

# The Status of the Teaching Profession 2005

Teaching and  
California's  
Future

California State University, Office  
of the Chancellor

Policy Analysis for California Education

University of California, Office  
of the President

WestEd

**Research conducted by SRI  
International**



# Refocusing the Discussion



## **CALIFORNIA IS HAVING THE WRONG CONVERSATION.**

Californians and their leaders have been distracted for too long by a budget crisis and a special election. Our attention must return to the challenges facing our schools. What we really need now is a meaningful public discussion about quality teaching and the urgent need to expand California's ranks of excellent teachers. We need to talk about how we attract our best and brightest to teaching, how we prepare them to be most effective, and how we support them and keep them teaching as professionals.

We need to talk about making sure that California has the teaching force it needs for its 6.3 million students to succeed — because ensuring that they do succeed has never been more critical, and the stakes have never been higher.

It is time to have the public conversation about what it will take to ensure that *all*

California students have the teachers they deserve. We need political courage and clarity. Our state needs to invest the kind of resources required to produce an education system of which Californians can be proud. Solutions demand bipartisan leadership, not political spin.

These are unusually strong words from us. We have a history of offering a straightforward presentation of data for policymakers with few rhetorical flourishes. For most of the past decade, we have issued annual reports on the status of California's teaching profession, all of it based on solid research.

We present fresh research again this year. In some ways, the numbers are getting better — far fewer teachers are working on emergency permits, and more new teachers are earning credentials. However, this is a temporary reprieve. Our projections show that we are likely to face severe shortages again soon and that the pipeline for recruiting,

preparing and training teachers has substantial problems.

In this report, we offer a summary of the latest research and a brief set of charts and graphs that illuminate California's teaching force. A more detailed research report is available on our Web site ([www.cftl.org](http://www.cftl.org)) and includes a mixture of hard data and qualitative research based on extensive case studies from 10 districts across the state.

First, we start with three critical observations.

**WE CAN'T GET THERE FROM HERE.** By most measures, California students are making some progress. Test scores in reading and math are up in every grade, and more high school students are passing the graduation exam. But the rate of improvement is far too slow — increased numbers of California schools and districts will be labeled as failing. And the gaps in achievement





are far too wide — the levels of proficiency among students of color and poverty are disturbing at best. Only 44 percent of our fifth-grade students score proficient or better in mathematics on the state test, but that number drops to 32 percent for Latino students and 28 percent for African American students.

The gaps also are wide among high school graduates. Only 29 percent of all students in the class of 2003 were academically eligible to attend campuses of the California State University, but that number drops to 16 percent for Latino students and 19 percent for African American students. And just released national achievement data show that only one state — Mississippi — is doing worse than California in fourth-grade reading.

The new research continues to echo our past findings — the students who need our best teachers the most are significantly more likely to be assigned to our least-prepared, least-experienced teachers.

That is neither fair nor right. Without a stronger teaching force, California will fall far short of its goal of having all of our children meet the state's academic expectations.

**WE ARE FOCUSED ON THE WRONG THING.** We have long said we believe every student deserves a fully qualified, effective teacher, and that is the only way we are going to reach the state's goals. But the debate in California has focused on redefining and regulating credentials at the expense of building the capacity of every teacher to help his or her students reach the state's high academic expectations. We talk about the number of teachers who are on emergency permits or are "interns," California's way of describing not-quite-prepared teachers. To comply with federal law, the state now defines practicing teachers who have demonstrated knowledge of subject matter and who have either a credential or a plan for getting one as "highly qualified," regardless of their actual capacity to

teach. We need a fresh conversation about what it means to be an effective, qualified teacher. More than any other factor in schools, teachers determine the success of students. We need to focus far more on building and maintaining the capacity of teachers to produce achievement results, not only on the credentials they hold.

**THE STATE HAS MADE AN INSUFFICIENT INVESTMENT IN TEACHING.** It takes resources to train and compensate teachers. At a time when the stakes have been steadily increasing, the state investment in training veteran teachers has been steadily shrinking. The state has eliminated dollars to recruit new teachers or offer incentives to persuade accomplished teachers to work in our most challenging schools. Californians want high-quality teaching and the academic achievement that it produces. It is time for the state to significantly increase its investment in the teaching force while demanding that those dollars be well spent.







