BOARD COMMUNICATIONS - DECEMBER 19, 2025

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

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Tami Lundberg, Chief Officer

Board Communications Approved by:
Mao Misty Her, Superintendent

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, Superintendent

Date: December 19, 2025

Phone Number: (559) 457-3884

Regarding: Superintendent Calendar Highlights

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

- Team taught 1st grade at Mayfair Elementary School
- Attended Farber Winter Wonderland event
- Met with Executive Cabinet
- Met with Mayor Dyer
- Attended the Central Valley Community Foundation Board meeting
- Met with Dr. Crystal Hill, Superintendent of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, to discuss Student Outcomes Focused Governance work

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Misty Her at (559) 457-3884.

Cabinet Approval:

Name and Title: Mao Misty Her, Superintendent

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Ambra O'Connor, Chief of Staff

Date: December 19, 2025

Phone Number: (559) 457-3838

Regarding: Winter Break Office Closures

The purpose of this communication is to notify the Board of planned office closures during Winter Break.

The Office of the Board of Education, the Office of the Superintendent, and the Constituent Services Office will be closed to the public for **Winer Break** from **Monday, December 22, 2025**, through **Friday, January 02, 2026**. The offices will reopen on **Monday, January 05, 2026**.

Although these offices will be closed to the public, some employees may be working on various days during this period.

We hope you have a wonderful holiday season filled with joy!

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Ambra O'Connor at (559) 457-3838.

Cabinet Approval:

Name and Title: Ambra O'Connor, Chief of Staff

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent — Date: December 19, 2025
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Ashlee Chiarito, Ed.D., Executive Officer — Phone Number: (559) 457-3934

Regarding: December Legislative Committee Meeting

The purpose of this communication is to provide the Board with information shared at the December 11, 2025, Legislative Committee Meeting.

At the regular meeting of the Legislative Committee of the Fresno Unified School District the following were present: Board of Education Members, Veva Islas and Andy Levine; District Staff: Adela Duncan, Chief Information Officer, Patrick Jensen, Chief Financial Officer; Kim Kelstrom, Chief Executive, Fiscal Services; Jonie Difilippo, Assistant Superintendent, Human Resources; Ashlee Chiarito, Executive Officer, State and Federal, and Teresa Plascencia, Executive Director, Constituent Services. In attendance online was Director, Governmental Relations, Leilani Aguinaldo.

Budget and Economic Update

Ms. Aguinaldo provided a budget update.

The November 2025 Finance Bulletin reports rising inflation at both the national and state levels, driven largely by higher prices for tariff-impacted goods, while gasoline and shelter costs continue to be moderate. A federal government shutdown created significant gaps in economic data, but California's General Fund revenues still exceeded expectations, propelled primarily by stronger-than-forecast personal income tax receipts. Department of Finance (DOF) cash data shows that the October General Fund revenues exceeded Budget Act projections by $2.2 billion (12.7%). Year-to-date, General Fund agency cash receipts are $8.6 billion above forecast, including $2.7 billion attributable to late-arriving receipts from the prior fiscal year.

The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) Fiscal Outlook cautions that recent revenue growth may be inflated by a temporary AI-driven surge and warns of rising deficits, including an estimated $18 billion gap in 2026-27 and a growing structural deficit in later years. Revenues are $11 billion higher than the enacted budget; $7 billion of these new revenues must go toward Proposition 98 (TK-12 schools and community colleges) obligations.

A resolution was signed to end the 43-day shutdown, the longest government shutdown in U.S. History. The Ag-FDA bill ensures fully funding school meals and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The bill also reverses recent federal layoffs, allowing critical operations such as special education grant administration and Impact Aid allocations to resume.

The U.S. Department of Education announced six new interagency agreements that shift major TK–12, postsecondary, and specialized education programs to the Departments of Labor, Interior, Health and Human Services, and State as part of an effort to dismantle the federal education bureaucracy. These changes affect core programs such as Title I, Title II, Title III, Title IV, rural education programs, Impact Aid, homeless education, and several competitive grants.

The legality of these shifts remains uncertain, as altering statutory agency responsibilities typically requires congressional approval and could prompt litigation. State leaders warn that transferring oversight to unfamiliar agencies may disrupt services and create new administrative challenges for LEAs, tribal-serving schools, and community colleges during the transition.

The 2025 California School Dashboard was released earlier than in previous years. Beginning in 2026, The dashboard will be available no later than October 15.

The School Services Legislative Committee December 2025 report is attached. The next Legislative Committee meeting is scheduled for January 15, 2026.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Ashlee Chiarito, telephone (559) 457-3934 or Kim Kelstrom, telephone (559) 457-3907.

Cabinet Approval: 

Name and Title: Patrick Jensen, Chief Financial Officer

Fresno Unified School District

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
DECEMBER 11, 2025

2025-2026 Legislative Session

Prepared By:

Leilani Aguinaldo
Director, Governmental Relations

School Services of California, Inc.
Legislative and Economic Update Prepared for:
Fresno Unified School District
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Legislative and Economic Update

October Revenues Continue Upward Trend

By: Wendi McCaskill, EdD November 19, 2025

The Department of Finance (DOF) released its November 2025 Finance Bulletin yesterday, offering a mixed portrait of the U.S. and California economies amid a federal government shutdown that temporarily halted several major federal data releases. Despite gaps in national Gross domestic product (GDP), labor market, and housing permits data for September and October, the Bulletin highlights notable developments in inflation and California's General Fund cash receipts as the state approaches the Governor's January State Budget proposal.

U.S. headline consumer price index (CPI) inflation rose from 2.9% in August to 3.0% in September, marking the fifth consecutive month of accelerating inflation after reaching a low of 2.3% in April. According to the DOF, the recent uptick was largely driven by higher prices for tariff-sensitive goods, including new vehicles, household furnishings, recreation, and education and communication.

Core inflation, which excludes food and energy, slowed slightly, edging down a 0.1 percentage point to 3.0%, led by deceleration in shelter costs. Gasoline prices continued their long downward trend with the 16th consecutive year-over-year decline, though the pace of decrease moderated substantially; gasoline inflation has accelerated by more than 11 percentage points since May, from –12.0% to –0.5%.

