



**CALIFORNIA  
BUSINESS  
*for Education*  
EXCELLENCE**

**CLOSING ACHIEVEMENT GAPS  
AT ALL GRADE LEVELS:**

**THE NEXT PHASE IN IMPROVING  
CALIFORNIA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**2005**

## **Executive Summary:**

### **The Next Phase in Improving California Public Schools**

Over the past decade, California has taken some basic but important steps to improve its public schools. By establishing world class standards for learning, measuring progress to make sure goals are met, and beginning to hold schools accountable for results, California is creating real change in schools throughout the state. California's business community has been a leading voice in support of this common sense plan for school improvement; however, more work thoughtfully developed and supported over the long term is needed if students and California's public schools are to both succeed and improve on that success.

This work will take strong, well defined leadership from the Governor as well as local superintendents, principals, teachers, and parents. Increased focus on standards, assessments, accountability must be the foundation of building a world-class education system. Data must be used to drive better decisions about student learning, and more a robust reporting system needs to be in place to reward success, identify and rectify problems and establish clear consequences for school failure.

The following plan of suggested reforms seeks to build upon the success of the last ten years and create a public education system of high expectations and achievement for all students:

#### **Taking the Next Steps on Standards-Based Accountability**

1. Hold schools accountable to ensure that students *at all levels* are attaining **grade-level proficiency** in reading, writing and mathematics as measured by the California Standards Test – not just achieving “growth” meeting standards
2. Give parents, teachers, and school administrators the tools to effectively utilize existing student performance data to identify achievement gaps.
3. Use best practices learned from high performing schools to aggressively intervene early to reduce achievement gaps in chronically low performing schools.
4. Improve accountability by establishing one standardized measure for high school dropouts.
5. Develop standardized end-of-course examinations in core high school subject areas.

#### **Improve Teacher & Principal Quality and Preparation**

6. Implement a performance-based merit pay system to reward outstanding teachers and schools.
7. Define “teacher quality” as the ability to improve and maintain student academic achievement and use it as the foundation to improve and drive teacher and principal preparation.

8. Give principals freedom and flexibility to manage their schools and work force to support the goal of consistently improving student achievement.

### **Improve State Governance Structure**

9. Create a governance structure that is clear and understandable and holds the Governor ultimately accountable for success or failure in our public schools.

### **Create Fiscal Transparency and Relate Costs with Achievement**

10. Improve and increase the public disclosure of the costs of education and hold schools accountable for their use of taxpayer dollars in terms of efficiency and raising and maintaining student achievement.

### **Empower Parents**

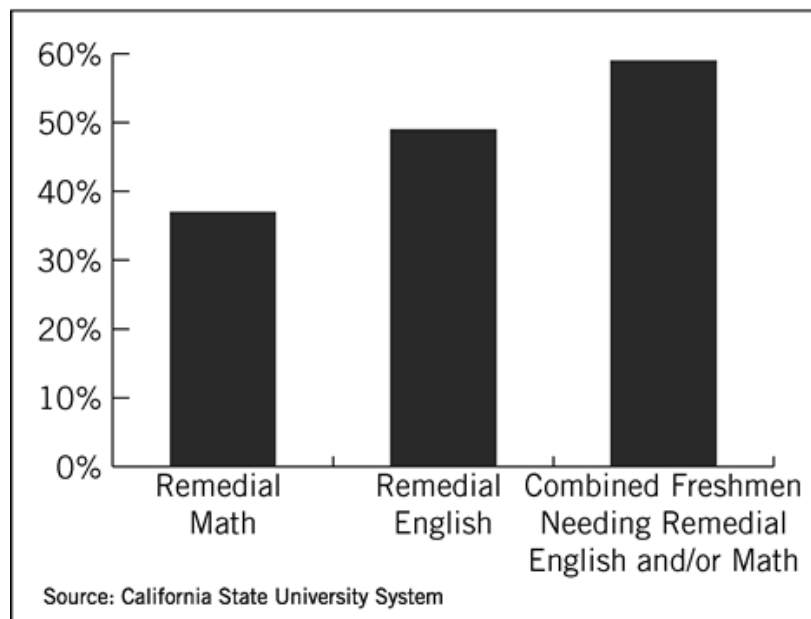
11. Give parents clear options when schools fail, do not improve, or are improving too slowly. This would include supplemental educational services, charter schools and promotion of student and parental choice.

