

## AFTERSCHOOL POLICY BRIEF

### RECRUITING TEACHERS TO HIGH-NEED SCHOOLS: A CAREER PATHWAY THAT BUILDS ON CALIFORNIA'S AFTERSCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE



MARCH 2010



Effective teachers are the most important component in high-quality education systems. Teachers are on the front line of education every day, carrying the responsibility for ensuring students are college- and career-ready upon graduation. As such, teachers also play a pivotal role in California's economic engine and prosperity.

The state's current teacher shortage and severe budget crisis require public, nonprofit and private institutions to work together and develop new strategies to meet the demand for skilled and knowledgeable teachers. This policy brief highlights an innovative approach to recruiting and preparing effective teachers, one that involves developing stronger partnerships, capitalizing on the availability of new federal resources and expanding promising models. The success of local career ladder initiatives in developing high-quality teachers points to a larger opportunity to leverage California's afterschool infrastructure in meeting the need for effective teachers.





## EFFECTIVE TEACHERS CONTRIBUTE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Students' ability to meet or exceed the state's academic achievement goals is greatly impacted by the quality of their teachers. Given the amount of time children spend in school, it is not surprising that the effects of both high-quality and substandard teaching are far-reaching.<sup>1</sup>

One of the biggest challenges facing California is the persistence of the academic achievement gap. This gap is typically measured by comparing disparities in achievement between subgroups of students. The root causes of the achievement gap have been debated by researchers since the term was coined; however, many agree that strategies for closing the gap should include ensuring disadvantaged students have access to effective teachers.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, in many cases, students who face the greatest challenges are placed in schools with teachers who are least prepared to meet their needs.<sup>3</sup>

The cost of an under-educated student population is immense. One analysis estimates 120,000 students in California annually leave school or drop out.<sup>4</sup> Students without high school diplomas can expect to earn about \$1 million less in their lifetime than students who go on to earn bachelor's degrees.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the state faces an estimated \$46.4 billion in total economic losses from each cohort of dropouts.<sup>6</sup>

Regrettably, dropouts are not the only student subgroup inadequately served in school. A large percentage of students who complete high school are also deficient in basic skills.<sup>7</sup> In 2008, 47% of the incoming freshman classes across the 23-campus California State University system needed remediation in English and 37% required remediation in math.<sup>8</sup>

Remediation is costly. In the community college system, California could save an estimated \$135 million a year if incoming students didn't require remediation.<sup>9</sup> In the workplace, remediation costs California businesses an estimated \$107 billion to \$447 billion a year.<sup>10</sup> A high-quality teacher workforce would significantly reduce the need for remediation

and provide colleges, universities, employers and the state tremendous savings to redirect to other pressing needs.

## CALIFORNIA'S TEACHER SHORTAGE

Despite recent teacher layoffs, California is expected to experience a strong demand for new teachers. This is due, in large part, to an increasing number of teachers who are either retiring or nearing retirement. According to the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, more than 17,000 K-12 public school teachers in California reached the average retirement of 61 in 2008, and more than 40,000, approximately one in eight teachers statewide, will reach that age in the next five years.<sup>11</sup> This issue is further compounded by two factors: fewer people are earning teaching credentials and new teachers leave the field at a high rate.<sup>12</sup> The current supply of teachers simply cannot meet the demand for them. Between 2003 and 2007, the number of new preliminary credentials issued by institutions of higher education declined by 34%.<sup>13</sup> For those who eventually earn a credential, 32% leave within the first seven years. In other words, an estimated one-quarter of newly hired teachers in California replace other recently hired teachers who have left public school employment.<sup>14</sup> The inability to retain teachers who enter the profession further strains the state's education system.

Although the shortage of qualified teachers is statewide, it is geographically skewed against the most vulnerable, high poverty areas. The areas of greatest need are localized in or near northern Central Valley. These areas fall within counties with traditionally higher rates of poverty and lower rates of educational attainment than the rest of the state. Imperial and Riverside counties are similarly affected.<sup>15</sup> In addition, throughout the state, secondary schools that serve students in high poverty areas offer a disproportionate percentage of classes taught by out-of-field teachers than their counterparts in low poverty areas.<sup>16</sup>

The teacher shortage is concentrated in the areas of science, math and special education. While this too is a statewide issue, some student subgroups feel the impact more acutely

than others. The percentage of underprepared and out-of-field science, math and special education teachers is much higher in low-performing, high-ethnic-minority schools.<sup>17,18,19</sup>

As a result of attrition and retirement, an estimated 33,000 science and math teachers will be needed over the next ten years to fill vacant positions. If the rates of teacher preparation remain constant, however, California will not be able to meet this demand.<sup>20</sup> Without access to highly qualified teachers who are trained in the appropriate subject areas, student achievement will suffer.

