

DATE: JULY 8, 2021

CONGRATULATIONS TO MICHAEL KIRST, 2021 RECIPIENT OF THE JAMES BRYANT CONANT AWARD!

Education Commission of the States is pleased to honor Michael Kirst, former president of the California State Board of Education, with the 2021 James Bryant Conant Award, in recognition of his unwavering commitment to improving school finance systems to serve students more equitably.

Kirst, professor emeritus at Stanford University, is California's longest-serving board president, having held the post during both administrations of former Gov. Jerry Brown: once in the mid-1970s and almost 40 years later when Brown again became governor in 2010. The last eight years of Kirst's board leadership proved the most challenging and fruitful, as California embarked on a dramatic overhaul of its standards, curriculum frameworks, assessments and school accountability.



Perhaps most notable is the development of California's Local Control Funding Formula, which was enacted in 2013. The formula upended the state's previous way of funding schools to more equitably distribute funding to the schools with the greatest needs. It eliminated more than 40 categorical programs, giving more flexibility to districts to respond to local challenges and

opportunities. Since 2013, per-pupil funding has increased in schools serving predominantly students from low-income households; and an independent study shows that the increased funding is an important factor in improving outcomes among students.

Kirst is credited for not only developing the formula, but also creating and guiding the strategy and political coalitions needed to ultimately make the formula a reality. A former state superintendent of education calls it "likely the largest school equity restructuring ever undertaken in the state or the nation."

Education Commission of the States is grateful to Kirst for his steadfast commitment to equity and is pleased to honor him with this award. Kirst's acceptance remarks will be available at the [2021 Virtual Forum on Education Policy](#), taking place Oct. 20-21. Registration for this event opens in September.

The James Bryant Conant Award is one of [three awards](#) that Education Commission of the States gives each year to celebrate outstanding commitment to public education. The others are the Frank Newman Award for State Innovation, which recognizes states or territories, and the Education Commission of the States Corporate Award, which recognizes a for-profit corporation, nonprofit organization or foundation.

For more information about Kirst or California's funding formula, contact Janet Weeks, director of communications at the California State Board of Education, at jweeks@cde.ca.gov.

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