

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

### **Background: High Standards for All**

In the middle of the 1990s, Californians awoke to a disturbing fact: our schools were not succeeding in educating our children. Results from the 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress showed what many had suspected: California students ranked at the bottom of the nation in reading achievement.<sup>1</sup> What had once been considered among the best educational systems in the nation had significantly eroded.

The response to these results has been a determined march to improve the state's schools. At the heart of this effort has been the development of standards for what students should know and be able to do. The state now has well-articulated student learning goals, by grade, in the core subject areas of mathematics, reading and language arts, science, and social studies/history. State policy-makers have sent a clear message to educators and parents alike: all children must achieve at higher levels.

The goal of high standards for all students is a deceptively radical one. On the surface, it is a rhetorical phrase with which most would have long agreed. Yet, if taken seriously, it represents a rejection of a basic tenet of American schooling: some students will achieve at high levels, most will succeed moderately, and others inevitably will be low achievers. The California standards, in contrast, call not for just the best and the brightest—or the most advantaged—to succeed; all students are expected to reach high levels of performance.

To support the implementation of the standards, California has taken a series of policy actions. The state assessment system—STAR—has been augmented to include items to assess students' progress relative to standards. Instructional materials will be updated with new appropriations. A new accountability system supports and, if necessary, will place sanctions on schools whose students do not perform up to standard. Beginning in the 2003-04 school year, all students will have to pass a new high school exit exam to graduate from high school. These actions come on top of a massive investment in class size reduction, which itself was aimed at improving student learning in the early grades.

Yet standards—and the curricular, assessment and accountability systems designed to support them—will have little impact if teachers are not prepared to enact powerful instructional strategies necessary for all students to reach the standards. In fact, when California students performed poorly on the first administration of standards-based items on the state assessment, controversy erupted over the question of whether students had been adequately prepared. State

Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin captured the problem succinctly: “They [students] were asked to answer questions on materials they had not yet been taught or had the chance to learn.”<sup>2</sup>

## **The Key to Student Success: High-Quality Teachers**

The bottom line is that standards-based reform asks more not only of students but also of all the adults expected to support student learning. No adults are more important to student success than teachers. Study after study has demonstrated the strong relationship between teacher quality and student learning. It is estimated that the difference between an effective and an ineffective teacher can be a full grade level of achievement in a school year.<sup>3</sup> A study in Tennessee, for example, showed that whereas low-achieving students with the least effective teachers gained about 14 percentile points in a year, similarly low-achieving students gained 53 percentile points in the most effective teachers’ classrooms.<sup>4</sup>

Effective teachers are those with strong verbal and mathematics skills, deep content knowledge in the subject they teach, and strong teaching skills.<sup>5</sup> Measuring such characteristics is not always easy. In California, the state has established minimum requirements for a regular teaching credential that combine coursework, practical experience in classrooms, and passing scores on basic skills and subject matter assessments. Successful completion of these requirements represents the minimum acceptable indication of quality and effectiveness to teach in the state’s classrooms. In fact, research in California has shown that students perform better in schools where most teachers have met these requirements; students perform worse when they are in schools with larger numbers of underqualified teachers.<sup>6</sup>

Attainment of high standards for all California students, then, requires that every student have a qualified teacher to help him or her achieve to the standards. And this—providing a competent and effective teacher for every student—is the greatest challenge California faces.

The challenge is daunting, for many reasons. Under the best of circumstances, training and supporting a professional workforce is orders of magnitude more difficult than drafting standards, choosing instructional materials, or creating additional test items. Yet the present conditions are far from optimal. The teacher workforce in California is huge, approximately 284,000. Continued growth in student enrollment and the attrition of teachers from the profession have increased the demand for teachers, but not enough qualified teachers are willing to take jobs in public schools, resulting in severe shortages of credentialed teachers. In 1998-99, more than 10% of California’s classrooms are headed by adults who have not met the state’s minimum requirements. And those students who need the greatest assistance, those whose

current performance is farthest below the state standards, are the most likely to be in classrooms with underqualified teachers.

Of course, even those teachers holding full credentials are being asked to do more and to do it with an increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse student body. These teachers need intensive and ongoing support—opportunities to acquire new subject matter knowledge and to learn more effective pedagogy. Again, research points to the efficacy of intensive content-based professional development for teachers in improving teacher practice and student achievement.<sup>7</sup> Yet the system of professional development in the state remains largely uncoordinated, placing the burden on individual teachers to create coherent learning opportunities to increase their capacity to bring students up to standards.