The teacher shortage and unstable workforce also has an immediate effect on the use of taxpayer dollars. California spends about \$455 million each year to recruit, hire and prepare replacement teachers.<sup>21</sup> Potential savings could be significant with an infusion of well-trained teachers across California, with particular emphasis on schools with vulnerable student populations. In order for California's students to be competitive with other states and nations, the state must continue to support conditions that will ensure the highest-quality teacher workforce.

#### IMPROVING RECRUITMENT: WHAT THE RESEARCH SUGGESTS

Promising practices for creating a sustainable, localized workforce include grow-your-own strategies and career ladder programs. Effective grow-your-own strategies focus on recruitment within a school, district or program and often provide counseling, support services, financial assistance and other incentives. They also provide job placement assistance to encourage potential candidates to become staff or teachers in their home district. Career ladder programs

create a path of coherent coursework that leads to a degree and career. Many career ladder programs begin as early as high school, providing students a career education program that encourages them to consider classroom teaching as a career. Once in the program, students are offered both conventional and unconventional support structures, such as tutoring, financial aid and access to other social services, as needed, as they pursue a degree and teaching credential. Once they complete their teaching credential, students are encouraged to return to their home district and work in high-need schools.<sup>22, 23</sup>

### AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS SERVE AS AN EFFECTIVE PLATFORM FOR TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Research confirms what we intuitively understand about how grow-your-own strategies and career ladder programs can increase regional teacher supply. Both new and experienced teachers prefer to stay close to their hometown. For high poverty districts, in particular, the pool of qualified candidates is small and strategies to fill shortages by importing teachers from suburban or rural towns often prove difficult and unsuccessful.<sup>24</sup> In communities where teachers are in high demand, local partnerships between school districts and teacher preparation institutions have been found to be particularly effective because participating individuals are more likely to stay after they become teachers.<sup>25</sup> The data also confirms that areas with the greatest demand for teachers have

#### PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

##### CALIFORNIA PARAPROFESSIONAL TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM (PTTP)

The California Paraprofessional Teacher Training Program (PTTP) is an example of a successful career ladder approach. PTTP creates local career ladders that enable paraprofessionals like teaching assistants, library-media aides and instructional assistants to become certified K-12 classroom teachers. The program also addresses teacher vacancies in high-need areas that traditionally experience shortages: English Language Development and special education.<sup>27</sup> Over the last thirteen years, scholarships and other academic supports have enabled PTTP to retain 92% of its 1,708 program graduates as California public school employees.<sup>28</sup>

##### Local Findings:

- > The PTTP for the City and County of San Francisco is a partnership between San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), United Educators of San Francisco, City College of San Francisco and San Francisco State University. PTTP has placed over 163 program graduates in SFUSD, over 77% of whom are ethnic or language minorities, similar to the district's student population.<sup>29</sup>
- > Los Angeles Unified School District established its Paraeducator Career Ladder program in 1994. Since then, over 300 participants have been hired as K-12 teachers, and 86% of them remain with the district for at least five years. Additionally, 89% of program graduates are ethnic minorities and 60% are bilingual.<sup>30</sup>
- > Orange County Department of Education PTTP has been in existence for nearly ten years and has trained over 130 participants, who went on to become credentialed teachers.<sup>31</sup>

PTTP participants reflect success in recruiting minorities into the teaching field. Of 1,726 California paraprofessionals enrolled in 2007-08, 65% were ethnic minorities and 51% were bilingual.<sup>32</sup> PTTP participant demographics reflect the student body of the state.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, in an effort to meet employers' needs, PTTP sponsors devote attention and resources to recruit paraprofessionals who seek certification in science, math and special education.<sup>34</sup>





labor pools with the lowest levels of educational attainment. Given the localized nature of the teaching market, these communities need to increase the pool of college-educated workers from which to draw qualified teaching candidates.<sup>36</sup>

### THE MANY BENEFITS OF EXPANDING CAREER LADDER APPROACHES IN THE AFTERSCHOOL FIELD

An afterschool workforce that is linked to a career ladder benefits students, teachers entering the field and education systems. It also improves retention in the afterschool field, which is estimated to have an annual turnover of up to 40%.<sup>35</sup> A stable workforce contributes to high-quality afterschool programs, which have been shown to be beneficial and critical to student success.<sup>36</sup> Student participation in afterschool programs is associated with improved school performance, decreased dropout rates, increased self-confidence and positive social behaviors.<sup>37, 38</sup> Young people who regularly attend afterschool programs have higher rates of school attendance and are less tardy.