## Preface

California's business leaders know that a successful public education system is not only in the best interest of students, parents and teachers, but also important to a strong and vibrant economy. We know our elected officials and policy makers are dedicated to California's public schools and committed to improving student achievement. While the recommendations and reforms outlined in this document are bold, state policy and decision makers can draw upon the willingness of California's business leaders to take responsibility for the success of our public schools and readiness to stand with the private and public sector and community leaders in their efforts to bring excellence back to California's public education system. The need has never been greater.

This document provides a comprehensive set of public education reforms designed to take the necessary next steps to close achievement gaps in our public schools. Independently and combined, these recommendations will help raise expectations and achievement, encourage innovation and choice, and create a more robust accountability system that rewards good schools and identifies those schools that are failing.

Many other industrialized nations are far outperforming the United States and California academically in preparing young people to compete in today's global economy. Current research estimates that addressing the lack of basic skills among students and employees cost billions of dollars to institutions of higher education and businesses each year.<sup>1</sup> In California alone the California State University (CSU) system provides remedial training in reading, writing, or mathematics to two-thirds of its incoming freshmen at an estimated cost of \$30 million/year.



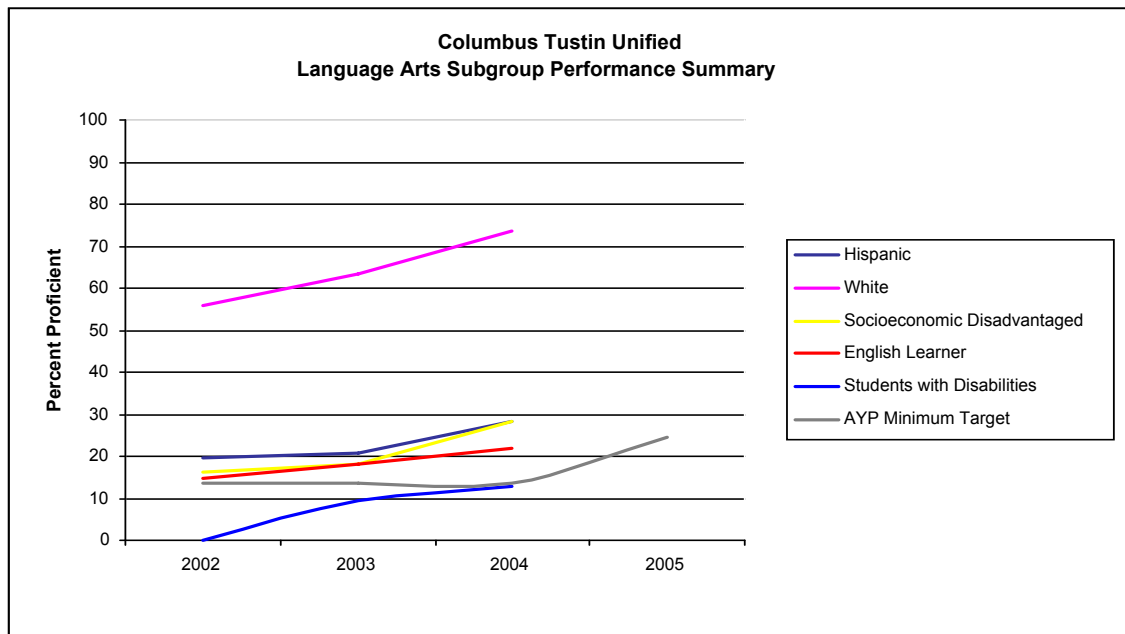
*Percentage of California first-time CSU Freshmen requiring remedial courses in English and/or math (2002)*

<sup>1</sup> Jay P. Greene, *The Cost of Remedial Education: How Much Michigan Pays When Students Fail to Learn Basic Skills* (Midland, MI: Mackinac Center For Public Policy, 2003)

The business community tells a similar story with 34 percent of job applicants tested by major U.S. firms in 2001 lacking sufficient reading and math skills to do the jobs sought. Perhaps even more distressing is that this trend of low performance by our schools reaches back more than two decades, during which time taxpayers have spent \$125 billion nationally on elementary and secondary education.

