

LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT:

Mr. James Mousalimas—San Joaquin County Superintendent of Schools



What led you to become County Superintendent?

The definition of an architect is “Chief Builder.” I was in a master’s program, pursuing a degree in architecture when I took a year off to join the Peace Corps. While my interest in building monuments that would form lasting impressions did not wane, my tools and focus did. I entered the world of education and it became my dream to help build our future leaders. I felt a responsibility to run for County Superintendent and build upon the outstanding work SJCOE has done for so many years.

What inspired you to enter the field of education?

Two West African boys, Diallo and Abdullai. I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in West Africa, teaching high school and coaching basketball. I had never formally taught students prior to the Peace Corps. The more time I spent with my young West African students, the more I saw the wonder in their eyes as we discovered a new lesson, as we shared a meal, or when I taught them a new basketball skill—I learned that I had a passion for teaching. I returned to California, taught mathematics at Richmond Unified (now West Contra Costa USD) and never looked back.

Do you have a particular goal that drives you?

“An educated citizenry is a vital requisite for our survival as a free people,” is a quote that has been attributed to Thomas Jefferson. I believe in the value of public education; it is an essential component of our democratic society. We have to continue to improve public education and address the inequities that exist within the system. I am committed to working to improve public education so that every child has an opportunity to receive a high quality education.

What objectives do you hope to achieve?

Our first goal has been to reestablish trust and forge partnerships with our 14 school districts and charter schools in San Joaquin County. It is essential that all of us in public education are working together to provide the best education possible for all children. In addition to providing direct programs to students, SJCOE is a service organization that can and should positively impact public education in our county. We have also focused on improving STEM and Career Technical Education. We are developing an outstanding STEM center and programs that will provide training, support and opportunities for teachers, administrators and students. Finally, our Teachers College of San Joaquin is an essential tool in preparing effective teachers and administrators for our region. TCSJ provides credential, masters degree and certificate programs to help address the shortage of qualified educators.

What are your interests?

I love to travel and experience new cultures, cuisines and languages. My wife and I worked at American International Schools for seven years and had the opportunity to travel extensively. We were able to travel to Western Europe with our daughters in 2013 and seem to be always planning our next trip.

Who are the special people in your life?

My wife, Diane, and three daughters, Ariane, Gianna and Paris. Diane and I have been married for 25 years; she was an English and Drama teacher and now runs her own jewelry design business. My oldest daughter, Ariane, is graduating from UC Davis in June; my middle daughter, Gianna, will be a freshman at UC Berkeley this fall; and Paris is a freshman at Tracy High School. I am truly blessed to have such a wonderful family.

FROM THE DESK OF:

Peter Birdsall, CCSESA Executive Director

As I write this column there are several important issues in flux as the Governor and Legislature work towards an agreement on the 2015-16 state budget. By the time we meet in Pasadena in late June, we should have answers on most or all of these issues.

It appears there is agreement on the \$40 million in funding for county offices of education to support our work on LCAPs. That is great news and sets the stage for our continued efforts to strengthen the capacity of county superintendents to support their school districts in the LCAP process, and to work with the Administration to obtain ongoing funding for this important work.

Less clear is where the Legislature and Governor are going on teacher and administrator quality issues. The Senate approved \$800 million for “educator effectiveness” that was not in the Governor’s proposal. There are serious concerns, however, that this funding is politically linked to efforts to approve legislation to expand the scope of collective bargaining to address teacher and administrator evaluation. Interestingly, \$190 million was approved by the Assembly for BTSAs and PARs, two former categorical programs which also were not part of the Governor’s budget proposal.

There is agreement that major funding will be made available for Career Technical Education (CTE) grants, but significant disagreements remain about how that funding will be allocated. Both the Senate and Assembly took action to make allocations on a per ADA basis, rather than pursuant to competitive grants. It is unclear how the new grants are structured in terms of supporting regional programs or in terms of meeting the quality standards that the Governor included in his proposal. Clearly these are critical details both in terms of reaching a political agreement on the funding, and in terms of how county superintendents and school districts move forward to support quality CTE programs.

We are actively involved in discussions about each of these topics. By the time of our June meeting, we expect to be in a position to have substantive discussions among the county superintendents about how to move forward on each of these critical issues.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

June General Membership Meeting: CCSESA General Membership will meet in Pasadena from June 28-30. Registration is now open. Contact JaConya Merchant if you have any questions; jmerchant@ccsesa.org.

CCSESA’s Cindy Ridley to Retire in May: After nearly 10 years with CCSESA, Cindy Ridley will move on to new adventures in retirement. Her last day with CCSESA will be May 29. We thank Cindy for her tireless support to the Association’s financial matters and the CCSESA Arts Initiative, and we wish her all the best.

