



May 9, 2022

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond
California Department of Education
1430 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Superintendent Thurmond,

We are writing to express our deep concern regarding reports the California School Board Association (CSBA) and Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) have received from the field about severe issues with the CALPADS system. Our members report experiencing significant challenges with CALPADS in recent weeks, to the extent that some consider the system as it currently stands unusable.

The issues are impacting a wide variety of systems from student information, special education, and child nutrition to CAASPP and Smarter Balanced testing. In addition to these anecdotal reports, the status page on the CALPADS website shows that there are nearly 300 active issues with only 13 resolved in the last two weeks.

Many of these issues have a direct impact on students. Among other examples, CSBA and ACSA have received reports that:

- The Test Operations Management System (TOMS) is not communicating with CALPADS. While CDE has implemented a workaround wherein information like testing accommodations and new students manually uploaded twice a week, testing is happening daily — this disconnect causes scheduling and logistical problems in conducting high-stakes testing and prevents students with IEPs from receiving the accommodations they need.
- Processing a student transfer in a single upload file is impossible and LEAs are only able to manually enroll new students if the prior LEA has closed out the record, which must also be done manually. With staff reluctant to make changes manually while the system is experiencing so many problems, this creates cascading issues where students cannot be enrolled in their new district.
- CALPADS now assigns new SSIDs to new students rather than comparing to existing data and providing the appropriate SSID or likely matches, creating multiple identifier anomalies. CDE has recommended LEAs manually search student-by-student to assign SSIDs — an onerous amount of clean-up work that will have to be done for thousands of student records at a time when staff are already stretched thin.
- CALPADS has created inadvertent issues with the Special Education Information System (SEIS) API, causing uploads of special education data to be paused for a month. For example, our members report that when a special education student transfers, they are unable to retrieve information on that student's IEP. Forced to rely on printing out hard copies, schools and teachers are concerned about missing deadlines and tests and their ability to provide accommodations — and about the liability and funding consequences they face.

These challenges have reached critical mass far beyond IT departments' capabilities and are affecting operational functions at the district and school level. While larger LEAs may have technical teams who can work around these challenges, those at smaller LEAs may be unable to do so. With the end of the school year rapidly approaching, special attention to this issue is particularly needed given many of the staff who

manage CALPADS are 10- or 11-month employees, and many LEAs may soon lack the capacity to correct or manage these ongoing issues.

The impacts on special education and testing provide particularly concerning examples of the far-reaching impacts these issues may cause. CALPADS is the intake system for CDE dashboard data and data that is released to the public. As the end of the year approaches, districts are increasingly concerned that they will be held accountable for inaccurate data. Additionally, local staff have reported that the response from CDE indicates that state-level staff may not fully understand the grave impact these ongoing problems will have for LEAs.

At a time when schools already face considerable duress due to the COVID-19 pandemic, declining enrollment and other pressures, it is imperative that the CDE is transparent with LEAs about the problems facing the CALPADS system and provides a full assessment of the situation and the tools for districts and county offices of education to address these issues.

Whether these are isolated instances or endemic of issues statewide, we ask that fixes to the system be implemented quickly to ensure LEAs are able to meet their statutory obligations.

Sincerely,



Vernon M. Billy
CEO & Executive Director
California School Boards Association



Edgar Zazueta
Incoming Executive Director
Association of California School Administrators