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WRESTLING THE DEVIL IN THE DETAILS:

AN EARLY LOOK AT RESTRUCTURING IN CALIFORNIA

“Restructuring” is the controversial last consequence under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) for schools failing to make “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) toward their state’s student achievement targets for five or more years. The sanctions associated with restructuring, from replacing the school’s staff to employing an outside expert, are intended to dramatically reshape an underperforming school. The law itself requires districts to choose one of five broad options for restructuring but leaves districts and schools to wrestle with the details of restructuring. How will districts and schools decide which options to choose? What will these options look like when they are fleshed out and implemented in schools with unique challenges? Will these options adequately address the needs of the individual schools?

To learn more about district and school decision making for NCLB restructuring, the Center on Education Policy (CEP) turned to California, a state with a substantial number of schools in restructuring and several state and regional supports for making decisions about restructuring. In the summer and fall of 2005, CEP reviewed state, regional, and district restructuring documents and interviewed decision makers at the state, regional, district, and school levels. Several key points emerged from our analysis:

2

Key Findings

- **More schools in restructuring.** In 2005-06 in California, 404 schools were placed in restructuring because they failed to meet adequate yearly progress targets for five or more consecutive years. This was up from 271 the previous year. This 49% increase occurred primarily because the state raised its AYP targets. The majority of schools in restructuring in California are in urban districts, rather than rural or suburban.
- **Detailed decision-making processes.** In California, the state and regional supports for restructuring do not tell districts and schools what should be done. Instead, they offer processes to help districts and schools wrestle with details of their restructuring plans. The California Department of Education’s decision to concentrate on the process was made in part because the state is so large and has so many schools in restructuring that the department could not become

directly involved in restructuring decisions at each school or district. In addition, state officials believe good decisions about restructuring can be made only after careful consideration by the people who will implement restructuring.

- **Data examined.** All these processes for making decisions about restructuring are based on examining data on student achievement and school climate—from state test data to classroom observations. State-created survey tools help district and schools collect and organize this information.
- **Districts primary decision makers, with school input.** The California Department of Education (CDE) has chosen to give support to districts with schools in restructuring but sees districts as primarily responsible for restructuring. While the buck stops with the district, CDE encourages districts to involve schools in decisions about restructuring.
- **“Other” most popular.** The most frequently used option for restructuring was “undertaking any other major restructuring of the school’s governance that produces fundamental reform,” which was chosen by 76% of schools in restructuring in California. In California this option has taken a variety of forms, from hiring coaches who will help teachers work together in new ways, which the Tahoe-Truckee Unified School District did, to appointing a leadership team to oversee school operations, which the Palmdale Elementary School District undertook.
- **Charter schools least popular, but still viable.** Only 2% of schools in restructuring in California have chosen to become charter schools, making this the least popular restructuring option. The charter option is viable in California because unlike 10 other states, California has laws allowing charters. But this 2% in California is still noteworthy, because even in some states that allow charters, such as Michigan and Maryland, no schools in restructuring have gone that route. By contrast, in Oakland, California, the charter management organization Education for Change was specifically created to serve schools in restructuring, and 2 of Oakland’s 13 schools in restructuring have become charters.

Study Methods

This study is part of a series of CEP analyses of the No Child Left Behind restructuring process in particular states. Two reports on Michigan, *Makeovers, Facelifts, or Reconstructive Surgery: An Early Look at NCLB School Restructuring in Michigan* and *Hope But No Miracle Cures: Michigan's Early Restructuring Lessons*, were published in 2004 and 2005 and are available on the CEP Web site, www.cep-dc.org. An additional report on Maryland will be published in 2006.

In California, 2005 was the first year the state collected information on district and school restructuring choices, and the first time state and regional education organizations offered extensive support to districts and schools in planning for restructuring. To examine restructuring in California, Caitlin Scott, a consultant to CEP, interviewed state department of education officials, regional administrators, and principals and teachers in districts with schools in restructuring. Scott also conducted three in-depth case studies of NCLB implementation in Oakland Unified School District, Palmdale Elementary School District, and Tahoe-Truckee Unified School District. Because all three districts have schools in restructuring, these broader case studies contributed valuable information to this report. In addition, Scott observed two workshops on restructuring, one held by the California Department of Education (CDE) and one held by the Los Angeles County Office of Education at which the Southern California Comprehensive Assistance Center (SCCAC) presented strategies for decision making for restructuring. She also reviewed state, regional, and district documents, such as state restructuring and school improvement policies, state records tracking restructuring implementation, state report cards, and the restructuring process produced by SCCAC. The interviews, observations, and document reviews were conducted from August 2005 through December 2005.

Federal Restructuring Mandates

The No Child Left Behind Act, signed by President Bush in January 2002, requires that all states test virtually all students in grades 3 through 8 plus once in high school, and that all schools and districts meet AYP goals which place

them on track for ensuring that 100% of students are academically proficient by 2014. States must also provide consequences for schools and districts not making AYP goals. After five consecutive years of not making AYP, schools must plan for restructuring. After six consecutive years of not making AYP, schools must implement their plans. In this last consequence for failure to meet AYP, schools and districts must choose from a menu of options designed to completely revamp the school. By federal law, these options include the following:

- Entering into a contract to have an outside organization with a record of effectiveness operate the school
- Reopening the school as a charter school
- Replacing all or most of the school staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP
- Turning operation of the school over to the state, if the state agrees
- Undertaking any other major restructuring of the school's governance that produces fundamental reform

Perhaps because these options are designed to radically change schools, implementation is complex. All require adjustments to schools' financial operations, and some may require additional resources, particularly if the school must train staff to work together in new ways. As more American schools face restructuring, it will be important to learn from schools, districts, and states that have experienced these changes.

Some states have had schools enter restructuring sooner than others. This is because some states began calculating AYP based on data collected prior to NCLB to meet the goals of the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994. Some states were also more aggressive than others about creating the testing and accountability systems required by IASA. As a result, some states with relatively new testing and accountability systems, such as Idaho, have no schools in restructuring at this point. Other states, such as California, Maryland, and Michigan with their well-established accountability systems, had schools in restructuring as early as 2003-04.

Overview of Restructuring in California

Schools in Restructuring

In the 2004-05 school year, 271 California Title I schools, or about 3% of California's 9,223 schools, were in the planning or implementation phase of restructuring, based on their 2003-04 test scores. Of the 271 schools, about 4% were in rural areas, and 22% were in suburban areas. The great majority, 74% of the schools, were in urban areas, with Los Angeles Unified School District accounting for 26% of the total number of schools in restructuring.

