A Brief History of the County Office of Education

BACKGROUND

County superintendents of schools are established pursuant to the California Constitution. Section 3 of Article IX of the constitution states, "A Superintendent of Schools for each county may be elected by the qualified electors thereof at each gubernatorial election or may be appointed by the county board of education…" Only five counties regularly appoint the county superintendent. Trinity County elects this position every four years, unless there is a vacancy prior to an election.

County boards of education are established by Education Code section 1000. The interaction between the county board and superintendent is entirely distinct from the relationship of a school district's board and its employed superintendent.[1]

County Superintendents operate intermediate service agencies providing direct and regional support to school districts and serve as the primary implementation arm of the California Department of Education (CDE).

HISTORY

1849 – The original California State Constitution called for a system of common schools, by which a school would be supported in each district at least three months in every year,[2] and it also called for the election of a State Superintendent of Public Instruction.[3] The position of County Superintendent was established in the original constitution as a duty of the county assessor.[4]

1850 - California achieved statehood.

1851 - A state school law was passed dividing schools into primary, intermediate and grammar schools, specifying studies in each, and providing for the establishment of high schools. Counties were apportioned school funding based on the number of children between 7 and 18

[1] Statutory Functions of County Boards of Education & County Superintendents of Schools, Approved for Publication by the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA) Board of Directors on August 4, 2014, www.scoe.org/files/statutory-functions.pdf

[2] 1849 California State Constitution: Article IX, Section 3.

[3] State of CA Archives, the CA Secretary of State, 2000, https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/tf3779n5p1/entire_text/

[4] CCSESA History and Background Document, 2010 page 1

years, but county treasurers were to distribute monies according to the number actually attending each school.

1852 – The office of County Superintendent of Schools was created by statute.[5] The California State Superintendent of Public Instruction reported approximately 6,000 children between the ages of four and eighteen in the state, with about 125 children in Trinity County.[6]

1862 – The position of County Superintendents of Public Instruction was established in the constitution with an election held every four years, with the Superintendent to enter upon the duties of the office on the first day of December after the election.[7]

By 1863 - County Superintendents were required to submit annual reports to the state superintendent.[8]

1863 - The State Board of Education became fully responsible for examinations of teachers at all levels. However, local school boards continued to hire and rehire teachers according to criteria they approved, and as counties continued to authorize authority to issue certificates to elementary teachers as provided in the Constitution.[9]

1864 - School districts were authorized to levy property tax whenever state and county school funding was insufficient.[10]

1866 - The *Common Schools Act* authorized the State Board of Education to adopt rules and regulations for the conduct of schools, to establish a course of study, and to adopt a series of textbooks. Local districts were required to furnish students with school supplies (paper, pen, ink, chalk) as well as to provide school libraries.[11]

1874 - The state enacts compulsory school attendance for children between the ages of 8 and 14 years.[12]

1879 - Article IX, Section 3 of the revised state constitution established the position of county superintendents, separate from other county officials, as an elected constitutional office[13] and called for schools to run for six months each year.[14]

1882 - The state legislature specified the powers of county offices of education to include, but not be limited to: (1) Meet and hold examinations for the granting of teaching certificates semi-annually; (2) Prescribe and enforce rules for the examination of teachers; (3) Examine applicants and prescribe a standard of proficiency for examination, and to grant certificates for two grades; (4) Prescribe and enforce the use of a uniform series of textbooks and a course of

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[5] CCSESA History and Background Document, 2010 page 1
[6] Short History of the Schools in Trinity County, Printed in the Trinity Journal, 1956
[7] Amendments to Article IX of the State Constitution, September 3, 1862 [Section 1]
[8] Historical Background, Sacramento County Superintendent of Schools, www.scoe.net/about/history/Documents/historical_timeline.pdf
[9] A History of Policies and Forces Shaping California Teacher Credentialing, Commission of Teachers Credentialing, February 2011, Sacramento, CA, www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/commission/files/ctc-history.pdf?sfvrsn=96050f5_0
[10] Historical Background, Sacramento County Superintendent of Schools, www.scoe.net/about/history/Documents/historical_timeline.pdf
[11] IBID
[12] https://caschoolnews.net/issues_guide/a-history-of-californias-public-school-system/
[13] https://www.scoe.org/pub/htdocs/scoe-history.html
[14] University of California, CALISPHERE Collections, http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb409nb2hr;NAAN=13030&doc.view=frames&chunk.id=div00001&toc.id=0&brand=calisphere

study in public schools, and to adopt a list of books for district school libraries; (5) Revoke, for immoral or unprofessional conduct, or evidence of unfitness for teaching, the certificates granted by them; (6) Issue diplomas of graduation from any of the public schools of the county, with county boards of education being required to issue diplomas only to pupils who have passed an examination issued by the County Board of Education; and (7) Grant county certificates and fix the grade of them, to holders of life diplomas, California State education diplomas, and other diplomas offered.[15]

1897 - The trend toward state authority was reinforced in 1897, when the State Supreme Court ruled in *Mitchell v. Winnek* (5: 1897) that the Legislature could prescribe the requirements for teacher certification. The issue had been in doubt because the constitution had given county superintendents and boards control over teachers' examinations and teaching certificates. In effect, the ruling opened the door to a dualistic pattern of teacher licensure. Counties were still permitted to issue certificates, but all regularly licensed teachers were required to possess a state "credential" before the county could issue a "certificate." Except for a few emergencies, substitute, and other short- term teaching authorizations that required only a certificate, the county certification process involved little more than registering state credentials. Importantly as well, when the state again resumed its influence and control of defining teacher credentialing standards at the turn of the century, it placed its support behind normal school and university courses, not examination performance.[16]