Preparing students for college and the workforce requires that we close the achievement gaps, particularly among ethnic minorities, socioeconomically disadvantaged and English language learners, who comprise nearly two thirds of California’s current K-12 student population and who represent our future workforce. Closing achievement gaps among these student populations demands that all teachers have the skills and knowledge needed to help all students meet high academic standards.

### Example of Achievement Gaps



***The above chart illustrates the achievement gaps in reading from Columbus Tustin Elementary School in the Tustin Unified School District. Note that the gap between white and Hispanic students is 53 percent and the gap between poor students and white students is 42 percent.***

According to Eric Hanushek of Stanford University’s Hoover Institution, “Raising student achievement is directly related to individual productivity and earnings and to national economic growth.”<sup>2</sup> In an analysis conducted for *The Teaching Commission*, Hanushek estimates that moderately strong improvements in student achievement over a twenty-year period could lead to significant increases in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). By 2035, the growth dividend from quality improvements could more than pay for all K-12 spending. In California terms, this gain

<sup>2</sup> Eric A. Hanushek, “The Importance of School Quality,” in *Our Schools and Our Future . . . Are We Still at Risk?* (California: Hoover Institution Press Publication, 2003), 160

in GDP could be used to better compensate the teachers who are successfully closing achievement gaps and improving student achievement, reduce class sizes and modernize school facilities

## **Challenges Faced**

More than a decade ago, under the leadership of Governor Pete Wilson and carried forward by Governor Gray Davis, California began a set of groundbreaking reforms that made standards-based accountability the centerpiece of its public education system. Since then California has put in place an accountability system based upon content standards and achievement tests. Overlaid on top of these measures, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002 now requires breaking down achievement data by race, poverty and English language learners; publishing and making accessible results; and creating options for parents with children in chronically low performing schools. These reforms clearly are beginning to have an impact.

California should be proud of the progress made, but must now meet a new set of challenges to continue its success and serve as an exemplar for educating all children at the highest levels. The state must continue to create its legacy of leadership in public education reform.

California must redouble its efforts to meet some of the most pressing educational challenges we face today including:

- Too many students are trapped in poorly performing schools and targeted interventions must be focused on schools that are chronically failing.
- Students' academic accomplishments in the early grades are not being sustained in later grades, with more than half of California students lacking the skills needed to succeed in college or the workforce.
- Students leaving middle school are not prepared to succeed with high school curriculum, placing an unrealistic burden on secondary teachers and setting students up for failure in college and the workforce.
- Too much focus has been placed on experimentation and faddish trends as opposed to the systematic replication of scientifically proven strategies and best practices learned from schools which have sustained high performance and improvement, particularly in high poverty, ethnic minority environments.
- Too few of our students, particularly among our minority populations, are graduating from high school and college. California is a diverse state with unique demographic challenges and we must close the gap with our competitor states and nations in successful workforce preparation, college participation and graduation.

## Challenges Faced, continued

- Taxpayers are demanding increased disclosure and transparency in the expenditure of public funds. Yet the California public school system, with its confused governance structure, lacks any clear and consistent structure for financial accountability that tells the public how their money is being spent and for what gain. Establishing fiscal accountability is essential to maintaining public confidence in education.
- Parents lack clear and timely options when schools fail, do not improve, or improve too slowly.

