Debate Over Governor’s School Funding Plan Heating Up

As we approach the release of the Governor’s May Revision (scheduled for mid-May), the intensity of debate over the Governor’s school funding plan has increased. In recent developments:

- The Governor hosted a meeting with district and county superintendents followed by a press conference in which he promised opponents of his plan the “battle of their lives”.

- The Assembly Education Committee held a lengthy hearing on the Governor’s plan, where questions focused primarily on the funding distribution (particularly the values of the base grants, supplemental grants, and concentration grants), which categorical programs are excluded from the new formula and why, and the accountability provisions.

- Senate Democratic leadership indicated their proposal will be amended into SB 69. Although similar in many ways to the Governor’s proposal, the Senate version would eliminate the concentration grants and reallocate that funding to the supplemental and base grants. SB 69 will also include different accountability language, which the Senate leadership describes as “substantially stronger” than the Administration’s version. Finally, Senate staff is recommending that the career technical education programs, such as ROCPs and partnership academies, be removed from the flexibility provisions of the Governor’s proposal.

From our perspective, the Governor’s strong statement underscores his commitment to see comprehensive legislation enacted by the end of June, as part of the budget package. Clearly, both the Senate and Assembly are pushing back that they will need changes to the proposal before it is approved.
Several Civil Rights Groups Oppose CORE Waiver Request

On April 29, several national civil rights/public interest groups sent a letter to the US Department of Education, saying they “strongly oppose... granting waivers from key accountability provisions of federal law directly to school districts, including those in the California Office to Reform Education (CORE).”

Reportedly the federal peer review process has provided feedback on the CORE waiver, and the CORE districts (including Long Beach, LA, and Fresno) are developing revisions and clarifications concerning their proposal. The CORE waiver is the only request from California that can be operative in the 2013-14 school year. The CORE request would allow other districts in California to operate under the waiver if they agreed to meet the conditions of the waiver request.

Spring Briefing Workshops Scheduled for May 28- June 4

The annual spring briefing workshops are scheduled for five locations around the state. They are intentionally planned for after the release of the May Revision, but late enough that they can also reflect the reactions of the State Legislature, so that better information is available to local educators.

The workshops will also cover critical issues like the CORE waiver request, federal budget sequestration, school accountability and student assessment.

To register for one of the five workshops, please contact CISI at cisi@ucdavis.edu or call (530) 752-1533.