May Revision cuts LCFF by 10 percent, introduces proposals in effort to mitigate impact

Reflecting California’s pandemic-induced $54 billion budget deficit, Gov. Gavin Newsom presented his May Revision on May 14, estimating that the Proposition 98 guarantee will decline by $19 billion. The Governor also outlined several proposals that he said could mitigate the impacts of dramatic revenue declines on state funding. "We are not just going to roll over and accept $19 billion of cuts to public education," he said.

Absent from the May Revision is a cost-of-living increase to the Local Control Funding Formula for already distressed local educational agencies that are now experiencing the rising costs of the COVID-19 crisis. In fact, the budget includes a 10 percent ($6.5 billion) reduction to the LCFF. However, Gov. Newsom said an injection of federal funding — such as the HEROES Act now under consideration in Congress — could backfill that dramatic cut. "If the federal government does what it must do under the circumstances to help states large and small across this nation, these cuts would go away," Newsom said.

CSBA has been an ardent supporter of the call for significant federal funding beyond the $13.5 billion delivered in the CARES Act. "Coupled with a 10 percent cut to LCFF — the primary source of funding for K-12 education — the May Revision impairs the ability of schools to serve all students and to resume on-campus instruction safely," said CSBA President Xilonin Cruz-Gonzalez. "This budget would be insufficient in ordinary times and is less than what is required for most schools to reopen safely during a pandemic — and if schools don’t reopen, our economy can’t fully reopen." While most of the new education proposals from January’s proposal were eliminated, the Governor said the increase to special education base rates will remain, calling the matter a “point of pride.” The proposal calls for a base rate increase to $645 per pupil apportioned on a three-year rolling average of LEA average daily attendance. The new rate is a 15 percent increase in the Proposition 98 General Fund contribution to the base formula funding compared to last year.

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A time to work hard ... and slow down
By CCBE President Janet Wohlgemuth

I hope this message finds you healthy and safe. The past several months has been trying for all of us in the education field. Many county offices of education have been faced with tough decisions and are having to develop new styles of learning for all of our California students.

Like most of us, we at the Monterey County Office of Education are learning how to "Zoom" and work from home. COEs have been thinking outside the box to hold meetings, trainings and support our parents, students and each other. Many of you have seen your communities come together to support their students by holding parades through student neighborhoods, placing signs of support to staff and students, and posting messages of how they are all missed.

As a parent of two children in school, I have found myself learning all over again about technology, terms and math. Who knew that I would learn a new language? Google Classroom, Zearn, Achieve, Class Dojo and many more. What I can take away from all of this is that our teachers do incredible work each day with our students and learning never stops, no matter what age we are.

This time has forced me to stop and look at the things in my life that are important to me. We all tend to get caught up in the moment of life and we forget to appreciate the little things around us. I have become more aware of the beauty that I drive by each day going to work, learning new things with my children, and the importance of family and friends near and far.

I have learned more from my children during this time by just wanting to be a kid again. The simple life. I have broken out the sewing machine to teach them to make masks and make a difference in their community. I can't say my cooking skills have improved, but we are working on that, too.

As we look toward the next school year, there are many unknowns for our students and classrooms. What do tomorrow’s classrooms look like? What is the budget going to look like?

The CCBE conference committee is still at work planning the conference. We would like to encourage COEs to submit proposals for breakout sessions. Proposals can help address COE’s top issues, safety measures, budgeting, alternative learning, etc. If you have questions, please reach out to the committee chairman, Rick Shea, or myself.

I want to keep encouraging you all to keep up the good fight and we will get through this. Stay healthy, stay safe and stay positive.

I hope this quote by Mother Teresa lifts your spirits: “Spread LOVE everywhere you go.”

Monterey County school helps students soar to new heights

A Monterey County Office of Education school is taking at-promise students from the streets to the classroom and into the sky. Bob Hoover Academy, in partnership with Monterey COE’s Alternative Education Department, created the Sea Air Fire Earth (SAFE) Flight program under the umbrella of the career technical education portfolio. While the program includes aviation topics, it is not about making pilots. It is about providing the students with inspiration, successes, hope and opportunity through flight.

Originally conceived as an after-school program, the academy now includes all aspects relating to student flight and aviation ground training operations, as well as consulting services to help develop aviation-related educational curriculum. SAFE program academic instructors are funded through the county office and flight instructor are funded through the Bob Hoover Academy, a nonprofit organization. The partnership is a great example of the public and private sectors coming together to provide opportunities for students who need them the most.

BHA is the brainchild of aviation legend and virtuoso air show performer, Sean D. Tucker, who is best known for his airshow performances in the Oracle Challenger. The aerobatic specialist named the school after his mentor and aviation great, R. A. “Bob” Hoover, who valued education, humility, dignity and optimism.

The students in SAFE are alternative-education at-promise youth who generally are referred to the program by a probation officer or because they were expelled from a Monterey County school. “These students struggle.” said Jeff Hardig, principal of the SAFE program. “The normal approach to teaching didn’t work. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing and expecting a different result.”

In addition to the ground school and flight-training component BHA, the program uses a high school STEM curriculum that includes aviation-related topics. Students are provided with computers, therapy sessions, internship opportunities, hands-on courses and more. The program can accommodate up to 40 students and is not currently full.

On a typical day, students hop from a traditional classroom on the Salinas Municipal Airport grounds where they learn aviation principles, history, science, English or other core subjects to a flight simulator, where aviation mentors demonstrate flight controls and concepts, or to Tucker’s hangar for flying. With each milestone, students find out more about themselves and what they can achieve with practice and commitment.

Teacher Christian Lamonea dishes out practical advice and encouragement between core classes. He said students hear about the academy through word of mouth and through social media. Potential aviation students “can’t do drugs or be involved in gang” activity, he noted.

Despite previous challenges in their lives, these at-promise students are up to the challenge offered by BHA. “This is a challenge — flying an airplane is a challenge,” said Tucker. “Facing your fears and conquering your fears one baby step at a time is a challenge. And (students) using the airplane as a metaphor to challenge themselves, to build their self-esteem, to build their confidence — they’re doing something extraordinary that their peers aren’t, and that’s fabulous, that’s really fabulous. Our students come from challenging homes and juvenile detention centers.” He said that “some have a chip on their shoulder,” but you can’t give up on them. “These kids are our future. They are our precious jewels and you have to give them a shot. They’re not looking for a handout. You have to grab them so they can become part of this great community that we call America.”

To learn more about BHA, visit https://www.bobhooveracademy.org/