Simply increasing financial support for public education is not enough to meet this new set of challenges. The reforms proposed are essential to further improve the organization, management and overall quality of the public school system. By creating a more transparent, accountable and innovative system of public education, California can remain at the forefront of education reform and ensure our schools are not just adequately funded but focused on results. *The dividend for accomplishing this goal would more than pay for the cost of this investment.*

## ***CLOSING ACHIEVEMENT GAPS AT ALL GRADE LEVELS SUGGESTED REFORMS***

*The following recommendations represent a comprehensive set of public education reforms designed to raise expectations and academic achievement, encourage innovation and choice, and create a more robust accountability system that rewards good schools and challenges and demands change from staff of failing schools.*

### **1. Hold schools accountable to ensure that students at all levels are attaining grade-level proficiency in reading, writing and mathematics as measured by the California Standards Test – not just achieving “growth” in meeting standards.**

The current system focuses on growth—but the future of children and our society depends on grade level proficiency. California has developed world-class content standards, adopted textbooks and aligned curriculum, and tests to those standards. These efforts are having the desired impact particularly in elementary school, but much more needs to be done to ensure these positive results are sustained and extended into middle and high schools particularly among ethnic minorities. The state needs to enhance the important reforms already in place by building a more comprehensive and robust accountability system.

The California system of accountability should align with NCLB and focus on being at grade level—at a minimum. Moreover, we must ensure that proficiency means something. For example, proficiency in one grade should predict proficiency in later grades and beyond. This would allow us to know when students are reading well enough to progress from one grade to the next and from high school to college or the workforce. This will move California to the next level of student achievement and close achievement gaps.

California should require that all state academic performance reporting is based on “grade level” proficiency as a minimum benchmark. Current California specific reporting using only the Academic Performance Index (API) is misleading and confusing because it focuses on academic growth with no reporting of whether or not a student is at grade level, thus being prepared to succeed in the next grade. ***The state API growth target is calculated in such a way that in many cases it will take students an unacceptable 51 years to reach proficiency at the rate of growth acceptable under the California API system.*** Most alarmingly, this “growth” may be at the expense of ethnic subgroups whose achievement gaps may be actually increasing over time.

For example, in March the California Department of Education announced that Brainard Avenue Elementary School in Los Angeles Unified School District was at the state’s average/mean API base of 718. Based on the calculation of the state’s definition of tremendous annual growth, should this school meet these targets (as defined by the CDE) it would reach the state benchmark of API 800 in the year 2056.

California should require a reporting system that provides parents and taxpayers a clear understanding of the grade level preparedness of every student in every subject in every year.



## **Recommendation:**

The state should identify “grade level performance” as meeting “proficiency” on the California Standards Test and all official reporting of student testing should be based on this grade level proficiency.

## **2. Give parents, teachers, and school administrators the tools to effectively utilize existing student performance data to identify achievement gaps.**

Meeting the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as defined by the state for the federal No Child Left Behind law has propelled California’s school improvement efforts forward by exposing large ethnic minority achievement gaps, identifying schools that have made significant progress in raising student achievement, and recognizing schools with high percentages of low-income and minority children that are meeting state proficiency benchmarks.

However, California has failed in developing a functional student information and records management system. What’s needed now is an easy-to-understand, comprehensive and accurate set of reports showing the strengths, weaknesses, long-term progress, and academic potential of each individual public school and district.

Currently teachers, schools and, most importantly parents receive achievement and accountability information after the next school year has begun, prohibiting them from making any timely decisions. Timely reporting of this information would ensure that parents are better able to make the decision whether to transfer their child to another school or provide additional instruction through tutors and/or investigate other school options.

## **Recommendations:**

- a. Report all accountability data well before the beginning of the traditional school year so that school leaders can make better decisions and continuously adjust instruction for the coming school year.
- b. Every parent should receive a school level “report card” within 60 days after the test based on the data described above, listing that school’s performance on the CA Standards Test, each grade’s performance on the CA Standards Test, and its ethnic and socioeconomic breakdown and how those groups performed. These “report cards” would also be distributed to school faculty and administration to help them evaluate their curriculum and modify it if necessary.
- c. School wide results from the CA Standards test should be readily available and easily searchable by school, by grade and by classroom via the Internet within 60 days of taking the test. Data could be used in websites that track school and grade performance such as Just for the Kids-California [www.jftk-ca.org](http://www.jftk-ca.org) or other similar websites.