In 2005-06, the number of schools in restructuring planning or implementation increased by about 49%. This increase is partly explained by a rise in state AYP targets. Between 2002-03 and 2004-05 testing, AYP targets jumped from 13.6% of students performing at or above the proficient level to 24.4% in elementary English/language arts, and from 16.0% to 26.5% in elementary math. High school targets similarly increased from 12.0% performing at or above the proficient level to 23.0% in English/language arts and from 12.8% to 23.7% in math. Despite the fact that the state reported that 83% of California schools posted increases in overall academic growth, compared with 64% in 2003-04, many schools could not reach the nearly doubled AYP targets. Indeed, the percentage of schools making AYP fell from 65% based on 2003-04 testing to 56% based on 2004-05 testing.

With these higher AYP targets, 404 California Title I schools, or about 4% of California's schools, were placed in restructuring planning or implementation in 2005-06. Of the 404 schools, about 5% were in rural areas, 26% in suburban areas, and 69% in urban areas. As in the previous year, Los Angeles Unified School District had the most schools in restructuring but accounted for a smaller percentage of the total schools than last year, only 20%.

State Restructuring Strategies

States are required by federal law to set aside 2% of their Title I funds for fiscal year 2003 and 4% of their Title I funds for fiscal years 2004 and beyond to use for schools in improvement, which include schools in restructuring. But how states use these funds and monitor restructuring is a

state decision. The variety of approaches used by other states ranges from state departments of education explicitly signing off on restructuring plans to states leaving all decisions and monitoring to districts, according Wendy Harris, the state's assistant superintendent for school improvement. "We decided to land right in the middle," she said of CDE's approach to restructuring.

For the 2004-05 school year, Harris said CDE "bumped up the monitoring system" and required districts to report their restructuring choices for schools for the first time. In addition, CDE has for the first time offered regional workshops focusing specifically on NCLB restructuring. The state will not, however, attach any specific funding to restructuring plans and will make only minor changes to and elaborations on the federal options for restructuring.

In the 2003-04 school year, the state had about \$47 million available for school improvement, some of which had been carried over from the prior year, Harris said. For 2003-04, Harris reported the state spent \$7.5 million to support the Statewide System of School Support (S4), which provides funds to county offices of education (also called regional educational agencies). These offices in turn provide an array of technical assistance services to districts and schools identified for improvement under NCLB in their regions.

S4 is composed of three entities. Two of these existed before NCLB—the federally funded Comprehensive Assistance Centers (CACs) and CDE, which plays an administrative role in S4. One other entity—the Regional System of District and School Support (RSDSS)—is a relatively new name for a longstanding component of S4 and is organized around the 11 county superintendent regions identified by the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA). Previously the RSDSS was known simply as S4. The name was changed to distinguish this component from the other two. Each region has a RSDSS director who operates out of one of the county offices of education.

In addition, Harris said that in 2003-04, the state spent \$8.2 million directly on 49 Title I schools that were in corrective action under the state's accountability system. The state's accountability system uses a growth model and measures academic improvement. This model is different from the accountability system used to determine whether or not schools have met AYP targets under NCLB. The results of the

state accountability system overlap somewhat with the NCLB accountability system. Of the 49 schools identified by the state system, 11 were in years 3, 4, or 5 of federal school improvement in 2003-04, but none of the 11 is represented in the in-depth case studies in this report. A small portion of the funds, less than 5% of the total set-aside, was spent on CDE staff. Funds remaining from 2003-04 were carried over into the 2004-05 fiscal year.

In 2004-05, the state set aside \$29 million for school improvement, which was 2% of the state's Title I funding. The state also had some carryover funds from 2003-04. During 2004-05, the state spent \$25.2 million in grants to Title I schools in state corrective action. Another \$41.4 million went for grants to districts identified for improvement and to districts with schools identified for improvement that were themselves at risk of being identified. All three districts in the in-depth case studies in this report experienced increases in Title I funding due to these grants. Districts were required to use the extra funds to revise and implement their improvement plans but did not write separate grant applications to receive the funds. Schools in these case studies tended to see the funds as a general increase in funding for their school improvement process rather than as a separate grant with separate goals. Of the remaining funds, \$12.5 million was used to fund S4 and a small portion was used for CDE.

In 2005-06, the state set aside 4% of Title I funds or about \$71 million for school improvement. As of mid-November, the state had spent \$10 million to support S4 personnel and activities. As this report went to press, state legislators were considering a bill to appropriate \$4.1 million for districts with large numbers or large proportions of schools in need of improvement.

In its largest departure from the federal options, California has decided not to allow districts to turn schools over to the state. The option is not practical, Harris noted, because the state department of education does not have the resources or the desire to run large numbers of school.

To help districts and schools make sense of the other NCLB restructuring options, the state department of education has created what it calls "build outs" for each option. These build

outs are one to two paragraph explanations for each option, which define terms, give tips for successful strategies, and suggest questions schools and districts should ask before adopting the option. For example, to help schools and districts understand the option of "reopening the school as a public charter school," the state defines charter schools as "generally funded by a group of teachers, parents, community leaders, community-based organizations, or private organizations," and operated "under a written contract (charter) between the sponsoring agency (authorizer) and a charter developer for a period of one to five years." The build out also states that "critical to the success of creating a high-quality charter school are grass roots support, a strong governing board, and a well-thought-out redesign plan." Furthermore, the build out suggests that before choosing to become a charter school, school and district personnel ask such questions as "What is the level of parent, LEA, teacher, and community support for a charter school? Who are the key charter developers? What is the structure and experience of the governing board?"

Of the 271 schools in restructuring planning and implementation in the 2004-05 school year, all reported their restructuring choices to the state over the spring of 2005. At this point, some were still in the planning process. This is the first time schools have reported their choices. The majority chose "undertaking any other major restructuring of the school's governance that produces fundamental reform," as shown in **table 1**. The least popular choice was "reopening the school as a charter school," which only 2% of schools chose. While this percentage is small, it is important to note that becoming a charter school is a viable option in California. Ten states do not have laws allowing charters, so schools in those states cannot restructure by becoming charters. Even in some states that do allow charters, the charter option has not been used by schools in restructuring. For example, no schools in restructuring in Michigan or Maryland have become charter schools, despite the fact that in 2004-05, Michigan had 233 charter schools and Maryland had 15.