## High Stakes, Difficult Times

To its considerable credit, California has set rigorous standards for all of its students in the past decade and provided considerable focus on where schools are falling short. Now, there are plentiful data about which schools and students are not succeeding. But the standards come with high stakes for students and schools — consequences that have been heightened by the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Today's high school seniors are the first class that must pass the state's high school exit exam to receive a diploma. But far too many of the class of 2006 have faced math and English teachers who do not have the preparation to teach these subjects, which are the two covered by the exam.

Today in California, 1,772 schools are listed as "program improvement" schools for failing to meet increasing federal and state academic requirements. (These struggling schools have a substantially higher percentage of underprepared teachers than schools statewide.) These

schools, along with 152 local education agencies, face increased levels of state intervention or even eventual state takeover. The numbers are expected to grow significantly as the federal requirements increase in the next few years.

Concurrently, California's sagging economy has resulted in tough budget times for schools. The state has significantly reduced the dollars to recruit new teachers or to give veteran teachers the skills they need to help their students meet the state's academic standards.

## More Credentialed Teachers

To obtain a teaching credential in California, new teachers must pass tests in the subjects they will be teaching, practice teaching under the guidance of a veteran and be trained in how to teach students whose native language is not English. But for a number of years, the state has faced a significant shortage of credentialed teachers, and schools have hired tens of thousands of teachers who are underprepared.

In the past school year, 2004–05, slightly more than 20,000 teachers were underprepared and teaching without the state's preliminary credential. Although that is a significant number, it is greatly reduced from the previous year, when there were about 28,000 underprepared teachers, or four years earlier, when the number was 42,427 (*see Fact Sheet 1*).

In 2004–05, the number of underprepared teachers included about 10,000 who were working on emergency permits. Teachers who work on emergency permits the next school year will not be compliant with federal law. The remainder were interns who had passed tests in subject matter and were enrolled in a teacher preparation program.

In 2003–04, California produced a record number of credentialed teachers — nearly twice as many as a decade earlier. But it is unlikely the increased rate will continue, and without a concerted state effort, chances are slim that production will be sufficient to meet California's demand for teachers. Indeed, there are fresh reports that enrollment has declined in university programs that prepare new teachers.



## The Storm on the Horizon

California now has more than 306,000 public school teachers, which is one-third more than we had a decade ago. We will need even more. The increased need comes in part because our student population is growing, although not at the rapid pace it had been. The more immediate concern is the number of veteran teachers who are eligible to retire.

California has a rapidly aging workforce, including 97,000 teachers who are over age 50, more than half of whom are over 55 (see *Fact Sheet 2*). Based on the combination of increased retirements, attrition of more junior teachers and estimates of new teacher production, we project California will again face a huge teacher shortage in less than a decade. And that shortage is likely to be most severe at exactly the time when state and federal laws expect all students to be proficient, a far cry from where students are today.

The problem is further exacerbated by the shifting demographics of California students. The state's numbers of elementary students are flat or even declining in some grades, but the numbers of students in middle school and high school are rapidly increasing. This is coupled with increased academic expectations for middle school students to master algebra and high school students to pass the exit exam, but not nearly enough teachers are prepared to help them.

## High School Mismatch

The requirement that students graduating this coming spring (2006) have to pass both the mathematics and English sections of the high school exit exam is producing considerable anxiety among teachers, students, parents *and* politicians. And there are significant reasons to be anxious.

When we look at the teachers who work with high school students on the two subjects covered by the graduation exam, we find that nearly one in every four of these teachers is either underprepared or teaching the subject out of



field. And when we look at physical science teachers, we find that nearly one-third of them are underprepared or teaching out of field (see *Fact Sheet 4*).

This would be problem enough if the underprepared teachers were equally distributed. They are not. The students who are doing the least well on the graduation exam are the students most likely to have teachers least ready to help them (see *Fact Sheet 4*).

## Unfair Distribution

California has considerably fewer underprepared teachers than it did just a few years ago, and there are fewer in the schools that serve the state's poorest children. But over the past several years, one thing has remained both constant and wrong: The students who need good teachers the most — students who are poor, students who are learning to speak English and students with learning disabilities — are by far the most likely to be taught by teachers who are the least prepared (see *Fact Sheet 5*).



