



California's Teaching Force

Key Issues and Trends

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning

Research conducted by SRI International

California State University

University of California, Office of the President

WestEd

2008



The Need to Focus on Quality Teaching

A year ago, California leaders seemed poised to pursue a comprehensive approach to education policy and a teacher development *system* to provide fully prepared and effective teachers for our students. A series of prominent research reports had found the state's education system fragmented, overregulated and operating largely devoid of data. Our own work reported continuing inequities in access for all students to fully prepared and effective teachers, as well as significant problems with California's development of teachers.

While the governor had planned to focus on education in 2008, it did not quite work out that way. The state's dramatic fiscal crisis swelled into a budget impasse that swamped thoughtful discussion over teaching, learning and schools.

The Legislature did make some changes to streamline the credentialing process for teachers and to allow the potential for providing additional incentives for teachers of mathematics and science. But it was the state's budget and the lack of available funding that held center stage.

Instead of new efforts to ensure teachers are supported with strong leadership and professional development, thousands of teachers got "pink slips" telling them that they were in danger of being fired because of the deficit. Instead of allowing education leaders to focus on finding enough high school mathematics and science teachers, the budget forced them to worry about sustaining lunch programs and bus routes.

But the state's budget was not the only issue that impeded the development of a systemic approach to teaching and learning. With little informed or open debate over how to get students to master mathematics before graduating, the State Board of Education quickly approved a requirement to test all 8th graders in algebra, potentially exacerbating an already substantial shortage of mathematics teachers. While the courts have delayed the algebra testing requirement, the issue exemplifies policy decisions made without either adequate data or attention paid to the ramifications for California's teaching force to implement the decision.

At the same time, the stakes for students and schools have gotten substantially higher. The dismal economy reinforced the reality of international competition and dramatized the importance of education. Even though California schools made progress—test scores went up—the pace of improvement was insufficient to meet the goals of the No Child Left Behind law. More schools than ever—2,241, which is 37 percent of all the state schools that serve significant numbers of poor children—are now on the state's watch list.

While there has been steady improvement, only 43 percent of California students in 2008 scored at the proficient level or above on state tests in mathematics and 46 percent in English language arts. The numbers are significantly lower for Latino students (33 percent in mathematics, 32 percent in English language arts) and African-American students (28 percent in mathematics, 33 percent in English language arts) than white students (54

The concentration of underprepared and inexperienced teachers remains highest in schools that serve the children whose families have the least.

percent in math, 64 percent in English language arts) or Asian students (69 percent in mathematics, 69 percent in English language arts). *See Fact Sheet One*

In addition, the level of proficiency declines as students move beyond elementary school. For example, 61 percent of 4th graders are at least proficient in mathematics, but only about a quarter of 8th graders are proficient. The urgency to do better is palpable.

But “doing better” will not be easy. California still lacks the kind of systemic approach to building a strong teacher workforce and promoting effective teaching necessary for our students to succeed. The tough fiscal times will not go away soon, nor is it likely the policy-making climate suddenly will be sunny. In spite of this, we believe the state must review existing policies and practices, and invest thought, energy and resources in its teaching force if it is to see substantial improvements in its schools.

Teaching Matters

There is little argument about the importance of good teaching to student achievement. The evidence is clear—the most important variable that can be controlled in how much students learn is the people who teach them.

For each of the past 10 years, the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning has issued a report on the status of the state’s teaching force based on research conducted by SRI International. We provide practical information to help policymakers and education leaders understand the challenges they face. We offer context, clarity and solid data about the teaching profession.

This is a brief summary of a more detailed research report for 2008 that is available on our Web site—www.cftl.org.

Looking back over our reports of the past decade, we find encouragement in the progress the state has made in substantially reducing the number of teachers not fully prepared to teach. When we started this work, California schools, particularly those in our poorest communities, were swamped by large numbers of underprepared teachers working on emergency teaching permits. The sheer numbers of underprepared teachers in these schools made it especially difficult for them to improve.

As you will see in this year’s report, the numbers of underprepared teachers has continued its decline over the past several years, although the concentration of underprepared and inexperienced teachers remains highest in schools that serve the children whose families have the least.

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But as we have previously reported, we still are far from having the kind of system that will ensure all children have the teachers they need to help them meet the state's academic requirements. The state's focus on teachers and effective teaching instead remains piecemeal and sporadic.

California has set high expectations for students' academic proficiency and extensive standards for preparing and licensing teachers, adopting textbooks and framing professional development. But the state's multiple education agencies do not always work together to ensure every child has an effective teacher. There are, for example, limited conversations between the universities that prepare teachers and the school districts that hire them. Almost no information is shared about the strengths and weaknesses of prospective teachers, even with the veteran teachers assigned to mentor novices.

The periodic evaluations of veteran teachers by principals tend to be *pro forma*, rarely consider the learning outcomes for students and are not connected to the professional development needs of the teachers. Teachers don't get constructive feedback, which they routinely say they would welcome.

And there are few incentives for teachers to participate in high-quality professional development programs or to take on the most challenging teaching assignments with the students who most need accomplished teaching.

Unintended Consequences

California is not alone among states struggling to provide a high-quality teaching force capable of helping all students meet its academic standards. California is not alone in being dissatisfied with its relatively poor levels of student achievement or large numbers of dropouts.

The state is unique, however, in its size and diversity. California represents amazing wealth and astounding poverty. A quarter of its 6.3 million students are English learners. No group of students constitutes a majority. We are the proverbial melting pot of America.

California has plenty of leaders who are trying to improve our schools. But too often, policymakers don't have the data needed and must act without being able to foresee the consequences of different courses of action.

When the state chose to reduce class sizes in the mid-1990s, policymakers did not fully anticipate the impact on the teaching force. The unintended consequence was a severe shortage of fully prepared teachers that hit California's poorest communities the hardest. Indeed, policymakers have spent many of the intervening years dealing with that shortage.

This summer, the California Board of Education voted to test all 8th-grade students on algebra. Previously, students were only tested on algebra if they had taken Algebra I. Regardless of how one feels about the merits of all students taking algebra in the 8th grade, the debate over the policy could have been better

informed by a review of the data revealing the capacity of the teaching force to meet this new demand, the resources necessary to implement this requirement in middle schools, and the implications that such a decision had for mathematics instruction at all grades.