Table 1: Options Chosen by California Schools in Restructuring

California’s Restructuring Options	Percentage of Schools Using This Option*
Undertaking any other major restructuring of the school’s governance that produces fundamental reform.....	76%
Replacing all or most of the school staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP	28%
Entering into a contract to have an outside organization with a record of effectiveness operate the school	14%
No plan	13%
Reopening the school as a charter school	2%

* Percentages total more than 100% because many schools choose more than one restructuring option.

Source: California Department of Education.

State Tools for Making Restructuring Decisions

In 2005-06, the California Department of Education held several workshops in different regions of the state to assist schools and districts with restructuring decisions. The decision-making process advocated was complex and began with a needs assessment. “Whatever direction you go should be based on a comprehensive needs assessment,” Education Programs Consultant Frank Pisi told district and school staff at one such workshop in Los Angeles. Pisi highlighted four state-created tools for assessment that should guide the restructuring process.

First, CDE suggested that school-level teams use the state-developed Academic Program Survey. This survey gauges how effectively the school has implemented nine “essential program components.” Research has found that these nine components are typically present at schools with higher academic achievement in California, Pisi explained. The components include the following:

1. Using state-adopted English/language arts and math texts (K-8) and standards-aligned texts for high school
2. Adhering to instructional time for adopted texts and creating access to standards-aligned high school courses through a master schedule
3. Providing Assembly Bill (AB) 75 training for principals, which includes 80 hours of training on leadership and state-approved curricular materials
4. Having highly qualified teachers and providing them with AB 466 training, which includes 40 hours of intensive training

on the state-adopted curriculum and 80 hours of follow-up training

5. Embedding an assessment and monitoring system into instruction to guide curriculum and instruction
6. Assisting and supporting teachers through coaching and content area experts
7. Facilitating regular teacher collaboration (e.g., monthly)
8. Providing pacing schedules in grades K-8 and allowing flexibility in the master schedule for interventions in grades 9-12
9. Putting fiscal allocations supporting English/language arts instruction and math goals in a single school plan

The state has created a similar district-level survey called the District Assistance Survey. This survey analyzes the district-level support for schools across seven categories and incorporates the essential program components. The seven categories are as follows:

1. Standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment
2. Professional development
3. Human resources
4. Data systems, analysis, and monitoring
5. Parent and community involvement
6. Fiscal operations
7. Governance and leadership

In addition to the school and district surveys, district and school staff together should complete the Least Restrictive Environment Self Assessment, Pisi said. This instrument was designed to help districts examine and refine their practices in supporting educational options for students with disabilities. In many California schools in restructuring, students with disabilities have a more difficult time meeting AYP targets than students in the general population.

Students who are English language learners also may need special assistance, Pisi said. For schools with English language learner subgroups, he recommended the state's English Learner Subgroup Self Assessment to help districts determine how to improve instruction for these students. This assessment, developed by the state's Title III office, identifies gaps in instruction for English language learners.

Pisi encouraged schools and district to use all four tools. "There's no magic mix here but used together they're great," he said. Still, even these four assessments are not enough to really get ready for restructuring decision making, according to Pisi. "The beauty of the comprehensive needs assessment is your local assessment," Pisi told workshop attendees. He recommended using school-level data, such as teacher observations and student work, to give a full picture of the schools and its needs. "Blame the program improvement process for asking all these hard questions," he suggested to staff.

Once schools and districts complete these needs assessments, the state has developed four worksheets that schools and districts can use to determine if the restructuring option they are interested in implementing will really help the school improve. Each worksheet focuses on a different restructuring option. For example, the worksheet on the option of closing the school and reopening it as a charter school includes these questions:

- What is an identified need that could best be addressed in a charter school format?
- What evidence exists to support the conclusion that the current system of school operation is not conducive to student success?
- What evidence supports the conclusion that to improve the level of academic success in your environment, you need autonomy from state and district constraints?

- What evidence exists to conclude that you have community and district support to become a charter school?
- What skills and knowledge exist in the community to successfully close the school and reopen it as a charter school?
- What evidence supports the conclusion that this option is/is not a relevant option for this school?

These state tools do not provide all the answers for schools in restructuring. Instead, Harris emphasized at a state workshop on restructuring, "they support a process of inquiry that we hope will lead you to the right choices for schools."

SCCAC Tools for Making Restructuring Decisions

Look Before you Leap: A Guide for Selecting Alternative Forms of Governance and Restructuring for PI Year 4 Requirements (2005) was created by Dennis Fox, a consultant to the Southern California Comprehensive Assistance Center (SCCAC). This decision-making guide takes administrators through series of activities designed to help them develop a major restructuring plan or select an alternative form of governance that will best meet their school's needs. Fox noted that before NCLB's restructuring requirements many educators did not give a great deal of consideration to school governance and that, therefore, the first step in restructuring was to develop a working definition of "governance." According to *Look Before You Leap*, school governance consists of six components:

- Organization—the ways people and offices are interrelated; in other words, the organizational charts of the district and school
- Systems—the routine ways things are done at the school
- Policies—formal written general guidelines for teachers and administrators
- Procedures—established routines for specific tasks
- Practices—informal habits of behavior
- Personnel—the people who work in the district and school

The guide then leads staff through a series of activities to address eight “critical questions,” which ultimately lead to a major restructuring plan or the selection of an alternative form of governance for that particular school. The eight critical questions are:

1. What evidence indicates that the school and/or specified subgroups are not making AYP?
2. What evidence indicates that the school and/or specified subgroups are making AYP?
3. What evidence indicates that the school’s governance may be impeding the AYP of the school and/or specified subgroups?
4. Which components of the school’s governance may be impeding the AYP of the school and/or specified subgroups?
5. What changes have been made in the school’s governance during the previous five years, and how have they affected the AYP of the school and/or specified subgroups?
6. What changes in the school’s governance must occur if the school and/or specified subgroups are to make AYP?
7. Why do you think these proposed changes in the school’s governance will contribute to the AYP of the school and/or specified subgroups?
8. Which alternative form of governance or restructuring plan will best meet the school’s needs?

The first two questions involve staff examining testing and classroom data about student achievement. The next three ask staff to evaluate the school’s current and past governance structures—organization, systems, policies, procedures, practices, and personnel—and determine whether these structures have promoted or impeded student academic achievement. The last three help the school develop its restructuring plan or select an alternative form of governance. Generally, it takes a full day to train administrators to use the process. Implementing the process with district and school staff may take longer and may happen in a series of meetings. For example, to discuss personnel issues, several additional meetings may be needed, Fox explained, and meeting attendees must be chosen carefully, so that issues of confidentiality are respected.