Whether we look at poverty or race or academic achievement, the students doing the worst have the least-prepared teachers. This would be wrong if it merely happened once in a student's time in school. But, far too often, it occurs repeatedly — poor and minority students face a string of teachers who are not prepared to help them catch up. Instead, they simply fall further back, and the promise of leaving no child behind becomes empty rhetoric.

For one of today's sixth graders in the lowest-achieving quartile of California schools, the odds of having already had at least one underprepared teacher are four in 10; the odds of having had more than one underprepared teacher are three in 10. But for a similar sixth grader in a school in the highest-achieving quartile, the odds of having had at least one underprepared teacher are only two in 10; the odds of having had more than one such underprepared teacher are only one in 50 (see *Fact Sheet 3*).

Indeed, it is not just our statewide data that show this. The Education Trust-West this year looked at a dozen California school districts and found a similar pattern. (See [www.hiddengap.org](http://www.hiddengap.org).)

Our research revealed several critical issues that policymakers and education leaders should address:

#### **WHERE INTERN TEACHERS ARE**

**ASSIGNED.** This year, we took a close look at where intern teachers are working. These interns, who are teaching before having earned the state's entry-level credential, are significantly more likely to be working in schools of mostly poor or minority children. We too often provide these intern teachers to poor children, whereas our schools that serve middle class communities rarely, if ever, hire teachers who have not come through a traditional preparation program. For example, intern teachers are 18 times as likely to work in the quarter of California schools that have more than 90 percent minority children as

they are to work in the quarter of schools that have less than 30 percent minority children (see *Fact Sheet 3*).

#### **UNDERPREPARED SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**TEACHERS.** This quite appalling pattern is mirrored when we look at special education, where there is a great need for teachers prepared to help special needs students but a great likelihood that the teachers working with our special education students of color will be the least prepared (see *Fact Sheet 5*).

#### **VETERAN TEACHERS NOT PREPARED TO WORK WITH ENGLISH LEARNERS.**

California has far more students whose native language is not English than any other state: 1.6 million English learners, a quarter of all of our students. Newly credentialed teachers have training in working with English learners, but more than half of veteran teachers have no such training, although nearly all of them face English learners in their classrooms (see *Fact Sheet 5*).



# Conclusions and Recommendations

Californians, like most Americans, value education. They see effective public schools as the bedrock of a thriving society. Some argue that a good education will help students in today's more complex economy, where the currency of good jobs is knowledge and analytical ability. Some argue that a good education produces thoughtful citizens and neighbors who are essential to our democracy. Many argue both.

We are on the right path in demanding excellence for all of our students. But we are courting disaster with how we prepare, train and allocate our teaching force. The nation is still reeling from Hurricane Katrina, after which we learned that there were not sufficient advance plans or capacity for handling

emergency situations. We realized that key personnel on the ground could not even talk to one another, a lesson the nation also learned after September 11, 2001. A disaster caused by the inadequate preparation of our teaching force is a storm we can forecast clearly. Murkier, however, is whether the state will attend to the warning.

In our first report six years ago, we started by asking whether California was setting its children up for failure with high academic expectations but without the investment in its teaching force. The question seems even more relevant now.

In California, when it comes to our teaching workforce, we have multiple bits of data and no data system. We

rely on anecdotes rather than clear data and analysis. The state needs a much more systematic approach to ensuring that every student has an effective teacher, including providing the level and quality of professional development that will make our teachers stronger. Over the past several years, the state has eliminated or cut to the bone funding to train veteran teachers.

California can do better. We need to summon the political will to do better by our children. We must.

In our full report, which is available on our Web site ([www.cftl.org](http://www.cftl.org)), we provide detailed recommendations for addressing these issues and strengthening the teacher workforce.