**3. Use best practices learned from high performing schools to aggressively intervene early to reduce achievement gaps in chronically low performing schools.**

A website like Just for the Kids—California (or a similar website), with its readily available and searchable data provided free to schools and the public, could serve as an important catalyst for improvement by connecting lower performing schools to higher performing schools that look just like them—with the same demographics—in an effort to benchmark and transfer best educational practices that are working. By highlighting schools that are overcoming common challenges and barriers in raising achievement, California can get these successful strategies into the hands of teachers and principals who would benefit. This process of school improvement through replication of best practices and benchmarking should serve as one of the most important benefits of our state’s public school accountability system.

**Recommendations:**

- a. Use the data/results from the CA Standards Test and the Just for the Kids—California (or a similar) website, to identify high performing and high poverty schools that have sustained the improvement over several years.
- b. Teacher preparation programs should place student teachers in these high performing, high poverty schools with teachers who have a proven track record in raising student academic achievement.
- c. Establish “teaching hospitals” in every county of the state. Colleges and universities, County Offices of Education and other pre-service preparation agencies and technical assistance providers should establish “teaching hospitals” within the consistently high performing schools in every county of the state where best practices can be observed and replicated. This is also where students in teacher preparation programs should be placed for their student teaching. These schools should also be awarded with incentives just as in the teaching hospitals. The state should continue the development and administration of performance-based contracts to public or private entities that have a proven track record of improving student achievement, and who have developed a way to work with these consistently high performing schools in the context of turning them into “teaching hospitals.”

**4. Improve accountability by establishing one standardized measure for high school dropouts.**

Currently, there is no uniformity to how high schools measure and report drop out rates and large numbers of students are “lost” in the system. Taxpayers pay a significant price for this lack of accountability and intervention at the high school level. The state should require that an immediate interim formula for determining accurate drop out statistics is necessary as the state develops a unique student identifier. High school completion rates should become more prominent in high school campus performance evaluations.

**Recommendation:**

A single standardized measurement system for determining drop out rates should be implemented to eliminate confusion over the calculation, reporting and meaning of current drop out reports.

**5. Develop standardized end-of-course examinations in core high school subject areas.**

This will reduce grade inflation by seeking consistency and quality in every classroom for those subjects that are most relevant to students' success after high school. Course content and quality vary widely from one school to another. Sadly, in many cases, students in schools with high concentrations of students from low-income families earn A's for work that would get much lower grades in schools that serve more affluent students.

**Recommendation:**

Standardized, end-of-course assessments will guide educators to provide solid content for students in all schools and help ensure all high school graduates are college and workforce-ready. These assessments will also begin to equalize access to rigorous content among schools so that high quality curriculum is available to all students in all schools. State and federal accountability testing should also integrate and not override these end-of-course assessments.

**6. Implement a performance-based merit pay system to reward outstanding teachers and schools.**

Today, very little if anything is done to reward teachers and schools whose students show exceptional improvement or to provoke fundamental change in schools with consistently poor student performance. Rewarding high achievement and providing consequences for poor performance will not only drive change among the highest and lowest performing schools, but it will also motivate average schools to reach higher for incentives or fight harder to avoid backsliding. This is opposite of what is done today as chronically low performing schools are often wrongly rewarded with additional improvement money—as they remain chronically low performing.

Currently, it is very difficult to recruit and retain a force of highly qualified teachers in high poverty inner city communities. Raising academic performance and reducing achievement gaps, especially in high poverty environments, requires the expertise of highly qualified teachers. The compensation for these educators should be restructured to provide for increased pay for campus and district personnel who provide a measurable contribution to the instructional process as evidenced by student achievement.

## **Recommendations:**

### **Performance based system for rewarding teachers:**

The business community and Governor Schwarzenegger have endorsed measures that would move to a better system that rewards teachers by “merit” based on improved student performance. CBEE recommends the following criteria to establish rewards and to determine merit:

- a. The existing teacher salary scale should be disconnected from academic credentials and seniority and restructured to represent levels of responsibility and demonstrated skill in improving student academic achievement.
- b. The value of good teacher mentoring should be recognized as an important part of campus compensation and increased salary for effective mentors -- based upon their ability and of those they are mentoring to improve student academic achievement -- should be a standard part of the pay system.

