reporting on cash receipts and economic trends as we head towards the Governor’s May Revision.

Note: The ED has given colleges and schools with race-specific programs until the end of the month to abolish them or risk losing federal funding as educators scrambled over the holiday weekend to interpret the sweeping scope of new guidelines.

Colleges, K-12 Schools Ordered by Trump Administration to Abolish DEI or Face Funding Cuts

By Jaweed Kaleem
Los Angeles Times
February 17, 2025

- The U.S. Department of Education has told schools and colleges to eliminate DEI programs or risk losing federal funding.
- The decision covers race-related programs including financial aid, culturally themed dorm floors and graduation ceremonies.
- Educators are scrambling to interpret the scope of the policy.

The U.S. Department of Education has given colleges and schools with race-specific programs — including financial aid and racially themed dormitory floors and graduation ceremonies — until the end of the month to abolish them or risk losing federal funding as educators scrambled over the holiday weekend to interpret the sweeping scope of new guidelines.

The [“dear colleague” letter](#) from the department’s civil rights division and addressed to K-12 and higher education leaders lays out a new federal anti-discrimination enforcement policy that extends beyond the use of race in admissions, a practice barred since 2023 by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The guidelines, signed by acting assistant secretary for civil rights Craig Trainor, said schools using “race in decisions pertaining to admissions, hiring, promotion, compensation, financial aid, scholarships, prizes, administrative support, discipline, housing, graduation ceremonies, and all other aspects of student, academic, and campus life” were in violation of anti-discrimination laws and legal precedent set in the high court’s affirmative action case.

“The department will no longer tolerate the overt and covert racial discrimination that has become widespread in this nation’s educational institutions,” the letter said. It later adds that federal education authorities will “vigorously enforce the law on equal terms as to all preschool, elementary, secondary, and postsecondary educational institutions, as well as state educational agencies, that receive financial assistance.”

The letter singles out “white and Asian students, many of whom come from disadvantaged backgrounds and low-income families,” as victims of discrimination. It did not mention other types of school programming that appeal to nonracial groups, such as women-only residence halls, dorm room floors or programs for LGBTQ+ students or religious communities.

A spokesman for the department did not reply Sunday to a request for comment.

California received about \$16.3 billion in total federal funding last year for its 5.8 million K-12 public school students, according to Education Data Initiative, which compiles information from government sources. The figures include education-related spending outside of the education department, such as school meal programs and Head Start for preschoolers. The letter did not say if the decision applies to funding that comes from beyond the department.

At the college level, more than \$1.5 billion is allocated each year from the department to California students through Pell Grants, which do not have to be repaid and are given to students with low family incomes. In addition, more than \$1 billion more is distributed throughout the country through other programs supporting low-income students.

The letter did not specify what type of federal funds for schools and colleges are at risk.

Education and legal experts said Sunday the department's guidance targets not only practices in which scholars agree that the use of race is illegal — admissions and hiring — but also those that are commonplace and often not controversial. They include scholarships aiding under-represented racial minorities, culturally themed dorm room floors and optional graduation ceremonies for Black, Latino, Native American and other college and high school groups.

Shaun Harper, a USC professor of education, public policy and business, said the message — a sharp turn from educational civil rights enforcement under President Biden — is “guaranteed to have a chilling effect.”

He also questioned whether the Department of Education's letter, which cites the affirmative action case for a “framework” that “applies more broadly” beyond admissions, is legally sound.

“The Supreme Court did not outlaw race-conscious campus programs and resources. Instead it ruled that race can't be used as a factor in determining admission,” Harper said. “Hence, the dear colleague letter is interpretive overreach.”

California's Proposition 209, approved in 1996, barred all public educational institutions in the state from considering race in admissions. Private institutions, such as USC and Stanford, were also banned from the practice after the recent Supreme Court affirmative action ruling.

But other race-related campus programs have been widely in place for years at K-12 schools, colleges and universities.

At UCLA, the Black Bruin Resource Center launched in 2020 to “uplift, support, and inspire the UCLA Black and African Diaspora Community.” The campus also has a LatinX graduation — formerly Raza graduation — that started in 1973. At Cal State L.A., there's the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Student Achievement Program. Since 1972, USC has held its Latine Graduate Celebration. Websites for each say they are open to all students.

The department's notice called such graduation ceremonies “shameful.”

In a statement, the University of California indicated Sunday that it was not concerned about running afoul of the department.

