

WEEKLY FLASH

Andy Ball, CEO of Webcor, Op Ed Draws Statewide Attention
The Chair of the Council's Education Committee wrote an op ed published in the *San Francisco Examiner* about education reform that is being fired around the state's education community and legislative leaders like a rubber pinball. It is well worth the read:

Education Reform Must Proceed

It was with great excitement when many of us heard that 2008 would finally be the long awaited "Year of Education Reform." California's education system has shameful deficiencies and is propped up by the legions of teachers, administrators, parents and concerned citizen who give their blood, sweat and tears to help our children succeed in spite of what could charitably be called "challenging circumstances." The system is failing and needs repair, no matter the distractions.

People who had been waiting years or even decades for the education reform window to open suddenly sprung into action for 2008. Massive amounts of bi-partisan research was conducted, statewide coalitions formed, the business community geared up for its goals, major charitable foundations changed their funding strategies to support the reform efforts, in short, a juggernaut got rolling whose momentum seemed unstoppable. In mid-2007, a series of studies let by Stanford University called "Getting Down to Facts," became ground zero for all involved as we waited for the clock to finally strike "2008."

Then, the budget crisis hit.

To say the budget has been distracting is an understatement, but the fact is many of the key education reforms must go on. Working for a company that is literally helping construct the new knowledge-based economy, I believe California's ability to produce a talented workforce is a matter of economic life or death, especially in the increasingly aggressive global economic competition. It is also a basic human imperative that we owe our children the best we can provide.

So where do we go from here? The good news is that the crisis has gotten so bad that all of the key players, from the unions, to the administrators, to the business community, to the school boards have come to the table, and the Stanford "Getting Down to Facts" studies are serving as an agreed upon foundation of facts. The areas covered include: school finance and governance systems; personnel policies; and, data and information systems.

The Bay Area Council is working on most of the areas of reform identified by the Stanford studies, but we have taken a statewide lead on data system reform. This is a natural fit for our members who know the value data provides.

Education leaders know the value too, they just can't access it. Unlike in other states, California's teachers and administrators do not have the information systems needed to understand what is working and where to best target resources for changes. Frankly, some of the most basic information is missing. We can't even accurately estimate how many students drop out of school each year. Meanwhile, in Florida, they have a system that tracks each individual student beyond K-12 and instead uses "P-20" to see how students perform from preschool all the way into the workforce, or end up in the prison system or on social services, such as welfare. Imagine the power of such a simple tool. With all due respect, if Florida can do it, so can we.

We recognize the difficulty of having comprehensive change discussions in a tough ... [\[READ MORE HERE\]](#)

VIEWPOINTS



Education reform must proceed

By Andy Ball

reform must continue. Working for a company that is literally helping construct the new knowledge-based economy, I believe California's ability to produce a talented workforce is a matter of economic life or death, especially in the increasingly aggressive global economic competition. It is also a basic human imperative that we owe our children the best we can provide.

So where do we go from here? The good news is that the crisis has gotten so bad that all of the key players, from the unions, to the administrators, to the business community, to the school boards have come to the table, and the Stanford "Getting Down to Facts" studies are serving as an agreed upon foundation of facts. The areas covered include: school finance and governance systems; personnel policies; and, data and information systems.

The Bay Area Council is working on most of the areas of reform identified by the Stanford studies, but we have taken a statewide lead on data system reform. This is a natural fit for our members who know the value data provides.

Education leaders know the value too, they just can't access it. Unlike in other states, California's teachers and administrators do not have the information systems needed to understand what is working and where to best target resources for changes. Frankly, some of the most basic information is missing. We can't even accurately estimate how many students drop out of school each year. Meanwhile, in Florida, they have a system that tracks each individual student beyond K-12 and instead uses "P-20" to see how students perform from preschool all the way into the workforce, or end up in the prison system or on social services, such as welfare. Imagine the power of such a simple tool. With all due respect, if Florida can do it, so can we.

We recognize the difficulty of having comprehensive change discussions in a tough budget year. When business leaders change initiatives, we too, don't try to do everything at all once. Strategic planning with a coordinated plan for additional investments is critical to long-term success. That said, the budget is not a blanket across-the-board veto. Key changes, such as the data system reform, that already passed Assembly Bill 680, can go on regardless of budget hiccups.

The Bay Area Council therefore calls on state leaders — Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, administrators and legislative leaders — the business and education communities, and the public to support bringing an education system to California.

A strategic investment such as this has a payoff that will far outweigh the small initial costs. With all of the stars finally aligned, we cannot let this 2008 opportunity pass.

Andy Ball is CEO of Webcor Builders and chair of the Bay Area Council's Education Committee.

- Thanks to our Flash sponsors:
- Deloitte
 - Aon
 - AT&T
 - Chevron
 - City National Bank
 - Dreyer's Grand Ice Cream
 - Hewlett Packard
 - KaiserAir
 - KB Home South Bay
 - Legacy Partners
 - M Squared Consulting
 - Marsh Risk & Insurance Services
 - McKinsey & Company
 - The Mechanics Bank
 - Nordstrom
 - O'Brien Homes
 - Pacific Gas and Electric
 - The PMI Group
 - Ponderosa Homes
 - Robert Half International
 - San Francisco Chronicle
 - San Francisco International Airport
 - Shapell Homes
 - Sunset Development Company