The guide is designed to promote constructive planning rather than punitive consequences. “This is not a process of

playing ‘gotcha!’ We’re not looking for a fall guy,” said Fox, who created the guide. Instead, he said, “we want to make sure we honor the people at the school during the process. Nobody wakes up in the morning and thinks, ‘I want to go to work today and screw up as much as possible.’” As a result, he said, the guide helps identify, preserve, and reinforce things that are working well at the school in addition to generating ideas for changes.

A Closer Look at Restructuring Strategies in Three California Districts

To identify districts to participate in this CEP study, CEP asked the California Department of Education, SCCAC, and WestEd in the summer of 2004 to recommend several districts that were on track in their planning for restructuring in 2005-06. From these recommendations, CEP chose to study Palmdale Elementary School District, Tahoe-Truckee Unified School District, and Oakland Unified School District because these districts used a collaborative district-school process to determine which restructuring options were best for their schools. The three districts were also chosen for their variety. Palmdale is suburban, Tahoe-Truckee is rural, and Oakland is urban. Palmdale is using *Look Before You Leap*. Tahoe-Truckee is using state-developed tools, and Oakland has come up with a unique district approach to restructuring.

Look Before You Leap in Palmdale

Palmdale Elementary School District serves an outer ring suburb of Los Angeles and is about 67 miles north of Los Angeles International Airport. While some residents commute to Los Angeles for work, the parents of many Palmdale students work in the Antelope Valley in the aerospace or service industry. Some also work at Edwards Air Force Base, which is about 50 miles away. The school district has been challenged by rapid growth and high rates of poverty: 71% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

In addition, rapid growth in the past has led the district to focus on building schools to accommodate students. As a result, during the early years of NCLB, district officials said they were scrambling to accommodate the influx of students, and less attention was focused on changing curriculum and instruction to meet the accountability demands of NCLB. As of

2005-06, growth in the suburb has slowed, four schools have entered restructuring implementation under NCLB, and district officials say they are now better able to focus on raising student achievement and meeting other demands of NCLB.

The schools in Palmdale having the most difficulty meeting AYP targets are typically those with higher percentages of low-income students and English language learners. For example, in 2004-05, Yucca Elementary, which participated in this study, had about 47% ELL students and about 91% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, an indicator of poverty.

The Palmdale district failed to make AYP in 2004-05 and is in year 1 of improvement. Overall, students met the AYP targets in both reading and math; however, subgroup performance kept the district from meeting AYP targets. In reading, African American, Latino, and low-income students, as well as English language learners, fell short of AYP targets. In math, Latino students did make AYP, but African American students, low-income students, and English language learners did not.

Of the district's 25 Title I schools, four are in year 2 of school improvement, eight are in corrective action, and five are in restructuring. Of the five schools in restructuring, two schools, Yucca Elementary and Juniper Intermediate, failed to meet AYP targets for the general population in both reading and math. Tamarisk Elementary failed to meet general English/language arts targets and African American students missed the math targets. At Mesa Intermediate, students met all targets in math, but African American students, low-income students, and students with disabilities missed targets in English/language arts. Palm Tree Elementary, which came the closest of the five schools to meeting AYP targets, met all math targets but missed English/language arts targets due to the performance of African American and low-income students.

USING *LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP* IN PALMDALE

Palmdale used a pyramid approach to the *Look Before You Leap* guide. After Fox trained a central office leadership team to use the guide to answer questions about the district's four schools in restructuring, the team trained principals at the schools undergoing restructuring. Principals, in turn, did the process with their school staff, who ultimately collaborated on the restructuring plans.

Central office staff gained a great deal from using *Look Before You Leap*, said Assistant Superintendent Betty Stiers. "Many of the policies and procedures were problematic at the district level," she said, explaining that central office staff hadn't fully realized this until they looked closely at the student achievement data and how students were affected by policies. For example, the focus on opening new schools and the high turnover of principals had resulted in lack of continuity in leadership.

At Yucca Elementary, *Look Before You Leap* gave new principal Anastacia Arnold the opportunity to start over with staff and build hope for the future. "That's what saved us last year," Arnold said.

The process of using the guide was not without challenges, both Stiers and Arnold admitted. "The toughest part was looking at the brutal truth about student achievement," Stiers said, noting that this was especially difficult for staff who had been working diligently in the district a long time and felt responsible that AYP was not met. "Finally, you have to say, 'This is the current condition, we have to move forward,'" Stiers noted.

Yucca staff had mixed initial responses, Arnold said, ranging from fear and blaming to a sense that the process would just create another meaningless school improvement plan. Going through the process helped dispel these initial negative reactions, Arnold said. "It gives a framework for all teachers to participate and takes the excuses away." Ultimately, Arnold said the participation of both district and school staff helped teachers buy into the restructuring plans that resulted. "We were held responsible, but the district was also being held accountable. That helped break down resistance at my school," she explained. "We could see that we were all in this together with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement."

RESULTS IN PALMDALE

The restructuring plans at Palmdale's five schools in restructuring fall under the federal option of "undertaking any other major restructuring of the school's governance that produces fundamental reform." The plans did not consider replacing principals because the principals had already been replaced within the previous two years, Stiers said. Staff

replacement was also not considered because of the teacher contract and the difficulty of recruiting new teachers, she added.

At Yucca Elementary, part of the restructuring plan is to actually implement some existing policies. For example, teachers will get more professional development on the district's reading program and on policies for ELL students. The school's Reading First coach is providing much of the English/language arts professional development on-site. While in the past teachers examined the data generated from reading and math tests, in 2005-06 all teachers have more staff time devoted to using this data to group students and collaborate on instruction. This collaboration occurs within newly organized grade-level teams that meet three times a month, as well as in the school's traditional monthly staff meetings.

Yucca has also seen some brand new initiatives for 2005-06. The school added all-day kindergarten rather than relying on half-day instruction. In addition, a leadership team of administrators and teachers now oversees many school operations rather than leaving this to the principal alone. Arnold noted that this leadership team has already improved communication among staff members and has increased buy-in for the school's restructuring plans.

The district has also stepped up to support the school as part of the restructuring plan, Arnold said. The school now has textbooks, paper, and other materials for all students. Prior to restructuring, Arnold said, staff felt neglected by central office and referred to themselves as "stepchildren." Arnold said she told her staff that because of the restructuring plan, "You are not stepchildren anymore. You have to let that go." Arnold said that over the past year she and her staff have come together, accepted the support of the central office, and begun the slow process of rebuilding.