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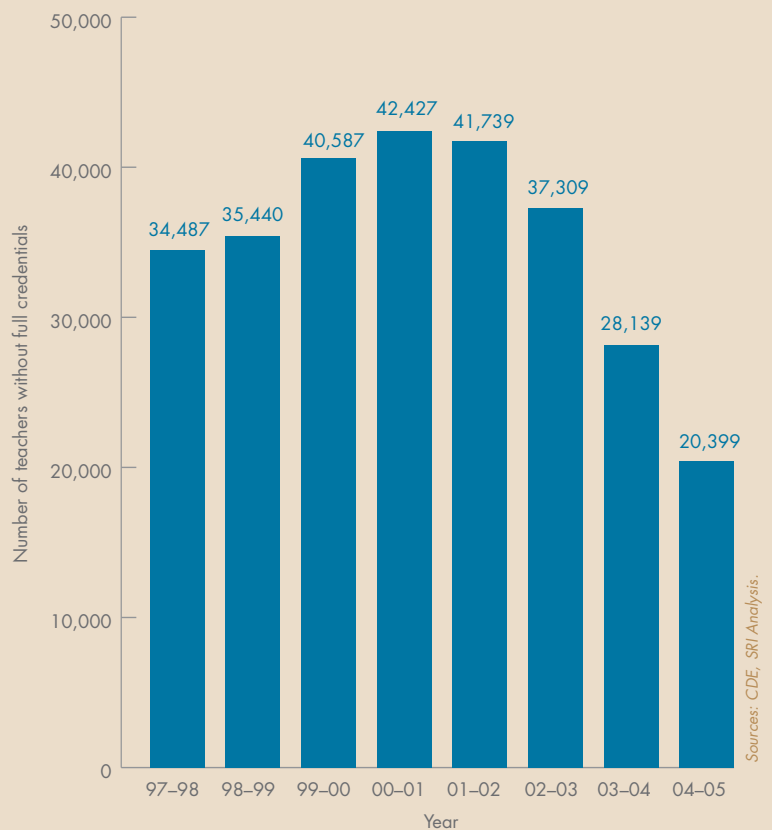


## Underprepared Teachers — Declining Numbers

In the past decade, California faced an epidemic of teachers serving without even the basic state teaching credential. Over the past few years, that epidemic has eased, at least temporarily. The number of underprepared teachers has steadily declined. Now, about one teacher in 15 is underprepared.

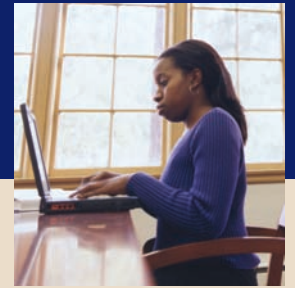
The 20,399 underprepared teachers during the 2004–05 school year included about 10,000 interns who have passed subject matter tests but have not completed other requirements to become a teacher. The total also included about 10,000 emergency permit, pre-intern and waiver teachers, none of whom will be compliant with federal law in the school year that starts in 2006.

**Number of Underprepared Teachers in California**  
1997–98 to 2004–05





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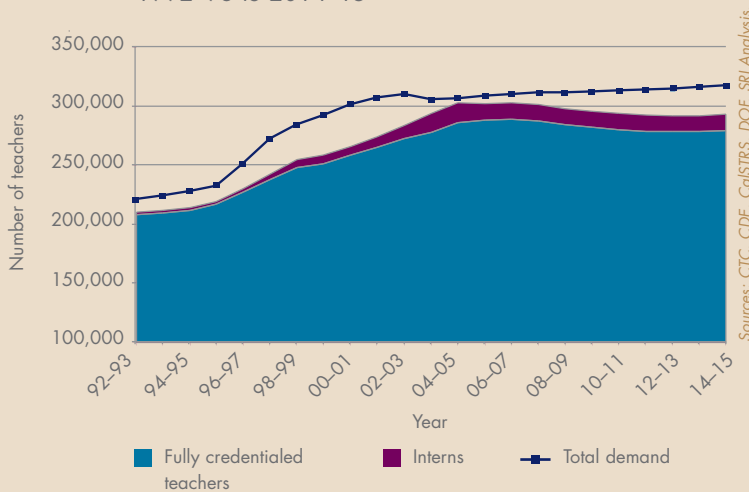


## Projecting Supply — More Underprepared Teachers on the Way

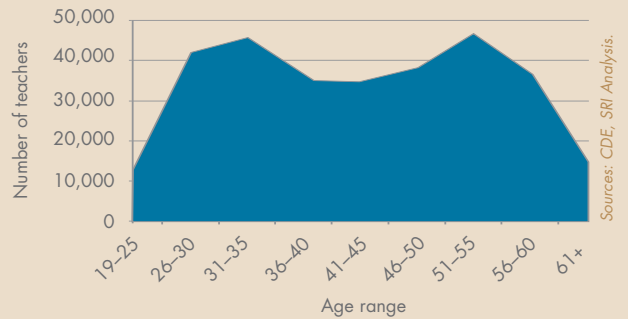
We can see the storm on the horizon. California is not producing nearly enough new teachers to fill our classrooms. We project that the state will be tens of thousands of teachers short of what we need just as stakes become the highest for students and schools under federal requirements. This projection is based on the combination of the need to replace the increasing number of teachers who are eligible to retire, the need to replace those who simply leave the teaching profession early in their careers and a changing student population.

