



# A BLUEPRINT FOR GREAT SCHOOLS

TRANSITION ADVISORY TEAM REPORT

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California Department of Education

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# Table of Contents

- Superintendent’s Message . . . . . 2
- Executive Summary . . . . . 4
- The Current California Context . . . . . 6
- Strategies for a New System . . . . . 9
  - 1. Educator Quality . . . . . 9
  - 2. Curriculum and Assessment . . . . . 11
  - 3. Higher Education and Secondary Alignment . . . . . 13
  - 4. Accountability and School Improvement . . . . . 16
  - 5. Early Childhood Education. . . . . 17
  - 6. Education Supports . . . . . 19
  - 7. Health, Nutrition and Physical Fitness. . . . . 21
  - 8. School Finance . . . . . 23
  - 9. Facilities and Construction Reform. . . . . 24
- Conclusion . . . . . 25
- Transition Advisory Team Members . . . . . 26
- Acknowledgements . . . . . 29
- Endnotes. . . . . 30

# Superintendent's Message

Fellow Californians,

As a teacher, I know our state's most important work is the education of our students.

When you elected me to serve as your State Superintendent of Public Instruction, it was clear that – despite the daily heroic efforts of dedicated teachers, school employees, administrators and parents – our schools were facing unprecedented challenges.

It was equally clear that understanding and addressing those challenges would take a team effort, bringing teachers, parents, business, labor and community leaders together to candidly assess where we are, set ambitious goals about where we want to be, and describe in some detail a shared vision for how to get there. That team assembled, and our work together created this, A Blueprint for Great Schools.

Our goals are fitting for the most prosperous state in the wealthiest nation in the world. We seek the day when all children in California – regardless of where they live, the color of their skin, or their economic circumstances – receive the start in life that comes with a world-class education. We seek the day when all students are prepared to pursue their dreams, participate in the rich cultural life of our state and compete in our global economy. We seek the day when every enterprise in California – public and private – has access to a pool of talent that both attracts the world's leading businesses and hastens the development and success of new ones, creating opportunities for all.

There's no question that the financial emergency facing California's schools represents the biggest roadblock in our path, made even more daunting by the recent failure to reach a bipartisan budget agreement. My top priority continues to be restoring and increasing California's investments in education, and I pledge to redouble my efforts to engage every leader in this state in the urgent and critical task of once again providing our children with the resources they need.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the people who took part in this effort. The 59 remarkable Californians who came together as my Transition Advisory Team took on this daunting task with incredible passion, energy and thoughtfulness. Co-chaired by Linda Darling-Hammond of the Stanford University School of Education, and David Rattray of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, the team included a wonderfully diverse group of our state's public education stakeholders. I am also very grateful to State Board of Education President Mike Kirst for his participation in this effort.

In some respects, the team’s findings are sobering, a reflection of how year after year of diminished resources, difficult circumstances, and shifting policy choices have frayed the very fabric of our most treasured public institutions – our neighborhood schools.

There is also cause for great hope and optimism. On issue after issue, you will find a wealth of sound strategies that hold great promise for our students and our schools – including many that have already proven effective in California. Some areas need further study, discussion, and debate, and would in some cases require changes in law to carry out. Others merely need nurturing and support to achieve lasting results.

Throughout its work, the team itself proved what powerful commitments Californians are prepared to make for public education when called upon to do so. What’s more, the team demonstrated that bitterness and acrimony need not dominate the dialogue over education.

In that spirit, I invite you to review our efforts, add your own thinking, and join us in the continuing discussion and the hard but rewarding work to realize our goals. I hope you find the team’s recommendations as invigorating and inspiring as I did. You may not agree with all of them. Some may take longer to accomplish than others. But together, they offer a vision of where we can go as Californians united for the future of our students and their schools.

A Blueprint for Great Schools was not written to sit on a shelf. It is imperative that it become a plan of action, unifying us with focus and purpose. For we dare not measure our commitment to public education in dollars alone. We must also invest in our students our very best thinking, our very best efforts – and above all – our very best people.

We can do this, California!

Sincerely,

Tom Torlakson  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

# Executive Summary

In January 2011, recognizing the need for broad and deep stakeholder involvement in the issues facing California public education, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson convened a 59-member Transition Advisory Team, including parents, teachers, classified staff, administrators, superintendents, school board members, business and union leaders, higher education and nonprofit representatives. The team was co-chaired by Linda Darling-Hammond, Ducommun Professor of Education at the Stanford University School of Education and David Rattray, Senior Vice President of Education and Workforce Development, Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce.

The team was designed to create a model for the kinds of coalitions necessary to prepare all of California's students to be healthy, productive citizens, and lifelong learners. Its work was funded entirely by private foundations including: The California Endowment, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Stuart Foundation, and the James Irvine Foundation.

Superintendent Torlakson charged the team with providing him with advice on the development of a new mission and planning framework for the California Department of Education (CDE). He asked for innovative and strategic advice to ensure that the state provides a world-class education to all students, preparing them to live, work and thrive in a highly connected world.

Based on the team's recommendations, the Department adopted the following new mission statement:

*California will provide a world-class education for all students, from early childhood to adulthood. The Department of Education serves our state by innovating and collaborating with educators, schools, parents, and community partners. Together, as a team, we prepare students to live, work, and thrive in a highly connected world.*

The team met as a whole three times over a two-month period. To make rapid progress in areas of high priority for the Superintendent, team members also participated in one of eight policy working teams focused on particular issues:

- Accountability and School Improvement
- Curriculum and Assessment
- Early Childhood/Preschool
- Education Supports and Parent/Community Involvement
- Educator Quality
- Facility/Construction Reform
- Finance Reform and Efficiency
- Higher Education and Secondary Alignment

Each policy working team met frequently between Transition Advisory Team meetings and produced a strategy memo articulating advisory recommendations, goals, outcomes, indicators, and strategies in their respective policy areas.

In addition, an Institutional Development Working Team was formed with the charge of concentrating on CDE as an institution and making recommendations for its continued development in building a strong culture of service and support, engaging internal and external talent, and collaborating across agencies. This team was asked to provide advice on a planning process to strengthen CDE as a service-oriented public agency engaging in innovative and collaborative work. That Working Team provided the Superintendent with a detailed planning

design entitled, *“Organizing for Innovation, Collaboration, and Service.”* This has subsequently been adapted and is being used by CDE staff to strengthen the department’s culture of service and support for California’s public education system.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of the Transition Advisory Team are summarized in the body of this document. Critical priorities include:

- **Educator Quality:** Recognizing that expert teachers and school leaders are perhaps the most important resource for improving student learning, support the development of more effective educator recruitment, preparation, professional support, and evaluation systems. Use professional teacher and leader standards to guide and assess practice in a way that reflects best practices and incorporates appropriate evidence of student learning. Create a major commission to outline how these educator quality systems should best be designed, supported, and implemented. Launch an ongoing initiative to support union-management collaboration toward high-leverage reforms.
- **Curriculum and Assessment:** In close collaboration with the State Board of Education, revise State curriculum standards, frameworks, and assessments to better reflect the demands of a knowledge-based society and economy, incorporate new Common Core Standards (CCS), and build on the strengths and needs of diverse learners. Incorporate technology as a key component of teaching, learning, and assessment, and support high levels of literacy and bi-literacy to prepare students for the globalized society they are entering.
- **Higher Education and Secondary Alignment:** Work with higher education partners to establish college and career readiness standards and align assessments for K-12 learning, college admissions, and college placement. Improve graduation rates and student preparation for college and careers by redesigning secondary school program models and curriculum, investing in Linked Learning approaches, and updating A-G requirements.
- **Accountability and School Improvement:** Develop a robust system of indicators to give students, teachers and parents a more complete picture of school performance, including broader measures of growth and learning that better assess 21st century skills; measures of school capacity and student opportunities to learn; and measures of resources connected to opportunity-to-learn standards.
- **Early Childhood Education:** Develop an infrastructure for a birth-to-3<sup>rd</sup>-grade system that serves our youngest learners and includes expanded access to programs designed to meet quality standards, supported by well-prepared and supported educators, guided by aligned standards and curriculum, and informed by readiness data.
- **Education Supports:** Support the provision of wraparound services to enhance student access to healthcare, social services, before and after school programs, and other supports needed for success. Encourage the development of community school approaches and provide technical assistance through existing CDE staff and structures.
- **Health and Fitness:** Improve children’s health, nutrition, and fitness by facilitating access to health insurance for all eligible children, supporting school-based health care, and encouraging better nutrition and increased physical activity within both school and home environments.
- **School Finance:** Identify new or expanded sources of revenue to stabilize and increase financial support for schools. Foster and promote fiscal and administrative efficiencies. Create a weighted student formula approach to tie funding to pupil needs.
- **Facilities Construction and Reform:** Enable districts to engage in more effective and efficient facilities construction and re-design, including movement toward energy self-sufficiency.

