

The Missing Signature at Modesto Junior College

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Robert Shireman

A well-functioning community college is one of the best ways to help students succeed by providing access to degrees and technical credentials that are crucial in today's economy. But right now, California's community colleges are burdened by an only-in-California decision-making structure that thwarts rather than values leadership. Here I offer another story about how this broken decision-making structure is undermining higher education in California, and how the problem can be fixed.

The signature page of the new governance handbook at Modesto Junior College tells the whole story. Engaging All Voices, which lays out a process for ensuring broad input into major policy decisions at the college, is signed by the student government representative; it is signed by the staff council and by the heads of two other advisory groups; it is even endorsed by the faculty union. The conspicuously blank space belongs to the college's academic senate.

Chancellor Joan Smith and the other stakeholder groups bent over backwards to accommodate the disproportionate demands of the academic senate, so much so that the other groups were "very unhappy" because they "felt they were not given equal opportunity to provide input." But because 100 percent of their demands were not met, the senators are refusing to recognize the decision-making manual as legitimate.

The chancellor, seeking consensus, was left with no good options. Cave to the academic senate's demands and risk upsetting other faculty leaders, students, staff and administrators. Prolong negotiations in an attempt to reach a consensus and divert precious resources from serving students, with no guarantee that the academic senate would ever try to reach agreement. What's a chancellor to do?

Chancellor Smith took the third bad option: move ahead without academic senate support. Clearly exasperated, she explains that the college must move forward or risk fiscal collapse, the loss of accreditation, or both. By asserting its veto power, the academic senate, like its El Camino College counterpart, can now question the legitimacy of any and every decision that is made using the new process, jeopardizing the very existence of the college.

Anywhere else in the country the academic senate's obstinacy could be written off as absurd. But in California, community college academic senates claim special powers: regulations severely restrict the situations under which they don't get their way. The idea behind the rule was worthwhile: to make sure that faculty members are an integral part of managing and improving the college. However, giving a faculty committee equal

decision-making status with the governing board has in too many cases contributed to hostage situations like in Modesto.

The agency responsible for these misguided requirements recently denied our request for revisions that would eliminate the veto while still requiring consultation. While acknowledging that the regulations give an academic senate the ability to "inhibit action," the agency's letter insists that "there is no veto power involved" because the regulations "provide mechanisms under which local boards of trustees can take action contrary to the recommendation of the academic senate."

What are these mechanisms? The letter doesn't explain, but the regulations say that in the case of a disagreement with the academic senate:

"existing policy shall remain in effect unless continuing with such policy exposes the district to legal liability or causes substantial fiscal hardship. In cases where there is no existing policy, or in cases where the exposure to legal liability or substantial fiscal hardship requires existing policy to be changed, the governing board may act, after a good faith effort to reach agreement, only for compelling legal, fiscal, or organizational reasons."

In other words, moving forward without formal, written senate concurrence requires clearing a hurdle demanding legal interpretations of any number of vague terms, as well as consideration of metaphysical questions about the existence of a policy.

Veto. Inhibit. Filibuster. Whatever the right term, the Modesto situation is a clear and present example of how the state rules mire California community colleges in a swamp of ambiguity about how decisions are supposed to be made. Legally the safest route for a college is inaction, which perhaps explains why so many California community colleges wait for the crisis to occur and then frantically scramble to repair the damage.

The letter from the state regulatory agency says that our diagnosis of the problem is wrong. When academic senates wield their authority unreasonably, the agency says, it is merely a symptom of deeper problems such as poor leadership or union issues. Judging by the signatures, it doesn't look to me like the agency's dismissive diagnosis fits Modesto Junior College.

Dan Walters: California's tax surge could be dangerous

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Capitol politicians have a sorry record in handling revenue windfalls, both real and imaginary.

In 2000, the state saw a one-time, \$12 billion spike in revenue, thanks largely to a selling frenzy by holders of stock and stock options as a high-tech bubble burst.

Everyone knew that it was a one-time windfall, but then-Gov. Gray Davis and legislators of both parties committed two-thirds of it to permanent spending and tax cuts, leading to huge budget deficits that fueled the recall of Davis.

