

PART I. ENSURING A QUALIFIED TEACHER FOR EVERY CALIFORNIA SCHOOLCHILD

The hope of having all students reach ambitious academic standards turns on the state's capacity to ensure a qualified and competent teacher in every classroom in the state. 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. Yet, if the state does not do so, the call for higher standards rings 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.

In this first part of the report, we ask three basic questions. First, 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? Second, which students are most likely to be taught by an underqualified teacher, and what is the impact on a child's education? Third, 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, which we address in detail, 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.** 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 refuse to graduate 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.**

In essence, California is embarked on a path where there are not enough qualified teachers in our classrooms and where the neediest students are allocated the fewest professional resources. Such an indictment of the current educational system in the state must be based on sound data and analysis. We devote the remainder of Part I of this report to the presentation of these data and analyses. In Chapter 2, we explore the overall statewide supply of and demand for teachers. In Chapter 3, we examine the distribution of shortages across the state and underscore the strong relationship between the needs of students and the percentage of underqualified teachers in that school. In Chapter 4, we examine the capacity of the system of teacher preparation to produce a sufficient number of qualified teacher candidates, describe current trends toward alternative preparation programs, and raise some issues about the potential effectiveness of such programs. We conclude Part I with the relevant Task Force recommendations.