







Reaching Higher

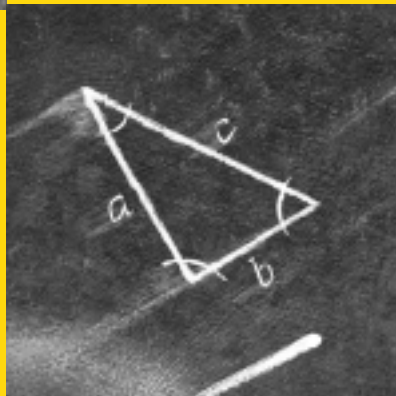
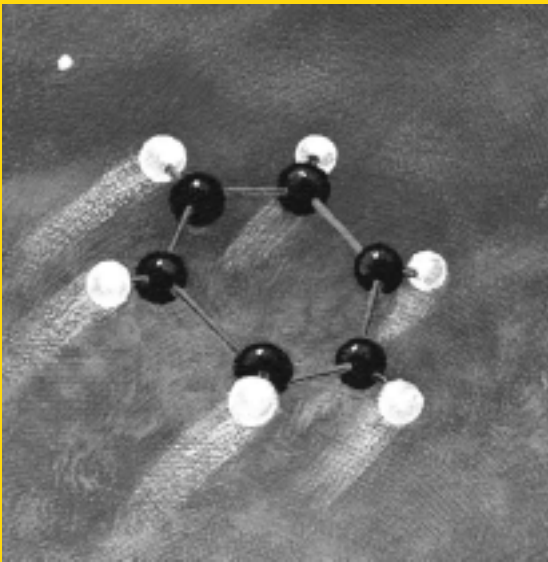
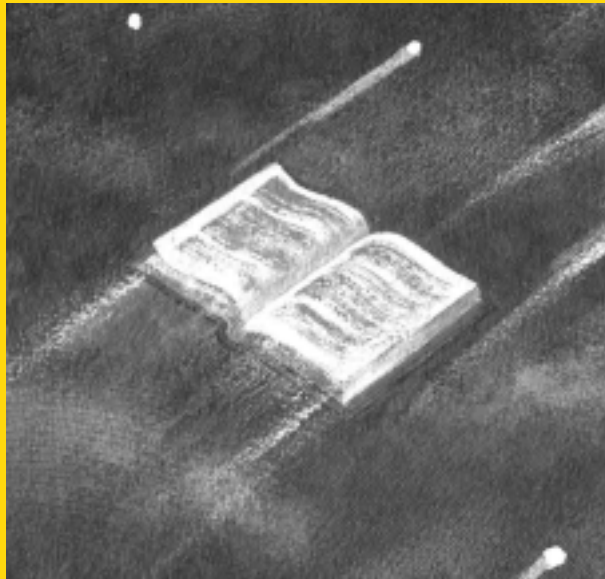
Restoring Excellence to
California Public Education

California Business for
Education Excellence

1215 K Street, Suite 1510

Sacramento, CA 95814

(916) 443-6411





Executive Summary

Statewide education improvement doesn't happen overnight, and accountability is not a one-year plan of action.

Schools in California must change — and they are. To make sure students are prepared for the high-tech, competitive world that awaits them, California schools are raising expectations for student performance and recommitting themselves to educational excellence.

California Business for Excellence in Education is a coalition of major employers and business organizations that is working to support these improvements. It is good business — and good citizenship — to invest in the quality of public schools.

Our goal is improved student achievement. Four interrelated strategies have improved schools across the country. These strategies are the focus of our efforts:

- Reinforce California's clear and rigorous standards for student learning — and help schools build capacity so students are meeting these standards.
- Improve California's system of measuring school performance and student achievement.
- Make students and schools accountable for results.
- Increase competition and flexibility within public schools.

California has adopted standards reputed to be the best in the nation. It has a plan for a testing program fully aligned to standards. It has taken unparalleled steps to reduce class size and improve its teaching force. And it has made massive investments in the K-12 school budgets.

We must stay on course. Statewide education improvements do not happen overnight, and accountability cannot be secured in just a one-year plan of action.

The most important policy goals in the next few years will involve ensuring consistency, alignment, and stability across the state's policy framework and better communication with parents and educators about the new expectations for student learning.

OUR PRIORITIES DURING THE 2001-2002 LEGISLATIVE SESSION:

- Ensure that parents and local educators are informed about the standards and the programs that have been designed to reinforce them.
- Continue improving the quality of California teachers.
- Address the growing need for leadership of schools and school districts.
- Stay the course on developing a system of testing and accountability to fully align the Standardized Testing and Reporting Program to standards by 2003.
- Hold districts accountable for their role as service providers to schools to ensure that low performing schools receive support, resources and — when necessary — intervention.
- Provide technology and training to support a data-driven assessment system.



An Agenda for Educational Excellence

To ensure students are well prepared for the rapidly changing, high-tech world that awaits them, California schools are recommitting themselves to academic excellence. The state has raised expectations and educators are working to improve student achievement. We believe these changes represent an important turning point for California, but more work — thoughtfully developed and supported over the long term — is needed if educators are to succeed.

