

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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.¹ What had once been considered among the best educational systems in the nation had significantly eroded.

California's response 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. 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 ineffective teacher can be a full grade level of achievement in a school year.²

Effective teachers are those with strong verbal and mathematics skills, deep content knowledge in the subject they teach, and strong teaching skills.³ 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.⁴

Attainment of high standards for all California students, then, requires that every student have a qualified teacher to help him or her reach 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 California's classrooms.

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. Furthermore, veteran teachers must be supported in their efforts to usher novices into the profession and, in some cases, to provide professional development to their colleagues.

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.

During the 1998-99 school year, SRI International conducted the statewide study of teacher development. The study involved a survey of a representative sample of K-12 California public school teachers and eight case studies of local teacher development systems throughout California. In addition, the SRI research team extensively reviewed secondary databases, analyzed new state policy initiatives, and interviewed key state policy-makers.⁵

This document summarizes the findings of the research carried out in support of *Teaching and California's Future* and includes the recommendations the Task Force developed in response to the research findings. At the request of the Task Force, the study focused on what is being done (1) to ensure a qualified teacher in every California classroom and (2) to build and maintain the strengths of the current teacher workforce.

Ensuring a Qualified Teacher for Every California Schoolchild

Does California produce, attract, and retain a sufficient number of teachers to ensure that every California schoolchild is in a classroom with a qualified teacher—and will it be able to do so in the future? Which students are most likely to be taught by an underqualified teacher? What is being done in terms of preparing teachers to ensure a qualified and effective teacher for every California schoolchild?

The answers to these questions are quite sobering. No, **California currently does not provide qualified teachers for all students**. More than 1 in every 10 classrooms in the state are staffed by teachers who have not met the state's minimum requirements. California policy-makers, including the Governor, are aware of this situation and have initiated a number of new

policies to address the problem since the beginning of 1998—such as the expansion of the teacher preparation programs in the California State University system. Still, we project that at best it will be many years before current policies will be sufficient to bridge the gap between the demand for teachers and the supply of qualified candidates willing to take jobs in the state’s schools.

In the meantime, **those students in greatest need of effective teachers are the most likely to be in classrooms with underqualified teachers.**⁶ In fact, the distribution of qualified teachers is quite uneven across the state. Students in poor, inner-city schools are much more likely than their more advantaged suburban counterparts to have underqualified teachers. Students who score in the bottom quartile of reading achievement in third grade are five times as likely as students scoring in the top quartile to have an underqualified teacher. These are the students who, if they do not learn to read well soon, will be unable to perform well in any subject area. And, of course, it is just these students whom, a few years hence, the state will most likely deny graduation from high school because they cannot meet the standards.

In response to the shortage of teachers, efforts are under way to increase the capacity of the teacher preparation system to turn out more teaching candidates and to create more flexible and streamlined routes into the profession. To the extent that policy efforts promise to increase the number of individuals preparing for the profession, they also raise serious questions about the capacity of alternative providers to support teacher candidates and about the quality of these alternative routes. **Of particular concern are the disincentives in areas of high demand for teacher candidates to complete—or even begin—their preparation before entering the classroom as a full-time teacher.**

Building and Maintaining the Strengths of the Current Teacher Workforce

As California struggles to attract and prepare a sufficient number of candidates for teaching—and to place them where they are in greatest demand—it faces the challenge of supporting those teachers already practicing in classrooms. Currently, there are approximately 284,000 practicing teachers in the state’s public schools—all of whom is being asked to do more with their students. If these teachers are expected to help all of California’s students to reach the state’s standards for learning, the teachers themselves will require high-quality learning opportunities.

In light of the importance of equipping teachers for their expanded role in helping students reach standards, we asked set of questions related to teacher learning. First, what kinds of learning opportunities are available to and taken advantage of by California’s teachers? Second,

what is the quality of these opportunities—in particular, to what degree does professional development improve teachers’ ability to do their jobs? Third, what are the state and local districts doing to support high-quality professional development?