California CPI data shows headline inflation increasing from 3.0% in June to 3.3% in August, the highest level since mid-2024. Per the DOF and like national trends, California's inflation acceleration was concentrated in goods most affected by tariffs. Gasoline prices in the state also remain negative year-over-year but have narrowed significantly, moving from –9.5% in April to –1.4% in August. Shelter inflation in California moderated slightly to 3.4% in August, down from 3.9% the previous December.

The federal government shutdown, which began on October 1 and concluded on November 12, halted operations for several statistical agencies. As a result, no updated federal GDP, labor market, or housing permits data is available for September or October. This temporary gap limits visibility into broader national trends heading into the final quarter of the year.

Preliminary DOF agency cash data shows that October General Fund revenues exceeded Budget Act projections by $2.2 billion (12.7%), continuing the strong fiscal performance seen since spring 2025. Year-to-date, General Fund agency cash receipts are $8.6 billion above forecast, including $2.7 billion attributable to late-arriving receipts from the prior fiscal year.

Personal income tax (PIT) receipts were the principal driver of the October surge, coming in $2.1 billion above forecast (16.9%). These results reflect a larger-than-anticipated surge in payments from Los Angeles County taxpayers following the October 15 extended filing deadline, which shifted an estimated $1.5-$2 billion of receipts into October beyond the amounts assumed in the Budget Act. Corporation tax receipts fell $75 million short of expectations, and sales and use tax receipts were $26 million below projections for October.

As displayed in the table below, year-to-date PIT is 14.7% above projected levels. Corporation taxes and sales and use tax receipts are both below forecasted year to date. Cumulatively, through October, the state's primary revenue sources continue to run above expectations. With a substantial share of this year's revenue gains tied to timing shifts and taxpayer extensions, the Administration and Legislature will continue evaluating how much reflects ongoing increases in tax liability versus one-time or temporary shifts.

2025-26 Fiscal Year-to-Date "Big Three" Tax Revenues
(In millions)

	Forecast	Actual	Difference
Personal Income Tax	$39,209	$44,977	$5,768
Corporation Tax	$6,960	$6,699	-$261
Sales and Use Tax	$10,054	$9,958	-$96
Total	$56,223	$61,634	$5,411

Source: California Department of Finance

With federal data delayed and inflation trending upward, the November Finance Bulletin highlights both progress and uncertainty in the state's economic outlook. The Legislative Analyst's Office is expected to issue its Fiscal Outlook this week, offering its own assessment of California's fiscal trajectory ahead of budget negotiations.

LAO Projects $18 Billion State Deficit

By: Megan Baier and Patti F. Herrera, EdD November 19, 2025

On Wednesday November 18, 2025, the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) released its annual *Fiscal Outlook* report in anticipation of the upcoming budget year. In the report, the LAO evaluates the state's fiscal condition and makes recommendations for legislators to consider as they build the 2026-27 State Budget.

While state tax receipts have outpaced the Enacted Budget's projections, the LAO warns that much of the growth, which is concentrated in personal income taxes, may be attributed to an artificial intelligence (AI) bubble. Corporate and sales tax collections have been much weaker and likely reflect the actual economic condition of the state. To reflect the risk of a potential AI bubble, the LAO forecast includes lower income tax collection estimates than current cash trends would otherwise suggest.

The Enacted State Budget did anticipate future deficits, expecting a $13.0 billion problem in 2026-27 that would continue to grow in the outyears. In the Fiscal Outlook, the LAO estimates the state's deficit in 2026-27 to be larger, approximately $18.0 billion.

Over the budget window, revenues are up $11.0 billion when compared to the Enacted Budget. Much of the growth, approximately $7.0 billion, will go to TK-12 schools and community colleges as required by Proposition 98. Below we will go into more depth on the Proposition 98 outlook. Much of the remainder of the increased revenues will be dedicated to make constitutionally required reserve deposits and debt payments.

At the same time, the state's costs are projected to increase by nearly $6.0 billion due to a variety of factors including increasing costs in retiree health care, pension payments, and the impacts of federal legislation on Medi-Cal and CalFresh, among others.

Under the LAO's estimates, California's structural deficit will grow to $35.0 billion annually beginning in 2027-28. The LAO warns that the state has exhausted many of its budget resiliency tools, such as borrowings, tapping reserves, and utilizing one-time revenues to limit programmatic cuts. Ultimately, the LAO recommends addressing the structural deficit now to strengthen the state's fiscal condition should the economy weaken.

Proposition 98 Outlook

As noted earlier, a significant share of the state's unanticipated General Fund revenues is obligated for TK-12 and community college agencies under Proposition 98. The LAO projects that the state must dedicate $7.0 billion of the $11.0 billion—63.6%—to address its $1.9 billion settle-up requirement built into the 2025-26 Enacted Budget adopted in June, a higher maintenance factor payment, and calculated increases to the minimum guarantee across the budget window.

Specifically, the LAO's *Fiscal Outlook* anticipates upward revisions to the minimum guarantee of $2.2 billion in 2024-25 and $3.8 billion in 2025-26 (see Figure 1). The 2026-27 minimum

guarantee is projected at $117.8 billion—$3.2 billion above the 2025-26 Enacted Budget level, but $500 million lower than the revised 2025-26 amount. In other words, the LAO projects a year-over-year decline in the Proposition 98 minimum guarantee from 2025-26 to 2026-27.

The modest increase to the funding levels in the prior and current year, combined with year-over-year decline in the Proposition 98 minimum guarantee in the budget year, leaves little margin for the state to fund any new or enhanced ongoing education priorities in 2026-27. According to the LAO, the state could afford to fully fund its estimated 2.51% statutory cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and little else.