HIGHER EXPECTATIONS, BETTER RESULTS

The foundation of California's school improvement efforts is a new set of academic standards that spell out exactly the skills and knowledge students ought to be learning — the skills and knowledge students need if they are to be successful in the workforce and in society.

Standards make clear to teachers, students, and parents exactly what students should be learning. They provide clear criteria against which progress can be measured and weaknesses identified and addressed. Standards drive important decisions about the instructional materials and other resources necessary to support learning. Most of all, standards help school communities focus on fundamental issues of teacher and teaching quality — what will it take to ensure students are learning what they need?

California's learning standards reflect the competitive economy and global society in which we now live. The world is changing in sweeping ways, and schools must adapt to reflect these changes. In earlier generations, well-paid assembly-line workers didn't need advance mathematics or problem-solving skills. But those jobs are a thing of the past, and so are assembly-line schools — where some students learn and many more do not. Technological innovation, high-speed communication, and creative problem solving characterize today's society. Schools must prepare students for this new economy.

California's new standards are among the most aggressive in the nation — and around the world — according to a broad spectrum of education experts ranging from the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation to the American Federation of Teachers. That's appropriate for a state that has become a world leader in many of the industries that define the new global economy such as high technology, entertainment, and research.

As employers and community leaders, California Business for Education Excellence endorses the effort to raise standards in California's public schools. We believe it is the first step in a concerted, long-term effort to boost student achievement in California.

California Business for Education Excellence was created by major employers and business leaders who recognize that a quality public education system is the cornerstone of a civil society and a dynamic economy. It is good business — and good citizenship — to care about the quality of public schools.

Business leaders know the vitality of our economy depends on finding workers with basic skills who can think critically and find creative approaches to solving problems. Too often, California employers are forced to look outside the state — sometimes outside the country — for employees with these skills.

In a world where technology reaches into every sector of the economy, businesses have retooled the way they do business. Schools must do the same.

Our goal is to improve student performance in California. We have seen in our own organizations and in schools across the country how four interrelated strategies can define the goals and the means that lead to high performance.

- 1 Reinforce California's clear and rigorous standards for student learning and help schools build capacity so students are meeting these standards by:
 - Promoting the standards and advocating for their adoption by local districts.
 - Integrating standards into curriculum, instructional materials, and assessments.
 - Helping educators become adequately trained to help students meet the standards.
- 2 Improve California's system of measuring school performance and student achievement by:
 - Ensuring a clear, consistent, and fair student assessment system aligned to the standards.
 - Improving the use of data and measurement systems in the management of schools.
- 3 Make students and schools accountable for results by:
 - Establishing clear lines of authority commensurate with responsibility.
 - Creating adequate incentives and consequences that are consistent with goals for improvement.
- 4 Increase competition and flexibility within public schools by:
 - Expanding the number of charter schools and other programs that support innovation.
 - Increasing the availability of comparable information about school quality.
 - Reducing bureaucracy and promoting local innovation and creativity.

Technological

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A great deal has been accomplished in the past few years and California leaders must continue moving aggressively to make necessary changes that support improved teaching and learning in schools. At the same time, policymakers must temper these actions with a long-term view and a clear sense of purpose. If we expect fundamental change — so students begin learning at world-class levels — we cannot change the targets from year to year.

As business leaders who have shepherded our organizations through change, we have learned that improved performance and accountability are not achieved in a one-year plan. We learned that massive institutional change requires time, constant communication, and unwavering focus. Most important, we learned that organizations — schools included — need stability in expectations and resources if they are to accomplish the expectations set for them.

Developing new standards means California is committed to improving the performance of every school. For policy makers, this creates the need for a careful balance between urgency and reasonableness. State and local policy makers must resist the temptation to tinker with existing policies or to begin dictating new procedures. They must instead remain focused on providing support and ensuring accountability for the standards.

Further, local decision-makers now need increased flexibility. The State defines what students should know and be able to do, it ensures that resources are adequate to meet those goals, and it holds local schools and school districts accountable for those outcomes. The responsibility for improvement, however, lies at the local level. The “how to” decisions are best made by those accountable for the results.

In short, asking schools to change requires changes throughout the system. The focus must be on results — not on compliance with procedural regulations.

A PLAN FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The document that follows describes our long-range view of the important ingredients needed to achieve high standards and accountability. It recognizes what has already been done, and suggests what the next steps should be, highlighting our priorities for immediate action in 2001.

Our plan is guided by a single goal: improving student performance. It is organized around the core strategies — standards, capacity, measurement, accountability, competition and flexibility — that we think are essential for California to make real progress.

The plan benefitted from the insights of local and state leaders and experts around the country who worked with us. By circulating a discussion draft of this document among educators and policy makers, California Business for Education Excellence sought responses to refine and challenge our thinking.