# The Current California Context

The world is more economically inter-dependent than ever before. With increased globalization and the opening of world markets, jobs move from one side of the world to the other with great speed and fluidity. Those who possess the deep knowledge and broad skills necessary to apply their learning in new and innovative ways are advantaged both in terms of higher earning potential and greater job opportunities.

California, the eighth largest economy in the world and a wellspring of technological innovation, should be leading the world in developing such learners. At present, however, our state is at a disadvantage in this globalized economy. Almost one-third of California's ninth grade students drop out before high school graduation and another one-third finish high school but find they are not fully prepared to succeed in college and career. Those who are prepared for college are finding it more difficult to gain admission and secure the coursework they need, as the higher education system is battered by budget cuts. Together, these factors threaten California's position in the world economy.

California is a wholly unique state, but one that, arguably, represents the future of America. It is a state that some might say is on the edge of educational collapse, but it is also a resilient state with abundant human resources and the leadership to regain its pre-eminence in education, if there is a purposeful plan joined with public will. This statement of the context focuses especially on the overall challenges California currently faces, but it also points out resources that we can draw upon in re-building the state's education system.

## WHO ARE OUR STUDENTS?

California has a vibrant, diverse student population that represents families who have had roots in the Golden State for centuries and others who have more recently arrived from virtually every nation on the globe. With high rates of immigration, California also has the highest proportion of English learners in the country.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 24 percent of California's students are English learners (ELs) who are not yet proficient in English, and 12 percent are former English learners (R-FEP) who need educational supports to improve their English proficiency as they progress through school.<sup>2</sup> Many immigrant families come from poor countries with few educational or economic resources. Most students in California schools (53 percent) come from low-income families.

Unfortunately, new immigrant students and students of color are increasingly racially isolated. California is one of the nation's three most segregated states for Latino students and one of the five most segregated states for African American students. Schools with concentrations of minority and low-income students are among the most under-resourced in the state, with fewer dollars, curriculum resources, and well-qualified teachers than others, although the needs they confront are greater.<sup>3</sup>

## WHAT ARE OUR RESOURCES?

During the thirty years since Proposition 13 was passed, funding for schools has shrunk, and inequality in educational opportunities and outcomes has increased. While California ranks first in the nation in the number of pupils it serves, it is at the very bottom of the states in K–12 expenditures, both overall and as a share of personal income. Currently, California spends just over half as much as states with comparable costs of living, such as New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut (about \$9,000 per pupil in California as compared to over \$17,000 per pupil in these states).<sup>4</sup>

As the 21st century dawned, California ranked in the bottom ten percent of states in class size, staff/pupil ratio, library quality, and most other school resources.<sup>5</sup> Beyond the low levels of per pupil funding, districts are challenged by the fact that an extraordinarily high proportion of their resources comes from a large number

of restricted categorical programs, especially if they serve high-need students. This makes it difficult to spend enough resources on fundamental needs, such as an adequately supported teaching force, and creates enormous reporting burdens.

Furthermore, the resources the state has are allocated inequitably, with some districts spending only \$6,000 per pupil and others spending as much as \$20,000 per pupil.<sup>6</sup> The gap gets even larger when spending is adjusted for cost-of-living differences, reaching a ratio of nearly 4 to 1. Such differentials might be justified if the highest spending districts were in urban areas with higher costs of living or in districts with greater pupil needs. However, this is far from the case. Most of the state's cities spend just at or below the state average, and poor rural districts spend even less. The highest spending districts serve much more affluent students. This makes California one of the most unequal states in the nation in terms of the resources it provides to its students.

## WHO ARE OUR EDUCATORS?

California has some of the most committed, hard-working, and talented educators in the nation, and some of the most innovative educator preparation programs. However, not all students have access to an experienced, high-quality educator workforce. As resources have shrunk, the State has lowered standards for teachers entering under-resourced districts that experience shortages.

Funding disparities lead to large inequalities in teacher and principal salaries and working conditions, which have produced staffing problems in high-need districts. Controlling for costs of living, as well as education and experience levels, teacher salaries vary across the state by a ratio of 3 to 1. For example, a teacher with 10 years of experience and a bachelor's degree plus 60 additional credits (about the median salary), could earn from \$41,000 in one district to \$117,000 in another.<sup>7</sup>

Not surprisingly, low-salary districts serve predominantly students of color and low-income students, and have more than twice as many English learners as high-salary districts. They also have nearly twice as many teachers who are uncredentialed and inexperienced, and who have lower levels of education. The result is a dramatically unequal distribution of teacher quality, with poorly resourced schools staffed by a revolving door of inexperienced and, often, untrained teachers and principals, while other schools have a highly trained and experienced educator workforce. Some California districts serving low-income students of color have as many as 50 percent of their teachers uncredentialed, and as many as 60 percent inexperienced. Some districts have as many as half of their teachers newly hired in a given year, suggesting extraordinary rates of teacher turnover.<sup>8</sup> Schools staffed in this way cannot provide a stable, coherent school experience for children or adequate mentoring and support for a revolving door of teachers.

After two decades of dwindling resources, teacher preparation programs and candidates now receive little support from the state. In some high-need fields, like special education and the teaching of ELs, there are too few high-quality programs to meet demand. As a result, California is now the only state in the nation that hires most of its special education teachers without teaching experience or pre-service preparation, leaving many of these teachers seriously underprepared for one of the most challenging and important tasks in education. California is also the only state that licenses principals without preparation on the basis of only a paper-and-pencil test. Most of these principals are also hired in the highest need schools.

Funding for high-quality professional development, such as that offered by the Subject Matter Projects, the once pioneering California School Leadership Academy, and many other excellent learning opportunities, has been substantially reduced or zeroed out entirely. As a consequence, the knowledge base for skilled teaching and leadership is not readily available to many of California's educators, especially in poor districts.



## **WHAT ARE OUR OUTCOMES?**

Given these challenges, it is not surprising that while there have been some gains, in reading, California students ranked 48<sup>th</sup> in grade 4 and 49<sup>th</sup> in grade 8 among the 50 states on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 2009. In mathematics, 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students ranked 45<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup>, respectively. In science, California students ranked 49<sup>th</sup> in both 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, besting only Mississippi. Graduation rates were just 79 percent in 2010, with African American and Latino students graduating at rates of only about 60 percent. And college-going has fallen below that of most other states, at only 28 percent of students now graduating from 4-year colleges, far below the national average, and about half the rate of the most highly educated states.

## **WHAT ARE OUR OPPORTUNITIES?**

Despite these challenges, there are many opportunities in the Golden State. California has rich resources on which to draw, including many expert practitioners, a number of high-quality teacher, classified staff, and leader education programs, and some excellent professional development providers, that could be leveraged to improve instruction on a broad scale. The state has parents who have repeatedly demonstrated their support for public education and a public that has, in every poll over the last decade, indicated its willingness to invest in the system. It has unsurpassed technological know-how and an innovative, entrepreneurial spirit. And it has new leadership that is forging a more united agenda among the Governor's Office, the State Board of Education, and CDE. All of these assets can and must be marshaled to succeed in the critically important work ahead.

# Strategies for a New System of California Education

The strategies offered by the Transition Advisory Team for building a new system of California education follow several key principles. These principles:

- Take into account the changing demands of a 21st century knowledge-based, technology-driven economy and society;
- Acknowledge, respond to, and build on the diversity of California's students so that more students are enabled to be successful and the state benefits from all of its human resources;
- Create a more flexible, streamlined, and integrated system of education supports as well as education expectations;
- Build on and expand successful initiatives and strategies in California and elsewhere; and
- Position CDE to become the service hub of a learning system, with capacity for learning about and disseminating best practices to teachers, classified staff, administrators, schools, and districts across the state.