Of its 306,000 teachers, California now has 97,000 who are older than 50, about half of whom are older than 55. The retirement boom among current California teachers is under way.

**Projected K-12 Public School Teacher Workforce**  
 1992-93 to 2014-15



**Age Distribution of K-12 Public School Teachers**  
 2004-05



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## Inequity — Neediest Children Routinely Get Least-Prepared Teachers

The inequity continues to be appalling. Poor and minority students, those who arguably need the best teachers, are far more likely to be assigned to teachers who are the least prepared to help them succeed.

For example, the students in the schools measured as the lowest achieving by the Academic Performance Index (API) are five times more likely to face underprepared teachers than students in the highest-performing schools. They also are far more likely to face a string of underprepared teachers, resulting in their falling even farther behind.

And intern teachers are nearly 20 times as likely to work in the quarter of California schools that have more than 90 percent minority children as they are to work in the quarter of schools that have fewer than 30 percent minority children.

### Maldistribution of Underprepared Teachers

2005

In the **lowest achievement quartile** of California's schools, the odds of having had

one underprepared teacher:	4 in 10
more than one underprepared teacher:	3 in 10

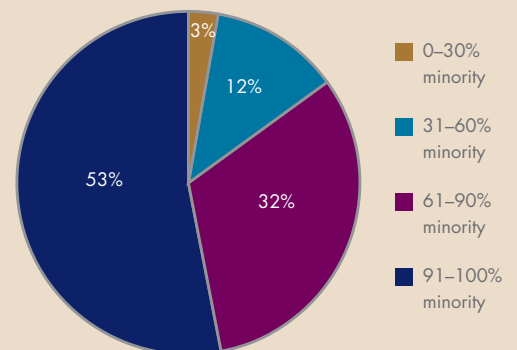
In the **highest achievement quartile** of California's schools, the odds of having had

one underprepared teacher:	2 in 10
<b>more than one underprepared teacher:</b>	<b>1 in 50</b>

Sources: CDE 2005, SRI analysis.

### Distribution of Interns by Percentage of Minority Students in School

2004-05



Sources: CDE, SRI analysis.

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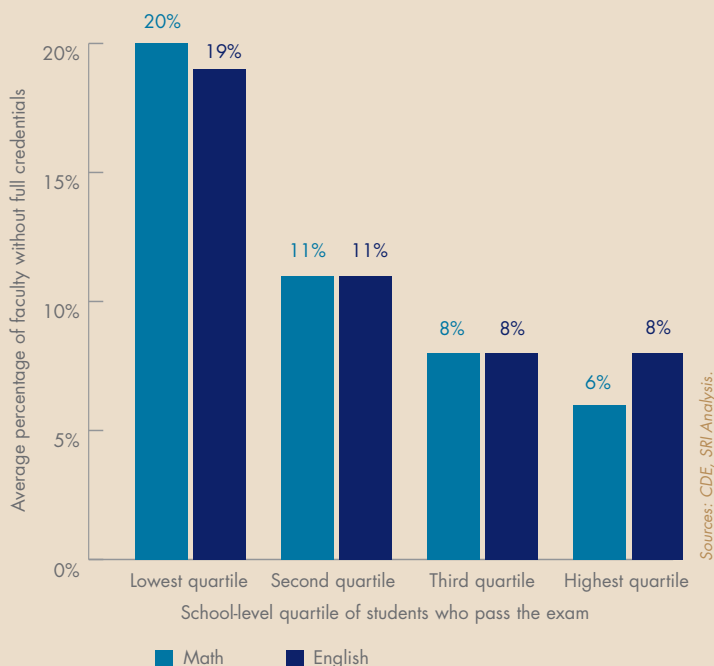