In short, if California's march toward academic excellence is to be successful, it must simultaneously increase the quantity *and* the quality of the teacher workforce. Failure to do so—to place high-quality, effective teachers in every classroom—will transform the ambitious standards-based movement into a meaningless game of politics, teacher frustration, and, worse, increased student failure.

## **Teaching and California's Future**

To address this challenge, a coalition of stakeholders with interests in teacher recruitment, preparation, induction support, and professional development have come together to search for ways to ensure that all California schoolchildren have a qualified and effective teacher. Led by the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning and cosponsors—the California State University Institute for Educational Reform; Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE); Recruiting New Teachers, Inc.; University of California Office of the President; and WestEd—these stakeholders are implementing an initiative focused on building teacher workforce capacity. *Teaching and California's Future* involves a twofold strategy: (1) convening a Task Force of key policy-makers, practitioners, institutions of higher education, and professional organizations to develop and implement a plan to improve teacher development policies and practices in California; and (2) undertaking a comprehensive study of the conditions of teacher development in the state to inform the work of the Task Force.

The Task Force on Teaching and California's Future comprises practitioners and leaders from the key organizations responsible for oversight of the teacher development system. The cosponsors have identified and brought to the table representatives from a broad cross-section of the critical policy and educational leadership organizations in the state, as well as leading

practitioners, including accomplished classroom teachers. The charge to each Task Force member includes:

- Providing counsel on the design and conduct of a study of teacher development in California.
- Encouraging the cooperation of those inside his/her own organization throughout the study period.
- Deliberating on the findings from the research and drawing from the data recommendations to strengthen teacher development.
- Mobilizing his/her agency or organization to carry out the recommendations of the Task Force.

### **Progress to Date**

Since January 1998, the Task Force has convened six times. At its second meeting, in June 1998, the Task Force was presented with *An Inventory of the Status of Teacher Development in California*, prepared by SRI International.<sup>8</sup> The *Inventory* reviewed and assembled secondary data on key issues facing the teacher development system. Based on previous studies, analyses of available databases, review of legislation and program documents, and interviews with key actors throughout the state, this report provided an objective picture of the status of the teaching profession in California.

The Task Force's review of the *Inventory* resulted in a decision to move forward with the design of a study to collect data on a series of issues not well addressed through existing data. The design of that original data collection was presented to the Task Force in fall 1998. During the remainder of the 1998-99 school year, the SRI research team undertook the study, the results of which are the source of the findings in this document. This research included a statewide teacher survey and eight case studies of local teacher development systems throughout California. In addition, the SRI research team continued to review secondary databases to update the key findings in the original *Inventory*.

The statewide teacher survey targeted a representative sample of K-12 California public school teachers. Seventy-seven percent of the surveyed teachers responded to the 60-item survey. The survey instrument asked teachers for their perspectives in the following key areas, concentrating particularly on those topics for which we found significant gaps in existing statewide data during our work on the original *Inventory*:

- Teacher preparation
- Job search and recruitment

- Induction for new teachers
- Professional development and workplace support
- Compensation and evaluation of teachers.

Details on survey data collection and analysis can be found in Appendix A.

To complement the breadth of statewide data gathered through the inventory and the teacher survey, we conducted case studies of eight local systems of teacher development—in El Centro, Elk Grove, Eureka, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Monica, and Selma. Case study sites were selected to achieve a mix of regional settings and represent urban, suburban, and rural districts. In addition, the case study sample was selected to include both districts with high access to teacher professional development opportunities and those with more typical levels of access.

Each case study focused on one district and included visits to the district office, visits to four schools within the district, and in-depth interviews with four teachers at each school. In addition, we conducted larger focus groups with additional teachers, interviews with school and district administrators, and interviews with other key players in the district's professional development system. The case studies examined teachers' career decisions and learning opportunities, the effectiveness of these opportunities, and the extent to which the current system of teacher development is integrated and coherent. Additional detail on the case studies is also presented in Appendix A.

### **Looking Ahead: Principles for Improving Teacher Development in California**

A draft of this document was presented to the Task Force in September 1999 to provide its members with the most up-to-date information on the status of the system of teacher development in California and, in doing so, to pinpoint the key areas that require the attention of policy-makers. As a result, the Task Force leadership developed a set of key recommendations, which are detailed later in this document. In brief, these are:

1. Ensure that every child has a fully qualified, effective teacher.
2. Eliminate the hiring of unqualified teachers.
3. Improve the ability of the teaching profession to attract and keep fully qualified teachers.
4. Strengthen accountability for all teacher education programs.
5. Reduce unnecessary barriers to teaching.
6. Encourage and support teachers to reach high levels of subject matter expertise and instructional skill.

## **Products of *Teaching and California's Future***

This document includes the main research findings of *Teaching and California's Future* and the detailed recommendations of the Task Force. The document is organized into two main parts. Part I addresses the issue of ensuring a qualified and competent teacher for every California schoolchild. It includes chapters on the supply of and demand for teachers, the distribution of qualified and underqualified teachers in the state, and the system for preparing teachers for California's classrooms. Part II addresses the issue of building and maintaining the strengths of the current teacher workforce. It contains chapters on induction, professional development, and state and district supports for professional development. In both parts, each chapter is preceded by a short synopsis of the key findings presented therein. Each part ends with key recommendations from the Task Force.

In addition to this document, the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning commissioned or adopted a series of papers to address issues raised in this study and to inform the work of the Task Force. These papers are available from the Center:

- *The Essential Profession*, by David Haselkorn, Louis Harris, and Elizabeth Fidler<sup>9</sup>
- *Professional Development for Teachers: Setting the Stage for Learning from Teaching*, by Linda Darling-Hammond<sup>10</sup>
- *Preparation for Teaching California's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*, by Patricia Gandara and Julie Maxwell-Jolly<sup>11</sup>
- *Teachers and Standards*, by Phil Daro<sup>12</sup>
- *Good Teaching Matters...A Lot*, by Kati Haycock<sup>13</sup>
- *A White Paper on Teacher Induction in California*, by SRI International (cosponsored by the New Teacher Center)<sup>14</sup>

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Results refer to fourth-grade reading achievement as reported in National Assessment of Educational Progress. 1994. *The nation's report card*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- <sup>2</sup> Eastin, Delaine. (1999, June). Draft letter from State Superintendent of Instruction to parents.
- <sup>3</sup> Hanushek, Eric A. (1992). The trade-off between child quantity and quality, *Journal of Political Economy* (cited in Haycock, 1998).
- <sup>4</sup> Sanders, William J., & Rivers, June C. (1996). *Cumulative and residual effects of teachers on future students' academic achievement*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center.
- <sup>5</sup> Haycock, K. (1998, Summer). Good teaching matters...A lot. *Thinking K-16*, 3(2), The Education Trust, Washington, DC.
- <sup>6</sup> Fetler, M. (1999, March). High school staff characteristics and mathematics test results. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 7(9).
- <sup>7</sup> See, for example, Shields, P. M., David, J. L., Humphrey, D. C., & Young, V. M. (1999). *Evaluation of the Pew Network For Standards-Based Reform: Third year report*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International; and Cohen, D., & Hill, H. (1998, January). *CPRE policy briefs: State policy and classroom performance: Mathematics reform in California*. Philadelphia, PA: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.
- <sup>8</sup> Shields, P. M., Marsh, J. M., & Powell, J. (1998). *An inventory of the status of teacher development in California*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.
- <sup>9</sup> Haselkorn, D., Harris, L., & Fideler, E. (1998). *The essential profession*. Belmont, MA: Recruiting New Teachers, Inc.
- <sup>10</sup> Darling-Hammond, L. (1999). *Professional development for teachers: Setting the stage for learning from teaching*. Santa Cruz, CA: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning.
- <sup>11</sup> Gandara, P., & Maxwell-Jolly, J. (1999). *Preparation for teaching California's culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Santa Cruz, CA: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning.
- <sup>12</sup> Daro, P. (1999). *Teachers and standards*. Santa Cruz, CA: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning.
- <sup>13</sup> Haycock, K. (1998, Summer).
- <sup>14</sup> SRI International. (Forthcoming). *A white paper on teacher induction in California*. Santa Cruz, CA: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning and the New Teacher Center.