### **Performance based system for top and bottom-performing schools:**

- c. The state should provide a substantial monetary award to those top 20 percent of schools demonstrating value-added results. Value-added results would be defined by the school demonstrating results directly associated with the school’s influence on improved achievement. This would be measured by percentage of students at grade level proficiency in the core subject areas. The size of the reward should depend on the number of at-risk students who are significantly benefiting. Growth in student achievement should be measured largely by the success of schools and teachers in closing performance gaps using the state test but should also consider improvement on other measures, including substantially increased graduation rates, and increased college readiness as measured by the California State University Early Assessment Program.
- d. Subsequently, the state should provide aggressive sanctions and interventions against the bottom 15 percent of schools that have consistently failed to raise student achievement.

## **7. Define “Teacher Quality” as the ability to improve and maintain student academic achievement and use it as the foundation to improve and drive teacher and principal preparation.**

The National Council on Teacher Quality gave California a failing grade for its teacher quality standards. The state must do a better job to recognize quality teaching and teaching practices and highlight those that are successful. Recently, a nationally prominent Foundation bestowed the honor of “Teacher of the Year” to a California teacher who was awarded a large cash prize and widely touted in the media as using “innovative” methods that other teachers should replicate. However, a grade level analysis of the academic performance for this teacher’s students showed a tremendous **decrease** in student achievement in both reading and mathematics over a three-

year period. Unfortunately, the academic performance of this teacher's students was not used as a criterion to reward high quality teaching.

## **Recommendations:**

a. The preparation of teachers should become more focused on successfully reaching grade level proficiency on the state academic content standards as measured by the California Standards Test. Certification should include completion of a rigorous standardized examination that establishes strong subject matter knowledge and teaching competence combined with a two-year apprenticeship with mentoring and value-added assessment based on improving student academic achievement. Local administrators should be free to put in place additional selection and training criteria for all candidates for employment based on their local student population needs.

b. The state should develop a unique teacher identifier as a means of determining the effectiveness of college, university and other alternative teacher preparation programs. This system will match the background, training, education level, skills, knowledge and experience level of the teacher with the improvement data from their students to better inform policy makers about the variables actually impacting student academic achievement. This would become a powerful improvement mechanism to adjust teacher education pre-service and in-service programs.

## **8. Give principals the freedom and flexibility to manage their schools and workforce to support the goal of consistently improving and maintaining student achievement.**

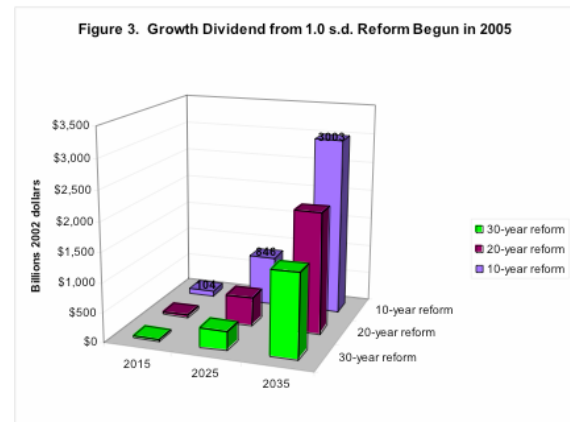
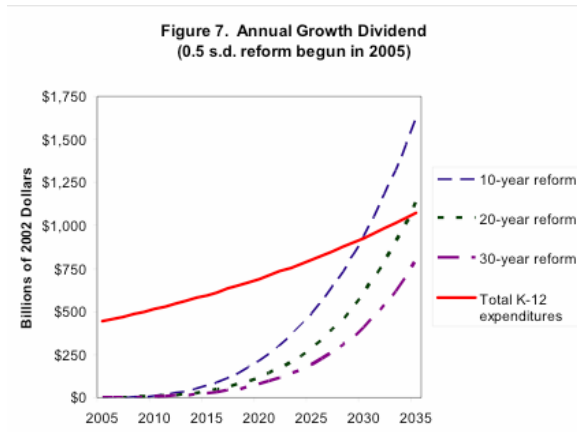
In California, certain restrictions exist that hamper local decision-making on critical issues such as teacher assignments and making adjustments of those assignments when necessary. California should remove any state-imposed barriers that impede getting quality teachers into the classroom thus hampering a principal's ability to run a successful school.