Many of the activities we propose will take years to implement. Not all of them can or should be done by the state. Locally elected school boards and school district leaders also have a role to play. Similarly, higher education leaders should align with these changes in the K-12 education system and our plan identifies the steps we think these players must also take.

Massive institutional
change requires
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Priorities: 2001 – 2002

Long-range plans require interim benchmarks. In the next year, these steps are critical to improving student achievement.

ENSURE THAT PARENTS AND LOCAL EDUCATORS ARE INFORMED ABOUT THE STANDARDS AND THE PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO REINFORCE THEM.

- Communicate with schools and with parents the details of the state's new system of standards, assessment and accountability — help educators and parents learn more about these changes, why changes are needed in this new economy, and how to make these new programs successful.

CONTINUE IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF CALIFORNIA TEACHING FORCE.

- Increase professional development opportunities that are aligned to standards.
- Increase performance-based incentives.
- Provide teachers with the professional resources (especially technology), flexibility, and training commensurate with increased responsibility for improved student performance.

ADDRESS A GROWING CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP IN SCHOOLS AND WITHIN DISTRICTS.

- Provide improved support, training and incentives for key school leadership roles (including principals, superintendents and school board members).
- Give school and district leaders flexibility, and training commensurate with increased responsibility for improved student performance.



Schools need a
consistent measure
of performance
toward which
to manage.

STAY THE COURSE ON DEVELOPING THE SYSTEM OF TESTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY; COMPLETE THE CALIFORNIA STANDARDS TEST BY 2003.

- A plan is in place to develop a standards-aligned test (The California Standards Test) which will include written essays, as well as a basic skills test (The Stanford 9) that is currently the focus of the state's accountability system. This plan, developed by the Department of Education and approved by the State Board of Education and the Legislature, provides to schools and districts, for the first time, a clear commitment that the state is developing a testing program aligned to the standards. This plan should be carried out according to schedule.
- Schools need a consistent measure of performance toward which to manage. The practice of giving schools a different testing plan and different tests each year must end. A testing program must be left unaltered in order to provide a consistent measure of progress. Deviation will only continue the confusion that has plagued California's assessment program for more than a decade.

HOLD DISTRICTS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ROLE AS SERVICE PROVIDERS TO SCHOOLS BY ENSURING THAT ALL LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS RECEIVE SUPPORT, RESOURCES AND, WHEN NECESSARY, INTERVENTION.

- Clarify the state law concerning the requirements of school districts to support low-performing schools — and to intervene when support fails.
- Give local communities the information necessary to determine if districts are providing the support that schools need and if schools within a district are making adequate progress toward the standards. Publishing a set of key measurements will help to define the district's role.

PROVIDE TECHNOLOGY, TRAINING, AND OTHER RESOURCES NEEDED TO SUPPORT A DATA-DRIVEN, HIGH STAKES ASSESSMENT SYSTEM.

- Ensure that schools and districts have the data management tools they need to make smart decisions about student learning. Teachers need good information about every child to adjust classroom instruction, and school leaders need good information about every school to identify strengths and weaknesses and to make the accountability system meaningful.
- Ensure that teachers, principals and district leaders have the technology and other management tools to support a high-stakes, data driven accountability program.



Retrofitting the K-12 System To Reach High Standards

Clear and rigorous standards are the starting point for any improvement effort. Standards make clear what ought to be accomplished. In California schools, new state standards in English-language arts, mathematics, history-social science and science spell out the skills and knowledge students need to learn in these core subject areas. Everything else that happens in schools — how classes are organized, teachers are trained, classroom materials are chosen, and resources are allocated — should support the overriding purpose of making sure students reach the standards. By paying attention to standards, educators — and educational policy-makers — are confronted with an essential question: What will it take to help students learn the skills and knowledge they need to succeed?

California's standards are consistently rated as among the best in the country, and they can be invaluable tools to focus and improve instruction. But, for too many, they also are the state's best-kept secrets. They have not been systematically distributed or explained to California teachers or parents. Broadly communicating about the new standards and tests must become a priority.

What's already been initiated?

- ✓ Adopted high standards. The State Board of Education has adopted rigorous academic standards to ensure students attain proficiency in English/language arts, mathematics, history-social science and science.
- ✓ Aligning instructional materials to standards. California is in the third year of an historic \$1.3 billion effort to put standards-based books and instructional materials in every classroom. This amounts to \$237 for every K-12 student.
- ✓ Raising mathematics requirements. Under California's standards, students are expected to learn algebra in the 8th grade. The state now requires students to take algebra in order to graduate from high school. Beginning with the 2000-01 school year, California middle schools will provide intensive pre-algebra and algebra instruction to 50,000 7th and 8th grade students.
- ✓ Expanding remedial support. A \$102 million expansion of supplemental instruction ensures that academic help will be available to all students who need it.
- ✓ Ending Social Promotion. Local school districts, following a legislative mandate, have begun efforts to end "social promotion" — the practice of advancing students to the next grade even if they haven't learned the skills they need to be successful. Benchmarks for promotion are now in place in most districts and schools are offering more intensive support and assistance to students who are struggling.

