

Dear Community Partner:

California is projected to receive approximately \$8 billion in federal funds for education. In fact, California was the first state to get the initial round of state fiscal stabilization money – nearly \$4 billion was distributed by the US department of education last week. These dollars represent an unprecedented opportunity to dramatically impact the journey that low-income students and students of color take through our schools.

Here's the catch: In order to ensure that these monies are invested wisely, strategically targeting inequities in California's public schools, **parents, students, and community-based organizations across the state have to stand up and demand their fair share.**

Many of you have voiced concerns that some reform efforts will be halted due to the budget crisis, and many of you have been told that rigor and reform must wait.

But that is simply not true.

The truth is that the time is NOW to improve our high schools by pushing for a college and career-ready curriculum for all students in California. We must use these one-time funds to jumpstart reform.

Title I money (about \$1 billion of the \$8 billion we're expecting) has been targeted to improve the performance of low-income students. Additionally, nearly \$6 billion in "State Fiscal Stabilization" dollars are coming to our state. This money is designed specifically to stave off the impact of our current fiscal crisis.

*Tell your districts to employ these funds to simultaneously ratchet up rigor in lower grades **and** target our neediest high schools in order to prepare all students for college and career.*

A Snapshot of Your District

While budgets have been cut dramatically, OUSD is slated to receive approximately \$17,619,000.00 in Title I funds and \$12,958,000.00 in IDEA funds over the next two years. Additional "State Fiscal Stabilization Funds" will be heading to California and to your district before this school year is up. While we don't yet know the exact amount OUSD will get, we do know there will be some flexibility for district leaders in targeting those dollars.

Demand that your school board and district target this money toward high schools for meaningful reforms that can really make a difference in the educational outcomes for our students.

Community Leverage

The federal government has incorporated four assurances that states must agree to in order to receive stabilization funding:

- 1) States agree to work toward making progress in achieving educational outcomes for all students in California's schools. (Communities should utilize this opportunity to stress that in our state, this should mean implementing rigorous college and career-ready standards (A-G) for all and high-quality assessments.)
- 2) States agree to work toward establishing a data system that can track progress and foster improvement.
- 3) States agree to work toward making improvements in teacher effectiveness and in the equitable distribution of qualified teachers for all students, particularly those most in need.
- 4) States agree to work toward providing intensive support and effective interventions for the lowest-performing schools.

Draft messages and talking points that tie specific reform demands to assurances for the following:

- A college and career-ready curriculum as the default district curriculum;
- Early interventions;
- Teacher professional development;
- A statewide data system; and
- Extra support classes.

Suggested Budget Talking Points:

- *While we understand that California is facing an undeniable fiscal crisis, we do not understand why our schools and our children are being asked to shoulder such a large portion of the economic burden.*
- *If we know that the children of today become the leaders and workers of tomorrow, how can financial hardship be an excuse to further delay the already long-overdue changes our schools desperately need?*
- *Right now, the best way that California can ensure that our children have a shot at success after high school is to educate all of them to the highest levels and graduate every single one of them ready for college and career. All of our children must have access and supports to succeed in the UC/CSU A-G course sequence.*
- *Getting all kids on the college and career track is crucial if we are serious about raising student achievement. Yes, we are in difficult economic times, but federal assistance can be used to help schools and districts stay the course for implementing this needed reform.*

- *The stimulus bill contains billions in new Title I money for California—money designed specifically to improve the performance of low-income students. Districts have numerous funding formulas available to them to ensure they are preparing students in lower grades for rigorous high school classes; they also have funding for intervening in our neediest high schools so that all students graduate ready for college and career. You have to use it for the kids and schools that need it most.*
- *Regardless of how the budgetary and fiscal situation shakes out, we know our students will be enrolled in the same number of classes, costing the same amount of teacher dollars as in previous years. We also know that the rigor of those courses is all too often unacceptably low, especially for low-income students and students of color. It is time to turn the tide on how we do school in California. It is time to live up to the high standards we have set for our children.*

We hope you find this to be a helpful tool in the critical work you are doing for students across the state. Please feel free to call or e-mail us for additional information or if you want help developing specific points.

In Solidarity,

The Education Trust—West Team