In the study conducted by Hanushek,<sup>3</sup> the most effective teachers were able to boost their pupils' performance by a full grade level more than students taught by their least successful colleagues. **In a different study by Rivkin, Hanushek and Kain, replacing an average teacher with a good one could erase the gap in performance between low income and high-income students within 5 years.**<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Eric A. Hanushek, *Some Simple Analytics of School Quality* (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2004)

<sup>4</sup> Steven G. Rivkin, Eric A. Hanushek, and John F. Kain, *Teachers, Schools, and Academic Achievement*, *Econometrics*, March 2005.



## Recommendations:

a. School principals need to be able to place the right teacher in the right classroom at the right time.

School districts should be responsible for the selection of competent leaders to plan and deliver the instructional services that best serve their student population. This means they require the authority to manage and run their schools. Campus administrators have similar responsibility to select, manage and support competent teachers and support personnel. Discharging these responsibilities requires adequate authority to set the means to select, employ, mentor, evaluate, compensate and retain the required personnel.

b. Hold principals accountable.

The role of a school principal is to help the teacher raise student academic achievement and, therefore, should be held accountable for school wide academic results. Administrator certification standards should incorporate relevant experience in raising achievement in addition to the academic course work and the required two years of teaching. Professional development for administrators should draw on the work of high performing schools. School districts should have the responsibility of terminating ineffective educators without going beyond existing legal requirements applicable to other public employees. The procedures for “due process” must be simplified and streamlined because it often costs a school district a prohibitive amount to terminate ineffective staff.

**9. Create a governance structure that is clear and understandable and holds the Governor ultimately accountable for success or failure in our public schools.**

The Governor is ultimately accountable for the state's role in education and our governance structure should reflect that. Currently, there is confusion and disagreement regarding the governor's role and defining who is in charge of the public schools in California. This confusion leads to a lack of accountability and diffused responsibility among elected and appointed public officials in raising student achievement in this state. *If we are to be serious about our system of accountability it must start at the top.* Only a statutory change, as opposed to a constitutional revision, is necessary to define the role of the elected Superintendent of Public Instruction as that of an Inspector General of Public Education and shift responsibility of running the Department of Education to the Governor's appointed Secretary of Education who is accountable the governor.

**Recommendations:**

These recommendations have been reinforced throughout time including the noteworthy work of the California Constitution Revision Commission.

- a. Make the Governor ultimately accountable for the success and failure of our public schools. The Governor and his appointed Secretary of Education should be in charge of managing the California Department of Education.
- b. The State Board of Education should continue to serve as a policy advisory body. The State Board of Education should continue to be appointed by the Governor but should serve the Secretary of Education in an advisory role with critical education policy decisions. The State Board of Education should also continue to serve as a body to receive direct public input.
- c. Define the responsibilities of the elected Superintendent of Public Instruction to that of Inspector General. The Superintendent would serve as an accountability watchdog, ensuring the accurate reporting of student achievement according to state and federal laws and reporting requirements.

**10. Improve and increase the public disclosure of the costs of education and hold schools accountable for their use of taxpayer dollars in terms of efficiency and raising and maintaining student achievement.**

An important ingredient in improving student performance in California has to be the robust public reporting of school level assessment results. There is similar interest, but less information available about the financial performance of public schools. It is not easy to find the actual costs of education on any specific campus. With current reporting, it is impossible to determine if public funds are equitably distributed or effectively used within a district. **More transparency in financial performance will bring about more effective use of funds just as more transparency in academic results has brought about more effective instruction.** Good management practice suggests that schools should be responsible for their costs.