PRIORITY FOR 2001-2002:

Ensure that parents and local educators are informed about the standards and about the programs designed to reinforce them.

While California's standards are consistently rated as among the best in the country, they might still be the state's best-kept secret.

NEXT STEPS... FOR STATE LEADERS:

- Continue to ensure that state education policies, rules and regulations reinforce the new standards.
 - Ensure that all statutory and regulatory policies reinforce the new standards. The priority of schools should be helping students meet the standards, and state policy should reflect that.
- Build greater public awareness about the new standards.
 - Launch a public communications effort about the new standards that helps parents, teachers and students know and understand them.
- Provide incentives for school districts to offer remediation for students who are struggling to meet the standards.
 - Increase investments in academic programs that help students “catch up” without repeating courses — such as after school, weekend and summer programs.

NEXT STEPS...FOR LOCAL SCHOOL LEADERS:

- Improve instruction to help students meet the standards.
 - Ensure that teaching methods and materials reflect the content in California's new standards.
 - Increase instructional time and emphasis in reading and math.
 - Help teachers master proven instructional methods that help students meet the standards.
- Provide challenging coursework and opportunities to all students.
 - Choose textbooks and instructional materials that are linked to California's new standards; ensure students are being taught the skills and knowledge specified in the standards.
 - Ensure all students have access to rigorous courses, such as algebra and Advanced Placement classes.
 - Provide financial aid to help low-income students take advantage of advanced learning opportunities.

NEXT STEPS... FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS:

- Set consistent standards for students in grade K-16.
 - State clearly what higher education institutions expect from entering students.
 - Align California's college admissions standards with the new K-12 standards.



Build Capacity to Reach the Standards

Leadership has always been an important ingredient in creating high performing schools.

Clearer and higher standards provide an important focus in a school community; they help teachers, students, parents, and other community members better understand what's expected and what's possible. But simply raising standards won't lead to better-prepared students. While they are an important start, they don't substitute for the subject-area knowledge and teaching skills of a well-prepared teacher. With class-size reduction and unprecedented investments in its teaching force, California is again becoming a leader in school improvement. That commitment must continue.

Leadership has always been an important ingredient in creating high performing schools and districts. In an era of high-stakes accountability, leadership is more critical than ever. A potential leadership crisis is building in California and across the country as critical numbers of school administrators approach retirement with few people training to replace them. Just as teacher quality matters, so do issues of recruitment, retention and re-training for those who lead schools and school districts.

What's already been initiated?

- ✓ Reducing class sizes. To increase student achievement, California provides \$1.5 billion in funding to reduce class size to 20 students per classroom in grades K-3.
- ✓ Recruiting and retaining teachers. The beginning teacher salaries program provides districts incentives to raise beginning teacher salaries to \$34,000 — an increase of 21% over the past two years. Beginning in January, six regional Teacher Recruitment Incentive Program (TRIP) Centers will aggressively recruit teachers giving them easy, reliable information about credential requirements and providing job placement services. A rich menu of incentives is now offered to attract and retain fully qualified teachers to our most challenging schools. The newly enacted Teaching As a Priority (TAP) Block Grant program provides school districts the funding and flexibility to offer incentives such as housing assistance, signing bonuses or other incentives to attract the most qualified teachers to our most challenging schools.
- ✓ Incentives to pursue advanced training. Experienced teachers who earn a prestigious certification from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards will receive a \$10,000 bonus, and an additional \$20,000 will be awarded to board-certified teachers who agree to teach at low-performing schools for four years.

**PRIORITY FOR
2001-2002:**

Continue to improve
California's teaching force.

With class size reduction
and California's push for
improved student
performance, paying
attention to issues of
teaching quality is now
even more essential.

- ✓ Providing professional development. California's model for rigorous research and standards-based professional development began in 1999 with the Governor's Reading Teacher Professional Development Institutes, training more than 6,000 teachers in direct, systematic instruction of reading. This year, the Governor's Professional Development Institutes will train 70,000 teachers in standards-based instruction in reading, math, high school English and instruction of English Language Learners. The Governor's Teachers Fellowship Program and the Governor's Principal Leadership Institute were established to recruit and retain the most talented educators into teacher training programs. The teacher program provides full competitive grants of \$20,000 to new student teachers who make a four-year commitment to teach in urban or hard-to-staff schools. The principal program provides a high-quality, 15-month course to help effective teachers become effective principals.
- ✓ Improved Pre-service Incentives. Pre-intern and internship grants expand award amounts from \$1,500 to \$2,500, and expand the number of interns from 7,300 to 12,700 to provide additional teacher trainees who work in classrooms under mentor supervision while earning their teaching credential.
- ✓ Peer Assistance and Review. With \$41 million in incentive state funding, districts are creating peer assistance and review programs to help veteran teachers work together to improve their skills.
- ✓ Improving the Credentialing Process. In the past few years, the legislature has created alternative routes to teacher credentialing and has eased barriers for teachers and administrators trained in other states.

