## State superintendent challenger to visit Fresno

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The man looking to unseat state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson is touring the central San Joaquin Valley on Thursday and Friday to pitch his plans to voters and meet with local education leaders.

Marshall Tuck, 40, said he'll meet with Fresno State President Joseph Castro and Mayor Ashley Swearengin, host a round table with education advocates at the Elbow Room and take a spin of the Fresno Food Expo. He'll also make stops in Madera and Merced, he said.

Tuck, a Democrat and newcomer who edged Torlakson into a runoff during the June primary (he took 28.9% of the vote to Torlakson's 46.5%), is looking to lock down votes and learn about the top education issues facing Valley schools. Tuck took 29.8% of the primary ballots in Fresno County.

"I just want to go and do some listening and introduce myself," said Tuck, who lives in Los Angeles. "Not a lot of people know me out there, but I know we've got a lot of kids making progress."

Tuck is pitching himself as the school reform candidate, and isn't shy about his qualms with the California Teachers Association union and the state's teacher tenure and dismissal laws. He recently filed an ethics complaint against CTA and has launched his own online petition urging Torlakson to not appeal a recent ruling striking down certain teacher tenure protections.

But the longtime charter school advocate who is known for turning around a handful of Los Angeles' worst-performing schools says that's not to be confused for animosity against teachers. He's looking to professionalize the field by extending the time it takes for teachers to get tenure, he said. He also supports ending certain teacher seniority privileges, which he says would keep the best teachers -- no matter their age -- in the classroom.

On the Local Control Funding Formula, he said: "Give schools a lot of flexibility to use resources, but then they need to tell the public how was the money was spent and what were the results."

On the drought's impact on rural schools: "If in the middle of a school year, a school loses a fair amount of kids, you just can't gut that school's program mid year. Part of the state's role is to make sure when there are unique situations, schools are not negatively impacted."

On Fresno Unified's waiver from No Child Left Behind: "When the rules don't make sense for kids, and the leadership refuses to change them, I think it's the responsibility of leaders to take whatever action they can for the benefit of children."