

CALIFORNIA EDUCATION REPORT CARD

INDEX OF LEADING EDUCATION INDICATORS,
THIRD EDITION

BY
LANCE T. IZUMI WITH MATT COX

SUBJECT	GRADE
TEST SCORES	?
DROPOUT RATES	?
ACCOUNTABILITY	?
TEACHER QUALITY	?

PRI

PACIFIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE

California Education Report Card

Index of Leading Education Indicators, Third Edition

by Lance T. Izumi with Matt Cox

August 2003

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Index of Leading Education Indicators, Third Edition**

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Introduction

In 1997 and 2000, the Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy (PRI) issued the first and second editions of its *California Index of Leading Education Indicators*. Both editions gathered and presented data on education topics ranging from student test scores to teacher quality to government education spending and provided fresh interpretations of those data. Since 2000, there have been many new developments in education in California.

The state's school accountability system has become more defined, with a variety of amendments since its creation in 1999, and is now functioning. New tests, such as the California Standards Tests, the High School Exit Exam, and the California English Language Development Test, have been created and are now being administered to students. Major new evaluations of key programs such as class-size reduction have been completed. Also, the fiscal climate of California has changed dramatically, with large state budget deficits facing lawmakers for years to come. Despite this fiscal uncertainty, lawmakers are proposing a costly state master plan for education that will have far-reaching effects if approved.

The 2003 edition of the *Index* analyzes these new developments and contains updated statistics. Like its predecessors, it seeks to answer fundamental questions concerning education in California. Is student achievement increasing or decreasing, and why? Are government education policies helping or hurting the goal of improved student achievement? How much bang for the buck is California getting from its government education spending? What reforms hold the most promise in improving the performance of both students and school personnel? The following pages address these and other key questions.

Executive Summary

This third edition of the Pacific Research Institute's education *Index* seeks to answer critical questions about the effectiveness of California education policies, the efficiency of the school finance system, and the potential for real reform. It concludes with a set of practical policy recommendations designed to increase student achievement.

The following is a summary of the *Index*'s analyses, data, and conclusions.

CALIFORNIA'S ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

- The state's school accountability system is flawed. For example, participation in the system's improvement program is voluntary and not all low-performing schools that apply to be a part of the program are accepted.
- Annual growth targets in test scores, set by the state, ensure that any gains are small and incremental. It could take years for a very low-performing school to reach a proficient performance level.
- There is no incentive for students to do their best on state tests. Especially among older students, it is common practice to fill out test answer sheets haphazardly with little effort.
- Rewards and sanctions are not tied to individual teacher performance, but instead to schoolwide performance. Poor individual performance by a teacher does not automatically invite an adverse consequence. The system attempts to hold principals accountable for student performance, but does not give them the tools to hold teachers accountable for their instructional performance.
- The sanctions portion of the system does not include a parental choice mechanism. Florida's school accountability system includes such a mechanism that has proved effective in giving public schools an incentive to improve their performance.
- On the plus side, California's accountability system is now aligned with the state's rigorous academic content standards. The state tests are aligned with the standards, as is the curriculum.

STANDARDIZED TESTS: STANFORD-9 AND THE CALIFORNIA STANDARDS TEST

- In 2002, reading test scores on the Stanford-9 improved for California students in the 2nd, 4th, and 8th grade.
 - > Second-grade reading scores were at the 52nd percentile, from 39th in 1997.
 - > The fourth-grade reading score was 50, compared to 40 in 1997.
 - > The eighth-grade reading score was 48, up from 44 in 1997.

- For the same period, math test scores on the Stanford-9 also improved in all three grades.
 - > Second-grade math scores were at the 62nd percentile, compared to 43rd in 1997.
 - > The fourth-grade math score was 58, from 39 in 1997.
 - > The eighth-grade math score was 52, up from 45 in 1997.
- Increases in the Stanford-9 scores are likely due to a combination of better curricula and teaching methods at the lower grades, such as a greater focus on phonics-based reading and direct instruction teaching methods, plus non-academic factors such as test familiarity.
- The relatively new California Standards Test (CST) will be the key test in upcoming calculations of the state's Academic Performance Index. The CST is aligned with the state's academic content standards. In 2002, only 33 percent of students scored at or above the proficient level in English/language arts, while only 35 percent of students scores at or above the proficient level in math.
- The poor performance on the CST indicates that standards-based learning is not a reality for large numbers of students. More than a third of the students perform below the proficient level.
 - > 37 percent of second-graders, 30 percent of fourth-graders, 33 percent of eighth-graders, and 39 percent of 11th-graders scored below basic or far below basic on the 2002 English/language arts CST.
- The CST results will be the main measuring device for student achievement in California. By that yardstick, California students have a long way to go.

