



Week of Jan. 9-13, 2012

“Rights of Youth . . . Imperiled . . . Violated”

by UCLA IDEA

Gov. Jerry Brown unveiled his proposed budget proposal last week, and Californians are responding with large doses of shock, fear, anger and a pinch of wary optimism. The budget, if it can be realized, would provide *some* relief, but conditions to support a positive scenario are uncertain.

Brown's proposal assumes a \$9.2 billion deficit, a much smaller deficit than last year's \$26 billion. Also, he plans to increase funding by \$8.3 billion to more than \$94 billion. Schools would receive more funding compared to this year's budget—\$52.5 billion. Brown also laid out a set of ideas that would distribute school funds based on need, providing districts serving a large proportion of low-income students with almost \$3,000 more per student.

However, all these hopes are pegged to a November initiative to raise taxes. Brown plans on the measure raising \$6.9 billion, but the Legislative Analyst's Office recently cautioned that the amount could be less than \$5 billion. It is this gamble and what hangs in the balance—\$4.8 billion in cuts from public schools—that have many questioning the governor's tactics.

This uncertain funding climate is familiar to schools, and the uncertainty is enormously inefficient and costly. Uncertainty affects the school climate and diminishes the effective use of funds—current and future funds—beyond the actual size of the budget. To act responsibly, school personnel and communities must act *as if* the tax measure will fail and there will be no new money.

How do schools prepare, in the midst of the current crisis, for new devastation if the measure doesn't pass? How damaging to students? How many days of instruction to cut? How crowded to make the classrooms? How many teachers and staff will districts send notices to that layoffs are in the works? Many are concerned, even if the measure does pass, schools will still be forced to cut. The "best case" scenario presented by Brown will leave California schools with less funding than 2007, and far less than schools in almost every other state. New funding would not be a lasting solution to California's dysfunctional school funding system—just a temporary slowing of the constant flow of cuts.

The proposed tax measure will keep California schools on life support; *not* passing it will pull the plug. Los Angeles Superintendent John Deasy told the school board that there could be thousands of layoffs and months cut out of the school year in order to close a \$543 million gap.

“Quite simply we've reached the point where there is not a single solitary thing in this budget that can and should be reduced. I actually believe, at this point, that the rights of youth are completely imperiled, if not outright violated...” he said.

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