Below we summarize the current context and major recommendations from each of the Transition Advisory Team's Policy Working Teams

## 1. EDUCATOR QUALITY

There is growing recognition that expert teachers and school leaders are perhaps the most important resource for improving student learning, and the highest-achieving nations make substantial investments in them. A McKinsey study of 25 of the world's school systems, including 10 of the top performers, found that investments in teachers and teaching are central to improving student outcomes. They found that the top school systems emphasize 1) getting the right people to become teachers; 2) developing them into effective instructors; and 3) ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction for every child.<sup>9</sup>

These systems offer high-quality preparation to a highly selected cadre of entrants, completely free to candidates with a salary while they train; equitable salaries and teaching conditions; universal access to high-quality mentoring and professional development; 15 to 25 hours a week of collaborative planning and learning time embedded in the teaching schedule; and opportunities to take on professional leadership roles throughout their careers.

U.S. federal investments in teacher quality are, by contrast, quite paltry – having declined substantially since the 1970s – and state investments are highly unequal. These problems and inequities are prominent in California. As a result:

- Teacher education is uneven in duration and quality, with high quality programs offset by some that offer inadequate training. And most teachers receive little financial support to prepare for an occupation that will pay them a below-market wage.
- U.S. teachers have little time for professional collaboration or learning – usually only about 3 to 5 hours per week of individual planning time. Furthermore, professional development opportunities are few, rather than the sustained practice teachers experience elsewhere.
- Despite the important resource of the state's Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Program, fewer than half of CA teachers receive intensive mentoring or coaching from an expert teacher in their subject area during their first year on the job.<sup>10</sup>
- A steep decline in new teacher production (more than 36% over the course of the decade) is due, in part, to budget cuts which have forced the state's university systems to cap enrollment and turn qualified applicants away.<sup>11</sup>

- Meanwhile, shortages still exist in fields like mathematics, physical science, bilingual/ESL education, and in many high-poverty schools, and projected increases in student enrollment and teacher retirements will increase demand in the years ahead.
- Teacher turnover contributes to shortages and causes discontinuity that interferes with school improvement efforts. Turnover is also wasteful, costing California an estimated \$700 million a year in replacement costs for teachers who leave before retirement.<sup>12</sup> Much of this turnover is caused by poor, but correctable, teaching conditions.<sup>13</sup>

This lack of investment is particularly problematic given the expectations of much higher levels of learning for today's students. Teachers now need not only deep and flexible knowledge of the content areas they teach. They also need to know how children learn, the different ways in which they learn, how to adapt instruction for the needs of ELs and students with special needs, how to assess learning continuously, and how to work collectively with parents and colleagues to build strong school programs.

These concerns about teachers' access to knowledge are replicated for school leaders. A recent study of California principals<sup>14</sup> found that school leaders in this state are deeply committed, but much less likely to have had a supervised internship as part of their preparation or to have access to mentoring or coaching in their work than principals in other states. They are less likely to have access to a principal's network, or to participate regularly with teachers in professional development – a practice associated with strong instructional leadership. They reported that their professional development experiences were less useful to improving their practice than principals did nationally.

The critical need for investments in teacher and principal learning has been made clear over and over again in school reform efforts. Those who have worked to improve schools have found that every aspect of school reform – the creation of more challenging curriculum, the use of more thoughtful assessments, the invention of new model schools and programs – depends on skilled educators who are well-supported in healthy school organizations. In the final analysis, there are no policies that can improve schools if the people in them are not armed with the knowledge and skills they need.

### ***Educator Quality Key Recommendations***

The Transition Team's recommendations aim to create a future in which California has a stable, uniformly high-quality teaching and leadership workforce from preschool through high school.

In this system, teachers and leaders are well-prepared, well-supported, and work in collaborative environments. Schools, districts and higher education institutions collaborate to provide high-quality, comprehensive teacher and leader preparation programs. Teachers and leaders are evaluated based on meaningful professional standards integrated with evidence of student learning. Teacher and leader evaluations are used to inform professional development. And a high-quality, widely available professional development infrastructure exists in California to support educators across their careers. To accomplish this, CDE should work with the State Board of Education and the California Commission for Teacher Credentialing to:

- **Use professional standards and educator performance assessments to leverage improvements in teacher and leader preparation.** California is already a leader in pioneering statewide performance assessments for beginning teacher licensing. Ensuring that these assessments are strengthened, well-implemented, and used for program approval decisions – and expanding this innovation to licensing for school leaders – could dramatically strengthen educator preparation in the state.
- **Strengthen and integrate BTSA and Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) programs** to ensure stronger mentoring and assistance for beginning teachers and for veteran teachers who are struggling.

- **Encourage the development of more effective educator evaluation systems** based on professional teacher and leader standards that guide and assess practice in a way that reflects best practices and incorporates appropriate evidence of student learning. Make sure these systems are supported by training for evaluators, mentoring for teachers, and professional development programs.
- **Create a major Commission on Educator Excellence** to determine how these teacher quality systems should best be designed, supported, and implemented.
- **Launch an ongoing initiative to support union-management collaboration** toward high-leverage reforms in school organization, management, and instructional innovation as well as teacher, classified staff, and administrator development, support, and evaluation.
- **Re-create a professional development infrastructure for the state**, including renewal of California's Subject Matter Projects, the School Leadership Academy, and other high-quality professional learning opportunities for teachers, classified staff, and leaders.
- **Equalize the distribution of well-qualified and effective teachers** by leveraging more equitable salaries and working conditions, using service scholarships and National Board stipends to recruit excellent teachers to high-need schools, and – because leaders are the single most important element in retaining teachers – developing strong leaders for all schools.
- **Support a statewide learning system** by documenting and disseminating best practices in teacher and leader development to teachers, schools, and districts.

## 2. CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

The highest performing school systems in the world prepare their students to apply rigorous academic content knowledge to real life situations. The end goal is to foster each student's ability to create innovative solutions to complex problems and to bring higher levels of economic prosperity and social cohesion. As a result, these students are better able to lead more productive and prosperous adult lives. Every California student deserves these same opportunities.

In 2010, California adopted the Common Core Standards (CCS) in English language arts and Mathematics, which provide an opportunity for the state to align curriculum across pre-kindergarten through grade 12 to ensure that students are prepared to compete in a global economy. In our increasingly complex society, students need to use knowledge in flexible ways, develop complex reasoning and problem solving skills, and abilities to collaborate and communicate in multiple forms.

Implementing CCS will require our education system to do things substantially differently from preschool through higher education. The new standards require a more integrated approach to delivering content instruction. The CCS in English language arts are written to include the development of critical reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in history, science, mathematics, and the arts, as well as in English class. The standards in mathematics are written to include the use of mathematical skills and concepts in fields like science, technology, and engineering. These standards emphasize the ways in which students should use literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum and in life, engaging in real life applications, analyzing issues, and using knowledge to solve complex problems.