State Restructuring Tool in Tahoe-Truckee

The Tahoe-Truckee Unified School District is a rural district in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California, approximately 100 miles northeast of Sacramento and 35 miles west of Reno, Nevada. The district includes the north shore of Lake Tahoe as well as some of the western shore and encompasses more than 720 square miles. Its 2,648 students come from three counties—Nevada, Placer, and El Dorado. The students served by the district's five Title I targeted assistance schools have had more difficulty passing state tests than students in

the other schools. One of the Title I elementary schools is in year 2 of school improvement. Its students feed into North Tahoe Middle School, which is in restructuring under NCLB. This targeted assistance Title I middle school serves approximately 350 students, 38% of whom are low-income and 32% of whom are Latino.

Since NCLB, the general population at Tahoe-Truckee has typically made large gains in student achievement each year and met AYP targets. In English/language arts, the percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient level on state tests rose by about 11 points from 2002-03 to 2004-05. In math during the same period, the percentage scoring proficient rose by about 14 points. Subgroups, particularly English language learners, Latino students, and low-income students, have also improved but not at the same rate as the general population, and these subgroups have not met AYP targets.

At North Tahoe Middle School, gains in the percentages of students scoring at or above the proficient level on state tests have outstripped those of the district as a whole, even though this is the district's only school in restructuring. From 2002-03 to 2004-05, the percentage scoring proficient in English/language arts have increased at North Tahoe Middle School by about 22 percentage points. In math during the same period, the percentage proficient rose by about 20 points. But at this middle school, as in the district as a whole, subgroups have not kept pace with the general population, except for white students. For example, Latino students increased their achievement by about 16 percentage points in English/language arts and about 6 percentage points in math. These subgroups have typically fallen short of AYP targets.

USING THE STATE RESTRUCTURING TOOL IN TAHOE-TRUCKEE

In the past, much of the Tahoe-Truckee district's efforts to improve student achievement have focused on North Tahoe Middle School. Of the effect of these efforts, Principal Dave Curry said, "We've seen intermittent success. The problem has been that we've never implemented a program with all the elements for success. One thing would get better and another would get worse." Instead of focusing on a single new initiative, this year Curry said the staff is "putting it all together."

To do this, Curry said he and key teachers are currently discussing the Worksheet for Considering Alternative Governance Option 5, developed by the CDE. This worksheet focuses on the “any other major restructuring” option of the federal law. It asks staff to gather data on and answer the following six questions:

- How does the proposed restructuring plan identify significant changes in school governance across at least one grade span (elementary, middle, or high)?
- How will the proposed restructuring plan improve teaching and learning in multiple academic subject areas?
- As a result of implementing this plan, how will students be better involved and engaged in the learning process?
- How does the proposed plan align a variety of instructional strategies, tools, and academic subjects to form a cohesive, focused restructuring effort?
- How will the proposed program result in a tangible restructuring and refocus of the school’s governance processes and procedures?
- What evidence supports the conclusion that this option is or is not a relevant option for this school?

While North Tahoe Middle School has not yet decided how it will restructure the governance of the school, the California Department of Education gives examples of possible alternative governance arrangements. These include creating smaller learning communities or schools within schools that would change governance and decision-making practices, selecting an alternative governance board or management team that would oversee the school, and implementing a comprehensive whole-school reform model that would include a change in how the school is governed.

The district has not asked North Tahoe Middle School to consider other restructuring options such as getting rid of teachers or becoming a charter school, Lasher said, because the school appears to be on the right track, especially in terms of raising test scores. “If our scores grow this year as much as last year,” Curry noted, “we’ll definitely be above the bar.” He said he is unsure what governance changes will be in store for North Tahoe Middle School, but he said he wanted to make sure any changes support the things that are already working well in the school.

RESULTS IN TAHOE-TRUCKEE

While Tahoe-Truckee’s restructuring efforts are still in the planning phase, the district will continue recent changes that the staff said have increased student achievement. Among these changes are ones begun in 2002-03 and 2003-04: grouping students by ability level, changing the schedule so that students who are behind can add extra periods of reading and math, and giving teachers a half-day each Wednesday for professional development. For 2004-05, two additional reforms are in place. These include implementing Achievement Via Individual Determination (AVID), a program aimed at motivating students, and adding coaches in reading, math, and English as a second language.

Prior to 2002-03, students were purposely not grouped by skill level. Instead, students of varying skills were placed together. Students with weaker skills were supposed to benefit from working with students with stronger skills. Social skills were supposed to improve for both groups, but teachers had difficulty meeting the academic needs of all students, Curry said.

Now students are grouped by skill level, and these groups change as needed. Also, students who are behind in math or reading can take up to three periods of reading and up to two periods of math. Some students, as a result, do not get science, social studies, or other electives. While they realized not getting these subjects was controversial, North Tahoe Middle School staff said missing a semester or two of these subjects was worth getting students closer to grade level in reading and math, so that they were more prepared to learn other subjects easily. Every nine weeks, students’ schedules are reevaluated, so that students who improve in reading and math can add courses to their schedules.

In addition, during 2003-04 Curry got permission from the school board to end the school day about two and a half hours early on Wednesdays, so that teachers could collaborate and attend professional development. Although the half-day Wednesday means fewer hours of instruction per year, Curry said, “the hours are better spent when kids are in school.” To make the change more palatable for parents, Curry said he got outside grant funding to offer after-school services at the Tahoe City Recreation Department and at Kings Beach Boys and Girls Club.

At first, parents and students did not like the new schedule or the half-day Wednesdays. “The first year, everybody was up in arms,” Curry recalled. “We lost 20 to 25 kids to other middle schools.” After the initial shock, however, parents and students like the new schedule, he said. Some students who had left the middle school returned, and in 2004-05 no students transferred out, he noted.

Of the scheduling changes that regroup students by skill level, Curry said, “It’s really worked well for the kids on the lowest end. They are no longer afraid to raise their hand in class.” He also said he believed instruction had improved in the school due to the added time for professional development and collaboration on Wednesdays.

But these schedule changes did not improve the performance of all students. “We struggled with the middle group,” Curry said, recalling the 2003-04 school year. These students, he explained, had the ability to do the work but were unmotivated. Some he described as “class clowns” and others he said simply came from backgrounds in which older relatives hadn’t succeeded in school or hadn’t had the opportunity to attend. If some of these students graduated from high school, they would be the first in their family to do so. For these students, the schools is implementing AVID. The program emphasizes study habits, note taking, and commitment to learning. Students get an extra period emphasizing study skills and motivational activities. Guest speakers talk to students about the value of graduating from high school and college and give advice on how to do it. “It seems to be working,” Curry observed. In addition, the notebook and note taking procedures used in AVID have been adopted by all the teachers in the school. He noted that the program has helped the staff be more consistent in their classroom procedures, and classes are running more smoothly.

