

January 7, 2022

Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond
President, State Board of Education
1430 N Street, Suite 5111
Sacramento, CA 95814-5901

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RE: CTA COMMENTS REGARDING ITEM #2: Approval of the Proposed California Community Schools Partnership Program Framework; Approval of the Amendment to the Administrative Plan; and an Update of the California Community Schools Partnership Program Activities.

Dear State Board of Education President Darling-Hammond and SBE Members,

On behalf of the over 300,000 members of the California Teachers Association (CTA), we appreciate the work of the California Department of Education (CDE) staff and State Board of Education (SBE) staff in developing this item. CTA strongly supports the historic investment of nearly \$3 billion for Community Schools and the work being done by the CDE and SBE to develop the detailed plans that will help with the awarding of the funds throughout the state. This investment in Community Schools instantly made it the largest of its kind in the country and provides a real opportunity to transform public education for our students and communities.

CTA has been working with the National Education Association (NEA)'s Strategic Campaign Institute on Community Schools— an exciting national initiative that was launched in February 2021, in which local educators and community partners in almost 50 cities and towns across the country are building strategic campaigns to win Community Schools. We see Community Schools as a unique vehicle to improve public education in historically marginalized communities, address racial injustice, increase parent/youth/community involvement in schools, expand democratically shared leadership, build community/labor coalitions, and initiate innovative community development efforts.

With California's historic investment in Community Schools, we have an incredible opportunity to transform our public schools for more racially just and democratic institutions for our students to learn, our members to teach, and our communities to thrive. California's historic investment in Community Schools dwarfs that of other states and even the federal allocation. It also raises the stakes of what we do in California. It is imperative that we lead the way with a successful, comprehensive, democratic, student and community-focused, racial justice-infused, school improvement-centered model.

Technical Assistance Center RFA Recommendations (Page Three)

CTA fully supports the recommendation to identify a Lead Technical Assistance Center and then issue a second RFA for the Regional Technical Assistance Centers at a later point in 2022. This will allow the Technical Assistance Centers to have a similar structure as the 21st Century California School Leadership Academy (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ai/ca21csla.asp>) and their approach to partnership and regional coverage. **As outlined in the item, the Lead TAC will serve as the backbone of the TA structure** and help to ensure high quality content and technical assistance is developed and then ultimately deployed in a comprehensive manner and with fidelity.

CTA recommends that the CDE require that potential applicants submit a “Letter of Interest” from interested parties as soon as feasible. This will help to better identify those qualified LEAs in partnership with IHEs, nonprofits and other qualified community organizations that are interested in providing these robust supports.

Additionally, once the “Lead TA Center” is identified and awarded, the next phase of RFAs for the “Regional TA Centers” can begin. This round of RFA should also require “Letters of Interest” to help immediately identify those qualified LEAs in different regions of the state who are prepared to partner with the Lead TA Center and serve as a regional hub.

The regional hubs should be limited to five regions of the state so to not dilute the funding and each regional hub should be responsible for delivering high quality technical assistance that is aligned with the statewide effort but to also work with the Lead TA Center to identify needs from the field.

Lastly, there should be explicit language added regarding **the role of the Statewide Advisory Council that Superintendent Thurmond is bringing together in supporting the Lead TA Center and the Regional TA Centers.**

Implementation and Planning Grant Requests (Page Four)

It is anticipated that the turnaround time from the RFAs for the first round of Planning Grants and the first round of Implementation Grants will be extremely tight.

With the RFAs for the first rounds being released in February 2022 and a likely due date for the grant applications being some time in late March/early April, there will be a significant need for the robust development of FAQs and supports for LEAs as they are developing their applications.

CTA highlighted in our letter to the SBE at their November meeting that there will be a gap of support for this program between the time the RFAs are released; LEAs are applying for funds; the time that the Lead TA Center is identified, funded and up and running; and then LEAs beginning to implement the Planning and Implementation Grants. CTA stands ready to support the CDE, the SBE and the Statewide Advisory Council and to lend our collective expertise with Community Schools to fill this gap and ensure that this program is successful.

Selection Criteria for Planning Grants and Implementation Grants (Starting on Page Four)

The following recommendations should be used as “guardrails” for the Planning Grant RFA and Implementation Grant RFA to ensure the development of Transformational Community Schools and must be inserted as commitments from the LEAs receiving funding.

These should be added to the selection criteria for Planning Grants and Implementation Grants that are outlined on page five of the item under “In addition to demonstrating need, planning and implementation grant applicants will be given priority based on the inclusion of the following elements in their proposed planning activities:” These recommendations were also outlined in our letter to the CDE regarding the Community Schools Framework and RFA Recommendations from December 14th, 2021.