Six years later, with Davis successor Arnold Schwarzenegger seeking re-election, the state experienced another, albeit smaller, windfall and it, too, was quickly spent, thus worsening the state's budget deficits from the subsequent recession.

At least those revenue surges were real, although short-lived. Two years ago, as Gov. Jerry Brown and legislators faced another budget gap, they solved it – on paper – by assuming the state would get an extra \$4 billion in revenue, extrapolated from a couple of months of higher-than- expected tax

Everyone in the Capitol knew that the \$4 billion was most likely bogus, but it served the politicians' expedient purpose of "balancing" an otherwise unbalanced budget and thus restoring paychecks to legislators that had been cut off because of missing a budget deadline.

Given that history, one is not inclined to be sanguine about how Brown and legislators will handle what could be another windfall.

The state received a big bump in personal income taxes in January – about \$5 billion – mostly from quarterly payments by high-income taxpayers.

The surge of money occurs just as legislators begin working on the 2013-14 budget that Brown submitted in January, a budget that does little or nothing to restore "safety net" health and welfare services that the Legislature's Democrats cherish.

They may be tempted, therefore, to assume that the windfall represents a permanent new level of revenue that could be used for those services, as they have in the past.

That would be a big mistake, because the windfall may be, at most, a one-time phenomenon and is more likely simply to be an acceleration of taxes that otherwise would have been received later in the year.

Personal income spiked all over the country in late 2012, largely because companies issued dividends earlier than usual to beat a federal income tax increase in January, the Wall Street Journal reported.

That bump was compounded by high-income taxpayers' taking capital gains from recent stock market increases to beat the federal tax man.

Chances are high, therefore, that the January surge in state revenue will be offset by lower collections later in the year, and if that's true, raising spending would be foolhardy – although in keeping with the Capitol's history.

Automatic budget cuts are almost certain

LA Times

BY JIM PUZZANGHERA AND RICHARD SIMON, Washington Bureau

February 9, 2013

WASHINGTON — In less than a month, a budget ax is set to fall on the federal government, indiscriminately chopping funding for the military and slicing money for various programs, including preschools and national parks.

The \$85 billion in cuts that would take effect from March 1 through September — the first installment of \$1.2 trillion in reductions over the next decade — would strike just about every agency and service in an attempt to ease the budget deficit.

The slashing, part of an automatic process known as sequestration, would affect the economy, government workers and average Americans in ways big and small. President Obama and Congress agreed to the sequestration law in 2011 hoping the threat of cuts would bring about a compromise to lower the deficit. But that hasn't happened. Now, to stop the process, Congress and Obama would have to agree to an alternative.

Though the reductions were never intended to be implemented, there is a growing belief they will kick in anyway, because Washington politicians are sharply divided on how to reduce the deficit.

Many Republicans want to spare the military by cutting more out of social programs. Obama and his fellow Democrats want to offset some of the cuts with new revenue from limiting tax loopholes.

"I just don't see how we're going to avoid it," House Armed Services Committee Chairman Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (R-Santa Clarita), who is concerned about the impact on the military, said of the looming cuts. "It's like everybody has dug in their heels."

The Defense Department would take half of the budget hit and has been warning of its toll.

As many as 800,000 civilian employees of the military could be furloughed without pay for 22 days this year. The time that Air Force pilots spend in the air on training and flying missions would be reduced by 203,000 hours. And the Navy's Blue Angels precision flying squadron would cancel all of their planned performances for the last six months of the fiscal year.

"This will badly damage our national defense and compromise our ability to respond to crises in a dangerous world," Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta said last week.

Because of limits on cuts to Medicare and exemptions for Social Security and other benefits, non-defense programs would face less of a spending cut — about 4.6% overall this year compared with 7.9% for the Pentagon. But on top of other reductions the last two years, the cuts would have a deep impact, according to analysts, advocacy groups and government workers.

"You're going to feel it," said Steve Bell, senior director of economic policy at the Bipartisan Policy Center in Washington. "There's no way there can't be a slowdown [in government services]. You're going to see it at a local level."

The White House said the cuts would reduce loan guarantees to small businesses, result in fewer food safety inspections, and leave hundreds of thousands of mentally ill adults and children untreated. Internal Revenue Service agents would not be available to help millions of taxpayers complete their returns, or to audit them. More than 1,000 federal agents would not be able to pursue criminals or protect the borders.

