A Priority for California’s Future:
Science for Students
The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning
Research conducted by Belden Russonello & Stewart • Funded by a grant from the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation
About the Initiative

✧ Strengthening Science Education in California is a new initiative that brings together educators, researchers, and others to examine the status of science teaching and learning, and develop recommendations for improving science education in California.

✧ Funding for this initiative was generously provided by the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation.
About the Research

✧ Telephone survey of 1,004 adults in California, including cell phone and Spanish language interviews.

✧ Six focus groups in three regions of the state (Sacramento, San Francisco and Los Angeles).

✧ Research for this report was conducted by Belden Russonello & Stewart.
Why is science important for everybody to know? It’s the basis for understanding almost everything.

– Focus Group Participant
Science Education is Key to a Brighter Future

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Extremely Convincing</th>
<th>Very Convincing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keeps America &amp; California at Forefront of Technology/Innovation</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps Young People Compete in Global Marketplace</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps Young People Become Engaged, Educated Citizens</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives Individual Child Opportunity to Succeed in Life</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Will Attract More High-Paying Jobs and New Industry</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kids Need Better Grounding in Science to Do Well in Today’s High Schools</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helps Students Get Into Good Colleges</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California Has Fallen Behind, Is Ranked Near Bottom in Education</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science is a Critical Part of Becoming a Well-Rounded Adult</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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Science is a High Priority

More than eight in ten Californians view science education as “very important” or “essential.”
Californians Think Science Teaching Should Start Early

- Kindergarten: 18%
- 1st Grade: 20%
- 2nd Grade: 9%
- 3rd Grade: 15%
- 4th Grade: 10%
- 5th Grade: 9%
- 6th Grade: 8%
- 7th Grade: 5%
- 8th Grade: 2%
- 9th Grade: 1%
- 10th Grade: 1%
Early Science Education is Important for Later Success

Eight in ten Californians say science in elementary school is “essential” or “very important” to success in high school and beyond.
Two-thirds of Californians believe that students should receive more science education than they themselves did.
All Students Should Study Science

Two-thirds of Californians say that all high school students should be required to study biology, chemistry and physics.
Ideas for Improving Science Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idea</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More resources/better equipment for science in classrooms</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More training for science teachers</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More time spent on science education in high school</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better access to science resources/experiences outside classroom</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More time spent on science education in middle school</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More time spent on science education in elementary school</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents saying it would make a “big difference”

Californians want schools to have more resources for science in the classroom, more training for teachers and more time for adequately teaching the subject.
Valuing Science

✧ African Americans and Latinos are more likely than other demographic groups to say that students should have more science.

✧ Latino parents are more likely than other parents to say that their children do not spend enough time learning science in school.
Strong Support for Investing in Science Education

✧ African Americans and Latinos are the most likely to say more resources and better equipment...

and

✧ African Americans are the most likely to say more training for science teachers...

...would make a big difference in improving science education.
At such a difficult moment, there are those who say we can’t afford to invest in science, that it’s a luxury at a moment defined by necessities.

I could not disagree more.

Science is more essential for our prosperity, our security, our health, and our way of life than it has ever been.

–President Barack Obama
STRENGTHENING SCIENCE EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA

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Partners in the project include:

The Center
for the Future of Teaching & Learning
www.cftl.org

Belden Russonello & Stewart
Research and Communications
www.brspoll.com

Inverness Research
www.inverness-research.org

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