Afterschool programs serve as an effective platform for teacher recruitment and development, providing practical experience for prospective teachers before they enter a formal credential program. For example, a number of new teachers discover they are not well matched for teaching and subsequently leave the profession within the first few years. By having an experience similar to teaching in an afterschool program, for as much as 4,000 hours, prospective teachers can better assess and prepare for the reality of the profession, which in turn can improve retention. In traditional

credential programs, candidates with additional pre-service training report increased levels of self-confidence and are perceived as more competent by their supervisors than candidates with less training.<sup>39</sup> It is reasonable to assume that the afterschool workforce also benefits from additional practical experience. Employment in an afterschool program can provide early access to valuable classroom experience, which includes customizing lesson plans to meet diverse student needs, managing classrooms, and interacting with parents and fellow staff.

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## AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER IS ONE OF THE GREATEST INDICATORS OF A STUDENT'S PERFORMANCE—SECOND ONLY TO FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS.

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Afterschool programs linked to a career ladder offer distinct advantages to the K-12 system, because they recruit and prepare quality, engaged teachers. Career ladder programs also help create local, sustainable teacher pools to draw from and promote the retention of a well-trained, diverse workforce. Afterschool staff are familiar with their school site and their district's teaching philosophy, curricula, students and policies, so the goals and expectations of the school day and the afterschool program are better aligned.<sup>40</sup> As previously noted, most teachers prefer to work close to home, so understanding these preferences can impact recruitment and training strategies.<sup>41</sup>

Grow-your-own strategies and career ladder programs also support better linkages and collaborative efforts between K-12, afterschool employers, community colleges, university campuses and community agencies.<sup>42</sup> Such partnerships increase efficiency and help prospective teachers move through various education institutions, with the goal of ultimately placing them in high-need schools. By investing financially in the afterschool workforce and career ladder program infrastructure, the entire public education system receives dividends in student growth and achievement, improved teacher quality, and increased regional partnerships.

## MODELS AND EARLY FINDINGS

The following models are built on the established elements of effectively recruiting and preparing teachers to work in high-need schools. All of them take into account local workforce pools, attract ethnically diverse teachers and provide them relevant, practical experience through opportunities to work in an afterschool program.

### LINKING AFTERSCHOOL EMPLOYMENT TO CAREER PATHWAYS

In 2008, the Linking Afterschool Employment to Career Pathways project was created to reach out to low-income, under-prepared college-age adults and provide them employment and educational opportunities. This project, a grant initiative from the California Community College Chancellor's Office, is part of the system's Career Advancement Academy (CAA) state demonstration project. During a bridge semester, students take introductory courses, develop foundational skills and address work readiness. Courses are linked together to create a learning community for students, and all materials are contextualized to the career pathway. During the bridge semester and the following semesters, students are given opportunities to work in afterschool programs to earn college credit and receive internship experience, income or both. As students work in cohorts, they are able to sample and pursue possible future careers in early childhood education, teaching, youth development or other human services.

Community colleges that offer this opportunity include Hartnell College, Laney College, San Diego City College, San Jose City College, Reedley College, Modesto Junior College, and the Willow International Center and Madera Community College Centers. The colleges partner with employers, local workforce investment boards, social service agencies and community organizations for outreach, recruitment and support services. They also work closely with county Offices of Education and afterschool providers to develop and implement programs, which includes job training and placement.

In its first year of operation, 339 students were served by Linking Afterschool sites and a total of 560 students were enrolled in education pathways in the Career Advancement Academy initiative statewide. The majority of the students were from low-income families, historically underrepresented groups in higher education or both, with Latinos constituting the largest percentage of any group enrolled. While it is too early to have longitudinal data on their subsequent progress, early results on their completion and success in the bridge semester are promising.

The Career Ladders Project (CLP) provides strategic support and technical assistance to grantee projects and works to link each site in a community of learners within the overall CAA initiative. CLP is partnering with Public/Private Ventures (PPV) and California Partnership for Student Success (Cal-PASS) to evaluate the initiative and track student progress.

