

## Kevin Gordon

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### [Lots of Reasons to Value ROCPs](#)

By Kevin Gordon,  
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**President**  
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Widely viewed as among the top education advocates in California, Mr. Gordon is leading our company's legislative advocacy group and oversees SI&A's activities in continuing education, conferences, and professional development.

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Thursday, September 03, 2009

We have just completed 19 workshops around the state, helping local education leaders better understand the state budget and what options make the most sense in planning for the future. We have received lots of positive feedback, but also a number of follow-up questions.

One important question concerns the use of the flexibility provided for the next four years in the use of categorical funding.

Our general message has been to use the flexibility to support and protect those programs which are of highest priority at the local level. The unfortunate reality is that schools are going to have to make difficult decisions because we can't continue to do all that was done in the past, when schools had 20 percent more funding.

At the top of our list for priority consideration would be regional occupational centers and programs. I say that for four reasons:

1. Career technical education benefits students by showing them how certain knowledge and skills are applied in real life. For many students, this approach gives school relevance and engages them in a manner that traditional classes have difficulty doing.
2. ROCP classes help reduce dropouts by keeping students engaged and focused on work and a career. This is not only a significant local issue, but the dropout rate has become a major focus of the state and federal accountability efforts. Given the direction of state and federal accountability, schools should place an emphasis on protecting programs that help keep students in school.
3. Regional occupational centers and programs are, as the name implies, regional. Even in difficult financial times, it is important to maintain cooperative relationships with other districts and counties to help serve students. Districts should honor their ROCP agreements with other districts and counties.
4. In 2013-14, the categorical program funding structure is scheduled to go back into effect. For most categorical programs, I don't think that is going to happen. However, I think ROCPs are among the most likely, if not the most likely, to be restored. Legislators strongly support career technical education and several were shocked and upset that ROCPs were subject to the cuts and flexibility. If the program is restored, as I expect, it would be a mistake to cut them now only to have to restore them in a few years. The equipment, relations with businesses, and specialized teachers all make these difficult programs to rebuild—better to protect them now.