

Notes from Small & Rural Districts Listening Session – March 5, 2025

Key Takeaways:

- Credentialing, compensation, and housing create staffing challenges for small and rural districts. There are several examples of counties collaborating to identify solutions for housing but more advocacy is needed for adequate compensation and reciprocity with neighboring states (specifically Oregon).
- Policy and legislation have provided funding for special education and for counties with unique needs however there are several roadblocks and challenges to receiving or directing funds towards needs. Opportunity to advocate for exemptions, deregulations and other policy changes to empower county boards.
- We can work to remove the stigmas associated with Career and Technical Education programs and opportunities at the community college level

Identifying Challenges & Opportunities Discussion	
Education Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community school has grown from 1 teacher to 2. Not that more kids are sent punitively but students are transferring to community school feeling it may be a better environment. Exciting that we can meet the needs for students many students.
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPED staffing remains a challenge and concerning. We're a rural community of about 1500 people that's about 40 miles from the closest city and many of our teachers don't live here. How do we attract talent to our program when cost of living is so high and commutes may be longer. Financially - staffing per diem for SPED was equal with other teachers and as a more challenging classroom SPED classrooms need more considerations for support (staffing, pay) • Should investigate why districts are taking SPED away from counties. In Del Norte they're short 6 SPED teachers and they hired teachers from overseas because it was easier to hire talent from the Philippines than it is to hire from Oregon due to regulations around reciprocity. How can we influence credentialing at the DOE level? • We should advocate for reciprocity with states like Oregon. In Oregon they're allowed to major in SPED. Pushback comes from within CSU and UC systems because they earn money through credentialing. It makes no sense for credentialed teachers from Oregon to take California history etc. to gain credentials here. We can partner with state SELF orgs. • Mariposa USD has a lot of federal land in their district including Yosemite. Noticed that their county is missing out on \$650K a year in property tax. Receives \$350K from the federal government to educate students on federal lands but it must be split with Mariposa county so BOE gets \$150K which is not enough. Just above criteria for basic aid with ADA is about 1700 students and small schools, one with a body of 35. Challenge to direct resources to where they're needed. • Significant need for teachers to secure housing. Teachers are unable to live in communities because there's not enough housing or it's too expensive • Several counties have smaller districts where they're looking to provide for housing needs across the county in a way small school districts cannot • Monterey is discussing a multi county coalition to work with a developer to collaborate on a solution that helps large urban and rural districts

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We should attach ourselves to the work CSBA has done. In Del Norte Mike has talked to hospital, city, county and district on how they should come together for solutions. ● Housing is a significant issue because Calaveras is where people own their second homes or keep for Airbnb resulting in a lot of vacant homes. Looking to address it at the board of supervisors level. Member of the executive council where they've noticed that the number of students have IEPs have increased significantly over time.
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need to make it clear where funding comes from and we need to streamline DOE so that counties and small schools get what they need. ACCBE allows us to advocate together ● SPED, federal funds are provided for SPED but it's not as much as was promised in the 70s when legislation was written. We could do more if we had more funding for SPED ● Had to close schools when budgets were reduced. An idea they have is a lease-lease back program where a contractor builds duplexes on county property allowing the contractor to collect rent for 10-15 before transferring ownership to county.
Compliance Bureaucracy, Legal & Other Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● DC is somewhat chaotic, however the chair of K12 Education Sub committee is from California— Kevin Kiley. He is someone we should consider engaging.
Board Governance & Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Three members of her county board are new (serving 4 years or less). Could use training on how to work with the superintendent and their team. The board is collaborative but one board member derails the meetings, would love a training that models how to facilitate productive meetings. ● ACCBE does a great job of informing boards of what their role is. Your basic trainings, and handbook were great resources. Agree with Janet that training on role with superintendent and support with tactics (like navigating team dynamics and facilitating productive meetings).
Top Legislative Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clean Energy legislation requires county to install solar panels that may not work because of fog in their region, would like to see exemptions for small counties and districts who may have challenges with compliance ● Interesting that regulations and requirements are based on communities in closer proximity to one another.
Big Ideas & Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wishes we didn't constantly push students to college. There's a need for post-secondary education and certification but the tendency is shifting to CTE instead of college. It's important that we remove stigmas around CTE. There's still value in general education and arts, it's a matter of being in balance. ● During covid the trades were considered essential. Not every child wants to go to college. ● Community college should be discussed as a next step as they have CTE training programs ● Trade skills can be lucrative ● Would want all the various types of intelligence to be recognized within school settings.