Figure 1. 2024-25 and 2025-26 Minimum Guarantee Revisions (Dollars in billions)

	2024-25		2025-26	
	Enacted Budget	LAO Outlook	Enacted Budget	LAO Outlook
General Fund	$87.6	$89.5	$80.7	$84.3
Local property tax	32.3	32.6	33.8	34.0
Total	**$119.9**	**$122.1**	**$114.5**	**$118.3**

Under its revised assumptions, the LAO expects the required maintenance factor payment for 2024-25 to increase from $5.5 billion to more than $6.6 billion. Higher revenues, particularly from stock market gains, also increase the required deposit into the Proposition 98 reserve. In June, the state made a $455 million deposit for 2024-25, only to withdraw it fully in 2025-26. Now, the LAO projects a $1.4 billion deposit and a smaller mandatory $270 million withdrawal, leaving a $1.1 billion reserve balance at the end of the current year, which the *Fiscal Outlook* assumes would be subject to a mandatory withdrawal, once again depleting the reserve in 2026-27.

While year-over-year total education funding decreases in 2026-27, the upward revisions to the minimum guarantee in 2024-25 and 2025-26 provide nearly $7.4 billion in one-time revenue for the state to allocate to TK-12 and community college agencies as part of the impending 2026-27 budget (see "Considerations and Recommendations" below).

With respect to the rest of the forecast for education, consistent with its overall economic outlook for California, the LAO assumes that the current revenue boost in Proposition 98 is temporary, fading in 2026-27. The LAO projects "average growth" for the remainder of the forecast period (see Figure 2), which it recognizes is difficult to predict and is subject to considerable risk.

Figure 2. LAO Outlook for TK-12 and Community Colleges (Dollars in billions)

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30
General Fund	$84.3	$82.1	$85.8	$90.2	$97.7
Local property tax	34.0	35.7	37.8	40.0	42.3
Totals	**$118.3**	**$117.8**	**$123.6**	**$130.2**	**$140.0**
COLA	2.3%	2.5%	3.7%	4.0%	4.2%
TK-12 ADA Change	0.9%	-1.0%	-0.7%	-1.0%	-1.1%

[1]ADA: Average Daily Attendance

Considerations and Recommendations

Given the state's recent reliance on one-time resources to cover ongoing costs within Proposition 98 and a modest revenue forecast, the LAO's *Fiscal Outlook* paints a picture of lean times ahead. Through 2028-29, Proposition 98 growth would provide sufficient funding to pay for the cost of existing programs, including annual COLAs, with a little left in each year for new or enhanced education investments.

Within this context, the LAO recommends a number of budget approaches that would strengthen Proposition 98 budget resiliency. Specifically, the LAO recommends that the state:

- Use $2.3 billion of available funding to eliminate the June 2026 deferrals, which would reduce outyear pressure on the education budget
- Provide a $1.9 billion advance payment in June 2026 that would be attributable to the 2027-28 fiscal year, putting the state on a schedule to provide the same amount a month early each year, creating cushion in the event of an economic downturn
- Accelerate the restoration of the final payment of the Learning Recovery Emergency Block Grant by investing $757 million, reducing pressure on the 2026-27 minimum guarantee

In January, Governor Gavin Newsom will propose the final State Budget of his tenure and we will see how he approaches managing the state's budgetary challenges. We will provide an in-depth review and analysis of the Governor's Budget proposal and its impacts on local educational agencies at our 2026-27 Governor's Budget Workshop. For more information and to register for the event, click here.

Longest Government Shutdown in U.S. History Ends

By: Kyle Hyland November 13, 2025

Last night, President Donald Trump signed a continuing resolution (CR) that reopens the federal government and restores operations across all agencies. The stopgap measure effectively puts an end to the 43-day shutdown, the longest government shutdown in U.S. history.

Scope of Funding

The CR provides full-year funding for three of the 12 annual appropriations bills for fiscal year (FY) 2026:

- Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration (Ag-FDA)
- Military Construction and Veterans Affairs
- Legislative Branch

These departments and agencies will be funded through September 30, 2026—the end of FY 2026. The remaining nine appropriations measures—including the Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS) bill—are temporarily funded through January 30, 2026, giving Congress additional time to negotiate full-year appropriations. As a result, key education programs will continue operating at FY 2025 levels until a broader agreement is reached.

School Meals and SNAP Fully Funded

Fully funding the Ag-FDA spending bill ensures full FY 2026 funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). This covers two of the nation's most significant nutrition programs: the Child Nutrition Programs, which include the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and Summer Food Service Program, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

Full-year funding for FNS guarantees continued support for school meal programs that serve children nationwide. These programs, while considered "appropriated entitlements," rely on annual funding from the Ag-FDA measure to reimburse schools for every meal served. With the full-year appropriation secured, local educational agencies (LEAs) can reasonably presume stable reimbursement rates and uninterrupted meal service through the end of FY 2026.

Reductions in Force Reversed

Amid the government shutdown, the federal Education Department (ED) laid off hundreds of employees, including 121 employees in its Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, leaving the Office of Special Education Programs, which administers special education funding and oversight, with just a handful of staff. The bill signed by President Trump contains a

provision reversing these and thousands of other early October layoffs across numerous agencies, and preventing further federal layoffs. Recipients of Impact Aid and Head Start grants will be eager for ED employees to return to work and resume funding allocations that were disrupted during the shutdown.

ACA Subsidies Not Extended

The CR does not include an extension of the enhanced Affordable Care Act (ACA) premium tax credits, which had been temporarily increased under prior pandemic-era legislation. Without further congressional action, these enhanced subsidies are still set to expire at the end of the current plan year, likely increasing marketplace premiums for millions of Americans in 2026.

Looking Ahead

While the stopgap measure ends the prolonged shutdown and allows the government to resume full operations, the debate over remaining FY 2026 appropriations is far from settled. Congress must now finalize funding for the nine remaining bills, including the LHHS bill, by January 30, 2026, to avoid another government shutdown.

For state and LEA leaders, the end of the shutdown means resumed coordination with federal partners and more certainty for programs that support students and families. Still, long-term clarity will depend on Congress's ability to reach full-year funding agreements in the months ahead. Stay tuned.

ED Announces Partnership of Six Education Programs with Other Agencies

By: Kyle Hyland and Michelle McKay Underwood November 19, 2025

On November 18, 2025, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) announced six new interagency agreements with four federal agencies—the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and the U.S. Department of State (State). They are part of an initiative to "break up the federal education bureaucracy" and "return education to the states."