- **Require a District Community School Steering Committee co-chaired by the district and a member of the local education association**
 - There are currently a variety of models being used in Los Angeles and San Diego that have been effective.
 - This structure should also be vetting and finalizing potential Community School partners (e.g., community organizations and governmental agencies) with the LEA.
- **Require application signoff by collective bargaining unit/s**
 - This will ensure that collective planning is done up front and that the groundwork for transformational change can be done in partnership.
- **Require the hiring of a District Level Community Schools Coordinator for LEAs who are applying for Implementation Grant funds for a significant number of Community Schools**
 - This will help to ensure that there is support for the school level Community School Coordinators as well as maximize the ability to efficiently leverage community partnerships and resources.
- **Additional commitments that should be required for Planning Grant recipients to be considered for additional Implementation Grant Funding**
 - Commitment to adopt a school board policy related to Community Schools that includes the Community School Steering Committee (CSSC)
 - Commitment to adopt a needs/assets assessment process that engages at least 75 to 100% of students, school staff, and families that uses the following strategies: 1-on-1 conversations, surveys, small and large meetings.
 - Commitment to democratically selecting the participating schools, such as implementing an application process.
 - Commitment to adopt the following recommendations for the Community School Steering Committee
 - Select co-chairs: The district and the education association should each select co-chairs and 5 members to join the co-chairs.
 - Each co-chair should select 5 members. For example, the district chooses a co-chair and 5 members, and the education association chooses a co-chair and 5 members.
 - Populate the CSSC with Community School experts, students, parents/caregivers, educators, administrators/principals, key district staff, community members/organizations.
 - Commitment to adopt the following Community School Steering Committee areas of focus:
 - Funding: The CSSC works to ensure there is adequate funding to maintain the current Community Schools core infrastructure and to support the growth of Community Schools.
 - Community School Selection: The CSSC develops and implements the application process and determines whether to grow the Community School strategy in any given year.

- Support Implementation: Receives regular reports from Community School coaches and other Community School implementers to learn what types of supports are needed for Community School Coordinators and other school and community stakeholders that are outside of the grasp of coaches and managers to provide. The CSSC works to provide those supports.
- Evaluation: The CSSC receives regular reports from those leading the Community School Implementation on the quality of implementation. CSSC develops a framework for evaluation (e.g., Logic Model). The CSSC also is tasked with the recruitment of an external evaluator.
- Awareness: The CSSC develops and implements a plan to share the successes and key learnings of the Community School strategy with key groups, such as the school board, city council, the Community School Collective Impact Committee, media, school and community stakeholders, etc.
- Commitment to provide answers to the following questions before hiring the first Community School Coordinator (CSC):
 - What will be the composition of the Community School Steering Committee?
 - Who develops the agendas for CSSC meetings?
 - How often should the CSSC meet?
 - How should the CSSC make decisions?
 - Supporting Community School Coordinator
 - Who guides and supports the work of the CSC??
 - What curriculum will the CSCs in your district follow to accomplish their job?
 - What modification, if any, will you want to make to the curriculum to personalize it for your district?
 - Will your Community School staff and stakeholders join a national professional learning community (PLC) that supports best practices?
 - Which national PLC will Community School staff and stakeholders join?
 - How will the CSCs and other school stakeholders be consistently coached and supported while they are on their journey to implement Community School best practices?
 - What are the top skills you need to look for in your Community School Coordinator?
 - What will the job description for the CSC include?
 - How will schools be selected to become Community Schools?
 - What district level department will house the Community School manager?
 - Where does the Community School strategy fit in the district's strategic plan?
 - School Principals:
 - How will the district support community school principals to lead community schools effectively?
 - How will the district integrate Community School expectations for principals, so they don't see the community school strategy as an added job responsibility, but one that is aligned with their role as school leader?

Grant Allocation Guidelines (Page Six)

- **Planning Grants-Base funding of \$200,000 for each LEA**
 - These funds should be used to:
 - Hire a Community Schools Coordinator who is 100% focused on the work of implementation Community Schools
 - Support the development and implementation of the District Community School Steering Committee (CSSC)
 - Help with the coordination and preparation for the LEA's transition to the Implementation Grant
 - Additionally, there should be flexibility in how LEAs determine the matching funds requirements. But the LEAs must work with their CSSC to validate the matching funds.