Welcome to Alex DeCaprio!
We are pleased to introduce our newest Executive Assistant, Alexandra DeCaprio. Alex comes to us from U.C. Berkeley, and will provide support to the Executive Director and on the CCSESA budget and steering committee finances.

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Executive Assistant

ESEA REAUTHORIZATION—WE’LL KNOW MORE SOON

In early May, a group of county superintendents and CCSESA staff went to Washington, D.C., to urge members of Congress to take action on the critical issue of ESEA reauthorization. Veteran consultants and staff in Washington are split on how likely it is that ESEA will be reauthorized this year, but they are all in agreement that June will be a critical month.

During the coming month, the Senate is scheduled to debate and take action on the Senate version, the Every Child Achieves Act, which passed the Senate policy committee unanimously earlier this year. Although the bill clearly had bi-partisan support in committee, the issue in June will be how Senators take action on a wide range of amendments that will likely be offered on the Senate floor. Some are amendments that, if approved, would likely

make it more difficult to get the votes to pass the amended package off the floor.

On the horizon is the House of Representatives, which so far has failed to approve its own version of an ESEA reauthorization bill, H.R. 5 (also known as the Student Success Act). In meetings with House majority staff during the CCSESA advocacy trip, it was clear that they have not given up the fight for H.R. 5. However, leadership in the House has been conspicuously silent on the bill, indicating that, at least for now, ESEA reauthorization is not a top priority for the majority party in House.

It is unclear how a Senate bill with bi-partisan support will be received in the House. However, it is fairly clear that nothing will be enacted this year if a Senate bill fails to make it out of the Senate in June and move over to the House.

NEWS FROM THE CCSESA ARTS INITIATIVE

NEW WEBSITE LAUNCH

CCSESA Arts Initiative launched its newly designed website on May 1, 2015. The site includes a new repository of professional learning resources focused on arts learning and Common Core State Standards produced by Regional Arts Leads and their arts organization partners as part of the Creativity at the Core Grant program sponsored by CCSESA and funded by the California Arts Council and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Hats off to Christina Marcellus, CCSESA Project Coordinator, and the Honey Agency for the yearlong process of redesigning the web site. Please take a look: www.ccsesaarts.org.

OTIS CREATIVE ECONOMY REPORT

The results of the 2014 Otis Report on the Creative Economy of California were recently unveiled in a hearing before the Legislative Joint Committee on the Arts. The Otis Report (available [here](#)) highlights California's competitive advantage in the creative sector and underscores the need to bolster the talent pipeline through support for the arts and arts education. The Otis Report has become a powerful advocacy tool and catalyst for change by clearly articulating the economic benefits of the creative industries, quantifying their financial

impact in the economy, and putting real numbers to the creative workforce. Significant findings in the 2014 Otis Report include:

- Creative industry output totaled \$293.8 billion (direct, indirect, and induced).
- The creative industries generated 1,447,100 jobs (direct, indirect, and induced), or nearly one in ten of all wage and salary employment; \$113.5 billion in total labor income, and \$12.1 billion in taxes to California state and local governments.
- Direct, indirect and induced jobs in the creative economy accounted for 9.6% of the state's total workforce.
- The largest direct job counts by creative sector in California were entertainment (164,000), publishing and printing (131,200), and fashion (120,100).

"The Otis Report leaves no doubt that creativity is a powerful economic driver both regionally and statewide," said Otis' Interim President Kerry Walk. " With jobs in the creative industries projected to grow 4% statewide - an increase of more than 27,000 - it is critical that leaders from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors work together to develop and sustain the talent pipeline that feeds the creative economy of California."

JEFF HARRIS TO ASSUME DEL NORTE SUPERINTENDENT SEAT

As Del Norte County Superintendent of Schools Don Olsen prepares to retire in July, Jeff Harris, current superintendent-principal of North Cow Creek Elementary School, has been selected to take the helm. The Del Norte County Unified School District Board of Trustees is now working to finalize the formal agreement with Mr. Harris. Prior to his current position, Mr. Harris served as a principal in the Corning Union Elementary School District in Tehama, and Delano School District in Kern. We look forward to working with

Mr. Harris when he takes office this summer. Additional information is available [here](#).

Don Olson has been the county superintendent in Del Norte since 2011. Among other initiatives, Mr. Olson has focused on improving student access to both educational technology and arts learning, in addition to addressing the chronic absenteeism and truancy rates in the county. He will be missed, but we are pleased to wish him a happy retirement.

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