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A Collision Course: High Expectations for Students, Low Investment in Teacher Training

Rising Expectations vs. Declining Resources

In the late 1990s, as standards rose for both students and teachers, California policy-makers invested substantially in strengthening the teacher workforce as a core strategy to improve student achievement. Today, expectations for students' academic achievement continue to rise. But resources needed to strengthen the teaching workforce have declined significantly. Since 2000-01, total allocations for major teacher professional development programs have decreased from \$222 million to approximately \$62 million in 2003-04.

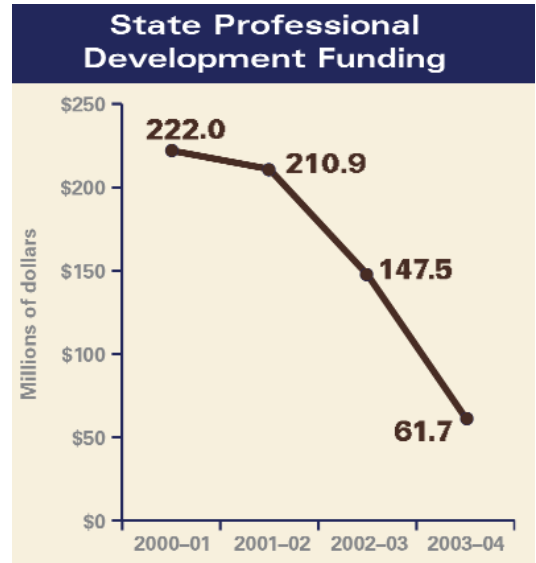
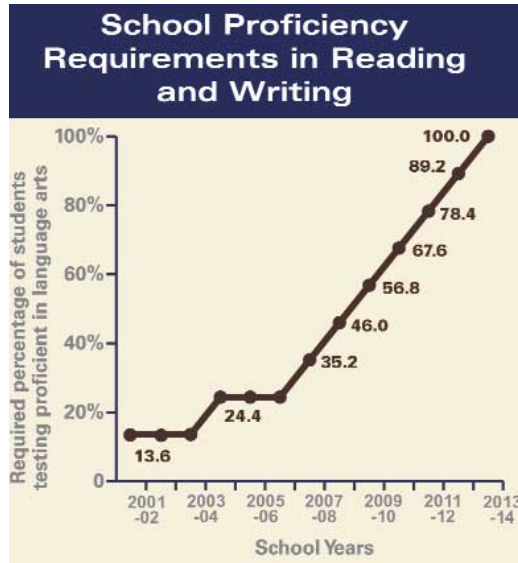
California's cutbacks to teacher professional development place the state on a collision course with its rising expectations for student achievement and raise serious concerns for California's students, especially those who are underperforming. California has set high standards for its schools and students, and the passage of the federal No Child Left Behind Act has raised the stakes still higher. Schools are now required to show improved test scores for all students—including all racial and ethnic subgroups, English language learners, and special education students—and eventually to bring all students to a high standard of performance. Teachers are under increasing pressure to assist their students in reaching these high standards, making it a particularly bad time to cut training and support services that aim to help them do so. Yet in recent years, this is exactly what the state has done. These cutbacks may impact the ability of California schools and students to meet state standards and new federal requirements.

A Quick Guide to Professional Development Programs in California:

California Subject Matter Projects and the California Professional Development Institutes provide subject-specific professional development to teachers.

The Mathematics and Reading Professional Development Program (AB 466) funds curriculum-based professional development for teachers.

The Peer Assistance and Review program, better known as PAR, provides funding for school district controlled professional development.



Challenges for California Policy-makers:

Reflecting California’s persistent economic downturn and budget deficit, the governor’s proposed 2004-05 budget does not restore K-12 teacher development funds, but instead generally maintains reduced funding levels from previous years. The effort to strengthen the teaching workforce may also be complicated by the proposal to consolidate categorical funding for 22 K-12 education programs, including most of the incentives and programs for teacher professional development, into the revenue limits, or general funds of school districts and county offices of education.

Reductions in Professional Development Support

California’s major professional development initiatives have been hit hard by the state’s budget cuts. These include the California Subject Matter Projects and the California Professional Development Institutes; the Mathematics and Reading Professional Development Program; and the Peer Assistance and Review program.

State Allocations for Certain Professional Development Programs In Millions

Program	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
California Professional Development Institutes (CPDI)	61.7	50.9	0	0
California Subject Matter Projects (CSMP)	35.0	35.0	20.0	5.0
AB 466: Mathematics and Reading Professional Development Program	0	0	62.2	31.7
Peer Assistance and Review (PAR)	125.0	125.0	65.3	25.0
Total	222.0	210.9	147.5	61.7

Additionally, support for the California Professional Development Institutes was eliminated in the 2002-03 budget and never restored. Only the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment program (BTSA) and the Instructional Time and Staff Development Reform program have maintained fairly consistent levels of funding.