NEXT STEPS... FOR STATE LEADERS:

- Increase support for teacher preparation aligned with California's standards.
 - Ensure that new teachers training programs reflect California's new K-12 standards.
 - Ensure that existing teachers have professional development opportunities that provide a clear understanding of the new standards and the teaching strategies that help students achieve them.
 - Increase the rigor of teacher training programs for new and continuing teachers.
- Link compensation to teacher skills, knowledge, and ability.
 - Increase teacher salaries as performance improves.
 - Adjust compensation plans to provide added pay for new content knowledge and teaching skills.
 - Provide salary incentives to ensure that students have access to a qualified, fully credentialed teacher (depending on local needs, incentives could address shortages in subject areas, such as math, or overcoming geographic challenges, such as urban or high cost of living areas).

PRIORITY FOR 2001-2002:

Address a growing crisis of leadership.

In an era of high-stakes accountability, leadership is more critical than ever. The need for leadership is growing as a critical number of school administrators approach retirement with few training in waiting to replace them. Recruitment, retention and re-training are needed for those who lead schools and school districts.

- Address the growing need for school and district leadership.
 - Provide incentives to recruit and retain talented leaders to California's schools and school districts.
 - Improve leadership development and training programs for school administrators, including knowledge of state standards, the use of assessment data and technology to improve student achievement, specific skills for review and evaluation of employees, and general understanding of leading organizational change.
 - Identify, collect, and distribute information on proven (research-based) methods for improving schools and student performance.
 - Create alternative routes for leaders to enter the ranks of school and district managers.

NEXT STEPS... FOR LOCAL SCHOOL LEADERS:

- Strengthen new-teacher orientation and ongoing professional development opportunities.
 - Help school districts redesign training opportunities so teachers learn more about the new standards and effective instruction to help students meet these standards.
 - Link teacher professional development opportunities to the new standards — so that salary credits for staff development are provided only for instructional priorities.
 - Provide additional training to teachers in student assessment.
 - Ensure that incentives and reimbursements for teachers for on-going professional development through university courses are aligned to training in priority instructional areas.

NEXT STEPS... FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS:

- Prepare teachers to teach to the standards.
 - Align the coursework of teacher preparation programs with the new K-12 standards.
 - Align the content of teacher licensing exams to the new K-12 standards and ensure that the rigor of the exams is at least as high as California's 12th grade standards.
 - Adopt a reporting and accountability system that can hold each higher education institution accountable for the quality of the teachers it produces.
 - Create incentives for higher education institutions (both public and private) to ensure that those graduates trained as teachers actually enter the teaching profession.



Measure and Report Progress

In the past year,
a great deal has been
done to develop a
long-term plan focusing
on a test that is fully
aligned to standards. And
now that California has
established this plan,
it must stick with it.

For standards to be meaningful, they need to be measured. Tests and assessments that measure standards tell teachers how well students are learning and tell communities how well schools are progressing toward the standards. Tests specifically designed to measure the standards — paired with tools such as school report cards — are another essential component of California’s high-performance school system.

As business leaders, we know that management systems must provide consistent and focused information about the goals of an organization. In education, a robust assessment system should be the central focus of an effective management system. It doesn’t have to measure everything; rather, it should convey what is most important. It provides information to those decision-makers who most affect student achievement — teachers, parents, and other local school educators. The information must help educators determine how to help students improve.

In the past year, a great deal has been done to develop a long-term plan focusing on a test that is fully aligned to standards. And now that California has established this plan, it must stick with it. This new system should be developed according to plan, and then left alone for 5-6 years. Over the past decade, California’s assessment system has been a political football, but it is the schools that are tossed about in this game. It makes no sense — and doesn’t help schools — to continue to tinker with the measurements.

While the test instruments themselves must not be changed, the next step is to improve the overall assessment system with better support and training. California needs to provide more tools — especially technology — to enable educators, parents and local communities to use assessment information to improve student instruction.

What’s already been initiated?

- ✓ An Academic Performance Index acts as a “Dow Jones Index,” providing the public with simple, clear, comparable information about the performance of schools.
- ✓ A specific plan for developing a standards aligned test. A three-year plan is in place to develop a standards-aligned test (The California Standards Test), which will include written essays. This standards test will become the focus of the system and the basic skills test (The Stanford 9) that is currently the focus of the state’s accountability system, will become an important secondary measure to provide national comparison data. This three-year plan, developed by the Governor’s Office of the Secretary for Education and Department of Education and approved by the State Board of Education and the Legislature, for the first time provides schools and districts with a clear commitment by the state to a testing program aligned to the standards.

PRIORITY FOR 2001-2002:

Stay the course!

A specific plan is now in place to fully align California's STAR assessments with the state's standards. The design, schedule, and components of that plan must be completed by 2003 to provide schools with predictability and information for appropriate planning. Disruptions to this schedule only continue the confusion that has plagued California's assessment program for more than a decade.