California's defense industry would face a \$3.2-billion loss this year from the cuts. The state also stands to lose about \$670 million in federal aid for a host of programs, including housing assistance for low-income families and funding to fight neighborhood blight, according to Federal Funds Information for States, which studies how federal decisions affect states. A planned \$177-million cut in research funding to California also is causing anxiety in the UC system.

Los Angeles warns it would lose more than \$100 million in federal aid this year at a time when the city is struggling to close a hole in its own budget.

"Yeah, it's going to hurt," said Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster, whose city would see cuts in federal aid for a variety of services. "Overall, it will reduce our ability to rebuild our infrastructure, reduce our ability for public security and safety, particularly around the ports, reduce our ability to provide health services for our citizens."

The National Head Start Assn. projects a loss of more than \$400 million nationally, including \$49 million in California, which would eliminate early education slots for more than 7,700 low-income children in the state.

The Assn. of State and Territorial Health Officials warned that the cuts to public health programs would put Americans "at greater risk for infectious disease outbreaks."

And the National Park Service is considering delaying the opening of some facilities at Yellowstone and other parks, said Joan Anzelmo, public affairs director of the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees.

"Instead of a 5% cut being a part of Congress' plan to help the economy, they're going to devastate the economy further with across-the-board cuts that don't take into account specifically what they are cutting," said Anzelmo, former superintendent of the Colorado National Monument.

Economists project the budget cuts would reduce the nation's total economic output by about 0.6 percentage points this year, a significant hit when growth remains sluggish. Combined with tax increases that began last month and some other federal changes, the economy would expand about 1.5% in 2013 — half of what it could grow without the fiscal tightening, the Congressional Budget Office said.

For that reason, Obama pushed Congress last week to delay the automatic budget cuts for a couple more months. He wants more time to work with lawmakers on a better deficit-reduction plan.

"Deep, indiscriminate cuts to things like education and training, energy and national security will cost us jobs, and it will slow down our recovery," Obama said. "It's not the right thing to do for the economy. It's not the right thing for folks who are out there still looking for work."

Republicans aren't fond of the automatic budget cuts either, particularly those set for the Defense Department.

"I think it's taking a meat ax to our government — a meat ax to many programs — and it will weaken our national defense," House Speaker John A. Boehner (R-Ohio) said last week.

Still, he wants to see government spending reduced. Republicans have tried unsuccessfully to replace the automatic cuts with more selective ones that target entitlement spending over defense programs.

"The problem is if you eliminate all defense spending — grow daisies in the Pentagon — you haven't touched the problem," McKeon said. "The real problem is the mandatory spending."

But after agreeing in January to a two-month delay as part of the fiscal-cliff deal, reducing the amount to be cut this year by \$24 billion, some Republicans said they would rather see the automatic cuts than push off again what they believe is the necessary shrinking of the federal government.

And while liberals have argued the automatic cuts would cause huge economic damage — some have dubbed them "an austerity bomb" — conservatives say the impact is vastly overstated.

"There are no cuts, just a very modest reduction in the baseline growth of government," said Dan Mitchell, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute in Washington. "The worst that

can be said is that a few parts of the budget, such as defense, are disproportionately affected."

But those who would be most affected see it differently.

"I think everybody believed that we wouldn't get to this point, but we're here," said Dennis Kenneally, a retired general and executive director of the Southwest Defense Alliance, a defense advocacy group. "When you thought it couldn't get worse, it did."

Dan Walters: Not all clashes at California's Capitol are partisan

By Dan Walters
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Much – probably too much – is being made of the newly minted Democratic supermajorities in the Legislature and the prospects of doing this or that.

While the Democrats' hegemony does take Republicans completely out of the picture, the Legislature's partisan conflicts have not been, contrary to popular belief, the primary impediments to effective governance.

Rather, they are the clashes of disparate interest groups – primarily economic in nature, but also cultural and geographic – that naturally coalesce in a state as large and diverse as California. And those differences remain, regardless of which party controls the levers of government at any one moment.