Across the state, there are 3,787 middle school Algebra I teachers. Approximately one-third of these algebra teachers are either underprepared (224 teachers) or teaching out-of-field (644 teachers). The system is currently not able to provide every algebra student with a fully credentialed mathematics teacher. One estimate suggests that the state could need as many as 1,900 additional middle school algebra teachers in order to offer all 8th graders Algebra I. To fill these positions, districts will be looking to train their existing mathematics teachers to teach algebra as well as hire teachers with the necessary mathematics credentials. Unfortunately, the state does not have a strategy for raising the mathematical skills of the current teaching workforce nor is the state producing enough new mathematics teachers to fill available mathematics positions. (About 1,800 teachers earned a math credential in 2006-07.) *See Fact Sheet Two*

In the past several years, policymakers have worked on improving the quantity and quality of the teaching force. Progress has been slow. We have long been advocates for the creation of a teacher data system. Governors and Legislatures have agreed. But the data system (the California Longitudinal Teacher Integrated Data Education System, or CALTIDES) is still under construction and will not be on line for at least three more years and, even then, may not be sufficiently robust.

Policymakers need to focus on creating a teacher development system that routinely provides both the number and quality of teachers needed throughout the state. We hope they can create the kind of data system that helps them understand teaching force issues as they consider new education policies. Last year, our recommendations about this kind of *systems* direction had much less to do with additional resources than a sense of focus and urgency as well as the revision of state policies to ensure greater equity, coherence and effectiveness.

In the quarter of California middle schools where students do the least well on the state's Algebra 1 test, only about half of their math teachers actually have the credentials or authorizations to teach math.

High Schools and Beyond

Such a thoughtful approach will become even more important as additional attention is paid to the changes necessary to improve California's high schools. We anticipate policymakers will consider a variety of ways to ensure high schools graduate more students with higher levels of achievement. These could range from expanding traditional academic approaches such as Advanced Placement to mixing rigor with relevance in new approaches to career and technical education. But any approach is certain to require a much stronger teaching force than we now have. Although the concerns about teaching are most acute in our poorest communities, significant teaching quality issues can be found in nearly every high school across the state. Particularly in our high schools, too many teachers do not have the content knowledge or teaching experience to produce the levels of learning now expected of all students.

Those expectations have been ratcheted upward by the realities of today's global economy. Policymakers and business leaders increasingly are demanding that all students graduate from high school with the knowledge and skills needed to enter postsecondary education or the workforce without requiring remediation. That means a substantial command of mathematics, science and literacy.



Unfortunately, that is not the level California students are reaching today.

The state's high school exit exam (CAHSEE) tests knowledge considerably less than the expected postsecondary readiness level. Even so, this year, approximately 10 percent of high school seniors did not pass the test and did not earn a diploma. At least 100,000 students who should have been part of the class of 2008 dropped out before they could have graduated. Indeed, the number of students dropping out of California's schools has become a tragedy. Tens of thousands of students are leaving school before getting the knowledge and skills they need to have almost any chance at a middle-class income. Few of them ever succeed later in attaining sufficient education to thrive. *See Fact Sheet Three*

Last year, of those who stayed in school, passed the exam and got a diploma, only about a third completed the courses required for entrance by the California State University or University of California systems. And more than six in ten of the 40,000 students who were admitted to the CSU campuses were required to take non-credit remedial mathematics or English courses.

This picture won't get much brighter without significant investment in strengthening the teaching workforce. When we look, for example, at high schools where the passage rates for the high school exit exam are lowest, we find that one-third of

the teachers are either underprepared or novices. Indeed, in high schools across the state, we find that a quarter to a third of teachers in core subjects are teaching out-of-field, are underprepared or are in their first two years of teaching.

The situation is worst in the lowest-performing middle and high schools, which have three to four times the percentages of mathematics and science teachers without full credentials as those schools that are among the best performing. For Algebra I, in those schools whose students do least well on the state algebra test, only about half of middle school mathematics teachers actually have mathematics credentials or authorizations. In those schools whose students do best, approximately 70 percent of teachers have such credentials or authorizations.

It is quite possible that the state may decide it needs to increase high school standards in support of international competitiveness, and that, too, will raise the skill requirements of teachers. A test of approximately 90,000 high school students across the nation on Algebra II earlier this year produced dismal results—they only got about a quarter of the answers right. A new international study of academic performance in mathematics and science will soon be released that is expected to show U.S. students significantly lagging their peers in many other countries.

Significant teaching quality issues can be found in nearly every high school across the state.



Structural changes alone cannot improve student achievement without corresponding changes in teaching practice.

Policymakers are legitimately concerned about the poor performance of California's high schools, as illustrated by insufficient achievement and substantial dropout rates. There are a number of approaches to school reform being tried at the secondary level, including career technical education (CTE) and other programs that feature multiple pathways to postsecondary education and careers. For CTE teachers, a college degree is not required and the state has made it even easier for potential teachers to obtain a CTE credential by reducing the number of years of required work experience. But high schools with substantial numbers of CTE faculty face the staffing complications of blending them with traditional teachers to create a coherent program for students.

Further, it remains uncertain whether such high school reform programs will help students reach proficiency and readiness for postsecondary success. Indeed, research on high schools suggests that structural changes alone cannot improve student achievement without corresponding changes in teaching practice.

If student achievement is to improve, California will have to recruit far more fully prepared teachers and help existing teachers gain sufficient knowledge and

skills. But what supports will high schools need to provide to attract and retain teachers in these demanding settings? To help policymakers better answer these kinds of questions, we will spend the next year closely examining teaching in California's secondary schools.

Supply and Demand

Although the state has significantly lowered the number of underprepared teachers over the past several years, uncomfortable warning signs are appearing on the horizon regarding the continued supply of fully prepared teachers.

In 2007-08, California schools employed a bit more than 310,000 teachers, a number that has been relatively stable. *See Fact Sheet Four*

With a workforce that large, the state will likely continue to struggle to reduce the number of underprepared teachers, which we define as those who have not yet met the qualifications for at least a preliminary teaching credential. But in 2000-01, a few years after the state reduced class size at the primary level, the state had about 42,000 underprepared teachers.

As policymakers responded then to what had become a flood of underprepared teachers, the numbers came steadily downward and now seem to have leveled off at about five percent of the teaching force.

In 2007-08, that number was down to 15,463, and that includes 6,772 interns who are still pursuing a full teaching credential but whom the state considers "highly qualified" for federal reporting purposes. *See Fact Sheet Five*

6 out of 10

number of students entering the California State University system who must take non-credit, remedial courses in English or math or both.