The program partnerships announced are as follows:

- The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) to the DOL
- The Office of Postsecondary Education's institution-based grants to the DOL
- Indian education programs to the DOI
- On-campus child care support for parents (CCAMPIS) enrolled in college to the HHS
- Foreign medical accreditation to the HHS
- International education and foreign language studies programs to the State

This announcement did not include movement for the management of special education, civil rights enforcement, or student financial aid; based on past statements by the Trump Administration, these divisions are likely to affected as part of the overall plan to eliminate the ED.

The OESE programs affected include the following:

- Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (LEAs)
- Title I, Part B: Improving Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged—State Assessment Grants
- Title I, Part C: Education of Migratory Children
- Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk
- Title II, Part A: Supporting Effective Instruction State Grants
- Title III, Part A: English Language Acquisition State Grants

- Title IV, Part A: Student Support and Academic Enrichment
- Title IV, Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers
- Title V: Small, Rural School Achievement and Rural and Low-Income School Programs
- Impact Aid
- Education for Homeless Children and Youths

Numerous competitive grant programs are also included in the partnership, including literacy grants, professional development, charter schools, and community schools.

The big question is whether these moves are legal, and for now, the answer to that seems to be a bit murky. While agencies can establish interagency agreements where one agency manages programs on behalf of another, altering the statutory duties of an agency would need congressional approval. The fact sheet outlining the partnership between the ED and DOL for elementary and secondary education describes the arrangement as "co-administering"; it is unknown at this time whether this agreement will lead to the alteration of statutory duties, but if it is interpreted that way, it will likely lead to litigation.

In a press release, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond condemned the ED's announcement, stating, "Experience also tells us that any time you move expertise and responsibilities, you disrupt services. There is no way to avoid negative impacts on our children and our classrooms with a change of this magnitude."

Shifting TK-12 oversight functions to the DOL could create new administrative and compliance hurdles for LEAs accustomed to ED processes, potentially slowing grant administration and reporting. The transfer of Indian education programs to the DOI may also require new coordination structures for tribal-serving LEAs. For community colleges, moving the CCAMPIS program to the HHS could alter funding priorities for on-campus child care, affecting access for parenting students across the state. Together, these changes may introduce transitional challenges for California's largest education systems as the Trump Administration looks to realign federal education responsibilities.

2025 California School Dashboard Released

By: Wendi McCaskill, EdD and Leilani Aguinaldo November 14, 2025

The 2025 California School Dashboard (Dashboard) and several corresponding DataQuest data files were released yesterday, November 13, 2025. The Dashboard includes the most current statewide information for local educational agencies, which in this case, is for the 2024-25 school year. Per statute, this year's Dashboard release occurred slightly ahead of last year's release date. Beginning with the 2026 Dashboard and 2025-26 academic year data, future Dashboards will be available no later than October 15.

The 2025 Dashboard provides an update on academic performance, chronic absenteeism, college and career readiness, English learner progress, and graduation and suspension rates for 2024-25, as well as year-over-year progress in these areas. The DataQuest reports include data on four-year graduation rates, five-year graduation rates, suspension rates, expulsion rates, chronic absenteeism rates, absenteeism by reason, stability rates, and homeless student enrollment. State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond highlighted improvements in graduation rates for specific student groups, college and career readiness, and the slight improvement in chronic absenteeism rates in yesterday's press release on the 2025 Dashboard. Statewide, graduation rates reached 87.5%, the highest level since 2017, and college and career readiness increased by 3.1% to 51.7%.

The pandemic heavily impacted student attendance and chronic absenteeism rates. The Dashboard reflects an improvement in the chronic absenteeism rate for all students in grades K-8 by 1.5% to 17.1% for 2025. Although an improvement over the 30% chronic absenteeism rate in 2022, it remains significantly higher than the pre-pandemic rate of 10.1%. Chronic absenteeism rates vary considerably by student group. The chronic absenteeism rate of each student group improved over the prior year, except for foster youth. The foster youth chronic absentee rate held steady at 30.6%. Although chronic absenteeism rates on the Dashboard are based on students in grades K-8, chronic absenteeism data is collected annually for students in grades K-12. Chronic absenteeism rates for all students in K-12 also improved, decreasing from 20.4% in the 2023-24 school year to 19.4% in the 2024-25 school year.

We will provide more information on the absentee reporting process through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System and the average daily attendance reporting process through the Principal Apportionment Data Collection at our upcoming Attendance Reporting: ADA and Chronic Absenteeism Roundtable on December 4, 2025. Please join us to learn more and engage in a discussion about these essential data reporting and collection activities and their outcomes.

2025 Differentiated Assistance Files Released

By: Leilani Aguinaldo and Brianna García November 20, 2025

A few days ahead of schedule, the California Department of Education (CDE) unveiled the 2025 California School Dashboard (Dashboard) on November 13, 2025 (See "2025 California School Dashboard Released" in the November 2025 *Fiscal Report*). Along with the Dashboard, the CDE also released the 2025 data files listing local educational agencies (LEAs) eligible for differentiated assistance.

Under the Local Control Funding Formula, LEAs are identified for differentiated assistance due to performance on the state and/or local indicators on the Dashboard or failing to submit California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) data on time. Based on the former, LEAs are eligible for additional support if a student group has a red state indicator and/or "Not Met for Two or More Years" on a local indicator in at least two priority areas on the Dashboard.

Based on the results included in the 2025 Dashboard, 418 school districts and county offices of education (COEs), or 42.1%, are eligible for differentiated assistance based on student group performance. This is a decrease from 2024, when 436 districts and COEs, or 43.7%, were eligible. The top three student groups that meet the criteria are students with disabilities, long-term English learner students, and students experiencing homelessness. In addition, 11 school districts and COEs are eligible for differentiated assistance because they did not certify CALPADS data by the final certification deadline.