This year's two most important legislative issues – water and school finance – underscore the point that while party may play a role in what happens, or doesn't happen, in the Capitol, it's much less important than generally assumed.

Water has always been an issue that generates regional, as well as ideological, friction. Most of the state's water supply originates in the sparsely populated northeastern quadrant of the state and most of the demand comes from Central Valley farmers and Southern California's homes and industries.

For decades, the focus of the conflict has been the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, into which the water flows and from which the transshipments to the south are taken.

Gov. Jerry Brown is trying to jump-start the long-stalled project to bypass the Delta with an "alternate conveyance," and the water users to the south are all for it. It continues to face stiff opposition from those in the north and from environmentalists who believe that stabilizing supplies would be growth-inducing.

A bond issue is needed not to pay for the new conveyance, but rather to lubricate the ancillary projects tied to it. But the bond already passed by the Legislature is bloated and probably doomed if it goes on the ballot, so a new one must be drafted.

It provides a new forum for California's perpetual water wars, but there's not even a hint of partisanship in the battle. It's all about regionalism, economic interests and ideology.

The same dynamic is also evident in school finance. Brown wants to overhaul how state aid goes to schools, increasing support for school districts with large numbers of poor and/or English-learner students.

His formula would benefit large urban school districts and small rural districts, while suburban districts would get relatively less. The battle lines are forming along those subregional divisions – as well as ethnic ones – that have almost no correlation with party.

Potential effects run into the billions of dollars. Many lawmakers, in fact, will have school officials within their own legislative districts at odds over the issue.

Daniel Borenstein: Gov. Jerry Brown's claim of balanced budget ignores failure to fund teacher pensions

By Daniel Borenstein Staff columnist

Posted: 02/08/2013

Contra Costa Times

Gov. Jerry Brown's claim that he balanced his proposed 2013-14 budget ignores that he's driving the state teacher pension system deeper into debt by shortchanging it at least \$4.5 billion.

Teachers will almost certainly receive retirement payments they have earned. It's our children, the next generation of taxpayers, who will suffer. They will be stuck with an astronomical bill we should be paying now.

Blame state lawmakers, who continue to ignore a crisis that's been building for a decade. The California State Teachers' Retirement System, which has warned about the shortfall, will this coming week report to the Legislature that the pension plan is underfunded by \$64 billion.

An improving economy will not solve the problem. According to a recently released draft of the report, erasing that debt through investment returns would require 17 percent annual returns for the next five years followed by 7.5 percent each year for a quarter century.

Nor will last year's much-touted, so-called pension reform provide meaningful help, according to CalSTRS. A forecast that the system will go broke in 2046 has been extended to 2047 thanks to the "landmark" legislation.

CalSTRS' talk of insolvency stems from its inability to control its destiny. As underfunded as other systems are, they can at least impose a payment plan to eliminate their debts. It's common to amortize liabilities over 18-30 years and force state and local governments to pay more each year.

But CalSTRS, which serves K-12 school districts and community colleges, lacks the legal authority to raise contribution rates. It must turn to the political arena, to the Legislature and governor, who have thus far done nothing. As a result, the problem has gotten worse.

Currently, for every dollar of teacher payroll, school districts contribute another 8.25 cents to the pension system, teachers pay 8 cents and the state kicks in about 2.8 cents. That total of about 19 cents roughly covers the future cost of the pension benefits workers are currently earning.

But that assumes the pension system investments earn 7.5 percent annual returns long into the future. Past CalSTRS investment projections have fallen short. That's a major reason for the \$64 billion unfunded liability.

To pay that off over 30 years would require the additional \$4.5 billion annually, according to CalSTRS. It's the bare minimum payment that should be made now. It would add another 15 cents to every dollar of payroll, bringing the total to 34 cents.

In fact, that's probably not enough. For starters, CalSTRS figures it has only about a 50 percent chance of hitting its investment target. If it falls short, more contributions will be needed.

Second, the notion of paying off debt over 30 years is antithetical to the idea of a prefunded pension system. Public employee retirement plans like those offered by CalSTRS are supposed to be funded like other compensation -- when the employee performs the labor, not years down the line.