Implementation Grant RFA Round One Recommendations

CTA believes that the CDE must ensure that access to Implementation Grant funds in Round One is limited to those eligible LEAs that meet certain threshold criteria of Community Schools Implementation. The threshold criteria should mirror all points that CTA recommended under the "Selection Criteria" portion of this letter. Additionally, qualifying entities that apply for Implementation Grants must make comprehensive commitments to meeting the intent of the Community Schools Framework. These commitments would be monitored by the District's Community Schools Steering Committee as well as by the regional TA centers via the annual reports and other TA mechanisms.

Clarity for LEAs Currently Implementing Community Schools

Currently there is a lack of clarity regarding LEAs that have already started down the path of implementing Community Schools. **CTA believes that funding for the Implementation Grants should be annually for six years (2022-23, 2023-24, 2024-25, 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28).** Those LEAs and schools that have been ahead of the curve should not be punished with less funding and fewer years of support.

Simplify the Funding Allocation Formula for the Implementation Grant RFA

The funding allocation formula should be consistent and easily digestible for applicants and the CDE. Using a "band" system that is differentiated by the size of student population could be an effective way to manage these comprehensive RFAs. At this point it is unclear how the LEA will be able to quantify "pupil need" and how funding could be aligned in a systematic way. One approach could be to have a funding amplifier within each band for schools that meet the 80% unduplicated pupil count.

With recommended bands that are outlined on page seven, the corresponding funding amounts could be:

- Small: Up to 400 students-eligible for \$250,000 per year
- Small/Medium: 401-1,000 students-eligible for \$300,000 per year
- Medium/Large: 1,001-2,000 students-eligible for \$400,000 per year
- Large: 2,001+ students-eligible for \$500,000 per year

Accountability (Page 7)

CTA recommends that the statewide Advisory Council play a role in guiding the CDE as they determine the appropriate school level and program outcome measures.

Proposed California Community Schools Framework (Attachment One)

Many of the recommendations that we have made throughout this letter will also apply to the Proposed California Community Schools Framework found in Attachment One.

In addition to those earlier recommendations, the following recommendations are crucial to the success of implementing Transformational Community Schools.

Under Section “The Four Pillars of Community Schools” CTA Recommends:

- Explicitly including restorative practices under Integrated student supports.
- Adding a specific reference to shared decision making under the Collaborative Leadership bullet.
- Referencing more culturally relevant teaching and learning under the Extended Learning Time bullet.

Under Section “The Four Proven Practices” CTA Recommends:

- Adding more specificity around the Community Asset Mapping and Gap Analysis regarding what it means to be comprehensive. CTA recommends that 75-100% engagement of students, school staff, families, and the community be defined as comprehensive.

Under Section “Key Roles-LEA” CTA Recommends:

- That the language regarding setting up a steering committee that shares decision making power be strengthened from “can” to “crucial to the success of implementing Transformational Community Schools”.
- That language be added that the LEA should hire a district level Community Schools Coordinator once a LEA has three or more Community Schools.
- That language be added to ensure that the steering committee [play a role in vetting and finalizing partnerships.

Under Section “Key Roles- Lead TAC and Regional TACs” CTA Recommends:

- That language be added to ensure that the TACs are aligned with transformational Community Schools model.

Under Section “Key Roles-CDE” CTA Recommends:

- That the CDE explicitly outline the role of the Statewide Advisory Council in helping to guide the Community Schools work and consult on technical assistance and other key areas.

Conclusion

While this letter serves as a comprehensive response to the content of Item #2, CTA would like to highlight some of the key pieces that we believe will help this historic investment in Community Schools be truly transformative for students, educators, families, and communities.

- **The State Advisory Council should be identified and engaged immediately**
- **The District Community Schools Steering Committee should be required and co-chaired by the District and the Education Association**
- **Recommend the base funding amount of \$200,000 for Planning Grants and a base funding amount of \$250,000 per year for Implementation Grants**
- **Require teacher association sign off for the grant applications**
- **Fund the Implementation Grants for existing Community Schools for the entirety of the CCSP**

CTA believes that this historic investment in Community Schools is the right approach to help provide services and support that fit each neighborhood's needs and ensure that they are created and run by the people who know our students best: families, educators, community organizations, and the students themselves. CTA stands ready to support this work and to ensure that it is implemented with these end goals in mind.

Sincerely,



E. Toby Boyd, President
California Teachers Association

C: CTA Executive Officers
Joe Boyd, Executive Director, CTA
Teri Holoman, Associate Executive Director, CTA
Lori Easterling, Manager, CTA Legislative Relations

Brooks Allen, Executive Director, State Board of Education
Steve Zimmer, California Department of Education
Deanna Niebuhr, California Department of Education
Rigel Massaro, State Board of Education
CTA Liaisons to the State Board of Education