Charter schools are also eligible for differentiated assistance based on the results on the Dashboard, with the main distinction that charter schools must meet the criteria for at least two years. Based on 2025 and 2024 Dashboard performance data, 135 charter schools, or 11%, are eligible for differentiated assistance in 2025. This represents a decrease from the 173 charter schools, or 13.6%, identified in 2024. Across the 2024 and 2025 Dashboards, the top three student groups meeting the criteria for charter schools are students with disabilities, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, and Hispanic students.

An LEA receiving differentiated assistance is required to include information about the work happening on behalf of the identified student group(s) in its Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). Specifically, the LEA must summarize its efforts in the Plan Summary section of the LCAP. Also included in the same section of the LCAP is a prompt that asks LEAs to detail the work being done for schools designated as needing Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI). CSI is a requirement of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act, and the Dashboard data is also used to identify CSI schools. CSI schools are identified in a three-year cycle, but exits are determined annually. The 2025-26 list of CSI schools should be released by the CDE shortly.

The details of differentiated assistance and the requirements of the LCAP can be dizzying, especially given the frequent updates over the last several years. To learn more about the LCAP

and the state's accountability system, consider registering for our "LCAP—From Accountability to Compliance" webinar scheduled for December 9, 2025.

By the Way . . . AG Releases Updated Immigration Guidance for Schools

By: Megan Baier December 3, 2025

Yesterday, December 2, 2025, the Attorney General (AG) Rob Bonta released updated guidance and model policies to guide TK-12 schools as they encounter immigration enforcement related issues on school campuses. The updated guidance incorporates legislation that was signed by Governor Gavin Newsom this fall, Assembly Bill (AB) 49 (Muratsuchi, D-Torrance), AB 419 (Connolly, D-San Rafael), and AB 495 (C. Rodriguez, D-San Fernando), which collectively make changes to how school personnel manage visits from federal immigration officers, prohibit sharing student and family information with immigration officers, and require schools to provide the AG's "Know Your Educational Rights" guidance to parents and guardians, in addition to posting it in all school buildings.

Local educational agencies are required to update their existing policies on how to respond to immigration enforcement on school campuses to reflect the new provisions of law by March 1, 2026.

Limón Takes over as Senate Leader

By: Kyle Hyland November 21, 2025

This past Monday, November 17, 2025, Senator Monique Limón (D-Santa Barbara) officially took the oath to become the new President pro Tempore of the California Senate. Limón, who currently represents the 19th Senate District, will have roughly three years remaining in her term before she terms out at the end of 2028.

Limón succeeds Senator Mark McGuire (D-Healdsburg), who held the post for nearly two years. Since McGuire is terming out at the end of 2026, he stepped aside for Limón to assume the role of President pro Tempore as a part of a planned leadership transition (see "Senator Monique Limón Elected Next President Pro Tempore" in the June 2025 *Fiscal Report*). McGuire now has his eyes set on Congress as he announced he is challenging Republican incumbent Doug LaMalfa in the state's 1st congressional district, which was recently redrawn due to the passage of Proposition 50 (see "Voters Overwhelmingly Approve Proposition 50" in the November 2025 *Fiscal Report*).

The President pro Tempore is the highest-ranking officer and chief leadership position of the California State Senate. The President pro Tempore chairs the Senate Rules Committee, which is the committee responsible for appointing committee chairs and membership as well as running the administrative functions of the state's upper chamber.

This change in leadership is significant for the Legislature and for policy areas such as education. A new Senate leader typically brings a reorganization of the chamber's internal structure, including new committee chair and membership assignments. When McGuire took over, he reshuffled much of the Senate leadership team, and a similar process is expected under Limón. That means key education-related committees—such as the Senate Education Committee and the Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 1 on Education—may see new leadership and membership, potentially altering legislative priorities and the flow of legislation.

Limón's background and policy record suggest potential areas of emphasis that could influence future education and workforce legislation. She has previously served committees focused on health, natural resources, and fiscal issues, and has championed measures related to educational equity, access, and community well-being. Her tenure as the Senate leader could bring increased attention to initiatives that connect education with broader equity, environmental, and health policy goals.

The Legislature will return for the second year of the 2025-26 Legislative Session on Monday, January 5, 2026, which should tell us more about Senate President pro Tempore Limón's policy priorities for the upper chamber.

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: December 19, 2025

Phone Number: (559) 457-3907

Regarding: School Services Weekly Update Reports for December 12, 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 December 12, 2025, are attached and include the following articles:

- A Pixelated Economy – December 05, 2025
- Hunger Is Squeezing California Students – and it Could Get Worse – December 10, 2025
- Rural California Gets a Lifeline in School Funding as Congress Restores Money it Cut – December 10, 2025

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Kim Kelstrom at (559) 457-3907.

Cabinet Approval: 

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DATE: December 12, 2025

TO: Misty Her
Superintendent

AT: Fresno Unified School District

FROM: Your SSC Governmental Relations Team

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

PPIC Releases Report on the LCFF

On Wednesday, December 10, 2025, the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) released a report analyzing the potential modifications to the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and the fiscal and equity trade-offs associated with these changes. The authors note that although overall school funding has nearly doubled since the LCFF's adoption in 2013 and targeted funds have improved outcomes for high-need students, persistent challenges remain including achievement gaps, chronic absenteeism, and the rising operational costs facing many districts.

A central finding of the report is that statewide declining enrollment may generate up to $7.5 billion in additional per-pupil funding by 2030, or roughly $1,500 per student, even without new revenue. The PPIC suggests that this creates an opportunity to revise components of the LCFF without reducing any district's current funding level—though any change would still produce relative "winners and losers" compared to simply increasing funding through the existing formula.

The PPIC's model (which excludes charter schools and county offices of education) simulates several alternative allocations to illustrate the fiscal implications and distributional trade-offs:

- **Shifting to enrollment-based funding**. This would cost roughly $3.8 billion to implement and modestly increase resources for districts with high absenteeism. Most districts would see changes of less than 2%.

- **Implementing a regional cost adjustment**. To reflect local labor-market differences, this model would shift funding away from rural and high-need districts and toward urban and suburban districts. While higher-cost regions would benefit, rural districts—already managing fixed operational expenses—would experience significant reductions compared to an equivalent increase under current LCFF rules.