Unfair Distribution

The problem would be more manageable if every school had only one teacher in 20 who was underprepared. But the underprepared teachers are far from evenly distributed. Instead, they are concentrated in schools and communities that serve our most economically disadvantaged students—exactly the students most in need of our best teachers. This inequitable distribution is persistent and neither fair nor right.

The proportions of underprepared teachers are far higher in schools with significant populations of English learners, students of color or schools that are the lowest performing. For example, on average, schools in the bottom achievement quartile have more than four times the percentage of underprepared teachers as schools in the top achievement quartile.

When we look at middle and high schools, we find that schools with the highest proportion of students of color are four times as likely to have underprepared mathematics teachers as the least diverse schools. *See Fact Sheet Six*

Uneven Odds

The chance of a 6th grader having *at least one underprepared teacher* in his or her elementary years is more than twice as likely for students in the lowest achieving quarter of schools than the top quarter.

The odds of a student in the lowest achieving quarter having had *more than one underprepared teacher* is 14 times higher than a student in the top quarter.

Production of New Teachers; Retirement of Veterans

It is risky to predict who and how many will choose to enter teaching. It is sometimes argued that in times of economic uncertainty, more young people may choose teaching for its relative stability. But some also will point to the approximately 14,000 teachers who got “pink slips” this past spring and see that as discouraging to those considering the profession. This is further complicated by the lack of data showing who is leaving teaching (and why) after only a short time as teachers.

What we do know with certainty is that California is producing fewer teachers and has been for the past several years. In 2007, the state issued 20,308 new teaching credentials; four years earlier, the number was 27,150. Enrollment in schools of teacher education is also down.

We also know that while there are plenty of novice teachers in the workforce, nearly 100,000 veteran teachers are older than 50 with many of them eligible to retire; nearly 18,000 are over 60. Retirements increased last year and are expected to continue to rise as more teachers move into their sixties.

The state budget may make it difficult for local school districts to adequately fund programs that help usher new teachers into the profession with

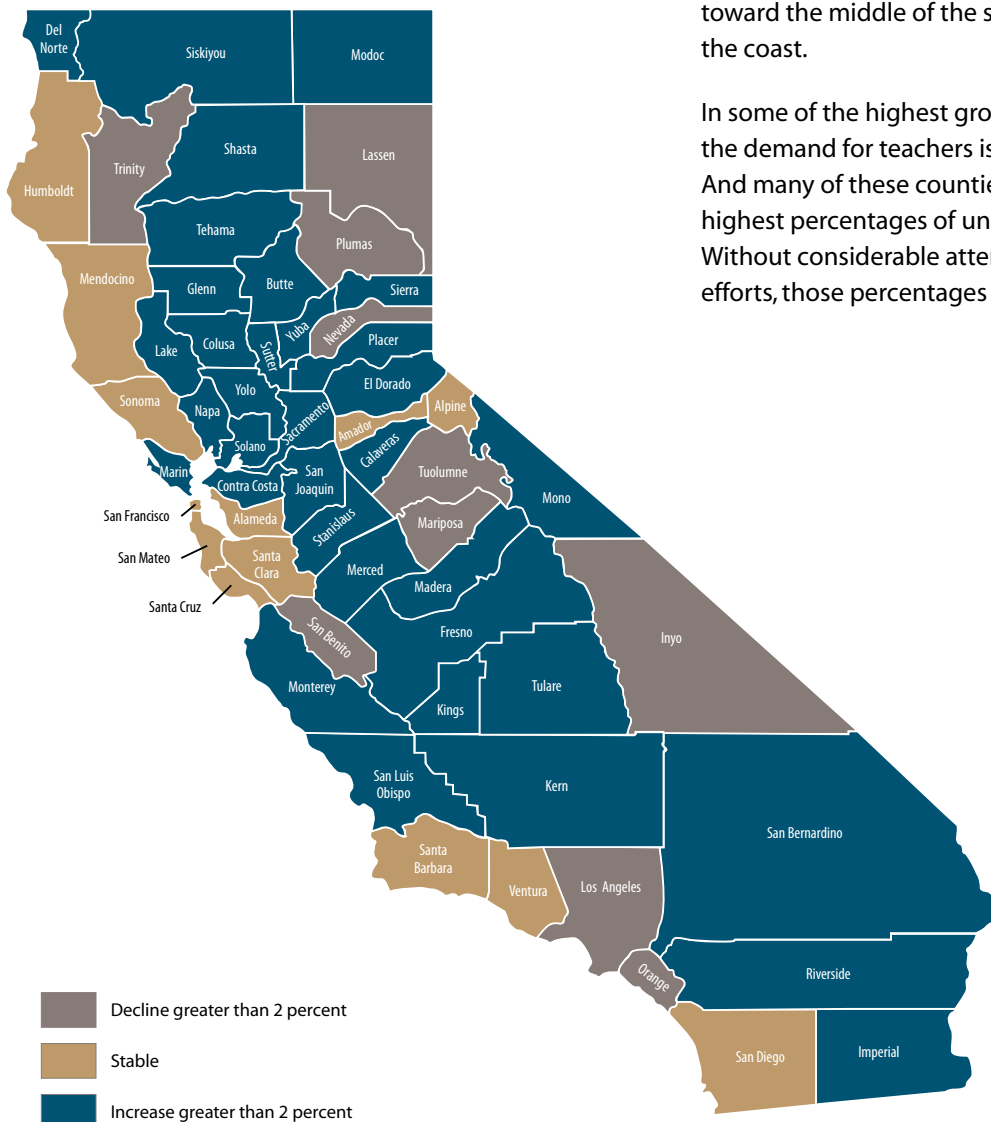
veteran mentors and classroom evaluations of their practice. It also puts at risk providing veteran teachers with the regular professional development they need to expand their content knowledge and teaching strategies. This is particularly troubling at a time when the expectations and stakes are going up for students.

Uneven Labor Market

There is no single labor market for teachers in California. A prospective teacher in Chico, for example, is unlikely to take an available job in Los Angeles. Moreover, the demand for teachers is uneven across California as the population grows toward the middle of the state and shrinks along the coast.

In some of the highest growth counties in the state, the demand for teachers is expected to increase. And many of these counties have some of the state's highest percentages of underprepared teachers. Without considerable attention paid to recruitment efforts, those percentages may go higher still.