The letter “provides guidance on the department's interpretation of existing anti-discrimination laws and does not name any specific institution,” the statement said. “It indicates how OCR [Office of Civil Rights]

intends to enforce these legal requirements. Given the UC's compliance with Proposition 209, we do not use race-based preferences in our practices.”

In a statement released Monday in response to the letter, the California State University Office of the Chancellor, which oversees the 23-campus system, called the department's action “unprecedented.”

“We are consulting with the California Attorney General and higher education partners across the country to better understand the statewide impact of this letter,” the statement said.

Spokespeople at USC and Stanford could not be reached for comment.

Morgan Polikoff, a USC education professor, said he viewed the Trump administration's move as a “pretext to go after universities.” The letter, he said, went “far beyond” the Harvard affirmative action case ruling. “But if it gets universities to change policies out of fear, they can accomplish a lot even if the argument of the dear colleague letter doesn't hold water.”

Edward Blum, founder of Students for Fair Admissions — the organization that won its affirmative action lawsuit against Harvard two years ago in the Supreme Court ruling — said the department's message was an opening salvo in potential legal fights.

“This letter is likely a prelude to a forthcoming series of detailed directives that will identify discriminatory policies and programs that will be challenged in federal court by the Education Department,” Blum said. “Public and private educational institutions that have adopted policies that they consider race-neutral may soon have those policies declared as illegal race proxies.”

K-12 schools and higher education institutions have been on alert since President Trump's inauguration over a host of issues affecting education, including executive orders on immigration enforcement and the role of transgender students in sports.

The president nominated former Small Business Administration administrator and wrestling executive Linda McMahon to be his education secretary and directed McMahon — whom the Senate has not confirmed — to “put herself out of a job.”

Trump said he wants to eliminate the department. McMahon, during her confirmation hearing last week, said she and Trump “will be working with Congress” to carry out that mission by “presenting a plan that I think our senators could get on board with and our Congress to get on board with.”

If the department is dismantled, some of its functions may be transferred to other federal departments, including civil rights enforcement moving under the Justice Department.

During her hearing, McMahon largely avoided giving specific answers about diversity, equity and inclusion while being questioned by Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn.).

“We are getting back to more segregating of our schools, instead of having more inclusion in our schools,” McMahon said. “When there are DEI programs that say that Black students need separate graduation ceremonies, or Hispanics need separate ceremonies, we are not achieving what we wanted to achieve with inclusion.”

Murphy mentioned that a West Point U.S. Military Academy Black engineers organization disbanded after a Trump executive order eliminated DEI in the federal government. He asked McMahon if public schools would risk funding over similar DEI programs structured around ethnic or racial affiliations.

“I certainly today don’t want to address, you know, hypothetical situations. I would like, once I’m confirmed, to get in and assess these programs, look at what has been covered,” McMahon said.

The Department of Education released its DEI letter the next day.

Note: The Trump Administration has launched a slew of reforms intended to reshape K-12 schools, but it is still too soon to determine how those efforts will play out in California.

How Trump’s Drastic K-12 Plans Will — and Won’t — Change California Schools

By Carolyn Jones
CalMatters
February 14, 2025

From private school vouchers to threats over “woke” curriculum, the Trump administration has launched a slew of reforms intended to reshape K-12 schools. But it’s still too soon to determine how — or if — those efforts will play out in California, experts say.

“There’s been a strategy of rapid-fire change, and Trump is very publicly testing his authority,” said Julie Marsh, executive faculty director at Policy Analysis for California Education. “That’s led to a lot of anxiety and uncertainty. But the state still makes most decisions about what happens in schools.”

In a barrage of executive orders and promises since he was inaugurated, President Donald Trump has said he wants to:

- Dismantle the U.S. Department of Education, transferring its duties to other departments
- Legalize school vouchers for parents to send their children to private and religious schools
- Withhold funding from schools that use curriculum focused on race or ethnicity, or offer protections for transgender students
- Overhaul Title IX, which prohibits against discrimination based on gender.

Conservatives are celebrating Trump’s efforts to reshape education. Joseph Komrosky, a member of the Temecula Valley Unified school board who was recalled in June and re-elected in November, said Trump’s orders, particularly those related to “woke” curriculum, will “protect innocent students and empower parents.”

“The hyper-sensitivity to LGBT issues, race, social justice — those days are over,” Komrosky said. “We need a return to common sense and a focus on the basics of reading, writing and math.”