For more information, please visit:  
<http://www.careerladdersproject.org/afterschool.php>

### FRESNO TEACHING FELLOWS

This model from Fresno began as an effort to provide academic assistance and enrichment to a handful of teacher cohorts, known as Teaching Fellows. Since its inception in the mid 1990s, Fresno Teaching Fellows has attracted over 500 participants to work in approximately 80 schools in the Fresno area and in surrounding counties. Incoming and current college students who express interest in teaching are recruited and placed in afterschool work positions to enrich their teaching experience. They participate in ongoing professional development and receive a monthly paycheck. The fellows are also afforded a wide variety of enrichment, team-building and professional development opportunities, including two-week workshops with NASA, whitewater rafting trips, mud volleyball games and Saturday Academies. The fellowship is so popular that a nonprofit organization, the California Teaching Fellows Foundation, was created to promote university partnerships and increase the pool of highly qualified, trained staff in the afterschool field, as well as in the future teacher workforce. Fresno Teaching Fellows partners with local school districts and is funded by the After School Education and Safety (ASES) program and 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) program.<sup>43</sup>

For more information, please visit:  
<http://ctff.us>

### URBAN TEACHING FELLOWSHIP

Urban Teaching Fellowship (UTF) is an initiative by the South Bay Center for Community Development (SBCCD) to recruit, train and place low-income teens and adults into the afterschool workforce or as elementary or single subject teachers. The initiative is designed to create employment opportunities for Los Angeles residents in high-need, urban neighborhoods; address the constant need for qualified staff in afterschool programs; and solve the shortage of qualified, highly skilled teachers in local schools.

UTF supports students through skills remediation, tutoring and a cohort-based learning community model, as they take classes at a community college and then transfer to a local state university. The program also supports students through wraparound supportive services, including part-time job assistance, financial aid and scholarship assistance, free counseling, transportation assistance, job coaching, and other services, as needed. One unique aspect of UTF is that a family support specialist is provided to each cohort of students. The family support specialist attends all classes with the students, conducts group meetings and team-building sessions, and has monthly, one-on-one meetings with each student. This consistent and intensive level of support ensures high levels of student success in the program.

To encourage students to earn either an associate's degree or a bachelor's degree and teaching credential, SBCC, LA Harbor College and California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) created a four-and-a-half year accelerated plan. Since it was implemented, the initiative has yielded encouraging results:

- > 60 students started the program in 2008.
- > 100% experienced basic skill gains of at least three grade levels after the bridge program.
- > 95% completed afterschool worker training.
- > 60% worked in afterschool programs or as teaching assistants.
- > 31 students (52%) completed an associate's degree. Of that number, 30 students enrolled in a bachelor's and teaching credential program at CSU Dominguez Hills. All 30 were retained in their first semester.

A significant challenge UTF faced was deficiencies in basic skills of cohort members, as defined by the Employment Development Department. UTF's goal was to raise all cohort members to 10th grade reading and math levels by the end of the second semester and 12th grade levels when they complete their associate's degree. To date, the students in the initiative are almost at these goals: 86% are at 11th grade reading or better, and 77% are at 11th grade math or better—with three semesters remaining. When measured by gains in grade level, the average gains by members who were deemed deficient in basic skills was 4.52 grade levels in reading and 3.675 grade levels in math. Also notable are the highest individual gains at 6.5 grade levels in reading and 5.9 grade levels in math.

UTF is being replicated at several community colleges and CSUs in Los Angeles and San Diego counties and in the San Francisco Bay Area.

For more information, please visit:  
<http://www.sbayercenter.com/teacherpath.php>

## CONCLUSION

An effective teacher is one of the greatest indicators of a student's performance—second only to family characteristics.<sup>44</sup> Students in California do not always have access to highly trained and effective teachers, and areas with large populations of ethnic minorities and high rates of poverty have fewer of them. As a result, low achievement rates often plague those areas. In an effort to address and narrow the academic achievement gap, California has made significant investments in before and afterschool programs—the largest among the fifty states. Resources are targeted at schools and districts that serve vulnerable student populations.

Well-trained, highly motivated afterschool staff are instrumental to program success, just as quality teachers are vital to school and student success. Working in an afterschool program provides a natural apprenticeship towards becoming a classroom teacher, and many California communities

are harnessing this opportunity to train and support future teachers.<sup>45</sup>

Afterschool employment that is linked to a teacher career ladder provides numerous advantages. Employment in such programs is often part-time and seasonal, providing the ideal schedule for staff to concurrently enroll at a local community college or university. Partnerships are forged among school districts, the higher education system, workforce investment boards and community agencies, which in turn provide employment opportunities for teens, support them through college and could help reduce teacher shortages in high-need schools. Ultimately, career ladder graduates enter the job market with increased confidence and skills, add to the quality of local schools, and give students increased access to highly trained teachers, all of which contribute to California's economic success.

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