District-Initiated Plans in Oakland

Oakland Unified School District is a high-minority, high-poverty, large urban district in northern California. Placed in state receivership in June 2003 due to financial difficulties, the district has continued to face a shrinking budget as a result of declining enrollment. Over the past five years, total student enrollment within Oakland has declined by 5,748 students. In addition, since 1999 the district has lost an

additional 3,306 students to charter schools—resulting in a total loss of over 9,000 students from the Oakland Unified School District.

Although the district has not made AYP, the percentage of students meeting AYP targets has increased since the 2002-03 school year, according to testing information on the state Web site. In English/language arts, the percentage of students meeting AYP targets increased by about 7 points from 2002-03 to 2004-05. During the same time period, the percentage of students meeting math targets increased by about 9 points.

While African American, Latino, and low-income students, as well as English language learners and students with disabilities, have traditionally had more difficulty meeting AYP targets on state tests, most groups showed increases since 2002-03, according to state data. However, the gains in the percentage of students meeting AYP targets were slightly smaller for subgroups than for the general population, except for Latino students in math. In English/language arts from 2002-03 to 2004-05, most subgroups increased by 4 to 6 percentage points, with the exception of students with disabilities, whose percentages stayed about the same. In math during the same time frame, these subgroups increased by 3 to 9 percentage points.

Three of the four schools in this study showed increases in the percentage of students meeting AYP targets for both the general population and all subgroups. At one school, Cox Elementary, the percentage of Latino students, English language learners, and students with disabilities meeting AYP targets in English/language arts and math declined. At all four schools, achievement gaps are difficult to calculate, because none of the four schools has a white or Asian subgroup, the ethnic subgroups that typically do better on state tests in Oakland. All four are Title I schools, indicating high rates of poverty, which means that the low-income subgroup includes the large majority of students in the school.

The four schools are all located in the “flatlands” of Oakland between highways 880 and 580. All have been identified for restructuring under NCLB. Through the district’s own restructuring policies, Cox Elementary became a charter school. Highland Elementary replaced staff. The Highland school site also houses a newly created small school, and a second small school is in the works for the site for 2006-07.

Sobrante Park Elementary pursued the “any other major restructuring” option under the federal law, and Whittier Elementary replaced about half its staff. All schools in restructuring also made some staff changes.

USING DISTRICT PLANS IN OAKLAND

As a district, Oakland has taken the lead in determining how schools are restructured by narrowing schools’ choices. Only schools that achieved a rating of 590 or greater on the state’s Academic Performance Index in 2004-05 and met schoolwide AYP targets for 2003-04 were eligible for what Oakland called “internal restructuring,” an option corresponding to the “any other major restructuring” option in the federal law. Three Oakland schools met these criteria: Allendale, Sobrante Park, and Stonehurst. Allendale and Sobrante Park chose to use this option.

The next option considered for schools in Oakland was “new school creation,” which involves closing the schools, appointing a leader to form a community-based design team that spends a year completely designing the new school, and hiring a staff committed to the design team’s vision. At the end of that year, the new school opens and the old school is either closed or phased out over two years.

The first new school creations were piloted in Oakland in 2001 under the district’s New Small Autonomous Schools policy. At the end of three years, a total of nine new schools had been created. A 2004 district evaluation of the new schools showed that most of these schools had significantly larger academic gains, higher attendance, and fewer suspensions than other large district schools serving the same communities. The district therefore decided to expand the program, and in 2005, the district offered new school creation as one possible option for schools in restructuring, explained Jean Wing, the district’s manager of research and best practices in new school development. New school creation also continues to be an option for other district schools, including those not in restructuring under NCLB.

If a school was not eligible for internal restructuring and the district or school did not support the idea of a new school creation, the third option was to become a contract or charter school. District documents emphasize that this option is only considered after the district rules out the first two options,

and only if the district receives a viable application from an outside entity to run the school. The district uses a rubric to evaluate the applications. Typically, when a school becomes a charter school, all staff reapply for their jobs, and these jobs are non-union.

In Oakland, a new chartering organization, Education for Change, was founded specifically to serve schools in restructuring. Although other chartering organizations were able to apply to manage schools, only Education for Change was successful in contracting with schools in restructuring. Education for Change will use the same curricular materials as the district but will focus on better delivery of instruction, said Kevin Wooldridge, executive director of Education for Change and former district administrator. In the past in schools in restructuring, Wooldridge said, “The materials were being used, but not necessarily as designed. We’re about full implementation.”

Replacing staff is also a frequently used option in Oakland. While district documents stated that replacing staff would be only a partial solution to restructuring in Oakland, all schools in restructuring have made some staff changes. According to data from the Oakland Education Association (OEA), approximately 120 teachers were involuntarily transferred out of the 13 schools in restructuring, and about 50 of this group were placed in other Oakland schools. About 70 of this group had not been placed by the beginning of the 2005-06 school year, but many of these teachers remained on the district’s payroll, and a few retired or resigned. OEA has initiated grievance procedures for many of these transfers, OEA President Ben Visnick said.

For 2005-06, plans for restructuring are in progress. Two schools, Sobrante Park and Allendale, will undergo “internal restructuring.” Both have also made staff changes. Five new small schools are being designed and will open on four restructuring campuses in 2006-07; this process also typically changes the staff. Two schools have replaced some staff members and are considering other changes, including new school creation and becoming charter schools for 2006-07. Two additional schools have become charter schools for 2005-06. Three schools relied solely on staff changes. No school became a contract school. These changes are summarized in **table 2**.

Table 2: Restructuring Choices for Oakland Schools in 2005-06

School	New School Creation (Opening in 2006-07)	Charter School	Internal Restructuring	Staff Changes
Allendale			x	x
Cox		Education for Change		x
Hawthorne		Education for Change		x
Highland*	x			x
Jefferson				x
Lockwood**				x
Mann				x
Melrose	x			x
Prescott	x			x
Sobrante Park			x	x
Stonehurst	x			x
Webster**				x
Whittier				x

Table reads: In the Oakland Unified School District in 2005-06, among schools in restructuring under NCLB, Allendale underwent internal restructuring and staff changes, while Cox contracted with the charter school management organization Education for Change and made staffing changes.

* Highland also houses the newly created small school, Rise Elementary, which opened in 2005-06.

** These schools are considering additional restructuring options, including new school creation and becoming charter schools for 2006-07.

