



CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE ON COMPUTER SCIENCE

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Position: Superintendent of Public Instruction
Candidate: Tony Thurmond

1. What do you think it will take to meet the growing demand for K-12 computer science education to prepare students for college, careers, and civic engagement? What specific steps would you take to address these needs?

California is widely recognized as the innovation capital of the world, yet [fewer than half](#) of K-12 schools in the state offer computer science courses. My top priority as Superintendent will be to modernize our curriculum so our schools are equipped to educate well-rounded students ready to compete in the global workforce. This means investing in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education across the state. As Superintendent, I will strengthen professional development for STEM educators, increase access to computer science education, and create public-private partnerships that prepare students for careers in technology. I began this work as Chair of the Assembly Select Committee on STEM Education, where I authored legislation (AB 2186) to expand courses in computer science and STEM education, particularly in low-income and rural school districts. I also support the integration of computer science education into the arts, civics, and global language curriculum – all disciplines that will be necessary to prepare students with skills like creativity and critical thinking that will be necessary to compete in the global 21st century economy.

2. How can the state ensure that opportunities to learn computer science are available to all students in California, especially those in under-resourced schools that serve Latinx, African American, Native American and other students of color, students with special needs, English Learners and others underrepresented in computer science?

Students of all backgrounds and abilities deserve access to quality computer science education. I have a proven track record of securing education funding for African American, Latinx, and Native American students, English Learners, special education students, foster youth, and students from low-income backgrounds. As Superintendent, I will only strengthen my efforts to close the achievement gap for these students in the public school system as a whole, with a special focus on STEM education.

The achievement gap begins before a student ever enters a kindergarten classroom – we must invest in high-quality early education and care programs and make universal preschool a reality. But for too many of our kids, the barriers to student success exist outside the classroom, like poverty, homelessness, and trauma, so we must recommit our investment in school-based health and mental health services, the free lunch

program, and truancy prevention, to ensure all of our students are in school and ready to learn. This holistic approach to education will prepare students for success in STEM fields.

3. In what educational programs and infrastructure areas do you think the state should invest to support full access to computer science education, for example, supporting teacher professional development and capacity building to provide a high quality education? Please be as specific as possible.

Strengthening California's STEM education will begin with investing in teachers who are prepared to teach computer science. As Superintendent, I will create funding structures for teachers' professional development, similar to the STEM Teachers' Grant Program I established in [AB 2186](#). I have also begun and will continue to bring together tech companies and school districts across the state to build partnerships that will infuse technology into curriculum and create pathways to the internships and jobs of tomorrow.

4. How do you plan to respond to recommendations provided by the state's Computer Science Strategic Implementation Plan Panel which includes members appointed by or designated by Governor Brown, State Board of Education President Kirst, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Torlakson, the Senate Committee on Rules, and the Speaker of the Assembly? The strategic plan may include recommendations on teacher preparation, capacity building and credentialing pathways, computer science standards, access to hardware and software and other plans to scale up computer science education coursework so that all high schools teach at least one computer science course.

As Superintendent, I will support the implementation of the Computer Science Strategic Implementation Plan Panel's recommendations. I see the Panel's goals, and the Assembly Select Committee on STEM Education, which I chair, as mutually reinforcing. This month I passed a resolution, [ACR 268](#), which calls for a renewed statewide focus on resources and support for technology in K-12 education. ACR 268 passed the Assembly Education Committee unanimously and with bipartisan support. I look forward to continuing to work together with the Panel, state legislature, and Governor to strengthen California's computer science programming.

5. In the context of significant budgetary challenges facing California's schools, how will you ensure equity and access to K12 computer science education? What specific actions will you take to ensure computer science education gets the resources that it needs?

Improving California's public schools in general, which includes computer science education, starts with funding. This year I proposed [legislation](#) to increase funding for STEM education by \$200 million in California – coincidentally this is the same amount President Trump has proposed to invest in STEM education for the entire country. I also led the effort this year to secure [\\$150 million](#) for career technical education (CTE) to

provide high-quality CTE programs for our students with real world, hands-on career skills and education.

Still, California ranks [46th in the nation](#) in per-student funding, even though California is the 5th largest economy in the world. I have a plan to bring California to the top ten states in per-pupil funding by 2022, and to #1 in the nation by 2026. I also plan to appoint a group of business, education, and government leaders to identify strategies for developing new permanent funding streams to improve education funding. Finally, I will work with state lawmakers to change the voter threshold for passing local parcel taxes from two-thirds majority to 55% in all districts. This will ensure the financial stability of the public education system as a whole, within which computer science education will be a top priority.

I encourage voters to read more about my priorities for public education in California by visiting my website www.tonythurmond.com. I'm proud to have the support of California's leaders including Senator Kamala Harris and Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, California's teachers, and [many others](#). I look forward to leading a broad coalition of education advocates to improve computer science education in the great state of California.