Each year, workers earn salaries, current benefits like health insurance, and future compensation through pension benefits. To pay for those future benefits, the employer and employee are supposed to set aside enough money now so that, after investment earnings, there are sufficient funds to cover retirement payments when they come due.

If those investment earnings fall short, they should be made up quickly. By deferring payments up to 30 years, we are making future taxpayers cover the cost of labor that has already been provided. It's intergenerational theft.

At a minimum, that debt should be paid off in far less than 30 years, as many pension systems do. That would mean higher annual payments now, but savings over the long term.

CalSTRS, in its upcoming report to the Legislature, proposes just the opposite. It suggests a 30-year repayment option and, amazingly, a 75-year alternative. Our great-grandchildren would be paying our debts.

That's morally and fiscally wrong.

Although Brown mentions the huge unfunded pension liability in his proposed budget and the Legislature will hold hearings on the problem, neither has offered a solution.

In the meantime, they should stop claiming the budget is balanced when they're not even paying their bills.

Americans Value Higher Education but Question Its Quality, National Survey Finds

The Chronicle of Higher Education

February 5, 2013

By Libby Sander

Washington

Americans overwhelmingly view a higher education as essential to landing a good job and achieving financial security, but they have doubts about its quality and affordability, according to a new report from the Lumina Foundation and Gallup.

They also favor changes in higher education that would make obtaining a degree more realistic for working adults. A majority of respondents to a survey underlying the report said they supported the awarding of credit for prior learning and skills acquired outside the classroom. Three-quarters, meanwhile, said that they would be more likely to enroll in college if they could receive credit for what they already knew.

"The demand for postsecondary education is as high or higher than it's ever been," said Brandon Busted, executive director of Gallup Education, which conducted the survey. But civic and economic demands are driving more Americans to view higher education through a pragmatic, job-focused lens, he said. "They're asking for something very different from what we've done in the past."

The report, "[America's Call for Higher Education Redesign](#)," was released on Tuesday and is based on more than 1,000 interviews that Gallup researchers conducted in November and December 2012 on behalf of Lumina.

The findings suggest that Americans acknowledge the central role of postsecondary education in employment and financial stability—but hardly think the current model is perfect. Three-quarters said college is unaffordable. And more than half said the quality of higher education is the same as or worse than in the past.

Charts available at the following link:

http://public.tableausoftware.com/shared/CGZRZWZYW?:display_count=yes

Despite those concerns, the notion of earning a college degree appears to be powerful. Of those who do not have a college degree or certificate, more than four in 10 said they had thought about going back to college in the past year. More than one in five said they were "very likely" to do so.

Mr. Busted said that enthusiasm could provide a critical boost to Lumina's college-completion agenda, which aims to restore the United States as the world leader in the proportion of adults who hold college degrees by 2025. Lumina's goal is for 60 percent of

Americans to hold a "high-quality degree, certificate, or other credential." Currently, about 40 percent of American adults hold a two- or four-year degree.

Since the data set of those interviewed was statistically weighted to reflect the adult population of the United States, Mr. Busted said, that means 55 million Americans said they had thought about going back to college. And 28 million are very likely to do it. About 23 million adults would need to earn college credentials to close the completion gap, he said.

But the quality of that education—and whether it results in a certificate or a degree that leads to employment—matters most. "A good job is now what Americans want out of college," Mr. Busted said. "Not just a degree."

Calls for a Redesign

Several leaders in higher-education policy said the survey's findings should prod campus officials and policy makers to shed outdated notions of who students are, why they enroll in college, how to educate them, and how to assess what they've learned.

Breaking free of the credit hour, as currently defined, could liberate colleges to be innovative in delivering a quality education to students, suggested Paul J. LeBlanc, president of Southern New Hampshire University. Speaking during a panel discussion here following the report's release, he said that at his institution the creation of competency-based education has allowed for a more-direct determination of what students are learning. The approach, which has been approved by the university's regional accreditor, would allow students who pass a series of assessments to earn credits without attending classes.

For Michelle Asha Cooper, president of the Institute for Higher Education Policy, a successful redesign of higher education means focusing more—and meaningfully—on adult students' needs. The survey findings, she said, indicate that nearly all adults think higher education is important—but only a quarter think it's affordable, and more than a third say that family responsibilities are a barrier to re-enrollment. It's time, she said, to "think about education in a different way."