Last year, Temecula’s school board was among a handful statewide to adopt a policy requiring school staff to notify parents if a student identifies as transgender. The policy was later struck down by the courts.

“This feels like vindication from the top down,” Komrosky said. “I don’t know how it’s going to play out in California, but I’m optimistic.”

Some of Trump’s plans have already come to pass, such as eliminating a ban on immigration raids at so-called sensitive locations, including schools. Although there have been few reports of federal agents entering schools, the possibility has led to panic in many parts of California, with parents keeping their children home from school for fear of getting deported. In some areas, superintendents say attendance has declined significantly, a blow to school funding and student learning.

Immigration and symbolism

In Ventura County, the threat of deportation has been a top concern about the Trump presidency, said County Superintendent Cesar Morales. Schools throughout the county have seen drops in attendance over the past few weeks, and school districts are taking steps to reassure families. They’ve held community meetings and set up resource websites, and Morales has done interviews in Spanish on local radio stations.

But the other threats may also have equally serious consequences, particularly for the most vulnerable students, Morales said. With the proposed elimination of the Department of Education, Morales worries about disruptions to special education and Title I funding for low-income students. Special education would likely move to another federal agency, but Project 2025, the conservative policy roadmap, calls for phasing out Title I.

Typically, districts use their Title I money to hire tutors, classroom aides and counselors; train teachers; and provide other services to students who need extra help. Morales fears that Title I cuts will lead to layoffs, at a time when schools are already grappling with budget uncertainty due to the end of COVID-19 relief grants.

But perhaps the biggest impact of Trump’s actions is symbolic, Morales said.

“When you have the most powerful country in the world dismantling its Department of Education, it means the interest is not there,” he said. “At a time when we need a renaissance in public education to meet the rapidly changing needs of society, we need to fortify public education, not tear it down.”

Budget may be a bigger concern

Andy Rotherham, a senior partner at Bellwether, an educational consulting organization, noted that most of Trump’s proposals have not happened, and may never happen. States make most decisions about schools, and receive relatively little federal funding — about 8% of their overall education budgets, even though much of that money goes to high-poverty districts.

A more urgent concern, he said, is whether — and how — the Republican-controlled Congress will reach a budget agreement before the mid-March deadline. A budget deal could include cuts to education, reflecting Trump’s desire to slash federal spending. That could affect everything from student loans to funding for rural schools. This week, Trump cut nearly \$900 million in contracts at the U.S. Department of Education, affecting research and program evaluation.

Curriculum changes are a little more nuanced, Rotherham said. Activists from both sides have long lobbied for curriculum changes, especially in history and social studies. In California's ethnic studies curriculum, for example, some want lessons that include the plight of Palestinians, while others want that topic excluded because they say it could be construed as antisemitic. Other fights center on how teachers cover subjects like colonialism, segregation, slavery and capitalism.

Rotherham suspects those fights will continue in California and elsewhere. Also, he said, how much those arguments affect what happens in classrooms varies, because teachers have a lot of leeway in what they teach.

Regardless, it's too early to predict the impacts from Trump's proposals, he said.

"Although there's a lot of chaos, many of the big-picture ideas are still outstanding," Rotherham said.

'Hatred feels normalized'

That's not much comfort for students. Some said they're already experiencing the aftershocks of Trump's attacks on immigrants and transgender youth, even if the policies haven't taken effect yet. They also worry about their futures, especially in light of Trump's pushback against environmental policies.

Kayla Houston, a senior at Luther Burbank High School in Sacramento, said that since Trump was elected in November, she's seen an uptick in racist and homophobic bullying at her school. She's even seen swastika graffiti on the walls, she said.

"It affects how people feel at school," she said. "Students need to feel safe.... Now hatred feels normalized."

Damian Martinez, a sophomore at Fowler High School in Fowler, south of Fresno, said he has friends who are afraid to leave their homes, even to go to the store, for fear of being deported. The threat of immigration raids has overwhelmed the entire community, a quiet farming town known for its grapes and citrus.

Beyond deportations, Martinez worries about the local economy. He wonders who will pick the crops if immigrants are afraid to show up for work, and whether the upheaval in the agricultural industry will drag down the local economy.

"This isn't just stuff on the news. It's affecting the people around me," Martinez said. "It makes me sad because it feels like we're going in the wrong direction."