Projected K-12 Enrollment Change, 2007-17





Conclusions

For the past decade, we have been issuing annual reports on California's teaching force. We have analyzed the consistent maldistribution of underprepared teachers, the adequacy of teacher preparation and data systems, and persistent shortages of science and mathematics teachers. Last year, we called for a fresh policy architecture to produce the kind of teacher development system that would strengthen the quality of teaching. We offered a series of recommendations that were low in cost and aimed at making the kind of changes necessary to improve teacher development.

Over the past 10 years, all of our recommendations have been based on solid data and in pursuit of ensuring that every student faces qualified, effective teachers. Our call for consistent, system-wide investments in effective teaching is a hallmark of the entire series of reports. It continues this year.

Sixteen years ago, during the 1992 presidential campaign, a now-famous sign on the wall reminded campaign staff to stay focused on their central theme: the economy. For those who are serious about substantially improving California's schools, we'd like to offer a comparable central focus: the teaching force. There is ample evidence to support the belief that the quality of the teaching force is indeed the key to successful schools.

Our economic crisis is unlikely to be alleviated quickly; partisanship could slow and complicate the process even further. We urge policymakers to stay focused on building the systems that will give the state the kind of strong teaching force that we will need to meet the educational challenges we face—and to help California's economy thrive.

Recommendations

In a few weeks, the nation will watch Barack Obama be sworn in as President. We hope this is a time of partisan healing and rebuilding of our infrastructure. California's policymakers will have to work through fiscal troubles and partisanship just as new political campaigns are getting underway to select our next governor and superintendent of public instruction. We believe they can work through these challenges.

Every year, we describe the realities of California's teaching profession. Despite the considerable challenges of ensuring an excellent teacher for every student, we remain optimistic. In part, it is our nature; in part, the future is hard to contemplate without teaching excellence.

But we encourage policymakers to take a fresh look at how California recruits, prepares, supports, deploys and compensates its teaching force. We urge them to make the changes necessary to ensure quality instruction for all of California's students.

We have attached to this summary a set of recommendations we believe will strengthen the capacity of California's teaching workforce to help students—*all* of them—meet the high standards the state has set for them.

About this Document

This summary report and its companion materials are available for download on our Web site, www.cftl.org. For information on purchasing print copies from the Center, please call 831 427-3628. Discounts are available for bulk orders of single publications.

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The Center
for the Future of Teaching & Learning

working to improve education for all students by
strengthening the teaching profession



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Key Issues and Trends

2008

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Fact Sheet 1

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning

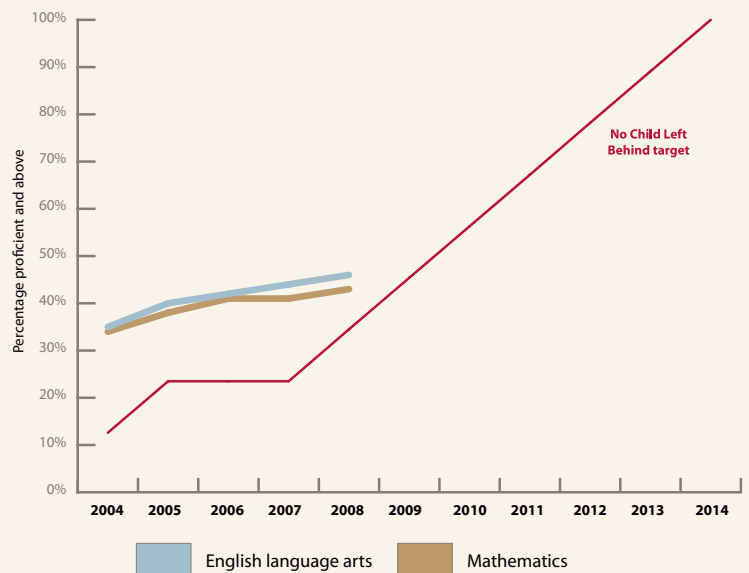
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Student Achievement: Far Short of Proficiency

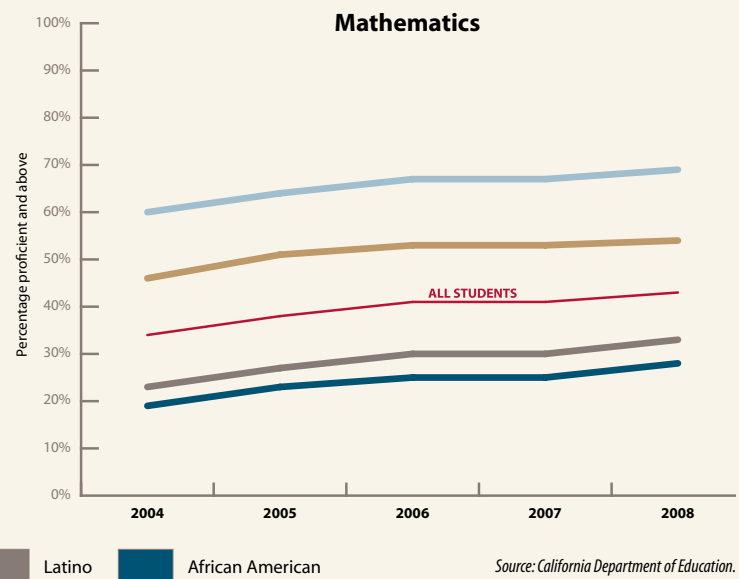
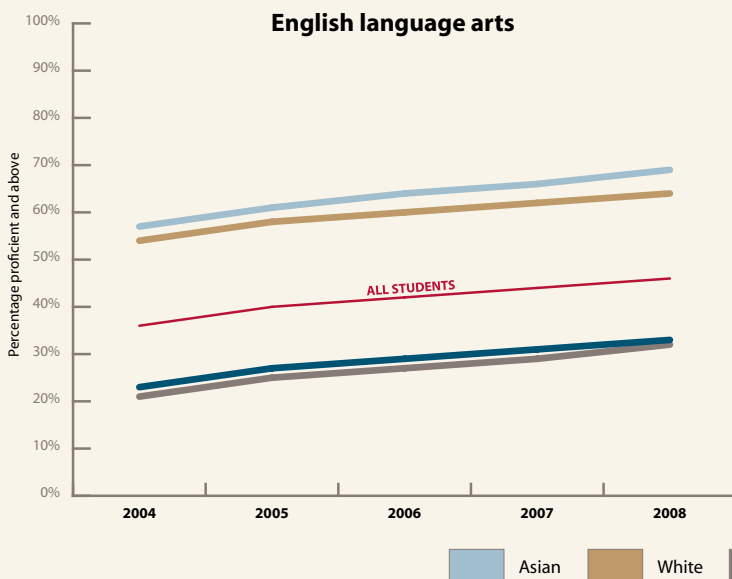
Academically, more students in California are doing better, more are testing at the proficient or advanced level. But far too few are doing well enough.