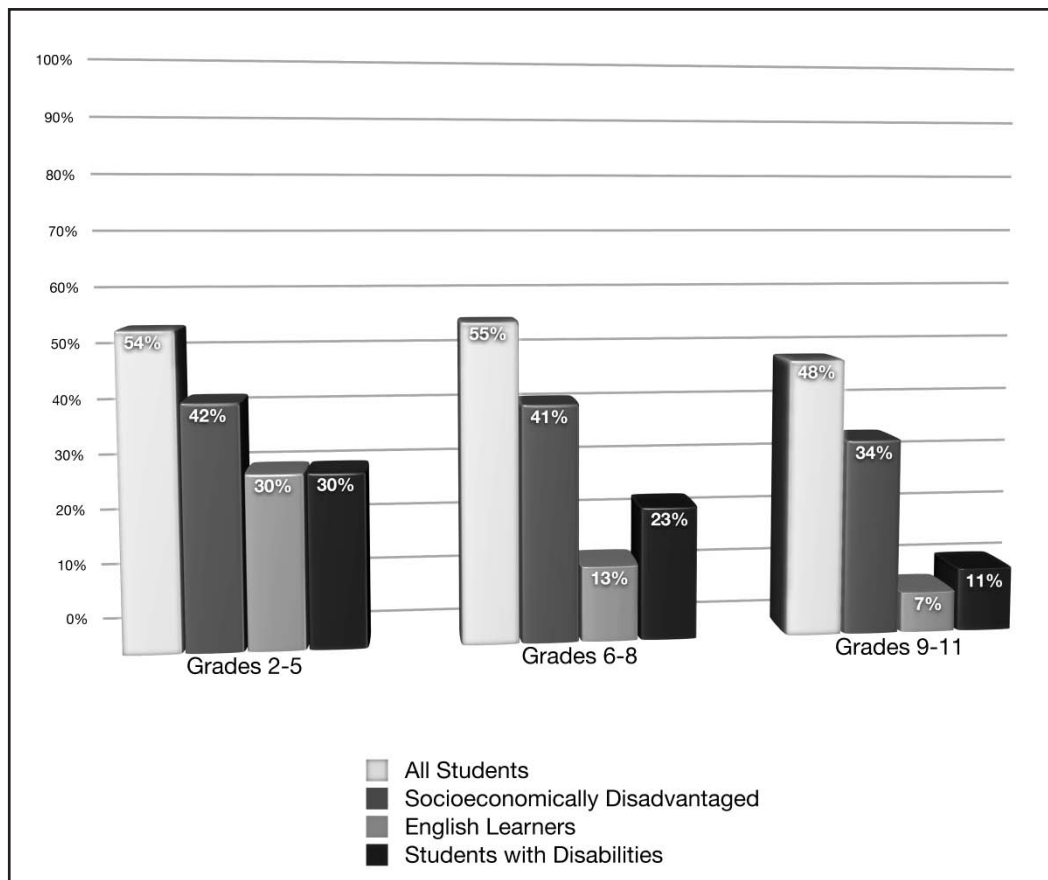
As California moves forward to implement these standards, we will also need to examine how our standards and curriculum frameworks in other subject areas can be made compatible with the Common Core, and how our assessments can ensure attention to critical thinking and performance skills that will enable students to be college and career-ready when they graduate from high school.

By 2014-15, states across the nation will be able to participate in multi-state assessment systems to evaluate college- and career-readiness in light of the CCS. Along with 30 other states, California has joined the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), one of the two multi-state initiatives organized to develop new assessments of English language arts and mathematics. With its computer-adapted testing capacity and provision of formative and interim assessment supports, as well as performance-based assessments that evaluate writing, research, and problem solving, the new assessment system will provide a platform for much more diagnostic support for learning and teaching.

With the adoption of new standards and assessments, there is urgency in ensuring that schools have more rapid and ready access to appropriate instructional materials – including digital materials –to support learning. In an era of budget constraints, increasing productivity is essential. One key path to increased productivity is through a commitment to technology – the same technology that has increased the performance of California businesses and nonprofits over the last 20 years. This does *not* mean computers replacing teachers to deliver curriculum, just as it does not mean computers replacing business employees. It means making digital technology as effective and productive a tool in the school environment as it is in the world beyond schools.

There is also urgency in considering how to ensure appropriate and effective learning experiences for California’s growing population of English learners. As Figure 1 shows, ELs fall further behind the longer they are in California schools, as do low-income students. The curriculum and teaching supports currently in place are not preparing these students for the higher-order skills expected in high school and beyond. A new approach to literacy development and learning in the content areas is needed.

**Figure 1: Percent of Students Proficient in English Language Arts (ELA)  
2010 STAR Tests**



## Curriculum and Assessment Key Recommendations

The Transition Team's recommendations envision a future in which every California student has access to a comprehensive, developmentally appropriate curriculum that prepares them to be college and career-ready and to participate as productive members of their communities and compete globally. This technology-supported curriculum enables students to develop deep understanding within and across disciplines, complex thinking and performance skills, a global perspective, and the capacity for inquiry and independent learning. The curriculum also reflects students' linguistic and cultural strengths and builds on the diverse assets of California's students and families, enabling them to become highly literate in English and one or more other languages. In order to achieve these goals, CDE should:

- **In collaboration with the State Board of Education, revise California's curriculum standards, frameworks, and assessments** to better reflect the demands of a technologically-driven, knowledge-based society, incorporate CCS, and accommodate and build on the strengths of diverse learners.
- **Revise the instructional materials adoption process** to allow more timely access to a greater array of instructional materials, including digital materials.
- **Create an integrated assessment system that measures the standards more fully**, including higher-order thinking and performance skills, and provides continuous diagnostic information and formative supports. Take a leadership role in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium and the new multi-state English Language Development Assessment Consortium.
- **Rethink the design of the California High School Exit Exam** to incorporate diagnostic information over time and to provide instructional supports and assessments that offer more useful information regarding college- and career-readiness.
- **Ensure English literacy and biliteracy** through a statewide campaign to better prepare parents and educators to support literacy. Adopt a California Literacy Plan for birth through 12<sup>th</sup> grade that builds upon research for developmentally appropriate written and oral language development in home and in second language; create English language development standards and curriculum; and recognize California students for being literate in English and one or more additional languages by awarding a State Seal of Biliteracy.
- **Facilitate the infusion of 1:1 computing in school, after school, and in the home**; provide devices, Internet access, new digital curriculum materials, capacity for ongoing diagnostic assessment, professional development and network support; and institute an open standard for the exchange of educational information.

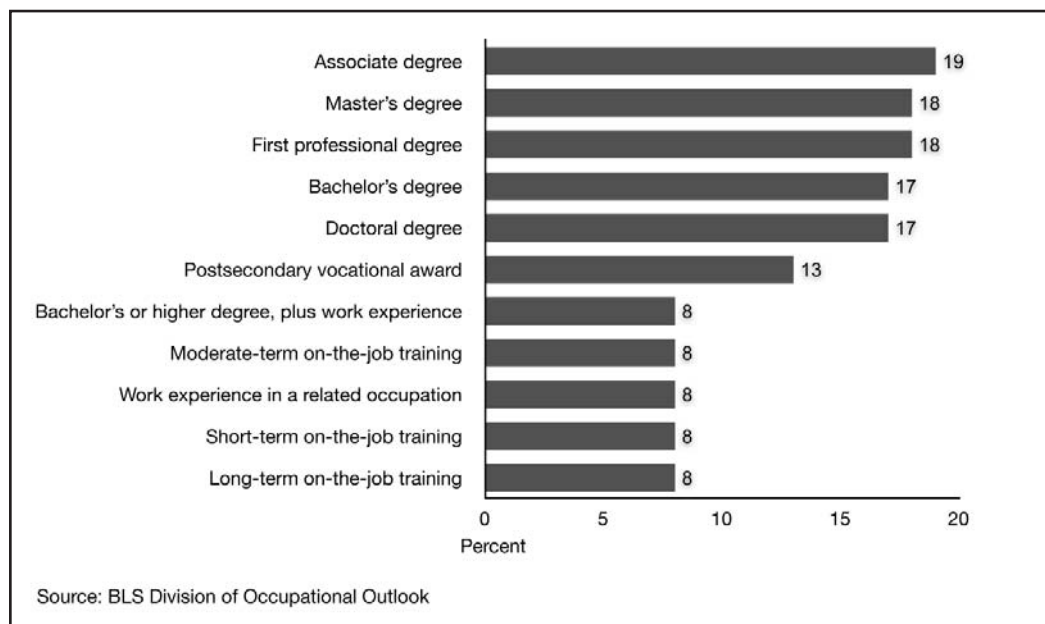
### 3. HIGHER EDUCATION AND SECONDARY ALIGNMENT

In *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns*, Christensen, Horn & Johnson note that we have moved the goalposts of success from needing one third of our students to graduate from college to needing two thirds of our students to complete higher education to be qualified for the jobs that will exist.

A recent forecast by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) showed that most of the growth in jobs between now and 2018 will be in white collar jobs in the professional, service, administrative, and sales areas. The more than 40 million new jobs in these areas compare to fewer than 10 million new jobs in traditional blue collar fields. There will be no new jobs in manufacturing through 2018 and low job growth in areas like maintenance and repair, construction, farming, fishing, and forestry.<sup>15</sup>

In the same report, the BLS forecasted the types of degrees required to meet these job requirements. As Figure 2 shows, the largest proportional increases in employment are expected in jobs that require at least an associate's degree, and most require a bachelor's degree or more.