- ✓ High School Exit Exam. California is designing a high school exit exam that shows students have mastered the standards. In Spring 2001 high school students may begin taking the exam with multiple opportunities to pass it by 2004, when it will be a condition for graduation.
- ✓ An English Language Development Test. A test is under development that will help schools better diagnose a non-native English speaker's English language development.
- ✓ School report cards. California's School Accountability report cards are now aligned to the state's accountability system and should provide comparable information to parents and concerned community members who want to understand school performance.

NEXT STEPS... FOR STATE LEADERS:

- Ensure that plans for developing a standards aligned test remain on schedule, providing stability and consistency in the state's new assessment system.
 - Maintain the current design, schedule, and components to ensure that efforts to align STAR to standards are completed on schedule (by 2003), thereby providing schools with predictability so that they can plan appropriately.
- Provide additional assessment and information management tools to help improve teaching and instruction.
 - Develop incentives for the creation of local assessments that classroom teachers and school districts can use to diagnose student problems and evaluate program effectiveness.
 - Offer training in how to use data to support instructional improvement.
- Provide technology, training, and other resources needed to support a data-driven, high stakes assessment system.
 - Help schools learn more about their instructional strengths and weaknesses by implementing a data system with these components:
 - Emphasizes continuous improvement and progress;
 - Easy to use and in a web-based format;
 - Designed to accomplish two tasks: collecting information to support the accountability system and providing local decision makers access to centralized data;
 - Provides key decision makers with broad access to information in the system. (Every teacher and principal should have their own computer to access this system, and computer centers should be set up for parent use).

**PRIORITY FOR
2001-2002:**

Provide technology, training, and other resources needed to support a data-driven, high stakes assessment system.

California needs to provide more tools — especially technology — that enable educators, parents and local communities to use assessment information to improve student instruction.

NEXT STEPS... FOR LOCAL SCHOOL LEADERS:

- Align local assessment practices with the state standards and tests.
 - Ensure that assessments used locally, including portfolio and performance assessments, are aligned to the standards and the tests.
 - Create data systems for measuring each student's progress and provide training to teachers on how to use this information.

NEXT STEPS... FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS:

- Develop an articulated testing system for K-16.
 - Eliminate redundancies in the tests taken by high school juniors and seniors.
 - Adopt a policy of “no surprises” for college placement assessments, so that a student knows before beginning college that remedial work will be needed — work that could be made up in high school with adequate notice.
 - Adopt a reasonable alternative for college admission decisions that uses information from the state's new standards-based K-12 testing program.





Ensure Meaningful Accountability

Accountability must
be clear at all
levels of the system —
including the state.

The over-arching requirement of an accountability system is ensuring that every school is getting better every year. Clear standards and a robust measurement system can work together to provide good data about each school's strengths and weaknesses. Improvement targets help establish expectations. Once those pieces are in place, however, clear, predictable rewards and consequences are needed — both for meeting expectations and for addressing chronic poor performance.

Clear lines of authority are also integral to effective accountability. Accountability requires a clear understanding of who is responsible for what. It requires that authority be commensurate with responsibility. At the state level, the lack of clear roles and responsibilities creates an ongoing blame-game, rather than a focused plan of action. Accountability must be clear at all levels of the system — including the state.

At local levels, accountability remains just as illusive. While principals, teachers, and other school staff are most “on-point” for student performance, their effectiveness depends in large part on the effectiveness of the district in which that school operates. Local school boards create additional policies that must make sense within the state context, yet their fiscal authority is not commensurate with that accountability. Clearly defined accountability is also needed for the role districts must play as a service provider to all schools — including the role that districts should play in intervening in chronically low performing schools.

What's already been initiated?

- ✓ Clear improvement targets. Central to California's comprehensive system of accountability is an Academic Performance Index (API). This year it is based on standardized test scores, but in future years it will include other indicators such as the California standards-based test and the high school exit exam. The Index is used to rank all schools annually and to measure comparable improvement in academic achievement by all significant ethnic and socio-economic subgroups.
- ✓ Incentives for low performing schools to retain outside help. Under-performing schools can opt to join the state's Immediate Intervention/Under-performing Schools Program, which provides funding to hire outside evaluators and work with teams to improve student achievement. If these schools are still unable to improve despite three years of intensive assistance, the state can take dramatic steps, including ordering staff transfers or allowing students to transfer to any other public school.
- ✓ Cash awards for improved performance. Schools that meet or exceed their API growth targets are eligible for cash awards through the Governor's Performance Awards Program. Schools meeting their API growth targets are also eligible for the School Site Employee Performance Bonus Program. All school site staff will receive performance bonuses and the remaining equal amount of the grant award will go to the school for school wide use. Teachers at schools ranked in the lower half of the API whose schools make extraordinary growth will receive up to \$25,000 in cash awards.

**PRIORITY FOR
2001-2002:**

Hold districts accountable for their role as service providers.