In 2008, fewer than half of students scored at least proficient in literacy or mathematics on the California Standards Test, and the percentages are far lower for Latino and African-American students. Yet the federal No Child Left Behind law requires all students to be at least proficient by 2014.

Percentage of Students Scoring Proficient or Higher on California Standards Test



The Learning Gap: California Standards Test Results



Source: California Department of Education.

Fact Sheet 2

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning

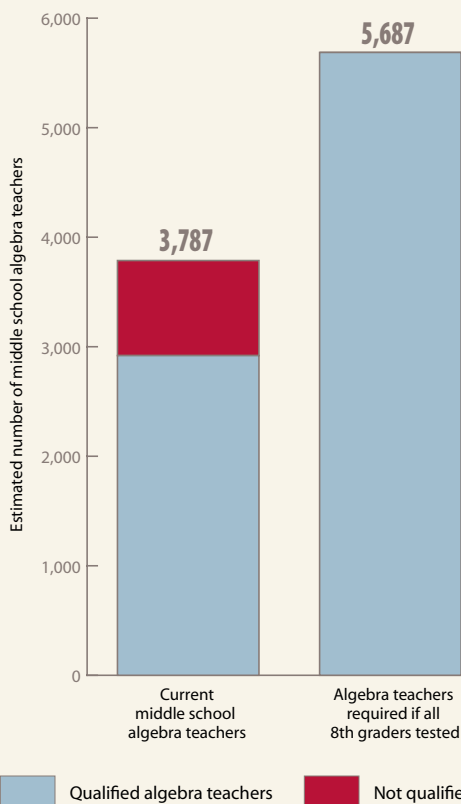
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Consequences Not Considered

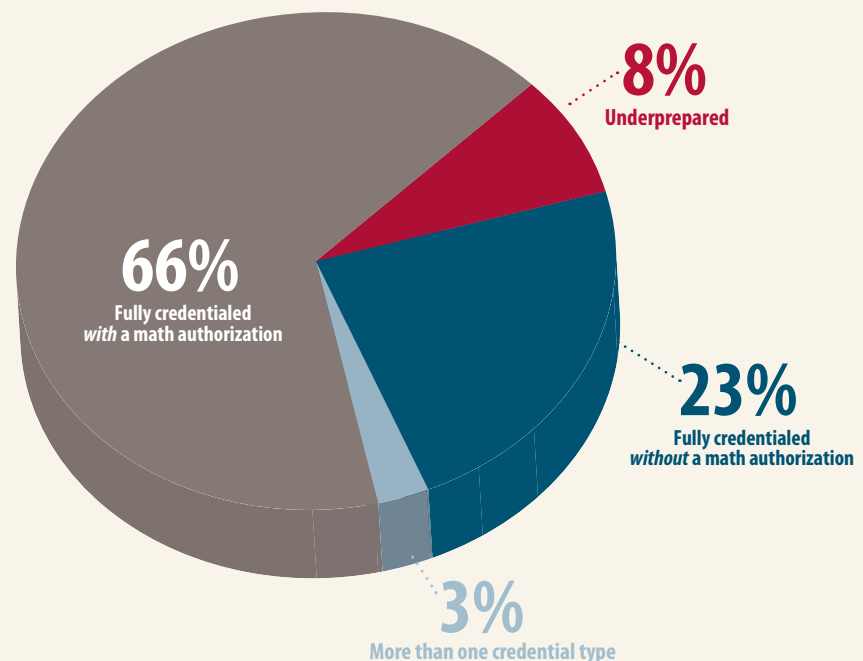
California has yet to construct a data system that provides policymakers and education leaders with the information they need to make good policy decisions to improve the state's schools. Often, policymakers must make education decisions without knowing the impact on the state's teaching force.

Such a data system is critical for informing the implementation of policies such as testing all 8th graders on algebra—now at least temporarily delayed by the courts—answering such questions as, “How many existing teachers do not have the qualifications to teach algebra?” or “How many more qualified teachers would be needed as a result?”

The Algebra Equation



Middle School Algebra Teachers, 2007-08



Source: California Department of Education.

Fact Sheet 3

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning

California's Teaching Force 2008

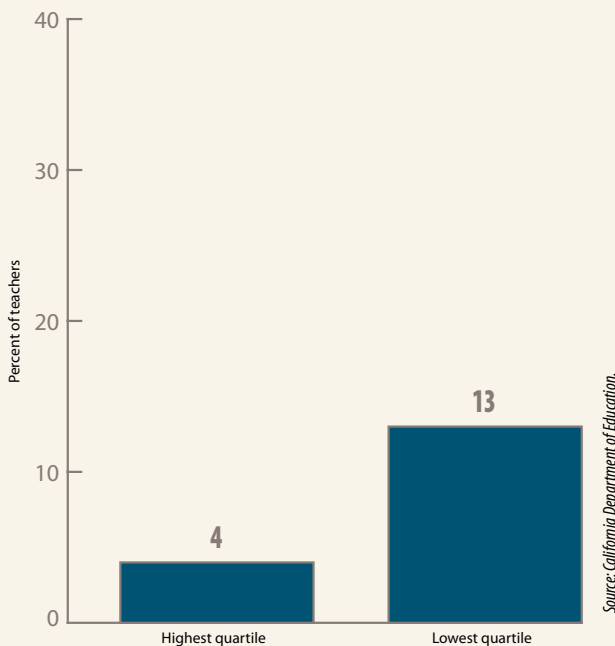
California's High School Pipeline Is a Sieve

California's secondary schools are not succeeding in getting a substantial percentage of students ready for success after high school. More than 100,000 members of the class of 2008 dropped out before graduation. At least 47,000 students in the class did not pass the state's graduation test (CAHSEE). Of those who go on to higher education, far too many of them need to take non-credit, remedial courses in English or math—60 percent of incoming students in the California State University system require such remediation.