**Figure 2: Percent change in employment, by education or training category, 2008-18 (projected)**



Preparing our young people for this new economy will require major changes in California’s secondary and higher education systems. While older Californians are among the most educated groups of people in the world, Californians under 35 now rank near the bottom of other industrialized nations. Currently, 38.6 percent of adult Californians have some type of a college degree, putting the state 21<sup>st</sup> among the U.S. in degree completion. For Californians under 35, the attainment level drops to 35.9 percent, moving California to 30<sup>th</sup>. This decline is occurring primarily because of declining high school graduation and college-going rates; it does not yet take into account additional declines that will soon show up because of budget-related enrollment rollbacks and tuition increases.

Absent any improvements, California’s labor market is projected to be short one million college educated workers by 2025, leading to the most severe drop in per-capita income in the nation.

Clearly, we must strengthen the pathway to high school graduation and post-secondary degree completion. This will mean embracing policies and strategies that will drive a more productive alignment between the secondary and higher education systems, and a focus on the kinds of learning that will pay off in college and career success.

One aspect of this evolution should be an ongoing rethinking of the “A-G” requirements – a system that is unique to California – along with the California Standards Tests in high school. While the A-G requirements guiding high school courses are intended to clarify standards and enhance equity, the century-old conception underlying the A-G list, when combined with the specific end-of-course tests required by the California Standards Testing system (14 in all, including the CAHSEE), have made it difficult for the secondary school curriculum to evolve to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century needs. For example, because of the twin sets of constraints, California students – unlike their peers across the country – cannot typically take courses in technology and engineering, marine science or biotechnology, statistics, or career and technical fields, except as electives, primarily in their senior year. This limits their ability to build programs of study that will take full advantage of their interests and talents and prepare them effectively for contemporary careers and college majors.

While there are investments needed to create a more productive system, there are also growing costs to a failure to act. For example:

- Adults with less than a high school diploma in 2008 earned only \$20,000 per year, whereas those with some postsecondary education or an associate's degree earned \$37,000 –85 percent more.<sup>16</sup>
- There is a strong correlation between low levels of education and criminal activity, with high school dropouts five to eight times more likely to be incarcerated.<sup>17</sup>
- Immigrants lacking a high school diploma or a GED are 15 percent less likely to become naturalized citizens.<sup>18</sup>

Ultimately, California must ensure that its public and private sectors will be able to tap into a pool of talented, well educated citizens, who will bring creativity, invention, innovation, entrepreneurship, industriousness, and high levels of productivity to the state's future.

A number of recent initiatives show promise in achieving this goal. The newly-adopted Common Core Standards initiative focuses on the skills needed for success in college and careers. These standards provide an opportunity for the higher education and K-12 systems to collaboratively design a more thoughtful and streamlined curriculum and assessment system that connects high school to postsecondary learning and employment opportunities.

California also has pockets of excellence in career and technical education programs in school districts throughout the state aimed simultaneously at preparing students for college and careers. One especially promising example is the California Linked Learning District Initiative funded by the James Irvine Foundation through ConnectEd: The California Center for College and Career. Linked Learning programs offer students a multi-year program of study that includes rigorous, college preparatory academics along with connections to individual student interests and learning needs through experiential, work-based learning and student supports. Students in Linked Learning programs are able to choose among themed pathways in fields such as engineering, arts and media, and biomedicine and health. They create an engaging student-centered learning environment based on the belief that all students can achieve at high levels if they are taught in active and authentic ways. These kinds of programs connect learning with student interests and career preparation leading to higher graduation rates, increased post secondary enrollment, higher earning potential, and greater civic engagement.<sup>19</sup>

### **Higher Education and Secondary Alignment Key Recommendations**

To increase high school and postsecondary graduation rates and prepare students for the new economy they will be entering, CDE should:

- **Reinvest in funding for and improvements to our higher education systems** and protect Cal Grants as a way to ensure higher education remains achievable for our students.
- **Work with UC, CSU, and CCC to establish and define California College and Career Readiness Standards**, along with performance goals and reporting systems, and align assessments for K-12 accountability, college admissions, and college placement.
- **Remove regulatory and fiscal barriers to dual enrollment** of high school students in college coursework to engage in rigorous curricular pathways in aligned sequences leading to bachelor's degrees or career-technical education credit.
- **Establish, with other agencies, a longitudinal data repository** that links databases from community colleges, K-12 (CALPADS), higher education (CPEC), and the Employment Development Department in order to track degree attainment, job placement, career path, and workforce success of students.
- **Create strong Linked Learning pathways to college and careers** by evaluating and investing in innovative, personalized high school models that engage students in academic and applied learning, and by modernizing A-G requirements while revamping high school assessments. Implement key recommendations from the AB 2648 Multiple Pathways to Student Success Plan published in 2010.



#### 4. ACCOUNTABILITY AND SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

In order to achieve the goals we have described, we need useful information to guide decisions; incentives that encourage both the right kind of instruction and the right kind of investments; and the knowledge, skill, and capacity in schools to improve practices and outcomes.

All of these conditions currently pose challenges for the state. California lags other states in the development of educational data systems, including a student longitudinal data system, a teacher longitudinal data system, and a data repository that links preschool, K-12, higher education, and non-educational data and makes it available for policy and research.

The state's accountability system, based on the Academic Performance Index (API), is based only on student test scores rather than a broader array of student outcomes and only takes into account student background characteristics and not the resources of schools, families, and communities. It also provides no diagnostic information on the capacity of schools and districts that could guide improvement efforts.

Finally the state accountability system, like the federal system under No Child Left Behind, relies only on performance standards coupled with rewards and sanctions to improve underperforming schools and districts. These systems provide little information on the source of the underperformance and little guidance on how to improve performance. As Richard Elmore points out:

*Low-performing schools, and the people who work in them, don't know what to do. If they did, they would be doing it already. You can't improve a school's performance, or the performance of any teacher or student in it, without increasing the investment in teachers' knowledge, pedagogical skills, and understanding of students. This work can be influenced by an external accountability system, but it cannot be done by that system. Test scores don't tell us much of anything about these important domains; they provide a composite, undifferentiated signal about students' responses to a problem.<sup>20</sup>*

The solution to improving the performance of California's schools and districts is based on the simple premise: *improvement depends on capacity*. An increasing body of research has identified capacity as the key ingredient in improving school performance.<sup>21</sup> This capacity depends on improving both the *individual capacity* of teachers and school leaders – their knowledge, skills, and material supports – and the *institutional capacity* of schools, districts, and state agencies to support the delivery of improved education through strong staffing, instructional guidance, well-directed resources, helpful data and information, and productive incentives.<sup>22</sup>

The underlying problem in California is a lack of capacity at many levels throughout the state's educational system – schools lack the capacity to support teachers, districts lack the capacity to support schools, and the state lacks the capacity to support school districts. A related problem is the lack of coordination among the various levels of the educational system in developing and providing capacity.

As the state faces an extreme fiscal crisis, it may be difficult to implement new school improvement systems in the short-term. However, there may be opportunities for rethinking elements of the testing and accountability systems while fiscal capacity is being recovered. It is imperative that discussions take place as soon as possible in order to come to agreement on the changes to be made once the state has resources to invest in updating these systems.

## Accountability and School Improvement Key Recommendations

The Transition Advisory Team believes that California needs both a stronger understanding of how to build school and educator capacity and an improved state accountability system that (1) is based on promoting continuous improvement of a broad array of student outcomes as well as continuous organizational learning; (2) places importance on improving the performance of underperforming students; (3) better identifies the needs and capacity of underperforming schools and districts and provides the appropriate resources and supports to improve; and (4) properly balances accountability – both vertically within the state and district (teachers, principals, superintendents, school boards), and horizontally within the community (schools, businesses, community based organizations, county services etc.). To accomplish this, CDE should:

- **Develop a robust system of indicators to inform school accountability**, including broader measures of student learning that focus on growth and better assess 21st century skills; measures of school capacity and student opportunities to learn; and measures of resources connected to Opportunity-to-Learn standards that describe the financial and human resources available to schools and help set targets for a system that ensures schools the resources they need.
- **Create an Accountability and School Improvement task force** to design a more useful and effective accountability and school improvement framework and to develop more productive approaches to building school and district capacity.
- **Create a senior data advisor position at CDE** to ensure the effective implementation of well-designed, privacy-protected longitudinal data systems (including CALPADS and CALTIDES), as well as integration of these systems with early learning and higher education data sets. Ensure and establish a clear vision of how this database will operate and be used for betterment of education throughout the state.
- **Create an evaluation capacity in CDE** through internal staffing and partnerships with research organizations, in order to enact policies and propagate practices based on sound research.

## 5. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Research confirms that children who attend high-quality early care and education programs are better prepared for kindergarten, have stronger language skills in the first years of elementary school and are less likely to repeat a grade or drop out of school.<sup>23</sup> High-quality early care and education offers one of the highest returns of any public investment – more than \$7 for every dollar spent – by reducing future expenditures on special education, public assistance, and the criminal justice system.

Yet a recent RAND Corporation study found that only 40 percent of eligible 3- and 4-year olds are being served by state-subsidized early learning programs. And just 13 percent of low-income children are enrolled in high-quality programs that promote school readiness and later achievement.<sup>24</sup>

In California, a student's academic trajectory is substantially determined by his or her third grade reading proficiency level. Without the strong, early start that high-quality early childhood education provides, students who are not proficient in reading by the third grade may never catch up – in fact, the gap increases as they move through the K-12 school system. Unfortunately, children who are socio-economically disadvantaged are more likely to start school behind and stay behind.

California has already begun work to raise quality, improve accountability and better prepare our children to succeed in school. In 2008, the legislature created the Early Learning Quality Improvement System (ELQIS) Advisory Committee. In December 2010, the Committee released a report outlining a comprehensive quality rating scale policy and implementation plan, which was to be the foundation for the recently established California Early Learning Advisory Council. The Council, though currently unfunded due to recent cutbacks, is also ultimately

to develop a comprehensive system and policy plan for early learning and preschool services in California, begin coordination of standards and an early childhood data system that connects with K-12, and work toward developing a coherent preparation, training and professional development system.

The implementation of a recent reform of kindergarten education policy gives California a significant opportunity to expand access to kindergarten readiness. The Kindergarten Readiness Act of 2010 creates transitional kindergarten, the first year of a two-year kindergarten experience for students born between September and December. The Act also gradually changes the kindergarten entry date from December 2 to September 1, so all children will enter kindergarten at age 5 by 2014. This historic legislation means that more than 120,000 children will receive access to an additional year of high-quality early learning and, as a result, be better prepared to succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

The California public school system has experienced serious reductions over the last few budget cycles leading to reduced educational services and personnel. Current budget proposals include significant cuts to California's early care and education programs. It is critical that we maintain the basic infrastructure of the early learning and development programs that serve our youngest learners, including high-quality preschool programs, so that the system can expand when funds are available.

### **Early Childhood Education Key Recommendations**

In tomorrow's California, we envision that all children will thrive in preschool, be ready for kindergarten, and academically proficient in third grade by growing up healthy and having opportunities for high quality early learning. The four essential components of this vision are 1) building a high-quality early learning system; 2) connecting early learning with K-12; 3) increasing access to quality, and 4) providing comprehensive support for the development of the whole child. To accomplish these goals, CDE should:

- **Develop an infrastructure for a birth-to-grade-three system** that includes readiness data, and aligned standards/assessment, curriculum, and professional development.
- **Develop a comprehensive system of supports for children**, including maternal education and infant home visitation programs to support parent information about health and education supports for their children; and developmental screenings in early childhood settings.
- **Preserve First Five State Commission and County Commission funding** so programs and services vital to children birth to age five are not significantly reduced or eliminated.
- **Implement a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)** to guide standards and supports for early learning settings, and align curriculum, assessment, and teacher development initiatives to support its implementation.
- **Design and fund early learning programs and professional development systems** that use both the research-based Preschool Learning Foundations and the K-12 California CCS.
- **Develop an early childhood data system** linked to the K-12 system to track children and the educator work force and guide decisions about investments and supports.
- **Improve pre- and in-service training for early childhood teachers and classified staff** by setting standards, evaluating workforce needs, and developing strong training models.
- **Design and fund universal transitional kindergarten programs** that are culturally and linguistically appropriate and inclusive in all local districts.
- **Build support for innovative funding models** by helping programs access and learn to integrate "braided" strands of funding from multiple sources. Take advantage of federal funding initiatives, including the inclusion of early learning in a new Race to the Top competition and the potential expansion of Early Learning Challenge grants.

## 6. EDUCATION SUPPORTS

In 1966, James Coleman's groundbreaking report, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, presented evidence that student background and socioeconomic status strongly influence academic achievement. Despite a long history of understanding the relationship between poverty and school success, current education reform strategies often ignore the very real needs of children for secure housing, regular health care, supportive out-of-school environments, and educational assistance. This is reflected in low achievement, drop-out rates, and a growing school-to-prison pipeline.

**Community Schools and Wraparound Services.** Full-service community schools are one tested approach to addressing the achievement gap. Key elements of such schools include attention to the whole child, provision of wraparound services through strong collaborations among community partners, a systems approach, and a healthy environment.<sup>25</sup>

It is important to recognize that a community school is both a place and a set of partnerships. It's a way of doing business – a collaborative approach to supporting student success. In a community school, the school staff and their partners (local government, community agencies) work together to identify and address the various needs of children and their families. This team, often led by a school-site coordinator, connects children and families to academic, health, social service and other resources that help *remove barriers to learning and support academic success*. When a school has a way of helping children get what they need so that they can come to school ready to learn, then teachers can be free to teach, families can be better engaged, and school outcomes improve.

A community school sometimes has support services at the school site – such as before and after school programs, health clinics, social service counselors, and adult education – and other times it has people and a system in place to make sure children and families have easy access to all these services, whether they are available on campus or in the community.

A number of schools and districts in California and around the country have demonstrated achievement gains through community school models that take a comprehensive approach to meeting student needs. California's 20-year history of community school development began with the Healthy Start program, which provided seed funding for the coordination and alignment of resources and programs that support and strengthen families at the local level. Healthy Start awarded over 1,400 planning and operational grants to local education agencies and their collaborative partners, reaching more than 3,100 schools and over one million students.

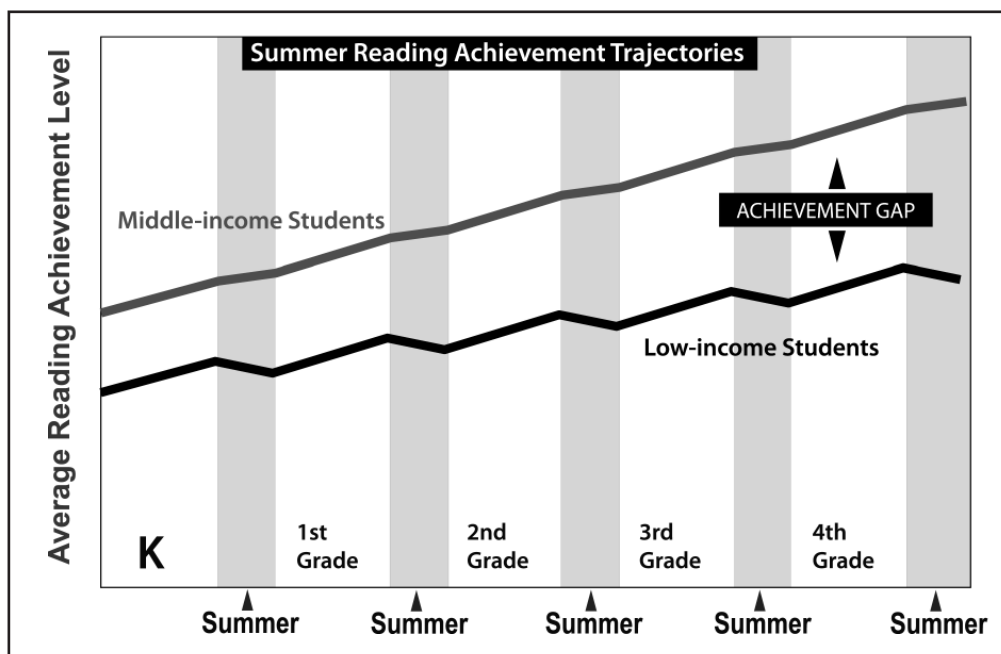
Although Healthy Start was never brought to scale as a school-reform strategy, over 80% of Healthy Start sites sustained their services after the end of their state grant funding. Successful Healthy Start grantees – those that have sustained and expanded their collaborative work and integrated services – almost unanimously credit the technical assistance they received from CDE as key to their success. In the current fiscal situation, this sort of alignment of resources is even more critical to create more efficient and effective supports for children and families.

**Expanded Learning.** It is widely agreed that many students need more time for learning, and that additional time for learning needs to happen in engaging and relevant ways. High quality after school and summer programs can be particularly effective in engaging students who have not succeeded in school, because these programs offer them a different learning environment that caters to their interests, are staffed by people who can pay close attention to relationships, can focus on project-based activities, and can often work more closely with families. After school and summer learning opportunities play an important and unique role by providing learning opportunities that are active, collaborative and meaningful, that support mastery, and that expand young people's horizons. Research from California after school programs has shown positive impacts on school day attendance, reduced high-school dropout rates, reduced juvenile crime, and increased academic success.<sup>26</sup>

California has led the nation in its investment in after school programs due to Proposition 49, which guarantees \$550 million annually. This is more than all other states combined. California also administers \$130 million in federal after school program dollars. However, California could get much more impact from these resources if programs were of more uniformly high quality. More can be done to disseminate information about and support successful program models across the state.

Another critical area for attention is summer schools. A substantial body of research shows that many children lose ground academically over the summer if they are not engaged in academic enrichment activities. This phenomenon of “summer learning loss” disproportionately affects the lowest-income children and is cumulative, so each summer children suffer these learning losses, the further and further they fall behind.<sup>27</sup> Dr. Karl Alexander, a leading researcher at Johns Hopkins University, attributes two-thirds of the ninth grade achievement gap to summer learning loss.<sup>28</sup>

**Figure 3: Summer Learning Loss Increases the Achievement Gap**



Federal policy governing federal after school dollars is likely to shift this year, creating the opportunity for investments in extended school year models, and California will want to plan ahead for how to best implement this change based on effective practices across the state.

**Parent Involvement.** Research conducted for the last 30 years clearly indicates that parent involvement in their children’s education has a significant impact on student achievement, as well as social and emotional growth. Challenges that can impede parent involvement include circumstantial barriers, such as foreign language, special needs, transiency, work responsibilities, and domestic issues in the home, among others. Additionally, schools vary in how welcome they make parents feel on their campuses, how readily they make information accessible to parents, how frequently they engage parents in regular communication about their children’s progress, and how much they encourage parent involvement on campus by offering leadership and volunteer opportunities.

CDE should prioritize the promotion of increased parental engagement with local schools, particularly in our most challenged schools where getting parents involved can be difficult for personal, economic, and institutional reasons. Teaching character and promoting trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and good citizenship, is important. Including parents in this process from the start will give California’s children a strong foundation for success.

## Education Supports Key Recommendations

In order to ensure that students are in school and ready to learn, we must explicitly remove the many barriers to learning that children, particularly those living in poverty, can face. To support these goals, CDE should:

- **Encourage schools to adopt a community school approach** in which students have access to all the supports they need to be successful, and provide both funding and technical assistance in this effort through existing CDE staff and structures.
- **Create a Children’s Cabinet**, an Interagency Children’s Task Force charged with promoting and implementing information sharing, collaboration, increased efficiency and improved service delivery among and within the state’s child-serving agencies.
- **Provide leadership to significantly improve the quality of expanded learning (after school and summer) programs** by being strategic in the use of Proposition 49 and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Community funds for training, technical assistance, and evaluation. CDE can draw on and disseminate best practices from leading program providers in California and other states.
- **Provide leadership to increase access to high-quality summer learning programs** by raising awareness about the importance of summer learning; maximizing the use of existing resources (ASES, 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC, Title 1, SES, etc); and adopting a “new vision” for summer school that builds on research showing the effectiveness of full-day programs that blend academic support with enrichment and recreation.
- **Support flexible use of federal after school program funds** for various kinds of expanded learning models (before and after school programs, summer learning, and extended school day or school redesign efforts), with a mandate for strong community partnerships and enrichment in every model.
- **Create a Parent Involvement Master Plan**, disseminate information about best practices in parent engagement and parent education through a statewide clearinghouse, and include data for assessing active parent/family engagement in school accountability measures.

## 7. HEALTH, NUTRITION, AND PHYSICAL FITNESS

Because healthy students not only excel academically but also are more likely to be engaged positively in social, community, and extra-curricular activities, the benefits of supporting student health, nutrition, and physical fitness are far-reaching. Employment, public safety, and community pride and partnerships are able to be cultivated when young people are supported to be healthy.

**Health Care Access and Nutrition.** Rigorous research confirms the clear connection between health status and academic achievement. We know that:

- Healthy children miss fewer days of school, are more attentive, and are better behaved.<sup>29</sup>
- Healthy children are more successful in school, and are more likely to graduate from high school and go to college.<sup>30</sup>
- Health disparities contribute to the achievement gap.<sup>31</sup>
- Children with health insurance are more likely to get the health care they need.<sup>32</sup> The result is healthier, more attentive, and higher-performing students in the classroom.
- Health insurance makes a difference in school performance. Children covered by California’s Healthy Families Program showed a 63% improvement in “paying attention” and a 64% improvement in “keeping up with school activities” over their performance when uninsured.<sup>33</sup>

Research also confirms that providing health services and facilitating access to health care in school can improve educational outcomes, keeping children in the classroom, improving achievement, reducing disciplinary referrals, and improving school climate.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the acknowledged importance of children's health, at least 700,000 California children who are eligible for existing coverage programs are not enrolled. By 2014, an additional 900,000 children are estimated to be eligible for health insurance offered through the California Health Benefit Exchange. Helping families enroll their children and other family members in health insurance is a natural fit for schools since that is where the majority of children are.

California's 176 school health centers serve only a small proportion of the children who are uninsured or lack access to health care. The ratio of school nurses to students in California is worse than that of 40 other states and has suffered as a result of recent budget cuts. Since the 2008-2009 academic year, there has not even been data on the number of school nurses employed by districts. Implementation of other school health interventions and health insurance outreach is uneven, and the state has no data on the number or types of programs in place.

Except for administering a handful of health-related funding streams, CDE has not historically played a strong leadership role in advancing or coordinating school health services or programs. The Superintendent has an extraordinary opportunity to provide the statewide leadership necessary to encourage and support schools as they become viable community centers where access to enrollment, information, and health care services are provided.

**Physical Fitness and Nutrition.** Research has also established the contribution of regular physical activity participation and good nutrition, not only to key health outcomes such as obesity prevention, but also to educational outcomes such as attentiveness, concentration, and academic performance. Studies show that:

- Active and fit students have better standardized test scores and grades.
- Classroom physical activity breaks improve attention and behavior; breaks without physical activity do not.
- Moderate to high levels of physical activity in physical education classes tend to improve academic achievement.
- Structured group exercise breaks for students and school staff have been shown to improve on-task time, academic test scores, absenteeism and disciplinary referrals.

Given these findings, physical activity can now be considered a strategy for enhancing academic performance. Physical education is the primary opportunity in childhood to enhance movement skills and knowledge, habituate students to regular activity, and teach for lifetime engagement. The quality of physical education instruction in California schools is uneven and lacks sufficient leadership needed to achieve its very worthy outcomes for all students. The need to maximize efforts and focus actions around physical education and physical activity is evident.

Good nutrition is an additional key component of building and maintaining health and can be facilitated by both education programs for children and families and the provision of healthy foods on the school campus.

## **Health, Nutrition, and Physical Fitness Key Recommendations**

CDE can do much to help foster children's health and fitness. The Department should:

- **Help connect eligible children to health coverage** by working with appropriate state entities to design school-outreach strategies.
- **Provide leadership in the development of school health centers and mental health services** by working with the California Department of Public Health and other agencies to help schools coordinate and more fully tap diverse sources of state and federal funding, and to make it easier for schools to construct facilities for school health centers.

- **Take advantage of new tele-health technology and funding** to increase access to health services at schools.
- **Create incentives to recognize improvement in student, teacher, classified staff, and administrator physical activity during the school day.**
- **Disseminate models and provide training to educators to implement activity breaks, active recess, and other resources. Provide toolkits and models of successful incorporation of physical activity on the CDE website.**
- **Incorporate measures of physical education opportunities and performance into accountability structures**, such as the new Academic Performance Index.
- **Enhance child nutrition** by providing accessible, engaging information for teachers, classified staff, administrators, children, and families; ensuring that every school has working water fountains with water quality meeting community standards; requiring that all food offered on school campuses meets USDA nutritional standards; and partnering with the Farm Bureau, Department of Food and Agriculture, and NGOs to expand the number of school gardens, as well as access to nutrition information.

## 8. SCHOOL FINANCE

In a recent survey, California school district officials identified “improving academic achievement” and “remaining fiscally solvent” as their top strategic priorities, reflecting the tremendous financial pressures facing California schools, at the same time that expectations for student performance continue to rise.

Based on the budget proposed by the Governor in January for the 2011-12 school year, state funding for education has declined by 13 percent since 2007-08, without adjusting for inflation, the equivalent of a reduction of \$1,100 for every K-12 student. Since then, the failure to approve a ballot initiative to extend taxes means that cuts may be even more severe over the coming year. In addition, significant deferrals of funding totaling \$9.4 billion have reduced the resources for K-12 education even further.

Since the 1990s, California has consistently ranked near the bottom among states in per-pupil spending when that spending is adjusted to reflect cost differences across states. As a result, the state has higher student to teacher ratios and fewer support and administrative staff than nearly all other states. Due to the cost of living differential for California, a typical school district allocates 85 percent of its budget for personnel costs, which limits the budget options available when districts have already made substantial cuts in personnel.

Equally problematic, an extraordinarily large share of funding in California comes in the form of categorical grants, especially in low-income districts, which both means that pressing needs may go unaddressed and that a large share of school and district energy must go into monitoring and reporting about small pots of money, rather than focusing on instruction and the improvement of learning.

Beginning in 2008-09, school districts were given flexibility in their use of funds for more than 40 categorical programs, where expenditures had been previously restricted. Districts have found the new flexibility in the use of these funds to be extremely helpful in enabling them to balance their budgets in the midst of the state fiscal crisis.

Persistent economic challenges in California compound the difficulty of identifying new sources of revenue for education. Over the past ten years, the proportion of funding for schools provided by the state has averaged 56 percent, with local property taxes providing 20 percent of revenue, the federal government 12 percent, local miscellaneous sources providing 10 percent, and the state lottery slightly more than 1 percent. Under Proposition 98, education funding is dependent upon state general fund revenue, which has contributed to volatility for education funding.



Significant political divisions exist over the merit of raising taxes in an economy that is struggling for recovery. However, the state retains large tax bases, which are recovering at differing speeds. Revenue enhancement will be an important priority as near-term challenges lessen.

### **School Finance Key Recommendations**

California needs a permanent funding system that is simpler, more transparent, more rational, and more directly responsive to the needs of students. To achieve this goal, CDE should work with the Legislature to:

- **Encourage efficiencies** by:
  - > Creating a repository of best practices for efficient operations and working with districts to support their use;
  - > Incentivizing district consolidation where it will produce economies of scale;
  - > Creating a mechanism within CDE to enable pooled purchasing by districts; and
  - > Facilitating and supporting the best uses of technology for both operations and instruction; re-examining requirements (e.g. seat time, textbook adoption) that might impede efficiencies that could accompany emerging technologies.
- **Proactively support needy districts in setting up effective systems** in areas such as procurement, transportation, facilities, food service, maintenance, transportation, etc., rather than waiting until a district reaches a crisis point and needs substantial intervention.
- **Seek responsible ways to reduce mandates and extend flexibility** for use of funds; move more of the school budget into general support rather than categorical funding streams that make efficient management much more difficult.
- **Create a weighted student formula approach to funding**, with most K-12 funding streams consolidated into core formula funding, supplemented by a small number of block grants to ensure that students who are at risk or high cost would receive the services they need.
- **Establish a flexibility/ accountability task force** to identify strategies and metrics to determine whether districts are using their funds in ways that support successful outcomes for all students.
- **Seek new revenue sources for schools:** At the state level, explore taxes on selected sales and services; at the federal level, initiate efforts to recapture more of the imbalance in funds between California and the federal government.
- **Seek legislation to allow districts to pass parcel taxes** with a 55% majority vote.

## **9. FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION AND REFORM**

A substantial body of research correlates the impact of school facilities on educational achievement. Over the last decade, these studies have focused on architectural components such as air quality, temperature control, acoustics, daylight/illumination, and out-of-date equipment and furnishings, and are widely reported in the school facility literature.<sup>35</sup>

Recognizing the important role of facilities in student achievement, the state has provided capital assistance to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) for over 60 years. The current School Facility Program (SFP), passed in 1998 (SB 50, Greene), provides matching funds for the construction of new schools and the modernization of existing schools, and was intended to create flexibility and enhanced local decision making. The State Allocation Board (SAB), on which the Superintendent serves, approves eligible projects from funds made available from voter-approved general obligation bonds.

Districts receiving these funds must work with four separate state agencies to gain approvals for their plans, and multiple reports have documented concerns with the efficiency of this state administrative structure.<sup>36</sup> LEAs and other stakeholders have repeatedly expressed a desire for a single agency to administer all aspects of the SFP.

Although the state has invested over \$35 billion in K-higher education school facilities since 2002 with the passage of Propositions 1D, 55 and 47, the state does not have a system-wide facility inventory to make priority decisions for determining where school facility investments are most needed. Within some general ground rules, funds are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. As infrastructure resource allocations become more constrained by the state's fiscal crisis, needs assessments are critical for allocating coveted state funds efficiently.

It is estimated that 20% of the education budget is assigned for construction, professional outside services, school equipment, information technology, energy and other services. This represents between \$9 billion to \$12 billion per year. Despite the size of this investment, there is currently no systemic approach to procurement practices governed by CDE. Local business officials in over 1,000 school districts operate as independent islands with respect to procurement, without clear guidance or incentives that promote efficient practices or socially beneficial outcomes like supplier diversity. The Superintendent of Public Instruction has the authority to set statewide policy in education procurement services that promote inclusion and diversity, as well as greater effectiveness and efficiency. This is a critical time to use that authority to create a more fair, green, and economical system of facilities development.

## **Facilities Construction and Reform Key Recommendations**

California can gain by developing smarter systems for school construction reform, promoting school district energy self-sufficiency, and improving incentives for educationally supportive construction designs. To facilitate these goals, CDE should:

- **Collaborate with the Governor to consolidate or better coordinate agencies** that have responsibility for facilities design and approval to streamline the process of developing facilities.
- **Inventory school facilities** as the basis for a multi-year, needs-based facilities plan. Establish a facility condition index that considers utilization, educational suitability, building condition, and technology readiness to determine priorities and investment levels.
- **Enable districts to engage in more efficient facilities construction and re-design**, including movement toward energy self-sufficiency, by setting targets for energy goals and providing information for LEAs to use to determine the most effective options for designing, building and modernizing school facilities.
- **Establish a Superintendent's Council of Business/Labor** to develop procurement criteria and to provide opportunities for procurement that promotes supplier diversity.
- **Foster joint use agreements that support schools as community hubs** and create efficiencies with other community service providers.

## **Conclusion**

Clearly, there is much work to do to rebuild the system of public education in California. But we are inspired by the commitment of educators, parents, and children in schools throughout the state, and we are encouraged by the outpouring of energy, good will, and excellent ideas from stakeholders within and outside of the education system. It is said that the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. If that step is taken, and we follow it with steady movement in a clear and purposeful direction, A Blueprint for Great Schools can create the 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning system for Californians that all of us want, and our children deserve.

# Transition Advisory Team Members

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# Endnotes

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