Source: Oakland Unified School District.

While district officials saw restructuring as an opportunity to make positive changes in schools, the process of restructuring schools was challenging and at times created controversy, they said. “The surprisingly hard part is getting the community to accept that schools need to change,” explained Katrina Scott-George, interim acting chief for community accountability. “There are service providers who make their bread and butter from serving failure.” Once the community accepts the need for change, Scott-George emphasized that the process should allow the community to have input in decisions and to participate in beneficial ways.

To make this participation possible, the district sent letters to all parents in schools in restructuring explaining the restructuring process. The district also solicited letters of interest from any community groups serving neighborhoods

with schools in restructuring. These letters asked community groups for suggestions and offered the groups the opportunity to participate in new school creation or charter school management. The district sent out a press release, posted the request for letters online, and communicated the process to parents, teachers, and community members in meetings at the 13 schools, district officials said. The district received approximately 55 letters of interest, Scott-George said. Responses came in from a variety of community groups, including churches like the First African Methodist Episcopal Church of Oakland, charter school organizations like Education for Change, and education think tanks like WestEd.

In order to report on Oakland’s restructuring options in more depth, CEP visited four schools in restructuring: Sobrante Park Elementary, which will use internal restructuring; Cox

Elementary, which has become a charter school; Highland Elementary, which replaced staff, housed a newly created small school, and plans to be the site for a second small school in 2006-07; and Whittier Elementary, which has replaced staff.

RESULTS AT SOBRANTE PARK ELEMENTARY

Sobrante Park's strategies for school improvement include continuing curricular changes, implementing a new schedule with added time for teaching and professional development, and starting supplemental educational services earlier in the school year. Staff changes were also required by the district, but these changes will not be the primary tools to improve the school, Principal Marco Franco said. In 2004-05, the school hired Performance Fact, Inc., a local for-profit professional development provider, to facilitate staff meetings and document the school's plans for improvement.

In terms of curriculum, the school has continued implementing Open Court, the district-adopted reading program. In 2005-06, the school also has a full-time instructional assistant/coach who will help teachers by modeling lessons and providing consultation. Teachers have been pleased with Open Court, Franco said, and will therefore add a "math workshop" in 2005-06 similar to the small groups used in Open Court. In the math workshop, teachers will work with students who are grouped by skill level. Ongoing assessments will help teachers regroup students frequently as they gain new skills. To emphasize math and reading skills learned in school, teachers decided that all grade levels should assign set amounts of homework in 2005-06. Before this policy, teachers' homework assignments varied. The new homework policy calls for 20 to 30 minutes of homework in kindergarten Monday through Friday; 45 to 60 minutes of homework in 1st through 3rd grades Monday through Thursday, with a weekend writing assignment; and 60 to 90 minutes of homework in 4th through 5th grades Monday through Thursday, with a weekend writing assignment.

To reach more students, Sobrante Park has extended instructional time for 2005-06. The school has added full-day kindergarten. In addition, the school has instituted a before-school intervention time. Each classroom teacher has invited about 5 to 10 students to participate based on their scores on state assessments and Open Court assessments and teacher

observation. These students receive this extra instruction from 8:00 to 8:50 a.m. Monday through Friday. Most parents have been cooperative about sending their children early to school, Franco said. Teachers work under extended contracts and are paid for the extra teaching time from Title I funds.

An additional schedule change at the school has increased the quality of professional development, Franco said. For 2005-06, the school changed its "minimum day" to Friday. The minimum day is a districtwide policy that sends students home about an hour early on Fridays so that teachers can participate in professional development. The rest of the district has this day of professional development on Wednesday. By changing the day, Franco found that he did not have to compete with other schools to get trainers to deliver the professional development, and therefore has been more likely to get his first choice of trainers and workshops.

Finally, Sobrante Park started supplemental educational services after school earlier this year and will augment these services with additional tutoring. In 2004-05, Kaplan and Platform Learning were popular supplemental educational services providers. About 60 to 70 students attended, but services did not start until February. This year Kaplan and Princeton Review, the school's two on-site providers, started in November. These providers are only offering 30 to 60 hours of tutoring per student. To extend this tutoring, the school will also offer a computerized tutoring program produced by Edusoft, a Houghton Mifflin subsidiary. Franco said he hopes that this year will have an even larger turnout for after-school tutoring.

Although not key to student achievement, staff changes did occur at Sobrante Park due to restructuring, Franco said. The district required him to transfer four teachers of his choosing. Then, the district filled the four positions with transfers from within the system, Franco explained. This process had some glitches at Sobrante Park. "One teacher who was assigned here refused to come," Franco recalled. But he said this allowed him to hire back a teacher he thought was excellent whom he had let go because she was not yet "highly qualified" under the NCLB criteria. The teacher has a master's degree in psychology and was expected to be highly qualified by November 2005, Franco anticipated. As a restructuring option, replacing staff was problematic, Franco said. "NCLB and unions get in each other's way," Franco said. "You have to meet the federal regulations without violating union rules."

RESULTS AT COX ELEMENTARY

Cox Elementary has become a charter school managed by Education for Change. “The strength of Education for Change,” said Principal Michael Scott, “is that it was founded by educators, former principals, and teachers, who clearly understand the connection between quality instruction and high academic achievement.” The CEO of Education for Change, Kevin Wooldridge, is the former executive director of the leadership academy in Oakland’s central office. While Education for Change pays a facility usage fee to the district and is a potential client for other services, such as professional development, Wooldridge explained that the organization is an independent nonprofit. Still, the organization is closely linked to the district and currently operates in Oakland only. “The impetus for starting Education for Change was to give year 4 schools the opportunity to become charters,” Wooldridge said.

Several changes made possible by becoming a charter school will be key to school improvement, Scott said. First and foremost, Scott emphasized that having staff members reapply for non-union jobs will make a difference. “My belief is that the key ingredient in academic growth is quality teaching and a cooperative, coherent program, followed throughout the school,” he said. Before contracting with Education for Change, Scott, who was principal at the time said, “We didn’t have coherence and agreement among the staff.” Scott said he reapplied for his job because he believed hiring a new, committed staff would make a difference. “There’s no tenure with Education for Change. Everyone’s a first-year teacher. We all have room to grow and improve,” Scott said. Of the school’s 31 teachers, 24 are new to Cox this year. All had to agree to be non-union, at-will, contract employees and to forego participation in the district’s tenure system. “Part of the difficulty with the tenure system was getting rid of teachers who didn’t want to get with the program,” Scott explained.

