

Responsibilities Of Various Agencies In Operating Schools Are Outlined

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The Federal government, the State of California, the fifty-eight counties, and the 2,900 active school districts all have a hand in the education of the youth of California. It is the purpose of this article to explain briefly the duties of each of these four governmental levels regarding public education. Complete accuracy will be sacrificed in order to present a simplified over-view of the highly-involved interjurisdictional relationships.

It is generally agreed that education is a national interest, a state function, and a local responsibility. It has long been recognized that a nation cannot be self-governing unless it is made up of an educated public, capable of reading and understanding national and local problems, and expressing opinions on them in the exercise of the right to vote. The men who framed the United States Constitution recognized that if it would be impossible to maintain a democratic nation unless the individual citizens were sufficiently educated so as to be able to vote intelligently on the issues which they knew would arise down through the years.

However, they believed it would not be feasible to impose a national system of instruction upon the new nation. Instead, education was left to the various states, with the federal government taking a keen interest in encouraging and assisting in public education indirectly. Therefore, education is now conceived as being a national interest, a state function, and a local responsibility.

In California, the State Constitution provides for a system of free public instruction. The State Legislature has enacted the legal provisions under this constitutional authority which are the framework for the public school system of California. All the legislative enactments pertaining to schools have been combined in one volume, known as the Education Code. From time to time the people have specifically amended the Constitution regarding the public schools, thus altering the original framework.

In California, the local responsibility is borne by the governing board of the local school district, the members of which are elected by the people. They are charged with the responsibility of actually conducting the schools insofar as their actions are consistent with the Education Code and the Constitution. The county assists as an intermediary agency between the

State Department of Education and the local school districts. In addition to caring for numerous legal requirements, particularly in financial and business matters, the county office is charged with the responsibility of providing an overall educational leadership to the schools of the county. This leadership is provided in varying degrees to the several types of school districts found in each county and is furnished by means of numerous professional services.

State Function
The framers of the United States Constitution recognized the importance of an enlightened public if our form of government was to survive, but as previously indicated they deliberately left education as a duty and function to be performed by the various states. The State of California has guaranteed free public education in its Constitution and has by law established the framework under which the public schools are operated.

For example, a minimum of 170 days instruction per year is required of all public schools. The minimum salary which may be paid a teacher is \$1,800 per year. Certain fundamental subjects and the minimum number of minutes which must be devoted to each are set up in the law. Thus, the teaching of American history and Government is required for one year both in elementary school and in high school. Similarly, reading, writing, spelling and other so-called fundamental subjects are required. However, the district may go beyond these minimum requirements if it desires to do so.

A liberal state system of support of public education, which may be supplemented by local taxation within legal limitations, is provided in California. Uniform school budget and accounting procedures are required by the state.

Believing that education should be kept "close to the hearts of the people," the state has in turn provided for the organization of the entire state into school districts. Some 2,900 districts actually operate the public schools within the general framework provided by the State Constitution and subsequent legislative enactments.

In general, school boards are elected by the people of their respective areas to manage the affairs of the school districts. It is the duty of each governing board to employ a chief administrator who is known as the "superintendent" in districts employing eight or more teachers. He is charged with the responsibility of executing the pol-

icies of the board and administering the school system.

It is the duty of the local governing board to:

1. Plan, develop, and adopt an annual budget, which results in the ultimate tax imposed on property in the local school district by the County Board of Supervisors.
2. Authorize and approve all expenditures.
3. Employ personnel on the recommendation of the superintendent.
4. Formulate policies for the district and evaluate the results.

In the performance of the above duties, the Board actually spends the money for the district, determines salary schedules and work loads for teachers, plans and constructs new school buildings, determines what transportation shall be provided for pupils, and represents the people, both as parents and taxpayers, in all matters pertaining to the public schools.

The Board must conform to provision of state law. For example, it may pay a higher salary than \$1,800 per year, but not less than that amount. It may operate a school for more than 170 days, but not less than 170 days. It may spend more time teaching history than the law requires, but not less. It may provide a more diversified curriculum than required, but it may not omit State which is required, nor may it teach reli-

gion, prohibited.

Having adopted policies and general overall procedures, all within the framework of the state law, the detail of actual administration is left to the employees of the board through the direction of the local superintendent of schools.

The County—An Intermediary
The office of the County Superintendent of Schools serves as an intermediary agency between the State and the local districts in providing educational leadership for the schools, and in discharging various legally required procedures in connection with the State Department of Education, the County Board of Supervisors, the County Board of Education and the local school districts. In addition, it performs numerous legally required duties delegated to it by the State.

In each county there is a county board of education, appointed by the County Board of Supervisors. In conjunction with the County Superintendent of Schools, the County Board of Education develops and adopts an elementary course of study for all non-city elementary school districts, provides for research and guidance activities, curriculum plans and coordination, conducts hearings regarding revocation of teacher certificates, and performs various other legally-required functions.

The County Superintendent serves as a trained, professional person on behalf of the County Board of Education in developing elementary course of study material. He acts for the State Department of Education in statistical and many legally-required functions prescribed by the Education Code. He works in conjunction with the County Board of Supervisors in connection with boundary changes, annexations, etc. He conducts his own responsibilities imposed on him by the Education Code. One of the duties imposed on the County Superintendent by the Education Code is budgetary control of school district finances and the approval of all warrants for legality of expenditure. School district warrants in California are drawn by the district on the county treasurer; they are then checked for legality by the county superintendent of schools, further audited by the county auditor, and then go back to the district for disbursement. The County Superintendent of Schools and County Board of Education also provide for the purchase of standard school supplies for non-city elementary school districts. In some counties this job has been delegated to the County Purchasing Agent.

Supervision of instruction of elementary school districts under 900 average daily attendance is an obligation imposed on the County Superintendent of Schools. In Los Angeles county the following educational services are offered to all the schools of the county: audio-visual education; research and guidance service, which includes educational testing; coordination of instructional programs; coor-

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