Open Letter to the California State Board of Education

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Abstract

The World of Work is a comprehensive K-12 curriculum solution aimed at early exposure for children to both self and career exploration in the ever-changing landscape of the global economy. Creating relevance to the real world and enabling students to map their educational goals to their possible future selves will maximize their investments in post-secondary education. World of Work empowers every child with unique strengths, interests and values needed in the world to nurture happy kids, living in healthy relationships on a path to gainful employment.

To: California State Board of Education

Re: Thank you and Recommendations From CA Computer Science Co-Chair

Dear President Kirst and State Board Members,

I’d like to first thank you for your nomination and the opportunity to serve as Co-Chair of the Computer Science Strategic Implementation Plan Panel (CSSIPP). I’m also grateful to the Cajon Valley Union School District Trustees who allowed me to volunteer weeks of my time away from my post as Superintendent to lead this committee. This was not a decision we made lightly, but having created the first Computer Science Magnet Schools in the US and being pioneers in
Computer Science implementation we were eager to support the State Board in scaling this work for the benefit of all California students. Our decision to invest heavily in Computer Science Education in 2013-14 aligned with our District Vision, “Happy Kids, Engaged in Healthy Relationships, on a Path to Gainful Employment”. The Department of Labor and workforce development experts forecast a million person job gap in Computer Science by 2020. We have a laser-like focus in Cajon Valley to ensure every child upon leaving our district will achieve career, financial, and social well-being as defined by Gallup.

To achieve this we’ve created a comprehensive K-12 Career Development (World of Work) curriculum and process to expose students to current and future opportunities for gainful employment, such as Computer Science, skilled labor, and high-demand jobs of the future. Information can be found at worldofwork.net. Before sharing my recommendations, I want to acknowledge the diligent work of the CSSIPP Committee, CDE Staff, and WestED Consultants. This collective brought deep expertise in computer science, professionalism, and a collaborative spirit each time we convened. I also want to emphasize my support of Computer Science Education and belief that all students should

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begin learning digital literacies and Computer Science principles beginning in Kindergarten. Very early on in the CSSIPP planning I recommended a thorough analysis of the current content standards, curriculum frameworks, graduation requirements, and accountability measures for consideration of revision, downsizing, and in some cases deletion. As a Superintendent responsible for implementing all subject matter for all grades in a finite block of time, I shared the concept of a zero-sum game in terms of what is currently on a given district’s, schools’, teachers’, and ultimately students’ plate of responsibilities as dictated by Ed Code and policy.

The California Department of Education has increased standards and expectations on school districts for decades without removing or making significant concessions to the core curriculum frameworks and standards. The best and unfortunate analogy to describe what we are doing is “adding chairs to the deck of the Titanic”.

All stakeholders would agree that we need a modern curriculum that reflects the demands of industry and the economy and that also prepares our students with the skills and avenues to fill those demands. Rather than lay new expectations onto an outdated model, we really need to start over with a plan that is consistent with the information age, modern technologies, access to ubiquitous and free content, and aligned to the current and future world of work. This hasn’t been done since 1892 when the Committee of Ten constructed the current K-12 model that we are still using today.

We all want and believe that California can lead the country in education and prosperity. In order to achieve this we must look at the broader outcomes that manifest in society once students leave our K-12 school system. Since the 1980s state accountability measures and our now current dashboard have focused on improving standardized test scores, graduation rates, English

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Language Development, lowering suspensions and expulsions, increasing student attendance, and more program offerings. These are all noble and well-intended efforts. Despite decades of this work, California now leads the country in percentage of homelessness, percent of people living in poverty, per prisoner spending, and we continue to receive national attention on our school to prison pipeline. These are all symptoms of an education system that has lost its’ relevance and is no longer preparing the majority of kids for successful adult lives.

Resources like The Gallup Student Engagement Survey measure student hope, engagement, and beliefs about their future. In my home district we will be using these as our primary metrics to measure success. Literacy, numeracy, language development, and content knowledge are still priority areas, but we’ve learned from the science that students who are hopeful, engaged, and see the relevance of what they are doing in school towards their future possible careers are significantly better positioned to achieve well-being. Aligned with our scientific research based World of Work resources, the Gallup metrics point to long term outcomes of our students’ social, financial, and career well-being.

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National Engagement Levels in American Public Schools

We don’t claim to have all the answers, but we’ve engaged in partnerships with experts and researchers from both academia and industry to help achieve our vision of “Happy Kids, Engaged in Healthy Relationships, on a Path to Gainful Employment”. We are eager to collaborate and assist in making these opportunities available for all California children.

Sincerely,

Dr. David Miyashiro, CVUSD
Superintendent of Schools