### The High School "Problem"

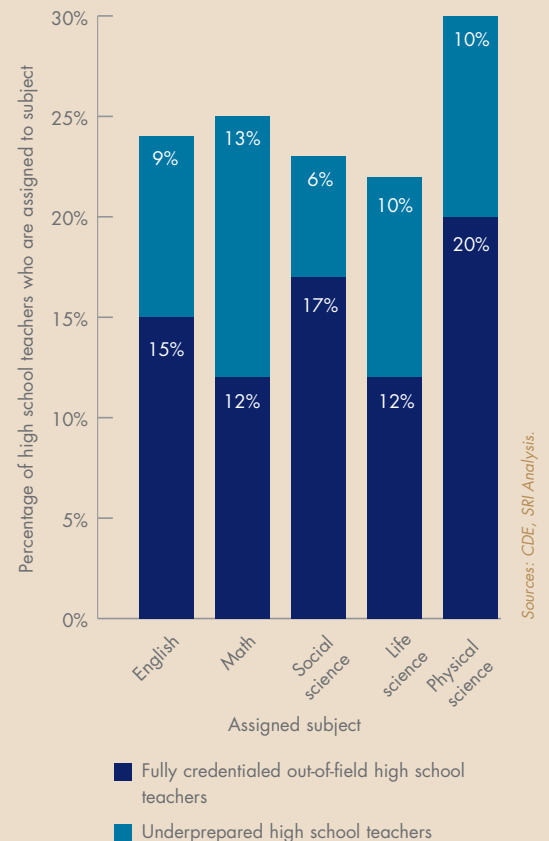
This year's high school seniors are required to pass the state's high school exit exam, but early data show that many thousands, perhaps several tens of thousand, of students are unlikely to meet that hurdle. The overwhelming bulk of these students attend high schools served by the state's least-prepared teachers.

The inequity is striking, but it is not just poor and minority children who are hurt by not having fully prepared teachers. Many core high school classes are taught by teachers without the qualifications to teach subjects such as English, math and science. These "out-of-field" teachers face students in nearly all California high schools.

**Underprepared Teachers by 10th-Grade Student Pass Rates on the California High School Exit Exam**  
2005



**Percentage of Out-of-Field and Underprepared High School Teachers in Assigned Subject**  
2004-05





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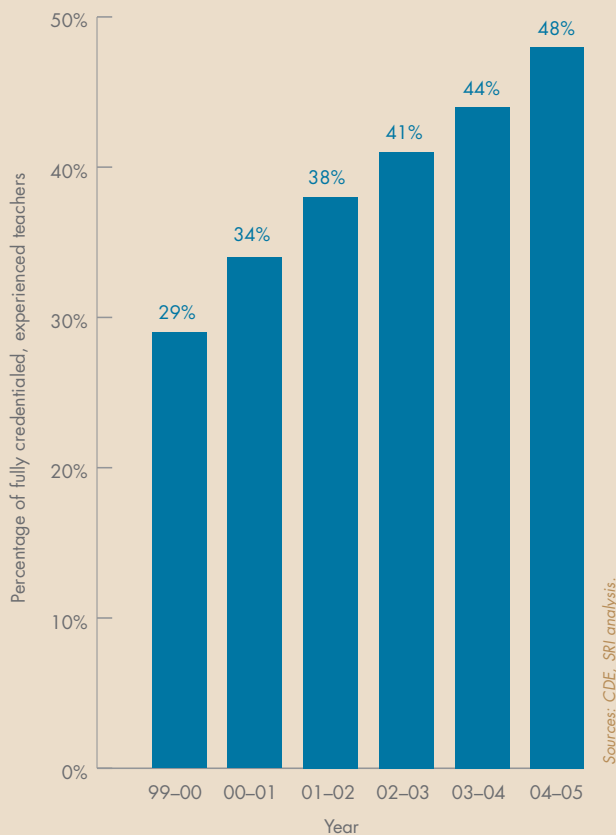


### Special Needs — Compounded Unfairness

Unlike schools in most states, nearly every school in California has students whose native language is not English; we have 1.6 million such students, about one-quarter of all of our students. Practically every teacher in the state has English learners (EL) in their classrooms, but too few are trained to teach them. Newly credentialed teachers get such training, but less than half of veteran teachers have had it.

Across the state, the demand for special education teachers is great, but for schools largely serving minority students, the need for these teachers is even higher.

**Percentage of Fully Credentialed Teachers with at Least Five Years of Experience and EL Authorization**  
1999–2000 to 2004–05



**Average School-Level Percentage of Underprepared Special Education Teachers by Percentage of Minority Students in School**  
2004–05