High school students across the state are not doing well enough, but the students in our poorest communities and in our lowest performing schools routinely get the teachers who have the least experience and the least preparation.

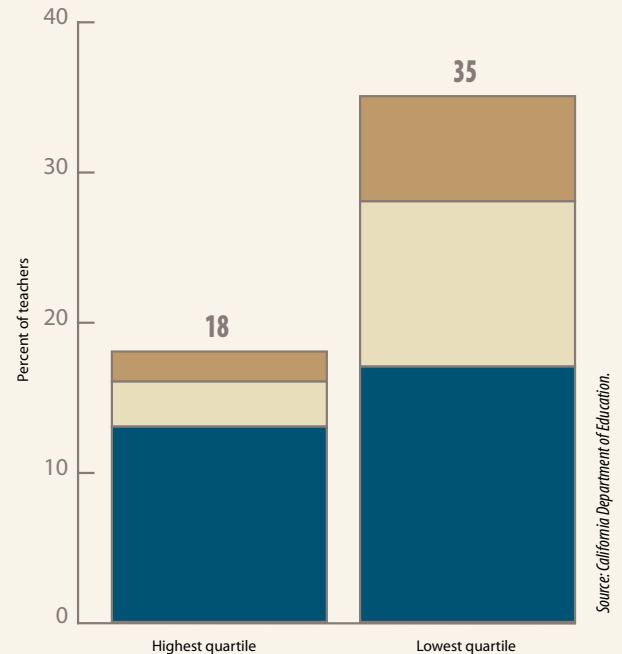
The Math of API

Underprepared Mathematics Teachers by API Achievement Quartiles, 2007-08



The Math of CAHSEE

Underprepared and Novice Teachers by Pass Rates on CAHSEE, 2007-08 Mathematics



- Underprepared experienced teachers
- Underprepared novice teachers
- Fully prepared novice teachers

Fact Sheet 4

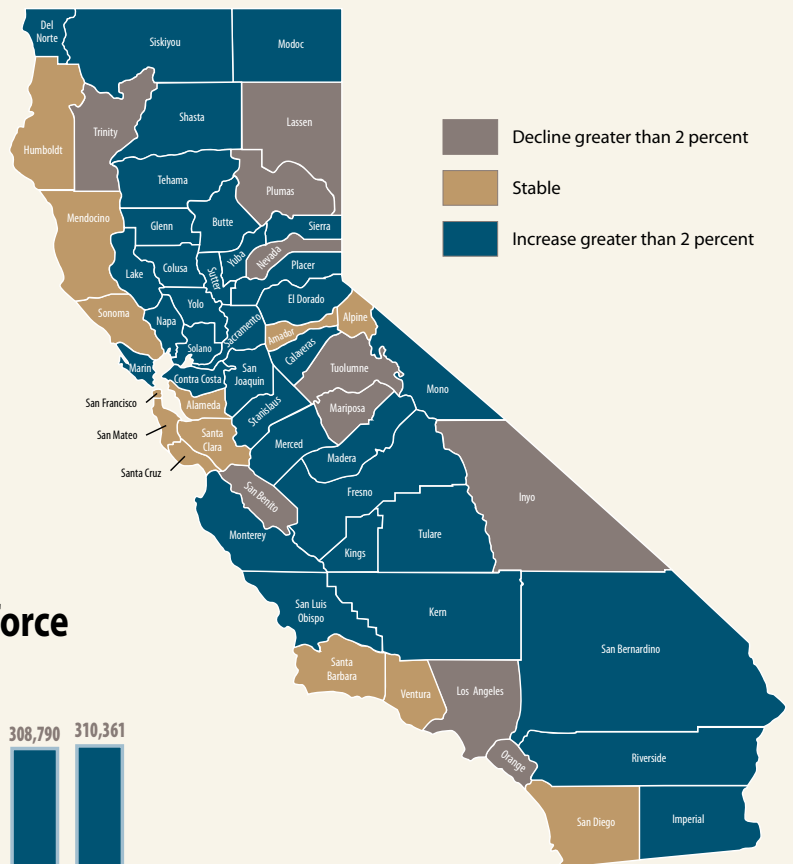
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No Single California Labor Market

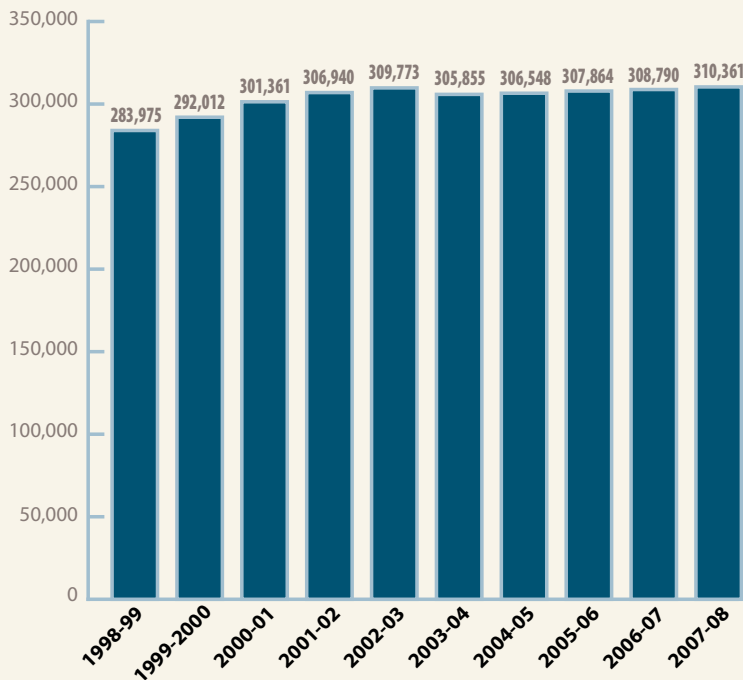
Viewed statewide, California's student population and teaching force are relatively stable at about 6.3 million students and 310,000 teachers, but those numbers mask considerable regional differences. The map on this page shows that many inland counties will continue to grow—and need more qualified teachers—while many along the coast will shrink and need fewer.

Projected K-12 Enrollment Change, 2007-17



Source: California Department of Finance, 2008.

K-12 Teachers in California's Workforce



Source: California Department of Education.