- **Providing additional weighting for students with overlapping needs (e.g., English learners who are also low income).** This model would direct more resources to most high-need districts. This adjustment would increase statewide funding allocations by approximately 2%, recognizing that dual-need students face compounded challenges.

- **Updating the measure of low-income status**. This model would replace free or reduced-price meals eligibility with direct certification and would improve the accuracy of identifying economically disadvantaged students. Districts with higher direct-certification rates would see greater increases, though effects would vary depending on local participation in safety-net programs.

- **Smoothing the concentration grant.** This model would replace the sharp 55% threshold with a gradual phase-in, which would increase funding for districts with moderate levels of need, while slightly reducing relative gains for the highest-need districts. This option would cost an estimated $1.5 billion.

The report emphasizes that no single adjustment is categorically preferable; each reflects different goals and policy priorities. Some approaches enhance equity for high-need students, while others address rising costs or improve the accuracy of need identification. The PPIC concludes that, with declining enrollment and potential increases in per-pupil funding, policymakers have a meaningful opportunity to strengthen the LCFF—but must carefully balance trade-offs to ensure any revisions support adequacy, equity, simplicity, efficiency, and flexibility in California's school finance system.

Leilani Aguinaldo

A Pixelated Economy

By Patti F. Herrera, EdD, and Wendi McCaskill, EdD
School Services of California Inc.'s *Fiscal Report*
December 5, 2025

On December 3, 2025, UCLA Anderson School of Management economists released their final forecast of the year amid persistent uncertainty heightened by the lack of reliable economic data due to the longest federal government shutdown in U.S. history.

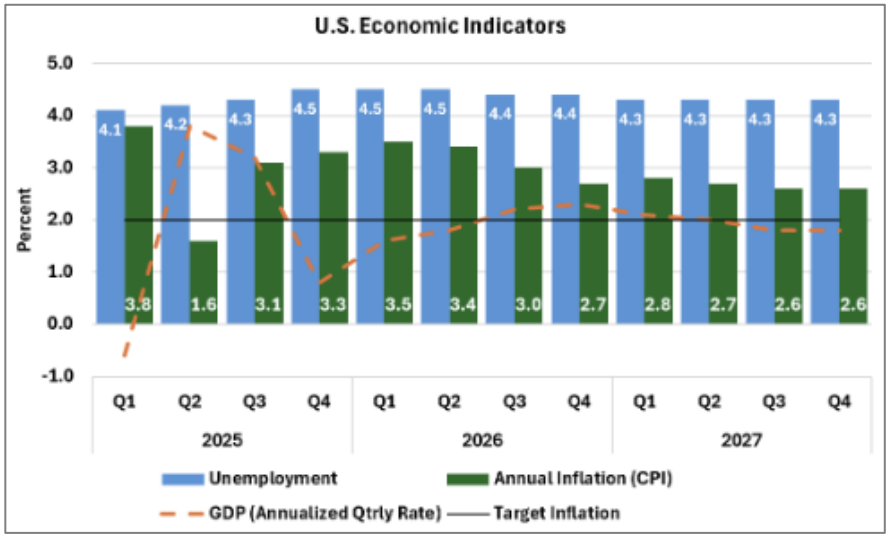
A National Forecast in the Crosswinds

Relative to the national forecast, UCLA economists continued to emphasize the arguably unprecedented level of uncertainty spawned by fluctuating trade relations and challenges to the Federal Reserve's (Fed) independence, whose mission is to maintain economic stability through apolitical monetary policy intended to control consumer prices and the labor market. The impact of tariffs and the resilience of Fed independence are the biggest risks to the economy.

Forecasters broadly characterize the national climate as one caught in the crosswinds of an economy bustling from an infusion of investments to build needed artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure while being sobered by an increasing lack of consumer and business confidence stemming from the impacts of the Trump Administration's new tariff regime.

The Winter 2025 forecast is relatively consistent with UCLA's Fall forecast, with a modest downward adjustment to 2025 fourth quarter gross domestic product (GDP) due to the 43-day federal government shutdown (Figure 1). This temporary reduction in national productivity rebounds by the first quarter of 2026, picking up through the year as a result of investments in AI and fiscal stimulus included in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. They predict that economic activity owed to AI will be tempered in 2027 by broader constraints related to energy and transmission capacity, and rapid depreciation of processing chips necessary to run and maintain AI functionality.

Figure 1. U.S. GDP, Consumer Price Index (CPI), and Unemployment



Source: UCLA Anderson Forecast, Winter 2025

The relatively robust GDP trends of 2025—particularly in the second quarter of the year—mask general weakness in the overall economy, warns UCLA. The visible strength is nearly solely attributable to AI capital expenditures and an uptick in spending among affluent consumers. Smaller businesses, non-AI industry sectors, and the vast majority of American consumers are struggling with rising prices.

And while inflation is expected to remain elevated above the Fed's 2.0% target rate—peaking at 3.5% in early 2026 and settling at nearly a percentage point lower by the end of the forecast period—the Fed appears to be weighing troubling labor market trends more than price trends as national employment reaches an important inflection point where there are more job seekers than there are jobs vacancies. Consequently, UCLA economists expect the Fed to continue its monetary easing policies as a way to keep the economy stimulated.

Turning to California, economist Jerry Nickelsburg presented a cautious evaluation of the state's labor conditions. As of August 2025, California's unemployment rate stood at 5.5%, 19 consecutive months above 5%, and was 1.2 percentage points higher than the U.S. rate. Nickelsburg noted that only 0.3 percentage points of this gap are "normal," with the rest due to job losses in entertainment, technology, durable manufacturing, and courier services.

Although healthcare, education, government, and agriculture added jobs, these sectors are not expected to sustain long-term growth. Forecasters identify headwinds from reforms to Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, as well as heightened immigration enforcement, which will weigh heavily on healthcare, agriculture, construction, retail, nondurable manufacturing, and hospitality. Deportations are progressing more slowly than expected, but are already nudging up unemployment in immigrant-dependent industries.