In addition to the change in staff, the district has cut enrollment at Cox. In 2004-05, the school had 855 students, Scott said, while in 2005-06 the district capped enrollment at 685. This decrease in the student body combined with the new staff has led to a positive climate change in the school, Scott said, noting that “classroom to classroom you can see high-level teaching and high-level student engagement.” What teachers are supposed to teach, however, has not

changed. “The curriculum is exactly the same,” Scott said. The difference, he said, is that this year teachers are actually teaching the curriculum. When Open Court was introduced at the school about five years ago, Scott said, “Teachers hated it. They fought it.” This year, he said, teachers are implementing the program.

RESULTS AT HIGHLAND ELEMENTARY

Highland Elementary will be replaced by two new schools—Rise Community School and New Highland Academy. Rise underwent new school design last year and opened in 2005-06 on the Highland Elementary site. New Highland Academy is currently being designed and will open on the site in 2006-07. Meanwhile Highland Elementary replaced about half the staff and the principal for 2005-06.

Highland Elementary currently has 18 classroom teachers, 9 of whom are new hires for 2005-06. In addition, eight of nine new teachers are first-year teachers. The new principal, Charles Wilson, who was a 7th grade English teacher last year, said he looked for career changers to fill the new positions because he said they would be more mature. In addition, Wilson said, “I tried to hire all my teachers as temporary rather than permanent.” He explained that if the new employees didn’t work out, the district could release them at the end of the year without going through the probation process, which offers teachers mentoring and a chance to improve. Finding people to fill the nine open positions was not easy, Wilson said.

Of the applicants, he noted, “They came with a variety of credentials. Not all were equipped to teach in an urban school.” He explained that some didn’t want the position after they found out where the school was located. “I got turned down more often than I was accepted,” he said. The human resources department, which had many new employees last year, did not vet the applicants or advertise the positions other than posting them at the district, Wilson said. To get more applicants, Wilson said he resorted to advertising on Craig’s List, a Web site that serves as a classified ads listing for a number of cities nationally. At the end of the first day of school, four teachers quit, Wilson said, but fortunately all but one relented and returned to teach.

Schools throughout the district had a difficult time hiring staff for 2005-06, noted Delia Ruiz, executive officer,

intensive support network. Ruiz monitors some of the schools in restructuring and provides support at Highland. “Last year human resources was redesigned. We were not strategic in our timing. Basically the whole department was wiped out. So the principals did all the recruiting and all the work,” Ruiz explained.

The main focus for Highland’s teachers this year is fully implementing Open Court. “It’s pretty structured. If teachers teach it the way it’s set up, students do well,” Ruiz said. Despite additional professional development and attention from the district, not all teachers use only Open Court materials, and not all stick to the pacing chart that dictates day-by-day instruction.

“The more experienced teachers tend to be more off track,” Wilson noted. “The new teachers are much more team players.”

While Wilson and Ruiz focus on improving instruction for 2005-06, Highland is also the site for a second new school creation. District officials said the New Highland Academy design team was still in the beginning stages of creating the school as of December 2005, but that it is certain the teaching staff at Highland will have to reapply for their jobs again next year if they want to be part of New Highland Academy.

RESULTS AT WHITTIER ELEMENTARY

The primary restructuring strategy at Whittier Elementary was replacing staff. For 2005-06, all teachers and the principal had to reapply for their jobs, said Fernando Yanez, the former principal who was rehired for 2005-06. Almost all of the school’s 27 teachers reapplied. The school lost one classroom position due to declining enrollment, and 10 of the 26 teachers for 2005-06 were new to the school, Yanez said.

“The ideas about restructuring were still in the embryonic stages,” said Yanez recalling the summer of 2005 when the school had to be restaffed. “At the same time we restructured, the district was reconstituting its human resources staff,” he noted, explaining that after he was rehired he had little assistance hiring teachers. A few of the strategies he used to attract new teachers paid off, he reported. First, he recruited new teachers from a list of good substitutes he had compiled in 2004-05. Second, he offered the school as the site for a districtwide math training. He said

he used the training to meet teachers from other schools and talk to them about transferring to Whittier. All 10 new hires are highly qualified, Yanez reported, and 4 are career changes in their first year of teaching on an alternative license.

Yanez said he believes restaffing the school will lead to higher academic achievement. “I think our students weren’t getting what they needed. For far too long we’ve had low expectations,” he explained. “I can create a road map, but if I don’t have buy-in from the staff, nothing works.” Of veteran teachers, he said, “People get so set in their ways sometimes.”

The curriculum has not changed at Whittier for 2005-06. The school is still using Open Court for reading. Instead, instruction has changed, Yanez said. “We had a standards-based curriculum; the next logical step is standards-based instruction,” he explained. “It’s much easier as an administrator to work with a teacher who is new and needs support to grow professionally and teach them to use Open Court. Veteran teachers think they know best.” To help teachers stay on the pacing chart for Open Court, Yanez said he now has a curriculum schedule that lets teachers know when instruction should begin and end.

Early Restructuring Observations in California

While it is too early to say whether these multiple decision-making processes for restructuring are effective in California, it is already clear that districts and schools in California are not simply picking an option from the federal list. Instead, districts and schools must wrestle with the details. Considerable time and effort went into identifying the right mix of changes at the schools and districts studied for this report. The process also clearly created tension among decision makers—from the initial apprehensiveness of the staff at Palmdale to continued disagreement among Oakland staff about the efficacy of replacing staff.

Explaining the tension surrounding restructuring in California, Fox quoted Nelson Mandela, “It’s not the darkness that frightens us, it’s the light.” The processes advocated by the state ask districts and schools to reveal and take ownership of problems for which there are no easy answers, Fox said. He explained that for many teachers and administrators, this is the first time they have had to openly

face these problems at their schools and districts. Wrestling with the problems takes time and creativity but may lead to innovations that are effective in raising student achievement, state officials said.

Most state and district officials also said that addressing these problems was more important than simply satisfying NCLB requirements. “Even if we didn’t have NCLB, wouldn’t you want to sit down and ask if your school is organized in the most effective way,” Fox asked participants in his restructuring workshop. “We’ve got to think bigger than NCLB,” he concluded.

Credits

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The Center on Education Policy receives nearly all of its funding from charitable foundations. We are grateful to The Joyce Foundation, The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, The Carnegie Corporation, and The Spencer Foundation for their support of our work on the No Child Left Behind Act. The George Gund Foundation and the Phi Delta Kappa International Foundation provide the Center with general support funding that assists us in this endeavor. The statements made and the views expressed are solely the responsibility of the Center.



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February 2006

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