

State of California  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## A BRIEF SUMMARY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

1. State School Laws

The founders of the State of California drew up a State Constitution in 1849. They saw the need for educating the children and youth of the State so that they could become good citizens.

Our school laws are based on the provision of our 1849 Constitution which declares: "The Legislature shall provide for a system of common schools by which a free school shall be kept up and supported in each district at least six months in every year..."

Ever since 1850, the Legislature has enacted many laws that govern the Public School System. Because the State has grown rapidly, and many special problems have arisen in public education, the statutory school laws of California today fill a book of some 1750 pages, called the California Education Code.

2. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

The State Constitution provides that a Superintendent of Public Instruction shall be elected by the people at each gubernatorial election for a four-year term. He is required by law to be "non-partisan" -- not allied with any political party. The Superintendent is the Chief Administrative Officer and Director of the State Department of Education, and the Executive Officer of the State Board of Education. Among his duties are the inspection of the schools to determine their condition and the apportionment of the state funds provided by law for support of local schools, duties carried out by members of the State Department of Education.

3. State Board of Education

Policy decisions at the State level in educational matters, except those concerning the University of California, state colleges, junior colleges, and privately-owned and operated schools, are the responsibility of the State Board of Education.

The members of the Board are appointed by the Governor for a term of four years, subject to confirmation by two-thirds of the members of the State Senate. The State Board of Education is the governing and policy-determining body of the State Department of Education. One important duty of the State Board is to select the textbooks that are to be distributed free for the use of pupils in the elementary schools.

4. State Department of Education

The California State Department of Education is the agency of State Government created in 1921 by constitutional and statutory provisions for the regulation and control of the public elementary and high schools of California.

As previously stated, the Chief Administrative Officer and Director of the Department is the Superintendent of Public Instruction; the State Board of Education is the policy-making unit of the Department, the State Special Schools, and for certain responsibilities relating to the public elementary and high schools administered by local boards of education.

The responsibilities of the Department are discharged by a staff of administrative personnel. To a large extent, the administrative function of the Department is performed by the Superintendent and his staff through professional direction and leadership rather than by direct intervention in local school administration, and by professional advisory and consultant services to local school personnel.

The statutory enactments of 1927, which created the present organization of State Government in California, established the State Department of Education in a form that was modified by reorganizations in 1947, 1961 and 1969. The organization of the Department was changed by consolidating the existing administrative units into the following offices and agencies:

1. Division of Libraries

This division maintains a collection of books, government documents, maps, etc. for the Legislature, executive branch of State Government, and public libraries of California. It stimulates and develops public library service through field service, provides a "talking book" service for the blind, and represents the State in the accumulation and preservation of historical material regarding the State. The Division Chief, who is the State Librarian, is appointed by the Governor. The Division receives from the Department of Education chiefly personnel and accounting services.

2. Legal Office

This office provides legal services to the Superintendent of Public Instruction and his staff, the State Board of Education, and to the staffs of the special schools, service agencies, and divisions in the Department.

3. Division of Special Education

This division provides administration and educational support for the State residential schools for the deaf, blind, and neurologically handicapped children. It also provides consultants to local schools on educational programs for the handicapped.

4. Division of Instruction

This is the division through which consultant, advisory and supervisory service in the field of instruction are provided. The two major functions of this unit are coordination and improvement of instruction. The division is staffed with experienced specialists in elementary and secondary education. In addition, this division has specialized experts in audio-visual, physical education, health, and guidance. The State-Federal Program of Vocational Education in agriculture, business, homemaking, and industrial education is coordinated through specialists of this division. The National Defense Education Act is a Federal-State Program to stimulate public education in science, mathematics, and foreign languages, and teacher education and research in this area. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 provides Federal funds for a great variety of educational programs.

## 5. Division of School Administration and Finance

This division assists local school districts in non-instructional areas. The services furnished are those related to local school administration, and are in the school planning of sites, buildings and facilities; school district organization and administrative research; Federal-State school lunch program; State elementary school textbooks; distribution of surplus Federal property; children's centers; and advisory service in public school finance and attendance. This division is responsible for the apportionment of the State funds to local elementary and secondary schools which totaled \$1,325,000,000 for the 1968-69 fiscal year.

## 6. Division of Departmental Administration

This division provides executive, fiscal, data processing, publications, teacher education, certification and accreditation, accounting, and personnel services for the Department of Education. For administrative services, the California Maritime Academy is included in this division.

## 7. Division of Compensatory Education

This division provides administration and educational support for Title I of the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and the McAteer Act (State program relating to compensatory education). It also provides statewide consultative services for local school districts engaged in compensatory education.

## 5. How Many Children and Teachers?

Your school "takes the roll" every day because it is important in the business of operating public schools to know exactly how many children attend school as required by State law. For State apportionment purposes an accounting is made at the end of each school month. The number of children in attendance controls the amount of money the State will apportion to the districts that operate the local schools.

A statewide count of enrollment is taken in the fall and again in the spring of each school year. In the spring of 1969, California's public elementary and high schools enrolled 4,929,993 pupils. This included adults in night schools and children in special classes. The number of pupils enrolled in the regular day school grades, from kindergarten through grade 12, was 4,364,637.

The number of full-time teachers working in the classrooms with the boys and girls during the 1968-69 school year was 183,615.

## 6. County and District School Services

The county superintendents of schools are elected or appointed depending upon the charter of the county. The law assigns to these officers and their staff many important duties, including distribution of the State funds that are apportioned by the State Superintendent, keeping records of teachers credentials (licenses), and furnishing educational services to smaller schools. A county board of education elected by the voters of the county establishes policy on county school problems.

In the last survey reported by the Division of Public School Administration, there were 1144 school districts in the State. Many of them support more than one school for their children.

The individual school districts have boards of trustees or, in the case of the larger districts, boards of education which are elected by the people in most of our communities. These boards select the certificated and non-certificated employees of the district and represent the people of the community in the conduct of the local schools.

Office of Superintendent  
State Department of Education  
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