For California to return to its long-run pattern of outpacing national growth, Nickelsburg and his colleagues argue that both manufacturing and technology employment will need to strengthen meaningfully. The forecast is guardedly optimistic about a rebound in durable manufacturing later in 2026 and 2027, driven by national industrial policy and increased demand for aerospace, satellites, and defense-related equipment, areas where California has an outsized footprint. In tech, job losses in information and professional services appear to be stabilizing.

Nickelsburg also pointed out that investment in AI, data centers, chips, and AI-related services is flowing disproportionately into California, and a growing ecosystem of firms is emerging to "clean up AI slop" and integrate AI into business operations. At the same time, the forecast cautions that tariff uncertainty, immigration restrictions (including potential changes to H-1B visas), and the risk that AI investment is partly bubble driven could dampen the employment impact. The forecast projects modest gains and a gradual decline in the statewide unemployment rate from an average of around 5.5% to the mid 4% range by 2027.

Housing remains one of California's most entrenched challenges. Existing single-family home sales remain at "depression-level" volumes, while median home prices continue to rise. Construction activity is stagnant: building permits have been flat through August 2025, and construction employment continues to decline due to high interest rates, material costs, and deportation-related labor shortages. Although the forecast anticipates increased growth in homebuilding by 2027, this growth begins from a historically low base. It is projected to be insufficient to meaningfully improve housing affordability or ease the state's housing shortage within the forecast horizon.

Note: Three in ten Californians, and half of lower-income residents, say they or someone in their household has reduced meals or cut back on food to save money, according to a survey conducted in October by the PPIC.

Hunger Is Squeezing California Students — and it Could Get Worse

By Emma Gallegos
EdSource
December 10, 2025

This has been an especially challenging year for Rosalba Ortega's family.

It's been a cold, soggy winter in Bakersfield, and Ortega said her two granddaughters, ages 4 and 7, don't have warm coats for their walk to school. Rent and food prices have been climbing, and as a farmworker, she's struggled to find work in the fields. Last month's delays to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) — known in California as CalFresh — hit her grandkids at a time when her family is already struggling to put food on the table.

"There's not much food for them," said Ortega, in Spanish. "We have to look for low prices to buy for them. Sometimes the shelters give us food and that helps us a lot."

Ortega said her family never had to rely on shelters and churches for food in the past, but this year has been different.

She isn't alone. Disruptions to SNAP amid the government shutdown last month came at a time when California families say they are increasingly struggling to meet basic needs, including putting food on the table.

Three in 10 Californians — and half of lower-income residents — say they or someone in their household has reduced meals or cut back on food to save money, according to a survey conducted in October by the nonpartisan Public Policy Institute of California.

Experts say that hunger and economic distress can affect students' academic performance and determine whether they decide to attend — or finish — college.

"What's happening out of school can have a huge impact on their ability to learn while they're in school," said Natalie Wheatfall-Lum, director of TK-12 policy for EdTrust-West, a nonprofit that advocates for justice in education.

Research shows children struggle to pay attention at school when SNAP benefits run out mid-month, and families turn to ultra-processed foods, according to Martin Caraher, a food policy expert at City University London who has worked with the World Health Organization.

"You see it in behavior and performance at school," Caraher said.

Federal cuts reduce food aid

President Donald Trump's budget and tax bill, passed by Congress in July, made cuts to SNAP and Medicaid, called Medi-Cal in California. California's low-income students and their families will likely see federally funded food support and health care shrink or vanish under the law.

This is coming at the same time that the Trump administration says it wants to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education to "break up the federal education bureaucracy and return education to the states," a move that conservatives have long advocated since the creation of the Cabinet-level department in 1979.

Wheatfall-Lum said that the federal government has been making cuts and laying off staff at programs aimed at those who are already hardest hit by hunger and economic distress, such as migrant students, multilingual students, homeless students, and students of color.

In its upcoming budget cycle, California should address the needs of families — both in and outside of education, she said.

"What the state can do is make sure not to back away from programming in place to support these same students," Wheatfall-Lum said.

EdTrust-West is advocating for the state to continue its commitment to a school funding formula that offers extra support to schools to help low-income and vulnerable students. Continuing to fund the community schools model is especially important, she said, because it is more responsive to families' needs.

Families with young children hit hard

The number of struggling California parents with young children is especially alarming, researchers say. Nearly 3 in 4 families in California with children under age 6 report struggling with one or more basic needs, such as utilities, housing, food, health care and child care, according to the RAPID California Voices survey conducted in July.

The project, conducted by Stanford University, has been surveying parents and caregivers with young children since November 2022. During that time, more than half of families surveyed said they struggled with basic needs, but over the last year, struggles with health care, food and utilities reached 73% — one of the highest levels since the survey began.

"It's pretty stark data," said Philip Fisher, director of the Stanford Center on Early Childhood. "Our research shows consistently that economic hardship translates subsequently into parent stress and distress, which then gets passed along to child distress. So if you want to know how kids are doing, these are not great trends."

Fisher noted that supports rolled out during the pandemic, such as the expanded Child Tax Credit, increased SNAP and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) benefits, and stimulus checks, resulted in fewer parents of young children experiencing material hardship and emotional distress. As those benefits expired, that trend reversed, he said.

Researchers at Stanford asked caregivers to explain the biggest current challenges for their family in their own words. They shared those anonymized answers with EdSource.

"We're working hard, but it's not enough anymore," wrote one caregiver in San Joaquin County. "We need our leaders to understand that even full-time workers can't afford rent, health care, and food in this state. Wages haven't kept up."

One caregiver in San Bernardino County said they are worried about how the cuts from Trump's budget will affect their Medi-Cal and CalFresh benefits.

"They might get cut because the [Big Beautiful Bill] passed," the caregiver wrote.

College students struggle with basic needs

College students are also struggling — and unlike K-12 students who receive breakfast and lunch at school, they don't have guaranteed meals.

Typically, students come into Long Beach State's Basic Needs center because of a specific crisis, such as losing their job, said the center's director, Danielle Muñoz-Channel. But now, students tend to come in just because they're getting squeezed all around by rent, utilities and food prices.

