

The FISCAL REPORT *an informational update*

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SSC-Axiom Mandate Partnership

It is with great pleasure and excitement that we announce expansion of the relationship between School Services of California (SSC) and Axiom Advisors and Consultants, Inc. For the past four years, the two firms have worked together to produce the leading data source for collective bargaining, Bargaining Hunter. We have now expanded that relationship to include all aspects of the mandate process.

SSC's point person for mandates is Vice President Robert Miyashiro. No one is more familiar with the legal, policy, and financial implications of state mandates than Robert. During his time as Chair of the Commission on State Mandates and Deputy Director of the Department of Finance, he heard the voices of all of the stakeholders in the mandate process.

At the other end of the continuum, Dean Getz and his staff at Axiom have been involved in the claims preparation process for many years. But, in our view, Axiom is much more than a mandate provider. Axiom has been the leader in developing technologies that improve efficiency and lower costs for school agencies. There is no doubt in our minds that Axiom is the premier provider of mandate services in the state of California.

Now that the mandate claiming process is not reimbursable, districts are responsible for the entire cost. This makes a compelling argument for districts to seek out the high value-low cost provider of all services, including mandates. After considerable research, we are convinced that the electronic process claims process developed by Axiom is not only far less expensive, but we think it is also more accurate and places a much lower burden on districts in terms of staff time. You will hear more from us on that topic at another time.

In the short term, the mandate reimbursement funding process is unreliable and generally a mess. In the longer term, we know the state has valid demands that we improve the accuracy, documentation, compliance, and validity of the process. At the same time, we have high hopes that the state will embrace true reform. We think reliability, simplicity, and predictability are key elements of reform. The partnership of Axiom and SSC is well positioned to deal with every aspect of the reform process that we hope will emerge and set this area to rest once and for all. No other team possesses the same level of knowledge and experience at all of the levels at which the mandate issue must be addressed.

As an aside, we at SSC have very few partners, but there are some common characteristics that define each of them. We think they have the best products and offer them at a fair price. We think that the firms are of unquestioned integrity. And finally, in the words of Warren Buffet, we do business with people that we like, trust, and admire. Our friends at Axiom during our long

association have exemplified each of those ideals. We hope you will welcome Axiom as a bigger part of the SSC family.

—**Ron Bennett**