## Recommendations:

a. Report the cost of education by County Office of Education, district and school.

- The state should allocate resources for the development of a school level cost of education reporting system. The basis for the reports should be the actual expenditures for all personnel working at the school and the additional operations and maintenance expenses incurred on the campus.
- Allocations to schools for shared services and district support should be identified and reported separately.
- Support services, administrative assistance and overall management activities provided at the district level that cannot be allocated should be reported separately and identified by administrative, instructional or support purpose.
- Cost of education reports should be disseminated annually and easily available to the public on-line.

b. Make the state Department of Education, County Offices of Education and district expenditures more transparent and understandable to the public.

- District, county and statewide expenditures are not reported in an easily understandable form. Costs of instructional programs and student services are difficult to identify. Consequently, it is difficult to evaluate the cost effectiveness or impact of basic programs and services. With accurate expenditure information, districts could make a more compelling case for additional funds.
- All expenditures of state, county office, district and schools, should be cost accounted and reported separately by educational purpose. Administrative costs should be clearly identified and reported for the state, county office, district and school. Adequate resources should be appropriated for periodic auditing of the accuracy of cost of education reports.

c. Begin financial accountability at the school.

- Within good educational practices, district policies and proper budgetary approvals, campus administrators should determine and be accountable for the cost of staffing of and instructional delivery programs for their building.
- The state should develop standard school accounting procedures, a financial statement format and a report for annual dissemination to parents and the general public on-line. True accountability for academic results includes both student academic performance and the effective use of resources. **Arguments for increased funding begin with an evaluation showing that existing funds are effectively used.**



**11. Give parents clear and timely options when schools fail, do not improve, or improve too slowly. This would include supplemental educational services, charter schools and promotion of student and parental choice.**

Under NCLB, parents in Title I schools are entitled to supplemental educational services designed to increase the academic achievement of students in those schools that have not met state targets for improving student achievement for three or more years. These services may include tutoring and after-school services. They may be offered through public or private sector providers that are approved by the state.

Children are eligible for school choice when the Title I school they attended has not made adequate yearly progress in improving student achievement--as defined by the state--for two consecutive years or longer and is therefore identified as in need of improvement, corrective action or restructuring.

**Recommendations:**

Any child attending such a school must be offered the option of transferring to a public school in the district--including a public charter school--not identified for school improvement.

- Currently however, parents are notified of the status of a low performing Title I schools too late in the year to make timely decisions and tragically, too many students are unfairly trapped in poorly performing schools. The state must do a far better job by aggressively informing parents and by promoting participation of a wide range of supplemental educational services providers to ensure that parents have access to the help they need for their child.

## **Conclusion: Closing Achievement Gaps In California's Public Schools**

This set of policy recommendations presents a cohesive, integrated approach to public school improvement by:

- Continuing to strengthen the accountability system by raising academic content standards and expectations, and broadening and strengthening the curriculum toward bringing all students to grade level for college and job readiness;
- Improving data collection and assessment to focus on grade level proficiency and to identify, learn from successful and improving schools and to widely disseminate their best practices;
- Setting forth specific and strong steps for state intervention to improve student academic achievement in schools that are failing or are improving too slowly;
- Defining teacher quality in terms of ability to improve and maintain student academic achievement;
- Compensating skill, responsibility and performance.
- Giving principals the ability to manage schools effectively and allowing the development and retention of an effective teacher corps by eliminating major impediments to proper instruction for students in the lowest performing populations;
- Defining a governance structure at the state level that makes sense and ultimately holds the Governor accountable for student achievement;
- Bringing transparency to a public education financial reporting system that is complex and so uniquely coded that it prevents any meaningful oversight of districts or schools and leads to a poor allocation of resources and serious levels of waste and abuse; and
- Empowering parents with options and choices when schools are not improving.

Taken together, these proposals build on the successes of the last decade, enhance improvements that have already been made and create a vision for the future. By enacting these measures, California can ensure existing resources are used more effectively and help bring greater educational opportunity and excellence to all students.

**Only bold new reforms and a significant improvement in existing policies will produce the great public education system California deserves.**