"They can't pinpoint any one factor," she said. "We ask what changed, and they say, 'Nothing, I just can't afford it anymore.'"

Muñoz-Channel said she's monitoring whether federal cuts to CalFresh and Medi-Cal benefits, such as tightened work requirements, could affect students and the future workforce. She said students need to have their basic needs met so that they can focus on school — otherwise they risk not graduating on time or not finishing their degree at all.

"I'm worried about how it will affect our most needy students who use college to break generational cycles of poverty," she said.

Note: The Secure Rural Schools Act would bring $471 million for schools, roads, fire prevention, public safety, and other critical needs, including $40 million for 30 counties in California.

Rural California Gets a Lifeline in School Funding as Congress Restores Money it Cut

By Carolyn Jones
CalMatters
December 10, 2025

Rural schools and communities are poised to receive millions in funding after Congress resurrected a program left for dead a few months ago.

The Secure Rural Schools Act, which Congress passed overwhelmingly this week, is headed to President Donald Trump for final approval. It would bring $471 million for schools, roads, fire prevention, public safety and other critical needs. In California, 39 counties would share more than $40 million.

"It's absolutely amazing," said Jaime Green, superintendent of Trinity Alps Unified in Trinity County, which is set to receive almost $4 million from the bill. "A lot of people worked very hard to make this happen. I've never been more proud of our country than I am right now."

Secure Rural Schools was created a century ago to reimburse communities that have large tracts of untaxable federal land. The program had been funded almost continuously until this year, when it apparently fell victim to the so-called Department of Government Efficiency's push to eliminate programs it deemed wasteful.

But relentless bipartisan badgering by rural politicians and school officials apparently worked. Green, for example, visited Washington D.C. more than a dozen times to push for the bill. Rep. Doug LaMalfa, a Republican who represents much of northeastern California, hounded Speaker Mike Johnson for months until he placed it on the House calendar for a vote. A bipartisan group of more than 80 senators and representatives sent a letter to Johnson last week asking for the bill to be fast-tracked.

Public pressure, spurred in part by CalMatters coverage, also made a difference, Green and others said.

Razor-thin budgets

The money is especially important to rural communities because overall funding is so low to begin with. Rural school districts often operate on razor-thin budgets, with very little extra money to make up for swings in revenue. Trinity County, where 70% of the land is owned by the federal government, was anticipating layoffs, program cuts, deferral of costly repairs and other money-saving measures to make up for the loss of Secure Rural Schools funds.

Counties received their last Secure Rural Schools payment in March. The current bill will reimburse counties for the past nine months and cover the next two years, as well. The first checks will arrive 45 days after Trump signs the bill.

"When the program lapsed, rural schools and counties were cut short of the funding they rely on to provide basic services," LaMalfa said. "This bill restores that funding and keeps future payments on schedule."

He added that a long-term solution would be for the government to help rural communities re-establish their timber economy, so programs like Secure Rural Schools aren't necessary.

Another long-term solution would be to extend Secure Rural Schools from a 3-year bill to a 5- or 10-year bill, said Allan Carver, superintendent of Siskiyou County, which will receive more than $4 million through the bill.

That would allow schools to make more permanent funding decisions — such as hiring classroom aides — and not have to continually lobby for the bill's passage. A longer-term bill, spanning at least one presidential term, would also avoid some political skirmishes in Washington D.C., he said.

"We're all celebrating today. This was truly an all-hands-on-deck effort," Carver said. "But we'd love to see a permanent solution to this, so we're not right back out there advocating a year from now."

Other cuts on the horizon

James Gore, a Sonoma County supervisor and former president of the National Association of Counties, agreed that Secure Rural Schools should be exempt from the shifting political winds in Washington. Not only does it have strong bipartisan support, but the money is absolutely necessary for rural schools, he said.

"This is an unequivocal lifeline for kids in rural communities," he said. "We'll take the win, but it's a shame that something so important was used as a negotiating tool."

The fight is far from over, he added. Rural communities, which are disproportionately low-income compared to their urban and suburban counterparts, are facing federal cuts in Medicaid, food assistance, education and other programs which will have a far greater impact on residents' day-to-day lives, he said.

"We all know that reform is needed," Gore said, citing social services cuts in the Republican spending bill also called the One Big Beautiful Bill. "There's going to be so many more fights in the next few years. Secure Rural Schools is only the first of 10 or more."

Fresno Unified School District
Board Communication

From the Office of the Superintendent
To the Members of the Board of Education
Prepared by: Linda Laettner, Executive Officer

Date: December 19, 2025

Phone Number: (559) 457-3885

Regarding: Monthly Update – November

The purpose of this board communication is to provide the Board an update about the Foundation for Fresno Unified Students.

The Foundation continues to support the Student Mental Health Council, a collaborative effort focused on strengthening mental health resources, student voice, and wellness supports across Fresno Unified. The council brings together students, district leaders, and community partners to identify needs, elevate best practices, and inform investments that promote student well-being. This work aligns with the Foundation's commitment to addressing student mental health as a critical component of academic success.

Through the generous support of U.S. Bank, the Foundation has provided stipends to support student-centered initiatives at their McLane High School branch. This opportunity advances wellness, leadership, and financial literacy. These stipends help remove barriers to participation, recognize student and staff leadership, and directly invest in programs that positively impact students' academic and personal development.

The Foundation's Adopt-A-School and Adopt-A-Project initiatives continue to connect Fresno Unified school sites with community, corporate, and philanthropic partners to address site-specific needs and priorities. These partnerships support a wide range of projects, including enrichment opportunities, student experiences, and essential resources. This allows school and district funds to be redirected toward core instructional priorities. Recently supported projects include the Bullard High School Hygiene Drive, backpacks at Fort Miller Middle School and Wawona K-8, bicycle helmets at Hidalgo Elementary, lunch bags at Easterby Elementary, and sensory items at Slater Elementary.

If you have any questions pertaining to the information in this communication, or require additional information, please contact Linda Laettner at (559) 457-3885.

Approval: Linda J. Laettner

Name and Title: Linda Laettner, Executive Officer