1905 - California became the first state to require a fifth year of college work for secondary teaching credentials, and by 1906 the fifth year included a full year of graduate study. For nearly 30 years, California was the only state to require a fifth year for secondary teaching credentials. [17]

By 1947 - The County Superintendent had assumed 22 functions, including curriculum supervision, emergency teacher credentialing, health and nursing services for districts, coordination of educational resources, attendance monitoring, and funding apportionments.[18]

1964 - A very significant structural change occurred when it was mandated by the state that county offices of education become independent from county government. The County Office of Education retains this independent structure today; it is not part of the county government.[19]

1976 – The Duties, Responsibilities, and General Powers of the County Superintendent were codified into law in Education Code 1240, listing the following:

The County Superintendent of Schools shall do all of the following:

> (a) Superintend the schools of his or her county.
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> (b) Maintain responsibility for the fiscal oversight of each school district in his or her county pursuant to the authority granted by this code. Including but not limited to

[15] Historical Background, Sacramento County Superintendent of Schools, www.scoe.net/about/history/Documents/historical_timeline.pdf
[16] A History of Policies and Forces Shaping California Teacher Credentialing, Commission of Teachers Credentialing, February 2011, Sacramento, CA, www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/commission/files/ctc-history.pdf?sfvrsn=96050f5_0
[17] IBID
[18] https://www.solanocoe.net/uploaded/Departments/Human_Resouces/Documents/SCOE_Employee_Handbook_2019-20_ADA.pdf
[19] https://www.scoe.org/pub/htdocs/scoe-history.html

auditing expenditures and investigate internal controls of any district if there is reason to believe that fraud, misappropriation or other illegal fiscal practices have occurred.

(c) (1) Visit and examine each school in his or her county at reasonable intervals to observe its operation and to learn of its problems. He or she annually may present a report of the state of the schools in his or her county, and of his or her office, including, but not limited to, his or her observations while visiting the schools, to the board of education and the board of supervisors of his or her county.

(2) (A) For fiscal years 2004–05 to 2006–07, inclusive, to the extent that funds are appropriated for purposes of this paragraph, the County Superintendent, or his or her designee, annually shall submit a report, at a regularly scheduled November board meeting, to the governing board of each school district under his or her jurisdiction, the County Board of Education of his or her county, and the Board of Supervisors of his or her county describing the state of the schools in the county or of his or her office that are ranked in deciles 1 to 3, inclusive, of the 2003 base Academic Performance Index (API)… [Note: Trinity County Schools were never ranked in deciles 1 to 3 on the API].[20]

1976 - Also this year Proposition 8 was approved by the electorate which made the following constitutional changes:

- Authorized county boards of education, instead of the legislature, to set the salaries of county superintendents,
- Empowered the voters of each county to determine whether the county superintendent should be elected or appointed, and
- Empowered the voters of two or more counties to create joint superintendencies and joint county boards.

1980 – In Resolution No. 76-80, the Trinity County Board of Supervisors transferred educational duties and functions to the County Board of Education, effective July 1, 1980. In addition, the resolution determined that the County Superintendent of Schools and the County Board of Education shall receive a pro-rata share of Government Code Section 26912 tax collected by the Board of Supervisors.

1992 – As a reaction to many school districts in the state going bankrupt in the 1980s, legislation was enacted (AB 1200) that defined a system of fiscal accountability for school districts and county offices of education to prevent bankruptcy. The law required County Superintendents of Schools to carefully monitor district finances, and for districts to do multiyear financial projections; identify sources of funding for substantial cost increases, such as employee raises; and make public the cost implications of such increases before approving employee contracts.[21]

This law also required the County Superintendent of Schools to review and certify district budgets and if districts are certified as "qualified" (that they may not meet their obligations for the current or next two fiscal years) or "negative" (not able to meet their obligations for the current or next fiscal year) to require a 3rd Interim updated budget filed with the county office of education. Along with this, the County Superintendent is required to review and approve any

[20] https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=1240.&lawCode=EDC
[21] https://edsource.org/glossary/assembly-bill-ab-1200

district collective bargaining agreements. In addition, all districts issuing Certificates of Participation (COPs) or revenue bonds must provide the County Superintendent with evidence of their ability to repay.

2013 - California enacted a new school funding model, known as the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), and a companion accountability program called the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). These initiatives significantly expanded the local monitoring responsibilities of county offices of education across the state.

Today, the Trinity County Office of Education operates under the direction of Sarah E. Supahan who was appointed in June of 2017, then elected in June of 2018 and sworn in as Trinity County Superintendent of Schools on January 2, 2019.

Trinity County Superintendents of Schools through history:

F. Bates	1853-1854	Lizzie H. Fox	1895-1906
D.W. Porter	1855-1856	Nellie M. Jordan	1907-1910
M. Ruch	1857-1860	J.F. McKnight	1910* term completed
Henry Martin	1861-1862	Mrs. Minne Ellery Aldrich	1911-1914
Frederick. Walters	1862-1863	Maude I. Schroter	1915-1918
David E. Gordon	1864-1868	Lucy Young	1919-1930
George H. Bunker	1868-1869	Clara E. Kreiss	1931-1938
C.W. Smith	1870-1871	Mrs. Clara E. Van Matre	1939-1956
William B. Lovett	1872-1873	Arthur C. Sanborn	1957-1966
Hiram H. Bragdon	1874-1875	Robert C. Gravette	1967-1986
Mary N. Wadleigh	1876-1878	Donald R. Stewart	1987-1995
George E. Noonan	1878-1882	James B. French	1995-2012
Horace R. Given	1883-1890	Bettina A. Blackwell	2012-2017
George E. Noonan	1891-1894	Sarah E. Supahan	2017-2022
		Fabio Robles	2023-Present