"We have refused to allow ourselves to think creatively and act creatively about what college can be for today's students," Ms. Cooper said. "The model that we're using is a model that is based in a traditional notion of higher education, and now, when we look at today's student body, over 75 percent of the student body is nontraditional."

Collaboration across sectors, strong partnerships between campuses and industry, meaningful engagement from civic leaders, and better communication with policy makers for elementary and secondary schools—all are necessary approaches to recast today's higher-education landscape in a way that will benefit students for generations to come, the experts said.

"We've got to think about how to create more opportunities for a large number of people at a very high-quality level," said Jamie P. Merisotis, Lumina's president and chief executive. "Because that's what society demands."

Dan Walters: School finance plan creates coalitions

By Dan Walters
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Whenever the governor or the Legislature proposes a change in how California's public schools are financed, someone almost immediately creates a spreadsheet that shows which districts would gain money and which would lose.

The losers quickly coalesce to oppose any formulaic change and that usually dooms the proposal, regardless of its merits.

Last week, Gov. Jerry Brown released a spreadsheet on his proposal to radically revamp state school aid to give more money – a lot more money, eventually – to districts with large numbers of poor and/or "English learner" students on the theory that they need more individualized attention.

It's probably a valid theory, although hard evidence of its efficacy is difficult to find. But by graphically demonstrating which districts would receive big injections of cash over the next several years and which wouldn't, the spreadsheet draws political battle lines.

The big winners would be big urban districts – giant Los Angeles Unified particularly – and small rural districts, both of which have big proportions of poor Latino students. The big losers, financially speaking, would be districts in mostly white and affluent residential enclaves – such as Beverly Hills Unified and those in the tony suburbs of San Francisco. Eventually, the former would receive about 50 percent more per-pupil financing than the latter.

Critics are already noting that in addition to a large state aid boost under the governor's new formula, Los Angeles Unified would retain hundreds of millions of dollars in a special pot of money, with the obfuscating name of "targeted instructional improvement bloc grant," that Brown exempted from the overall streamlining of state aid.

TIIB, as it's called, was originally ginned up to pay L.A. Unified for its highly controversial busing program to offset racial segregation in the 1970s, but has remained on the books ever since. Critics see its retention as a payoff to the huge district and its political allies.

Brown's plan received qualified endorsements last week from the Public Policy Institute of California and the Legislature's budget analyst, Mac Taylor, although PPIC says it ignores federal funds for the educationally disadvantaged and Taylor is critical of retaining TIIB for L.A. Unified.

Getting past suburban opposition will be tough. One notion being floated would be to soften the opposition with a constitutional amendment lowering the vote threshold for

local "parcel taxes," thereby making it easier for the affluent districts to close the funding gap in Brown's plan.

In the overall context, however, the forthcoming school finance battle is essentially a class conflict – neither the first nor the last in a state that is stratifying along economic, ethnic, cultural and even geographic lines.

Brown's school funding plan draws mixed reactions

BY TERESA WATANABE, Los Angeles Times

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In the Anaheim City School District, where most students are low-income and struggling to learn English, teachers need special training, extra tutoring time and lots of visual materials to help their pupils achieve at grade level.

In the well-heeled Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District, poverty and limited English are not widespread problems. But officials there say their student needs include more expensive Advanced Placement classes to challenge them with college-level material in high school.

Who should get more state educational dollars? Last week, school districts got their first glimpse of how that question would be answered under Gov. Jerry Brown's proposed new funding formula: Anaheim would receive an estimated \$11,656 per student annually; Palos Verdes would get \$8,429 by the time the plan is fully implemented in seven years.

And that disparity draws distinctly different reactions.

"It's great news," said Darren Dang, Anaheim's assistant superintendent of administrative services. "Given our demographics, we'll be getting much-needed resources for our students."

But Lydia Cano, Palos Verdes' deputy superintendent of business services, said she believed the new scheme would shortchange her students. Disadvantaged students already receive a bigger share of state and federal dollars, she said.

"It's not fair," she said. "It will make the divide even bigger."