Another Trump proposal is expanding school vouchers and school choice. School vouchers, which already exist in 28 states, provide tax credits or other incentives for parents to send their children to private schools.

Vouchers, which teachers unions strongly oppose, have never been popular in California. In 2000, a ballot initiative that would have legalized vouchers lost by 70%. But school choice — families' right to send children to schools other than their locally assigned school, including charter or magnet schools — has been legal for decades. In fact, California has more charter schools than any other state, and one of the highest enrollment percentages.

Confusion and resistance

California officials are fighting back against many of Trump’s proposals. Attorney General Rob Bonta has vowed to sue the federal government if it interferes with the state’s protections for transgender and immigrant students, and issued guidelines for schools on how to handle potential immigration raids and attacks on LGBTQ students.

The Association of California School Administrators pledged its “unwavering support” for transgender students and recently urged its members to uphold state laws protecting them. The California School Boards Association recently hosted a webinar on how schools should handle immigration threats, and it was among its most well-attended ever.

But plenty of school board members in California support Trump’s moves to overhaul K-12 education. School boards in Chino Valley, Temecula, Roseville and a dozen other districts have voted in the past year or two to require school staff to “out” transgender students to their parents. The policies were struck down by courts, but advocates vowed to continue to fight.

“We have communities that will be enraged at what’s happening, and some that will be enthusiastic, and everything in between,” said Troy Flint, spokesperson for the school boards association. “It’s a difficult time for school boards because traditionally the federal government has stayed out of local school decisions. It adds a layer of complexity, and there’s some confusion about that.”

Marsh, at Policy Analysis for California Education, echoed the sentiment about confusion. Some of Trump’s policy ideas are contradictory — for example, his belief that the federal government should have a reduced role in education, while he also wants to dictate curriculum.

“Right now, we don’t know how this will work out,” Marsh said. “Still, it’s a lot to deal with.”

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education

Date: February 28, 2025

Prepared by: Rita Baharian, Prevention and Intervention Executive Phone Number: 559-457-3340

Regarding: Current Attendance Data

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board with an update regarding district attendance data as of February 19, 2025.

During the Student Attendance Outcomes Board Presentation on December 18, 2024, we reported that our ADA was 0.4% higher than the previous school year and that our chronic absenteeism rates had decreased by 2.7%. We also reported on the cross-departmental and site-based efforts to which we believe we can attribute this increase.

When students returned from Winter Break, we continued to show improvement in our ADA; however, since January 20, 2025, we have seen a notable decrease. We have seen, on average, a decrease in our ADA between 0.5% and 1.1%, with one exception: the week of February 3, 2025, which averaged a decrease of 4.3%.

You will find two tables that show a comparison in ADA by grade level and the total for the district from last year to this year. The data indicates that we are showing a decrease in ADA by 1% in comparison to the same time last school year.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication or require additional information, please contact Rita Baharian at 457-3940.

Cabinet Approval: 
Carlos Castillo (Feb 27, 2025 15:27 PST)

Name and Title: Carlos Castillo, Ed.D., Interim Chief Academic Officer

2024-2025 Year to Date		
Average Attendance Rate from August 19, 2024 through February 19, 2025		
Grades TK-12		
Grade Level	Students	Average Attendance Rate
TK	2,270	87.7%
K	4,811	89.3%
1	4,987	90.9%
2	5,131	91.6%
3	5,202	91.9%
4	5,153	92.0%
5	5,360	92.1%
6	5,405	92.1%
7	5,236	91.2%
8	5,331	90.3%
9	4,982	90.8%
10	4,536	90.0%
11	4,376	89.9%
12	4,241	88.9%
Total	67,021	90.8%
Prepared by AMA		
Rates based on students enrolled on February 19, 2025 (109th day of School Year)		

2023- 2024 Year to Date		
Average Attendance Rate from August 14, 2023 through February 15, 2024		
Grades TK-12		
Grade Level	Students	Average Attendance Rate
TK	2,004	89.5%
K	4,897	90.0%
1	5,082	91.6%
2	5,182	92.3%
3	5,219	92.4%
4	5,375	92.7%
5	5,432	92.8%
6	5,384	93.0%
7	5,388	92.0%
8	5,303	91.4%
9	4,751	91.4%
10	4,801	91.6%
11	4,370	91.2%
12	4,611	90.8%
Total	67,799	91.8%
Prepared by AMA		
Rates based on students enrolled on February 15, 2024 (109th day of School Year)		