

The Sacramento Bee

April 15, 2008

EDITORIALS

Time to get serious about school data, Governor

Countless education experts and reports have noted that – in the words of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger’s own Committee on Education Excellence – California has “woefully inadequate data systems that lag behind those of nearly every other state in the nation.”

One example illustrates the problem: When a student transfers between school districts, it can take weeks or months for records to arrive. Here’s another: The state can’t even accurately measure its dropout rate.

The problem isn’t a scarcity of information. School districts must respond to multiple, duplicative data requests for 125 different data collections. But the information is in “disconnected silos” that prevent sharing.

What is holding the state back? As one report diplomatically put it, “California needs influential education data champions.”

Schwarzenegger seemed poised to be such a champion. In his State of the State address in January, he said the first priority of his 2008 Year of Education would be to “fund, link and determine additional data elements” for an ambitious education data system. A key part of that would be an Education Data Commission that would make recommendations within six to eight months for the design and cost of a comprehensive data system.

So where is the Education Data Commission that Schwarzenegger announced in the State of the State

A bill in the Senate gives Schwarzenegger opportunity to make good on his pledge

address? No members have been named, and no work has begun.

In the meantime, the Gates and Hewlett Foundations have funded a consulting team to produce a report for the California Department of Education that will map out the education data already collected by the state, what data are missing, how to get quality data and what it would cost.

That’s a start. But this report cannot hash out important political issues that have hampered California’s data collection in the past. How to link prekindergarten, K-12, higher education, work force and other data cur-

rently collected by multiple agencies? How to link student and teacher data?

How to give data to researchers and local school districts in a way that protects the privacy of individual students? How to foster exchange of data among and between school districts? How to give teachers data they can use in the classroom? Who will control an expanded, inter-agency set of data?

That’s why an independent data commission is needed.

In the absence of leadership by Schwarzenegger, Sens. Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto, and Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento, have introduced the Education Data and Information Act of 2008 (Senate Bill 1298). It would set

up a 19-member Education Data Governing Board (10 appointed by the governor, four by the speaker of the Assembly, four by the Senate Rules Committee and one representing the superintendent of public instruction). This board would develop a timetable for a system of connecting records from prekindergarten through higher education and into the work force, as other states have done.

At the Senate Education Committee hearing on Wednesday, Schwarzenegger should support SB 1298. Statewide, there’s more momentum than ever for getting this done. It’s time for the governor to put some muscle behind overcoming the bureaucratic hurdles that have kept California behind other states.

Imperial Valley News

Heart of the Matter

September 30, 2008

Governor Schwarzenegger Signs Legislation Laying Foundation For California Education Data System

Written by Educations Scope

Sacramento, California - Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger announced he has signed SB 1298 by Joseph Simitian (D-Palo Alto), which will lay the foundation for the design and implementation of a comprehensive statewide education data system and ensure increased accessibility to education data in California.

"Information and data drives where parents send their children to school, allows teachers to better understand and respond to the needs of their students and affects what policies elected officials pursue," said Governor Schwarzenegger. "A comprehensive education data system is essential for the future of California's education system - and having access to such information is essential to ensuring parents can make better informed decisions about their children's education."

SB 1298 requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to establish a process by which local educational agencies (LEAs) issue, maintain, and report information using the unique statewide pupil identifiers for state and federally funded center-based child care and development programs. The bill also requires the State Chief Information Officer (CIO) to convene a working group to create a strategic plan that, among other things, provides an overall structural design for the linked data system and examines the procedures to be used by state agencies in data processing.

SB 1298 also requires the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), State Board of Education (SBE) and the California Department of Education to provide the CIO with non-personally identifiable individual or aggregate educational data in an agreed upon format and in a timely matter according to an agreed upon schedule - at no cost to the CIO.

Signing SB 1298 facilitates the timely release of education data for use on California School Finder, a Web site recently launched by Governor Schwarzenegger in upholding his promise to increase parents' accessibility to data on California's schools. This new Web site allows parents to easily find and compare schools side-by-side on data such as graduation rates and Academic Performance Index (API) scores, as well as information on student support services and advanced placement courses, in a one-stop easy-to-navigate Web site.