Clearly defined accountability is needed for the role districts must play as a service provider to all schools — including the role that districts should play in intervening in chronically low-performing schools.

NEXT STEPS... FOR STATE LEADERS:

- Ensure that rewards for performance are aligned to standards.
 - Align statewide programs that recognize excellence in education (such as California Distinguished Schools awards) to include as a criterion progress toward the standards.
- Ensure that the state's school governing system makes sense and supports the standards.
 - Clarify state law that the state's role in education policy is to set high standards, measure performance, and ensure accountability.
 - Give a single state entity the responsibility and authority for policies guiding the state's public schools.
- Ensure that all low-performing schools receive the support, resources, and, when necessary, intervention, by holding districts accountable for their role as service providers to schools.
 - Clarify state law about the role and expectations of school districts to support low-performing schools — and to intervene when support fails.
 - Give local communities the information they need to determine if districts are providing the support that schools need and if schools within a district are making adequate progress toward the standards. Publishing a set of 5-6 measures of performance on key measures can help to define the district's role. Those measures might include performance measures, such as overall student performance, graduation rates, percentage of schools remaining in low performing groups, and service measures, such as text books and school environments.

NEXT STEPS... FOR LOCAL SCHOOL LEADERS:

- Ensure that action is taken to redirect schools that demonstrate a pattern of lower performance.
 - Intervene where low performance is clear and if necessary, reorganize staff.
 - Make certain employee contracts allow for extra incentives and other provisions to ensure that low performing schools have quality personnel as well as other needed resources.
- Create methods of measuring the provision of key services to schools.
 - Create key measures of district performance, such as on-time arrival rate for buses, the turn-around time for supplies and other instructional materials, and satisfaction surveys to help all employees understand the role they play in improving school performance.
- Ensure that program and employee review practices align to the standards.
 - Ensure that performance toward content standards, as measured by state assessments, is included in school accreditation reviews.
 - Include reviews of standards and assessment results in annual employee review procedures as required by statute.



Increase Competition and Flexibility within Public Schools

Results — not process
requirements — should
matter most for schools.

Business leaders know first hand the role that competition plays in improving performance. Several important ingredients will introduce competition into the public school system.

Demand, of course, is a crucial ingredient in creating competition — and the demand for better schools is clear.

Improved performance measures, such as student testing, which provide clear, comparable information to evaluate performance, are also essential for competition. To be effective, test scores and other measures of performance must be publicly reported in a way that is easily understood by parents and a concerned public.

However, demand and better information won't fuel change unless all families have real choices about how and where to educate their children. Theoretically, California families should have ample choice. Laws passed in 1994 provide that a family can select any school in the state in which to enroll their child. Yet, overcrowded conditions in many communities prevent families from finding a seat in any school that is close to home — regardless of the school's quality. For this reason, improved facilities are yet another key ingredient to creating the choices that fuel competition.

As many change-minded superintendents and policymakers recognize, the presence of real, viable alternatives that prove change is possible also provide increased competition within local communities. Charter schools — innovations in schooling where rules and regulations are waived in favor of performance contracts — provide such a force in many communities. They demonstrate that change is possible and thereby help all schools to improve.

Increased flexibility is not simply a goal for charter schools. Results — not process requirements — should matter most for all schools. The patchwork of rules, laws, and policies that governs California schools undermines innovation. Policies that don't support a focus on achieving the standards ought to be eliminated, and educators ought to be encouraged to think outside the box, be creative, and figure out what works best with their students. Increased resource flexibility, then, becomes the final, critical ingredient to improving competition in the public schools.

What's already been initiated?

- ✓ Choice is permissible (though not always possible) within all public schools. In the early 1990's, California adopted legislation allowing families to choose the best public schools for their children. However, overcrowded schools undermine the impact of these laws.
- ✓ Charters schools are expanding. California's charter school law was the second to be passed in the country and is rated as one of the most effective laws at encouraging strong charter schools to open. Subsequent legislation raised the initial cap of 100 to 250 and by 100 new schools every year thereafter. California's charter school funding model provides charter schools with a fair, simplified block grant that treats charter schools the same as other schools.



ssed would expand fiscal flexibility to more schools. A first step
nd the fiscal flexibility enjoyed by charter schools to 75 public schools

e it easier for local communities to build more schools, including
charter schools. In November of 2000, California voters reduced the voting requirements
for raising local school construction funding from 2/3rds to 55% of the votes cast if stricter
accountabilities are met. This action increases the authority and the accountability of local
policymakers to respond more directly to problems of overcrowding and long-term school
development.