Shifting Decisions on Teacher Development to Locals

The governor's proposed budget also suggests that categorical funding for 22 K-12 education programs be folded into the revenue limits, or general funds, of school districts and county offices of education. These 22 programs fund a wide range of programs, including the teacher development programs. The table below outlines the professional development funds that would be shifted to local districts.

Professional Development Shifted to Revenue Limits	2004-05 Appropriations (In Millions)
Staff Development Buyout Days	\$235.7
Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment	\$87.5
Intersegmental Staff Development	\$2.0
Bilingual Teacher Training	\$1.8
Mathematics and Reading Professional Development	\$31.7
Peer Assistance and Review	\$25.9
Total	\$384.6

This shift in categorical funding is quite different from block granting proposals that have been considered by the legislature in the past where specially funded programs for similar purposes, such as teacher professional development, are consolidated into one support program for that purpose. By contrast, under the governor's plan districts may use these funds as they see fit. There would be no state-imposed criteria or requirements that districts submit a plan for how the funds are to be spent. While, as in previous years, districts and county offices of education would receive funding for these programs, they would have the option to shift the use of these funds away from the original intent of the legislation that established the programs. For example, districts could supplement funding for intern programs with money that was previously allocated to BTSA, or they could provide professional development in science with funds that previously were targeted only at reading and math. In fact, districts would not have to spend the money on teacher development at all, and could spend the money on any number of pressing local expenses.

The proposed change may have far reaching impact on the support and training that teachers receive and policy-makers should carefully examine the implications.

The change in funding rules would offer districts and county offices of education more flexibility, potentially allowing them to tailor teacher development programs (or develop new ones) to better support and promote high quality teaching. Such a change could help reduce inefficiencies and redundancies that result from the current collection of categorical funds for teacher development.

But policy-makers need to remember that school districts are already facing tough choices as a result of tight budgets. The consolidation of funding may pit teacher development programs against competing local demands and weaken the level and consistency of support for teacher development in future years. The allocation of teacher development funds will require local leadership to devote considerable time and energy to making and defending difficult spending decisions, and in some cases will require negotiation with the local bargaining unit. Given that the new plan merges funding from a wide array of diverse programs, and that no spending plan or particular priorities are required, the result may be that spending on teacher development is reduced in some districts, and in the state as a whole.

The elimination of certain categorical funds and accompanying regulations may also weaken the state's ability to address issues that were recently deemed important enough to merit special incentives and regulation. Further, with no direct funding, program regulations essentially will become irrelevant, and important priorities for teacher development, such as support for new teachers, can be ignored.

The proposed changes send mixed messages to districts about state priorities. For example, the state requires that districts train teachers on state-adopted instructional materials in order to receive AB 466 funds. Those requirements would be eliminated under the new plan. In one case – BTSA – additional confusion may arise since SB 2042 (1998) institutionalized

state support for beginning teachers and made induction a key component of California's new two-tiered teacher credentialing system. Under the new plan, districts still would be required under SB 2042 to provide induction support, but would have no funding specifically earmarked for it.

Finally, other problems could arise from the new plan's method of basing future funding on previous year allocations. For example, if program allocations for BTSA are not recalculated annually, will districts be shortchanged if they have increasing numbers of beginning teachers to support? Another question is whether districts that did not apply for certain categorical funds (such as AB 466) in the previous year should be considered ineligible to have any portion of these funds included in their revenue limits in future years. These issues will need to be resolved if the state is to move forward with this plan.

The View of The Center: The Teacher Pipeline is Threatened

The reduced level of resources now available to train and support teachers is troubling, especially given the mounting pressure on schools, teachers, and students to achieve at higher levels. In addition, the plan to shift some decision-making to the local level could mean that long-standing programs that were developed with the goal of building a teacher development continuum could now be diminished or dismantled. As we documented in our recent report, *The Status of the Teaching Profession 2003*, the state was beginning to see improving trends in teacher qualifications, preparation, and professional development. Now, given the severity of cuts to major teacher development programs and the proposed elimination of certain categorical funds, that progress may be threatened.

There is no question that the state faces a daunting fiscal crisis, and that hard decisions must be made. However, program cuts today could result in lower-quality teaching and lowered student achievement in future years—outcomes that California cannot afford.

As policy-makers consider their options they would do well to remember that teacher quality matters. Basic fairness requires that if the state is going to hold students and schools accountable for achieving state standards and meeting federal requirements, then state policy-makers need to make investments and policy decisions that will ensure that every student has a fully qualified and effective teacher who can help them achieve those goals.

The Status of the Teaching Profession 2003, found at www.cftl.org, offers policy-makers recommendations for continuing to focus and sustain attention on teacher development.