



The Education Trust–West

Closing the gaps in opportunity and achievement, pre-k through college.

June 13, 2016

The Honorable Carol Liu
Chair, Senate Education Committee
State Capitol, Room 5097
Sacramento, CA

RE: SUPPORT FOR AB 2548 (Weber)

Dear Senator Liu:

I am writing on behalf of The Education Trust–West to express our support for AB 2548 (Weber), a measure we are co-sponsoring with Children Now. AB 2548 would ensure that the state creates an accountability system that: (1) is based on key indicators aligned with the state’s priority areas and the requirements of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act; (2) includes high standards for student performance for each indicator, as well as expectations for improvement that promote closure of achievement gaps; (3) meaningfully differentiates schools; (4) identifies schools in need of technical assistance, support, and intervention; and (5) provides information on student achievement through an electronic platform that is accessible and easy to understand.

Over the past year, California’s State Board of Education (SBE) has been working on a new school accountability system to fit new academic content standards and new assessments, and also to measure the performance of local educational agencies (LEAs) in eight state priority areas. The SBE has been moving toward a system of “continuous improvement,” in which district leaders receive information from multiple measures to continuously improve instructional practices. The focus of the SBE’s work has been on the development of an evaluation rubric that may be used to assess the strengths and weaknesses of LEAs, and guide supports and interventions. The SBE is scheduled to adopt the final rubric in September 2016.

In December 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced No Child Left Behind, and created a new set of federal rules for school accountability. Among other changes, ESSA grants states the flexibility to choose indicators for the purposes of differentiating schools and providing schools with supports. In addition, ESSA requires states to set ambitious, statewide goals for student performance, and goals for closing gaps in achievement for student groups that lag behind.

AB 2548 would ensure alignment of key provisions of the local, state, and federal school accountability systems in California, establish a system that serves local and state needs, and satisfy federal requirements. Here are the key provisions:

1. AB 2548 would establish “key indicators” for school accountability.

AB 2548 builds on the requirements of ESSA, draws on indicators already included within California’s Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), and establishes the following as key indicators:

For elementary and middle schools: (1) a measure of pupil achievement in, at minimum, English language arts, mathematics, and science; (2) a measure of academic growth; (3) a measure of



progress toward English proficiency for English learners; (4) chronic absence rates; and (5) a measure of school climate.

For high schools: (1) a measure of pupil achievement in, at minimum, English language arts, mathematics, and science; (2) graduation rates; (3) a measure of progress toward English proficiency for English learners; (4) a measure of college and career readiness; (5) chronic absence rates; and (6) a measure of school climate.

Together, these indicators will paint a portrait of how each school is serving students. They are all indicators that are available at the student level, can be disaggregated by subgroup, and are aligned with postsecondary readiness.

2. **AB 2548 would require clear, ambitious, statewide performance standards to encourage schools toward continuous improvement for all students.** ESSA requires states to set ambitious statewide goals for student achievement, and goals for closing gaps for students who lag behind. Consistent with this requirement, AB 2548 promotes educational equity by requiring ambitious statewide performance standards and expectations for improvement in each of the key indicators that would be established by the bill. Student performance and improvement in these indicators would guide assistance and supports.
3. **AB 2548 would require meaningful differentiation of performance of public schools, and identification of schools for supports and interventions.** ESSA requires states to establish a system of meaningfully differentiating among all public schools, and identify schools for support and improvement. Those identified for support and improvement must include, at a minimum, (1) the lowest performing 5 percent of Title I schools, and all high schools graduating less than two-thirds of students, (2) schools in which any subgroup of students is consistently underperforming, and (3) schools where any student subgroup's performance would, on their own, rank among the lowest 5 percent of Title I schools in the state.

AB 2548 would fulfill California's obligations under ESSA by requiring a system of meaningful differentiation based on indicators that would be established by the bill.

The differentiation of schools would also provide critical information to parents. Parents deserve the best available information regarding school quality, and AB 2548 would meet that need by requiring a system based on state-adopted key indicators.

4. **AB 2548 would clarify the role of data in a multi-tiered system of review and assistance that supports continuous improvement.** Although the 5-6 key indicators would be used to identify schools for the purposes of support, assistance, and intervention, a broader set of data would be used to design the appropriate assistance for those schools and for districts. AB 2548 clarifies that the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence and county superintendents shall analyze data aligned with *all* of the state priorities in order to align the level of support, collaboration, and intervention to the needs of the local education agency or individual school or schools.



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5. **AB 2548 would require the accountability system to include a data and reporting system that provides meaningful and accessible information on school and district performance that is displayed through an electronic platform.** This display would be consistent with the work of the SBE to develop a data dashboard, showing student outcomes from multiple measures. The extension of the SBE’s work to include an electronic platform would allow quick and easy access to the information for parents and community members, enabling all stakeholders to monitor performance across each of the priority areas established by LCFF and giving communities the information they need to contribute to the development of Local Control and Accountability Plans.

AB 2548 would provide the foundation for a single, aligned accountability system that promotes high levels of student achievement, and uses multiple measures to direct supports to schools. This system will help close opportunity and achievement gaps in our state.

For these reasons, we are pleased to co-sponsor AB 2548 and ask for your “aye” vote when it comes before you in the Senate Education Committee.

Sincerely,

Ryan J. Smith
Executive Director
The Education Trust–West

cc: Assemblymember Shirley N. Weber
Members of the Senate Education Committee
Kathleen Chavira, Staff Director, Senate Education Committee
Lynn Lorber, Principal Consultant, Senate Education Committee
Roger Mackensen, Policy Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus