

SUMMARY

GREATNESS BY DESIGN:

Supporting Outstanding Teaching to Sustain a Golden State

Every child deserves a great teacher. For this to happen, California must create and maintain a highly effective educator workforce. To that end, California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, in conjunction with Mary Sandy, Executive Director of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, convened the Educator Excellence Task Force (EETF) in January of 2012. Comprising more than 50 education stakeholders—including parents, K-12 educators, postsecondary educators, researchers, and community leaders—the task force was charged with drafting recommended actions that could be woven together into a coherent system that would produce exceptional teachers and principals. In September of 2012, after more than six months of deliberation among EETF work groups, the task force produced a report of its recommendations: *Greatness by Design: Supporting Outstanding Teaching to Sustain a Golden State*.

The *Greatness by Design* report is grounded in knowledge and practical lessons gained from decades of school improvement policy implementation. These efforts have shown that every aspect of school reform—the creation of more challenging curriculum, the use of more thoughtful assessments, and the invention of new model schools and programs—depends on highly skilled educators who are well supported in healthy school organizations. In short, there are no policies that can improve schools if the people in them are not armed with the knowledge and skills they need.

This finding is confirmed by a McKinsey study of 25 school systems worldwide, including 10 of the top performers, which found that investments in teachers and teaching are central to improving student outcomes. Those top-performing school systems—including Japan, Finland, and Singapore—emphasize and fully underwrite: 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.

In the coming years, it will be essential for Californians to have a strategic plan for reconstructing their formerly great education system. Three critical priorities identified by the EETF should be the basis for implementing these much needed reforms:

- » Creating a coherent continuum of learning expectations and opportunities for educators across their entire careers
- » Developing a learning system in California that supports collaborative learning about effective practices among educators, across schools and districts, between and among school boards and unions, and within state agencies
- » Developing a consistent revenue base for high-quality professional learning by creating a category of flexible funding to support it

This summary of the full report is designed to provide policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders a succinct overview of EETF recommendations and includes references to related pages and item numbers in the full report for more detail. A copy of the full *Greatness by Design* report is available at www.cde.ca.gov/eo/in/documents/greatnessfinal.pdf

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Recruiting and Equitably Distributing Excellent Educators

The highest-achieving nations recruit high-ability individuals to teaching and school administration by underwriting all of the costs of their training in high-quality programs. These investments on the front end of the career save money for all the years thereafter by reducing the high costs of teacher turnover and ineffectiveness and by avoiding the added costs of bureaucracies and programs designed to offset the problems of inadequately prepared teachers.

To properly staff our schools, three pressing problems require immediate attention. First, although downsizing creates what look like teacher “surpluses,” there are still shortages of qualified teachers in fields such as special

education, early childhood education, mathematics, physical science, foreign languages and bilingual education/English language development. Second, these shortages—along with difficulties attracting qualified administrators—are most acute in the schools where low-income and minority students are concentrated in under-resourced districts. And finally, entry into the state’s preparation programs has been declining rapidly, even though student enrollments are on the rise and projected to increase further over the next decade. As we solve these problems, it is critical that we develop policies to attract and prepare highly able individuals who will serve California’s students well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2A: Recruit and retain a culturally diverse, high-quality teaching and school leadership workforce to meet California’s needs. (p. 23)

- » Offer subsidies and expand programs for recruitment and training of a diverse pool of high-ability educators for high-need fields and high-need locations. (p. 23)
- » Create new pathways into teaching that align the resources of community colleges and state universities with supports for candidates willing to commit to work in high-need schools. (p. 24)
- » Offer incentives and high-quality accessible pathways for licensed teachers to become cross-trained in shortage areas like special education, English language development/bilingual education, mathematics or physical science. (p. 24)

2B: Distribute well-prepared teachers and administrators equitably among all students. (p. 25)

- » Enact a more equitable Weighted Student Funding Formula. (p. 25)
- » Require districts to distribute resources equitably to high-poverty schools, as a condition for receiving state categorical funds and, eventually, “weighted” funds. (p. 25)
- » Report progress toward educator equity targets at the state and local levels. (p. 26)
- » Strengthen enforcement by CDE and CTC of existing federal and state laws requiring the equitable distribution of fully prepared and experienced teachers. (p. 26)
- » Create incentives for expert, experienced teachers and leaders to serve in high-need schools. (p. 26)

Preparing Educators

To provide a high-quality education to all of its culturally and linguistically diverse students from preschool through high school in every community, California must develop and maintain a stable, diverse, highly effective educator workforce. California has created excellent preparation models for both teachers and principals and has led the nation in the development of teacher performance assessments for licensing. However, for

a variety of reasons, the state's capacity to enforce its high standards has been uneven. Given the challenges that face today's educators as they seek to teach the increasingly challenging content required by the Common Core State Standards, California clearly must deepen areas of educator preparation and narrow the variability in quality among those preparation programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3A: Update licensure and program accreditation standards for teachers and administrators to support the teaching of more demanding content to more diverse learners. (p. 29)

- » Infuse preparation for Common Core State Standards (CCSS) into both teacher and administrator preparation standards. (p. 29)
- » Strengthen the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders to target greater capacity to support teaching practice aimed at college- and career-readiness for diverse students. (pp. 29–30)

3B: Strengthen and streamline accreditation by incorporating the features of successful programs and the results of national accreditation, creating common data (e.g., graduates' and employers' surveys; performance assessment outcomes) and creating more strategic review processes. (p. 30)

3C: Incorporate valid and reliable performance assessments into licensure and accreditation for both teachers and school leaders. Use results of these assessments to improve candidate preparation, build tailored induction experiences, and leverage program improvement. (p. 32)

3D: Set clearer and stronger clinical training expectations and expand models of training that prepare candidates well for practice. Support residency models and school-university professional development school (PDS) partnerships for teachers, especially in high-need communities, and residency components of preparation programs for administrators. Ensure that both new teachers and principals receive high-quality mentoring that builds on the strong clinical training they will have already received. (p. 33)

3E: Strengthen preparation for educators in key, high-need fields: early childhood educators, teachers and administrators who serve new English learners and standard English learners, and teachers and administrators who serve students with disabilities in both general education and specialist contexts. (p. 35)

3F: Remove barriers to successful teacher education program models and expand the use of models that work. (p. 38)



Inducting Teachers and School Leaders

New teachers and leaders can either become highly competent in their first years on the job, or they can develop counterproductive approaches or leave the profession entirely, depending on the kind and quality of help they encounter when they enter.

Studies have long shown that high-quality teacher induction programs lead to teachers who stay in the profession at higher rates, accelerated professional growth among new teachers, and improved student learning.² The costs of replacing a teacher who leaves in the early part of the career range from \$15,000 to \$20,000, at a national cost of more than \$7 billion annually—an unfortunate way to spend scarce resources that should be used to improve teachers' effectiveness.³

With its pioneering Beginning Teacher Support & Assessment (B TSA) program—which was shown to reduce attrition and improve teacher competence—California has been a national leader in developing mentoring programs for beginning teachers. But, existing strong induction programs are currently imperiled in many districts due to budget cuts. Immediate steps are needed to ensure that current strengths are preserved and continued progress is made for induction of new teachers. It is critical, as well, to create strong induction for school administrators, a policy adopted by the CTC but yet to be implemented.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4A: Define the standards for high-quality induction programs for both teachers and administrators and embed them in state accountability systems that affect funding and accreditation. (p. 44)

4B: Clarify the competencies beginning teachers and administrators—and their mentors—should be expected to acquire and ensure they are represented in appropriate assessments. (p. 45)

- » Use the current Teaching Performance Expectations (TPE), California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP), and the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSEL) to lay the foundation for rigorous educator preparation and induction. (p. 45)

4C: Provide a strong, statewide infrastructure to allow all districts to offer high-quality induction programs. (p. 46)

- » Strengthen CDE and CTC processes to ensure that state and cluster-level offices are staffed at adequate levels with carefully selected leaders, who are provided time to engage in the administration, leadership, and support of induction implementation efforts. (p. 46)

4D: Align the teacher early career system so that it allows a seamless transition from preparation to career decisions and ongoing development; support an induction program for administrators that aligns with their early career needs. (p. 48)

- » Ensure that the early career system offers candidates an induction that builds on their performance in their preparation program, as reflected in such documents as their performance assessment completed for the initial license. (p. 48)

Offering Professional Learning Opportunities

The knowledge teachers need to reach all students in today's schools has increased considerably. Teachers not only need deep and flexible knowledge of the content areas they teach, they also need to know how children learn at different stages; how to adapt instruction for the needs of new English language learners and students with special needs; how to assess learning continuously so they can diagnose students' needs and respond with effective teaching strategies; and how to work collectively with parents and colleagues to build strong school programs.⁴

Unfortunately, in this context of increased demands on educators, funding for professional learning has been severely reduced in California, in part as a result of recent budget cuts and in part because of categorical flexibility provisions that have allowed districts to use those dollars to fill other budget gaps. More than half of districts report that they have eliminated, or significantly reduced, professional development offered to teachers and principals, and one-third of districts have reduced paid professional development days.⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS

5A: Establish professional learning expectations for educators linked to the certification renewal process and orchestrated through Individual Learning Plans. (p. 52)

- » Base credential renewal on accrued professional learning hours that reflect high-quality options. (p. 52)
- » Support Individual Professional Learning Plans for each educator, informed by California professional standards (CSTP and CPSEL) and student learning goals. (p. 52)

5B: Establish a strong infrastructure for ongoing high-quality professional learning so that educators develop the skills they need to support student success. (p. 53)

- » Adopt standards and quality criteria for professional learning that guide systems at the state, regional, district, and local school levels. (p. 53)
- » Create a California master plan for professional learning that guides those developed by each county, district, and school. (p. 53)
- » Develop, leverage, and incentivize a range of rigorous, standards-based, professional growth opportunities. (p. 54)
- » Leverage technology for professional learning. (p. 55)

5C: Create review processes to support statewide learning about high-quality professional development. (p. 56)

- » Create a framework for state, county, and local boards to evaluate and update their policies regarding professional learning opportunities. (p. 56)
- » Support a voluntary review process that examines the quality of professional learning systems, identifies promising practices, and provides support for improvement. (p. 56)

5D: Provide consistent, high-leverage resources for professional learning. (p. 58)

- » Dedicate a consistent share of the education budget to professional learning investments. (p. 58)
- » Provide incentives for schools to establish flexible structures within the teaching day and year that provide time for teachers to participate in collegial planning and job-embedded professional learning opportunities. (p. 58)



Evaluating Educators

Virtually everyone agrees that teacher and administrator evaluation in the United States needs an overhaul. Existing systems rarely help teachers or principals improve or clearly distinguish those who are succeeding from those who are struggling. The tools used do not always address important features of good teaching or professional collaboration. Principals, especially in large

schools, rarely have sufficient time or training to do a good job of evaluation, much less to address the diverse needs of some teachers who need extra support. Thus, evaluation in its current form too often contributes little either to teacher or leader learning or to accurate, timely information for personnel decisions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHERS

- 6A: Base evaluations of teacher practice for both initial entry and later personnel decisions upon the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. (p. 60)**
- 6B: Include multi-faceted evidence of teacher practice in the evaluation, including student learning, and professional contributions that are considered in an integrated fashion, in relation to one another and to the teaching context. (p. 60)**
- 6C: Include both formative and summative assessments in the evaluation system to ensure that the evaluation helps to improve teaching and learning. (p. 63)**
- 6D: Accompany evaluations with useful feedback connected to professional learning opportunities relevant to teachers' goals and needs, including both formal professional development and peer collaboration, observation, and coaching. (p. 64)**
- 6E: Include accomplished teachers as part of a Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) process for teachers needing assistance.(p. 65)**
- 6F: Build an evaluation system that values and promotes teacher collaboration, both in the standards and criteria that are used to assess teachers' work and in the way results are used to shape professional learning opportunities. (p. 66)**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADMINISTRATORS

- 6G: Base administrator evaluation for both initial entry and later personnel decisions on professional administrator standards, and make it sufficiently sophisticated to assess leadership quality across the continuum of development from novice to expert administrator. (p. 67)**
- 6H: Include multi-faceted evidence of leadership practice in evaluations, including student learning and professional contributions that are considered in an integrated fashion in relation to one another and to the leadership context. (p. 68)**
- 6I: Accompany evaluations with useful feedback connected to professional learning opportunities. (p. 69)**
- 6J: Have local education agencies (LEAs) develop Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) programs for administrators. Include accomplished administrators as part of the assistance and review process for new administrators and for administrators needing extra assistance. (p. 70)**

Providing Leadership and Career Development

Many of the conventional ways of leading schools and districts must be rethought to meet current challenges and opportunities. Currently, there are relatively few opportunities for expert teachers to share practices with their peers or to take on leadership roles. Most teachers are still isolated from each other, teaching in egg-crate classrooms and performing the same functions after 30 years as they did when they began teaching. A teaching career model has yet to evolve that provides regularly supported shared learning, career advancement, or enhanced compensation. Likewise, leadership positions are limited to the ways in which formal roles in the

bureaucracy were designed a century ago, pitting teachers and administrators against each other rather than encouraging mutually supporting collaboration.

A growing number of school districts throughout the nation have adopted successful career advancement programs for their most accomplished teachers. Districts like Long Beach Unified and San Juan Unified in California have developed formal teacher leadership positions for master teachers, staff development leaders, project leaders, and school site leaders. These programs have had a positive impact on student achievement⁶ and on retaining many of the district's most effective teachers.⁷

RECOMMENDATIONS

7A: Create a Career Development Framework supported by research, technical assistance, and training opportunities to support new leadership roles for teachers. (p. 76)

- » Have CDE provide districts with general research, case studies, and technical assistance on the utilization of teacher leaders. (p. 76)
- » Reinstatement of fee subsidies and compensation incentives for teachers who earn National Board Certification. (p. 77)
- » Have the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing develop a new authorization or Recognition of Study for a "Professional Learning Facilitator." (p. 77)

7B: Develop licensing structures that conceptualize a career continuum and include optional advanced certificates for both teachers and administrators to encourage and recognize accomplishment and to support the development of new leadership roles. (p. 78)

7C: Promote labor-management collaboration to enable innovation in educator roles, responsibilities, and compensation systems. (p. 78)

- » Convene a task force consisting of superintendents, union leaders, and school board leaders to collaboratively plan for a statewide conference on labor-management collaboration to share innovative practices and to promote cross-district dialogue. (p. 78)
- » Develop a comprehensive agenda for improving labor-management collaboration in school districts across the state. (p. 78)

7D: Focus state agencies on becoming leaders of a learning system. (p. 79)

Through partnerships with the state's universities, regional and local agencies, and other knowledge organizations, enable CTC and CDE to share research and expertise with schools and districts throughout the state.

- » Document and disseminate information on effective models of preparation, induction, professional learning, evaluation, and career development. (p. 79)
- » Support networks of schools and districts to engage in shared learning and knowledge production. (p. 79)
- » Use what is learned about effective practices to inform state policy as it influences legislation, regulatory guidance, and plans for scale up and expansion of practice. (p. 79)



Moving Forward

Perhaps the most important recommendation is that the *Greatness by Design* report be treated as a living document, with its proposals reviewed bi-annually to evaluate where progress has been made, to reassess recommendations based on current needs and trends, and to update the recommendations.

Transformation of the education workforce will require a long-term effort to rebuild the education system in the state of California. This challenge and opportunity should be thought about in terms of decades, not a few months or years. Commitment and strategic investment must be

built and sustained over time and beyond single budget, election, and policy cycles.

While the effort will be substantial, the goal should be nothing less than a Golden State that represents, as it once did, the best place on earth for educators to work and students to learn—a state that cultivates the human ingenuity and intelligence that will fuel the economy, create a sustainable, healthy environment, and ensure that all citizens are able to make contributions that reflect their unique passions and highest potential.

“California is home to some of the very best ideas and research on how to train teachers and principals, support them from their first days in the classroom to their last, and give them the kind of feedback they need to become even better. Several school districts in California are emerging as leaders [in implementing these ideas]. The challenge, and, therefore, the opportunity, is to revive and expand these isolated and sometimes neglected experiments and weave them together into a system that forms a coherent whole that produces exceptional results.”

— Tom Torlakson, California State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Endnotes

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