The answers to these questions show that California has not progressed far enough in ensuring that all teachers receive high-quality professional development. There certainly are many professional development initiatives and programs, and, in fact, teachers do report participating in about 3 work-weeks of professional development per year. **Yet much of professional development continues to be disconnected workshops and other “traditional” activities. Intensive, ongoing, and content-based learning opportunities are uncommon for California teachers.**

Although examples of high-quality professional development exist, in general, teachers do not believe that the professional development activities they participate in have a substantial impact on their teaching. Only half of all teachers respond that they received new information from professional development—a relatively low standard of impact. One in five teachers think that the professional development they participated in was a waste of their time. Still, the small percentage of teachers who have opportunities for high-quality professional development, who collaborate around concrete activities focused on instruction and student work, report that their professional development experiences have a greater impact on their professional growth and instructional skills than do other teachers.

Our review of state policy demonstrates the commitment of the state to the importance of professional development. The many state professional development initiatives provide needed resources to districts and schools to address important goals, like increasing reading achievement. **At the same time, some state policies restrict local efforts, increase the burden on local educators as they seek to follow state guidelines, and, in combination with myriad federal and privately sponsored initiatives, make it difficult for districts, schools, or teachers to formulate a coherent professional development strategy.**

Thus, although much is being done to support teachers’ professional development, too little of it is sufficiently focused and coherent to help teachers bring California’s students up to the state standards.

Task Force Recommendations to Strengthen the Teaching Profession in California

In response to these findings, the Task Force has made the following recommendations:

Ensure that every child has a fully qualified, effective teacher.

- Implement a comprehensive program of preparing and placing qualified teachers in inadequately staffed schools through specifically focused competitive grants available to publicly supported colleges and universities which are located in areas with high percentages of inadequately staffed schools.
- Provide 100% forgivable state loans of at least \$20,000, plus tuition fees and books to students who enroll in and complete a teacher preparation program and immediately go on to teach in a hard-to-staff school for a minimum of 4 years, by expanding APLE loans and Cal T grants.
- Expand SB 1X to provide annual discretionary grants of \$350 per student for up to three years to enable inadequately staffed schools to attract and retain fully qualified classroom teachers, develop the skills and knowledge of the school's resident staff, and take steps to create a positive learning environment for students and teachers.
- Expand the provisions of existing law to require the Commission on Teacher Credentialing to notify annually all local education agencies when they employ more than 150% of the statewide average of under-qualified teachers, encourage the identified districts to review and modify their recruitment, hiring, and placement practices.
- Encourage local policy makers and bargaining units to focus Peer Assistance and Review programs (PAR) on inadequately staffed school sites. Special attention in these efforts should be given to the identification, selection, and preparation of accomplished teachers responsible for ushering novice teachers into the profession.
- Provide training for accomplished teacher leaders called upon to provide professional development or support for novice teachers, and ensure that their classrooms are staffed by fully qualified teachers in their absence.
- Establish regional cadres of accomplished veteran teachers and recognized experts, with additional incentives for drawing from the pool of retired teachers, to provide professional development and support for novice teachers at inadequately staffed schools. Classrooms of teachers providing professional development and/or support for novice teachers must be staffed by fully qualified teachers.

Eliminate the hiring of unqualified teachers.

- Phase out the approval of waivers and emergency permits over the next 5 years, allowing waiver of credential requirements by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing only in exceptional cases where specialized individual skill and talent or eminence is involved.

- Expand Cal T grants in size and number, with special emphasis on shortage fields (i.e., math, physical science, computer science, special education).

Improve the ability of the teaching profession to attract and keep fully qualified teachers.

- Revise the current beginning teacher salary incentive of \$32,000 to establish a target minimum of \$40,000 for fully qualified new teacher hires in order to make teaching more competitive with other professional opportunities in attracting talented and qualified individuals.
- Continue and expand through CalTeach and other state and local programs efforts to recruit teacher candidates whose background and experiences mirror those of the state’s diverse student population.
- Provide incentives for developing and maintaining a professional working environment that address facilities use, scheduling, safety, materials, supplies, and other conditions under which teachers are attracted to and stay in the profession.

Strengthen accountability for all teacher education programs.

- The Commission on Teacher Credentialing should ensure, as a part of monitoring or accreditation processes being developed, that teacher preparation programs, including district or university internships, prepare teachers in a manner consistent with the California Academic Standards and the California Standards for the Teaching Profession.
- Initiate an effort to stop the flow of prospective teachers out of the public education system before classroom placement through a statewide system to monitor the progress of preservice candidates through professional preparation and into the job market. Such a system must include a standardized reporting format for all accredited teacher preparation programs, and an annual summary report published by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

Reduce unnecessary barriers to teaching.

- Continue to pursue aggressively full reciprocity with other high-standards states and recruit aggressively from states with surpluses of qualified teachers.
- Initiate an independent effort to review local hiring and placement practices and to develop model policies and procedures designed to reduce the delays in hiring new teachers and identify steps local districts and bargaining units can take to ensure that students with the greatest educational needs are placed with teachers best qualified to teach them.

Encourage and support teachers to reach high levels of subject matter expertise and instructional skill.

- Commission, on behalf of the Legislature, an independent analysis of existing statutes, regulations, policies, procedures, and guidelines with the intent of eliminating provisions that deflect teachers' professional development time to matters other than the enhancement of subject matter expertise and instructional skills, and that don't reflect the elements of high quality professional development.
- Focus professional development on enabling students to meet the state standards by calling for all appropriate public agencies, including the legislature, State Board of Education, State Department of Education, and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, to take action to ensure that state-sponsored and locally sponsored professional development opportunities are consistent with the elements of high-quality professional development.
- Ensure that all novice teachers, including interns and those on emergency permits and waivers, get the support and guidance they need to enable their students to reach the state standards for student learning.
- Make available to districts incentives of up to \$250 per student (75% new funding with a local match of 25% from existing sources) to restructure the teaching day and year to embed time for teachers to participate in high quality professional development that addresses student standards.
- Create incentives for teacher preparation institutions to offer experienced teachers masters degree programs consistent with standards set forward by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards that culminate in the award of both a master of arts degree and successful completion of the National Board certification assessments.
- By 2005 the Legislature should establish an overall statewide goal in statute of at least one teacher certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards for every school in the state.
- Support for National Board certification candidates should be included annually in the budget with funds authorized for 1) continuing the incentives established in AB 858, 2) subsidizing candidate application fees, and 3) developing candidate support programs. Priority in allocation of these funds should be given to candidates from and programs providing service to inadequately staffed schools.

Summary

In the considered opinion of the Task Force, California policy-makers and educators should be congratulated for the bold steps taken in the last few years to bolster the state's public school system. The research conducted for *Teaching and California's Future* documents the promise of the many new state initiatives, the statewide commitment to higher standards for all students, and

the countless ongoing efforts by local district administrators, school leaders, and teachers to make standards real in California classrooms.

Yet the job is only partly completed. The hope of having all students reach ambitious academic standards now turns on the state's capacity to ensure a qualified and competent teacher in every classroom in California. With a teacher workforce of approximately 284,000 and the need to hire at least 26,000 new teachers each year, filling every classroom with a qualified teacher is and will remain a challenge. The Task Force believes that meeting this challenge will require full implementation of the recommendations outlined here. Doing so will be expensive and difficult—but if California educators fail to do so, the call for higher standards will ring hollow. Without the political courage and will to provide every student a fully qualified and effective teacher, the state has no right to hold either schools or students accountable for high levels of achievement.

Endnotes

- ¹ 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.
- ² Hanushek, E. A. (1992). The trade-off between child quantity and quality. *Journal of Political Economy* (cited in Haycock, 1998).
- ³ Haycock, K. (1998, Summer). Good teaching matters...A lot. *Thinking K-16*, 3(2), The Education Trust, Washington, DC.
- ⁴ Fetler, M. (1999, March). High school staff characteristics and mathematics test results. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 7(9).
- ⁵ In addition to the SRI research, the *Teaching and California's Future* initiative sponsored a statewide opinion poll, *The Essential Profession*, to gauge the public's view of the teaching profession, as well as a series of policy papers. These documents are available from the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning.
- ⁶ These underqualified teachers—those without appropriate credentials and preparation for their assignment—should be commended for their willingness to take on jobs that others often will not in schools that present some of teaching's greatest challenges. These teachers should not be blamed for systemic problems in the profession; indeed, they need additional training and support to succeed.