Fact Sheet 5

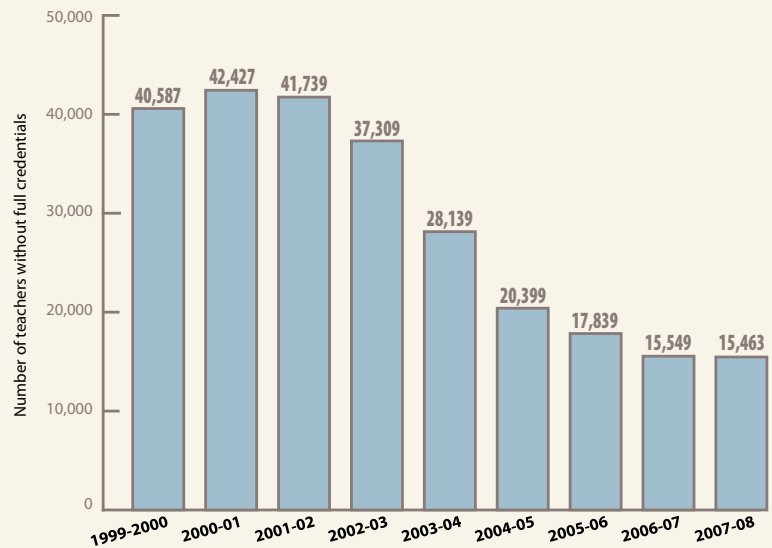
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California's Teaching Force 2008

Fewer Underprepared Teachers, but Fewer Prospective Teachers

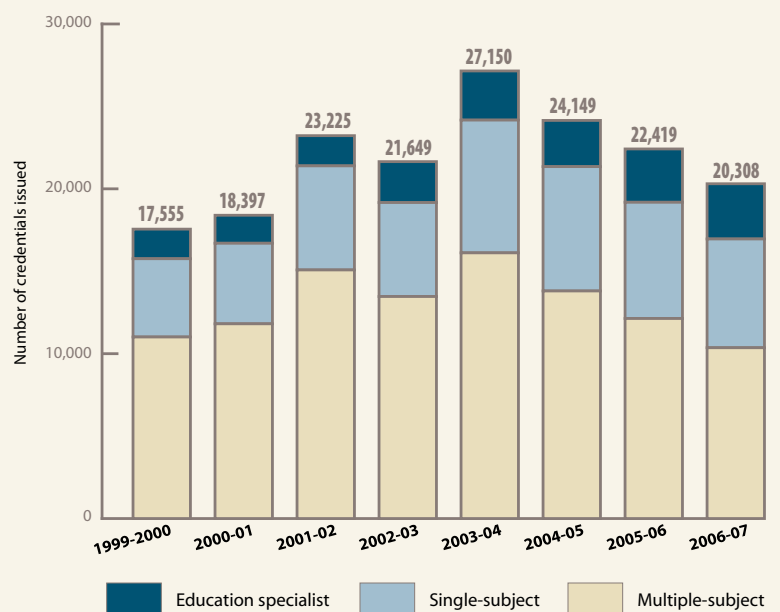
California has considerably fewer underprepared teachers than it did a few years ago. In 2001, 14 percent of teachers were underprepared; seven years later we are down to 5 percent underprepared. But there are warning signs of future shortages—we are producing fewer new teachers and enrollment in teacher training programs is declining.

California's Underprepared Teachers



Source: California Department of Education.

New Preliminary Credentials Issued



Source: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

Fact Sheet 6

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning

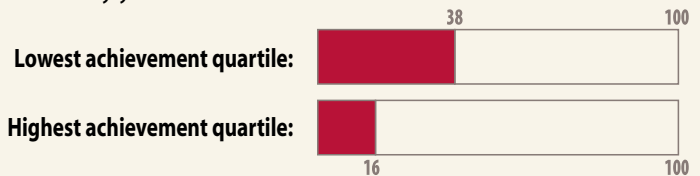
California's Teaching Force 2008

Distribution Distinctly Unfair

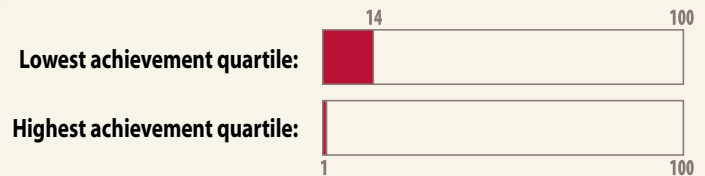
While the numbers of underprepared teachers have diminished, the odds are still much higher that California's least prepared, least experienced teachers will be teaching students who are poor and of color and in schools struggling academically.

Maldistribution 2008: Bad Odds for Kids Who Need Better

For California 6th graders in 2008, the odds of having **one underprepared teacher** during their elementary years if their school is in the:

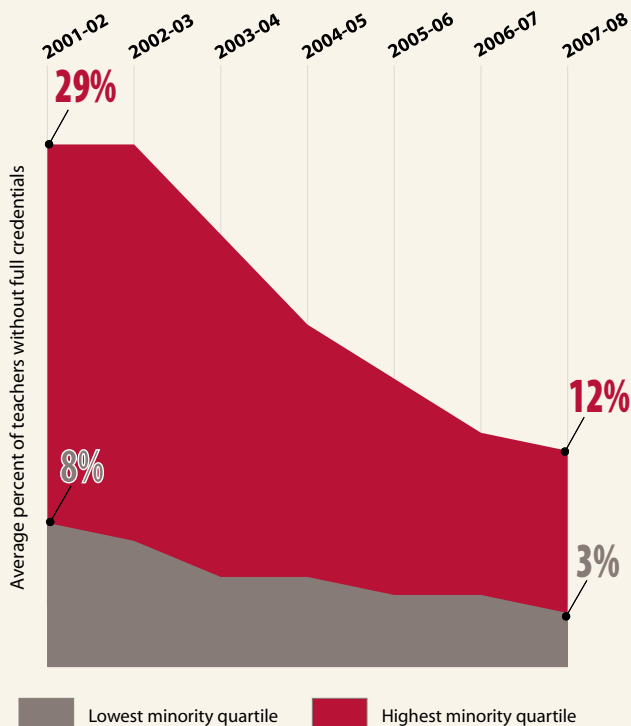


The odds of having had **more than one underprepared teacher** during their elementary years if their school is in the:

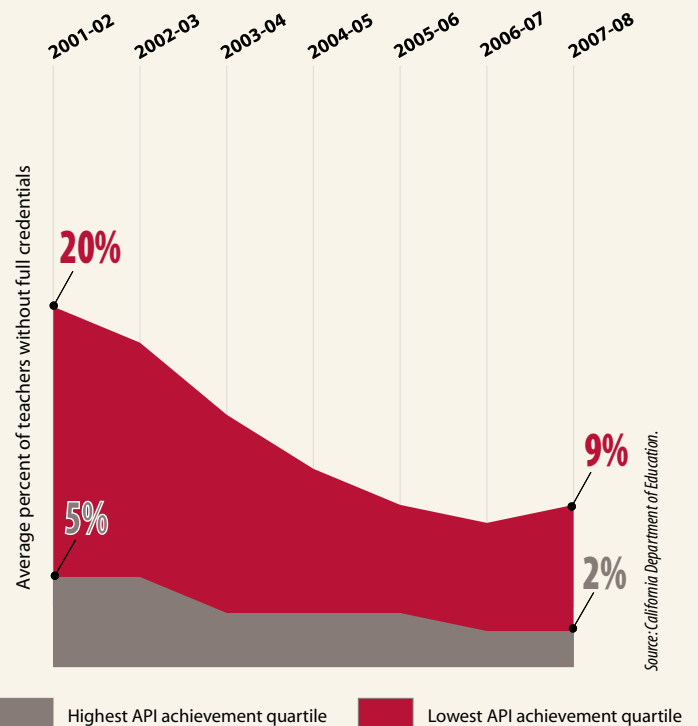


Source: California Department of Education and SRI analysis.

Minority Students Get Least-Prepared Math Teachers



Underprepared Teachers in Schools



Source: California Department of Education.

Recommendations

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning

California's Teaching Force 2008

Recommendations

Every year, we describe the realities of California's teaching profession and offer what we hope are reasoned and reasonable recommendations for policymakers and education leaders. We do so again this year.

Despite the considerable challenges of ensuring an excellent teacher for every student, we remain optimistic. In part, it is our nature; in part, the future is hard to contemplate without teaching excellence.

Addressing Teacher Shortages

Although California has made significant strides in decreasing the number of underprepared teachers, major challenges remain. This is no time for complacency given shortages in high-need schools, core subject matter areas, geographic regions and special needs programs. Further, the State Board of Education's decision to require that 8th-grade students be tested on algebra—now challenged in the courts—has opened serious debate on mathematical literacy and its implications for teacher preparation and professional development in middle schools and in the elementary grades, where success in higher mathematics begins.

We recommend that the governor and the Legislature review 1) evidence of why these shortages continue to exist in certain schools, subject matter areas and programs where fully prepared teachers are needed most, as well as 2) the scope and viability of existing efforts to ensure equity. Based on these reviews, we recommend the development of a strategic plan designed to ensure access for all students to a fully prepared and effective teacher. With respect to immediate demands to build mathematical

literacy, we recommend that the strategic plan identify essential steps along with the corresponding resources needed to strengthen math education in elementary and middle schools over each of the next four years.

Creating a Teacher Development System

California lacks a systemic approach to routinely provide the numbers of teachers needed throughout the state and the quality of teaching required to ensure students' academic success. A coherent, consistent teacher development system must include a set of reliable measures of teachers' knowledge and skills. These measures should provide a bridge across the components of preparation, induction, professional development and accomplished teaching.

We recommend that the existing assessments within each component of the teacher development continuum—preparation, induction, evaluation and accomplished teaching—be modified as necessary to form a more cohesive and coherent teacher development system that promotes access to qualified and effective teachers for all students, builds capacity, eliminates duplication and focuses on strengthening teaching practice.

✓ Addressing Teacher Shortages

✓ Creating a Teacher Development System

✓ Developing a Teacher Workforce Data System

✓ Examining High School Reform

✓ Providing Adequate Resources and Reasonable Guidelines

Recommendations

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California's Teaching Force 2008

Developing a Teacher Workforce Data System

The establishment of CALTIDES, the teacher information data system being developed in response to state statutes and federal reporting requirements, is a step toward providing policymakers with solid, reliable information on which to make decisions related to the state's teacher workforce—but it is only a first step. The information that will be provided under CALTIDES may not be sufficiently robust or detailed to assist policymakers with crucial decision-making. In particular, policymakers need data on the broader dimensions of teacher and administrator development such as preparation and professional development. They also need timely information on where teachers and administrators serve, and for how long, to evaluate the need for, and effectiveness of, efforts to ensure both equity and quality of teaching for all students.

We recommend that policymakers request the California Department of Education, in collaboration with the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, develop a long-term plan for a more adequate state data system, including benchmarks of progress and funding estimates.

Examining High School Reform

California is not ensuring that students leave high school ready for post-secondary education, prepared for the workforce, and able to participate fully in civic life. Student performance indicators raise serious questions about the capacity of many California high schools to graduate students who are prepared to meet these challenges. Abysmal dropout rates add a sense of urgency to address this problem: one in every five California high school students now drops out of school. The state needs to invest in building teacher workforce capacity as a key strategy to reversing these dropout trends. Further, strengthening teaching must be considered in light of the need for a more cohesive and comprehensive approach to student success, from elementary and middle grades through high school.

We recommend policymakers focus on identifying ways in which high school teachers and administrators can be effectively prepared and supported in order to provide the instruction, learning environment and real-world connections that will reverse this trend, especially for those students at risk for dropping out of school.

Providing Adequate Resources and Reasonable Guidelines

The challenge of creating a coherent, consistent and effective teacher development system in California is directly related to dollars. Recent research beyond our own shows that existing spending patterns and budget requirements may actually work against education equity and quality. Further, the deadlines set in state law for local school district budgeting and the state budget process itself are not conducive to sound decision-making. The recent budget crisis is likely to have a very serious impact on the current teacher workforce and the career plans of future teachers. Although many "pink slips" were eventually rescinded, we may have lost effective and experienced teachers to other states. If California is to have the highest expectations in the country for student achievement, we need a reliable school finance system that aligns resources with expectations while addressing wide disparities in the ability of schools to provide adequate support, assistance and development for teachers.

We recommend reviewing resource levels and approaches designed to promote equity in California in comparison to other states. In addition, we recommend a review of the budget process specific to the realignment between the state and its public schools, with the goal of establishing a more reliable metric for school districts to use as they develop their annual budgets and make staffing decisions.