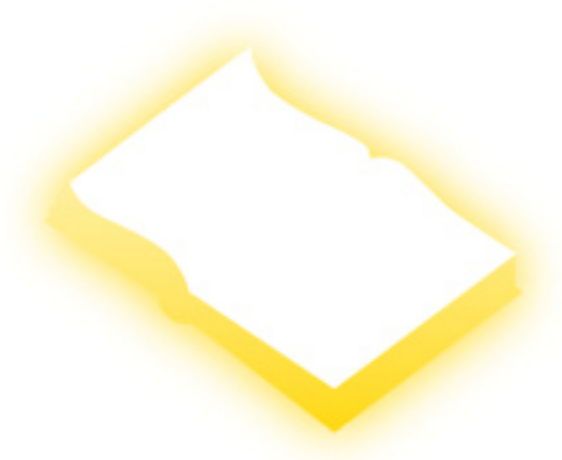
NEXT STEPS... FOR STATE LEADERS:

- Encourage charter schools and schools of choice.
 - Give every parent a realistic choice among quality public schools.
 - Provide information about school performance to enable parents to evaluate and compare school programs.
 - Ensure that Charter Schools receive their fair share of any local bonds passed under the provisions of Proposition 39.
- Increase staff and resource flexibility.
 - Increase fiscal flexibility by reducing or combining categorical spending programs.
 - Create more local options for schools to secure additional revenues.
 - Give local communities maximum flexibility to deploy staff according to the unique needs of the school community.
 - Prevent the re-regulation of charter schools and roll-back charter school regulations created in recent years.

- Create a single school plan for continuous improvement.
 - Consolidate school-planning and data reporting requirements (now estimated to be more than 50 separate non-fiscal reports a year required by state law) into one streamlined planning requirement.
 - Modify or eliminate regulations that create conflicting planning requirements for schools and districts.
 - Eliminate planning requirements that do not support achievement of the new standards.
 - Align planning requirements with the new reporting timelines of the school accountability system and with program and employee review practices.
 - Create a clearinghouse to review and advise whether new data and reporting proposals add value or create bureaucracy.
 - Improve the training of school leaders to better use planning and evaluation as tools to improve performance.

NEXT STEPS... FOR LOCAL SCHOOL LEADERS:

- Increase staff and resource flexibility.
 - Increase fiscal flexibility for local schools, providing the flexibility to determine the needed mix of staff and other resource needs at the school-site level.
 - Streamline district planning and reporting requirements.
 - Re-organize district/county services to function as “cost-centers” where schools determine the central services that are needed and pay only for those services that benefit the schools.





Conclusion

Reaching high standards requires changes from everyone — not just schools. California has made many impressive strides toward restoring excellence in its public schools. But at this stage, communications and continuity are essential. For 2001, our priorities are better communication, continued emphasis on building capacity for teachers, a new emphasis on the role of leadership, and a willingness to hold districts accountable, especially for low-performing schools.

At the state-level, policy makers must resist the temptation to tinker and instead allow the accountability system to withstand the test of time. At the local level, policymakers and administrators must ensure alignment of locally determined policies and procedures. Higher education also must do its part by ensuring that the content of teacher training programs truly reinforce the standards.

California was once a world leader in education. By staying the course to higher standards and improved accountability, it can be again.

$$y = \frac{2}{3}x + 1$$



Reaching Higher has benefited from the assistance of numerous local and state leaders as well as experts from around the country who are advocating for education reform. California Business for Education Excellence actively sought their insights to refine and challenge our thinking in the development of this document. Although CBEE is solely responsible for the content, conclusions and recommendations in Reaching Higher, we would like to thank the following organizations whose leaders and other members provided valued feedback to our initial discussion draft.

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| Association of California School Administrators | The Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Partnership |
| Association of California Urban School Districts | |
| The Bay Area Reform Collaborative | The Long Beach Unified School District |
| Birdsal, Wasco, and Associates | Office of the Secretary of Education |
| The Broad Foundation | The Orange County Business Council |
| California Department of Education | Project Tomorrow |
| California Teachers Association | The San Diego Unified School District |
| California County Superintendents Association | School Services of California |
| California Parent Teacher Student Association | The Sonoma Business/Education Roundtable |
| The Elk Grove Unified School District | State Board of Education |
| The Fresno Chamber of Commerce | Strategic Education Services |
| The Kern County Chamber of Commerce | The Stuart Foundation |
| | The Vallejo City Unified School District |

Written works consulted for this report include: “The Status of the Teaching Profession 2000,” released by the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning; the National Alliance of Business, Teaching for Results Campaign (2000); “A K-12 Master Plan” released by the Legislative Analyst’s Office (1999); “The 1999 National Education Summit Briefing Book,” produced for the National Education Summit by Achieve, Inc. Washington, D.C. (1999); and the work of the California Constitutional Revision Commission (1997).

Additional copies of this report may be obtained from:

California Business for Education Excellence
 1215 K Street, Suite 1510
 Sacramento, CA 95814
 (916) 443-6411



California Business for Education Excellence (CBEE) was created by major California businesses and business organizations to restore excellence to California education. We recognize that a quality public education system is the cornerstone of a sound society and a dynamic economy. The vitality of our economy depends on an educated workforce — workers with basic skills who can think critically and find creative approaches to solving problems. Those skills are as important to sustaining a civil society as they are to the economic viability of our businesses and our state.