In the most significant change in four decades in how school dollars would be distributed, Brown is proposing to give all districts a base grant, then add an extra 35% of that for each student who is low-income, struggling with English or in foster care. If such students make up more than 50% of a district's population, another 35% supplement would be given.

The formula is part of Brown's proposed budget, which requires the Legislature's approval.

Under the proposal, the state would do away with most so-called categorical funding — which was earmarked for such specific uses as textbooks, remediation and low-income student aid. Instead, the money would be given directly to districts with no strings attached, to promote Brown's goal of greater local control.

The plan is aimed at reforming what most educators agree is an inequitable, burdensome and overly complex funding system. It is grounded in a 2008 report coauthored by state Board of Education President Michael Kirst that compiled research showing that parental income and English language ability are two critical factors in academic achievement.

Kirst argued that it was more important to help needy students gain grade-level skills than it is to provide college-level work for top-achieving high schoolers. "These are judgments about political priorities," he said.

About 20 states currently distribute extra dollars to needier students, including Rhode Island and New York, according to Margaret Weston of the Public Policy Institute of California. Poor districts in California already receive about 20% more in state and federal dollars than do affluent ones, but Brown's formula would increase that share, she said.

After four years of crippling budget cuts, the Los Angeles Unified School District is expected to receive an estimated boost of \$820 more per student over the next two years under Brown's proposal. By 2020, funding is expected to grow to \$11,993 per student from \$7,509 last year.

L.A. Supt. John Deasy hailed the governor's proposal. "It's morally the right thing to do and educationally the sound thing to do," he said.

Like many administrators, however, Deasy cautioned that it would take a few years of increases to make up for the state's devastating reductions since 2007. New spending could possibly begin in 2015, he said, adding that he would recommend restorations in summer school, counselors, arts and support staff, among other things.

He also said he would make it the district's "policy and practice" to send the state dollars for disadvantaged students directly to their schools to help them. Some officials, such as Dang in Anaheim, have expressed concerns about possible pressure to use the money for salary hikes.

Over the next five years, per-student funding is expected to grow by about \$2,700, the state estimates showed. All school districts and charter schools would receive at least as much money this year as last.

In Los Angeles County, funding estimates range from a low of \$7,863 per student in the Hermosa Beach City School District to \$13,569 for Animo Leadership High, an independent charter school in Inglewood.

Long Beach, San Bernardino City and Santa Ana unified all are estimated to receive funding boosts of \$800 to \$1,000 per student over the next two years. But the state projects an increase of less than half that for more affluent districts, such as San Marino, Palos Verdes Peninsula and Manhattan Beach unified.

Julie Boucher, San Marino's assistant superintendent of business services, said she was dismayed that Brown was not proposing to first restore general funding that the state has cut since 2007 before allocating additional dollars to specific students.

San Marino's state funding has been slashed by \$17 million since 2008 — a total equivalent to 60% of its annual budget. The district has received \$3.1 million annually from its nonprofit fundraising foundation and \$5.1 million from a parcel tax but still has worked with its employee unions to freeze salaries, require larger contributions for healthcare, cut 26 teaching positions and shorten the school calendar with unpaid furlough days, she said.

"It does not seem equitable given the fact that we're all down," she said of Brown's proposal. "First we need to be made whole. Don't rob Peter to pay Paul."

During a recent visit to Ponderosa Elementary School in Anaheim, however, educators demonstrated how teaching lower-income English learners is more costly and time-consuming.

In Bernadette Grzechowiak's fifth-grade classroom, for instance, students were learning how to find main ideas in a passage about Native Americans. But unlike fluent English speakers, she said, those with limited language skills need far more visual aids — presented every 60 to 90 seconds, according to research. Her room is filled with graphics about colonial America and sentence frames to teach them academic language, such as "One detail that supports the main idea is..."

Grzechowiak said she learned those and other techniques from a district-paid teaching coach.

Ponderosa has also spent \$10,000 on a science book series heavy on photos and graphics to help students learning English. And the school has two full-time teachers to provide extra support for struggling students and a bilingual community liaison to help educate the school's largely immigrant parents about their children's academic needs.

"Kids are so hungry and ready to learn," said Maria Villegas, the principal. "It just takes time, opportunity and having a great staff."