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS (NAEP)

Reading

- On the 2002 NAEP reading exam, 21 percent of California fourth-graders scored at or above the proficient level (the recommended scoring level), 29 percent scored at the basic level, and 50 percent scored below the basic level. Nationally, 30 percent of fourth-graders scored at the proficient level, 32 percent at the basic level, and 38 percent below basic.
- Although the 2002 reading scores of all ethnic groups in California improved over scores in 1998, 63 percent of African-American fourth-graders and 65 percent of Hispanic fourth-graders still tested below basic.
- On the eighth-grade reading exam, only 20 percent of California eighth-graders scored at the proficient level versus 31 percent nationally.
- California's scores on the 2002 NAEP fourth- and eighth-grade reading exam ranked the state in the bottom 10 nationwide.

Math

- On the 2000 NAEP math exam, 15 percent of California fourth-graders scored at or above the proficient level, while 52 percent of the state's fourth-graders scored at or above the basic level. Forty-eight percent of fourth-graders scored below the basic level. California tied New Mexico for the next-to-last position in the ranking of state scores.
- The scores of students of all races, including African-American and Hispanic students, improved in the 2000 math exam compared to scores on the 1996 exam. However, the scores of California's African Americans and Hispanics were considerably lower than the scores of Texas African Americans and Hispanics.
- For example, while only two percent of California African-American fourth-graders scored at or above the proficient level and 25 percent scored at or above the basic level, 12 percent of Texas African-American fourth-graders were proficient and 60 percent were at or above basic.
- Eighteen percent of California eighth-graders scored at or above the proficient level on the 2000 math exam, while 52 percent scored at or above basic. On the flip side, 48 percent of eighth-graders scored below basic. Three-quarters of the state's African-American eighth-graders and two-thirds of Hispanic eighth-graders failed to score at the basic level.

Science

- On the 2000 NAEP science test, 14 percent of California fourth-graders scored at or above proficient level, while 47 percent scored at or above the basic level. Fifty-three percent scored below basic. California's scores earned a next-to-last ranking among the states.
- Scores of California eighth-graders on the 2000 science test fell from scores on the 1996 test. Whereas 20 percent of eighth-graders scored at or above the proficient level in 1996, only 15 percent scored at that level in 2000. California's 2000 scores tied with Hawaii for a dead last ranking.

SAT AND UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA ADMISSIONS

- On the SAT I in 2002, California's average verbal score was 496, while the average math score was 517. The national average verbal score was 504, while the national average math score was 516.
- Because of lower African-American and Hispanic scores on the SAT I, UC president Richard Atkinson proposed eliminating the SAT I from the UC's admissions process. The College Board, which administers the SAT I, compromised with the UC and changed the SAT I for-

mat to include a new writing section, eliminate the analogies section, and increase the difficulty of the math section.

- The UC has tried to increase the numbers of African Americans and Hispanics admitted into flagship campuses such as UCLA and UC Berkeley by implementing a “comprehensive review” admissions process that gives applicants points for various life experiences such as overcoming hardships.
- Comprehensive review has adversely affected high achieving Asian Americans and whites. The owner of an SAT-preparation business says, “It is shameful that it is worth less to be poor and Asian than to be poor and Hispanic.”

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

- In 2002, 32 percent of English language learners tested on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) scored at the proficient level. In 2001, only 11 percent of such students hit the proficient mark.
- The improved test scores are likely due to the positive effect of the English-immersion instructional methods required by the voter-approved Proposition 227.
- Although more students are passing the CELDT test, many school districts are not re-classifying them as English fluent because of state and local policies that require students to perform well academically in addition to demonstrating English fluency. English fluency, however, is a means to acquiring knowledge, but does not guarantee that knowledge.
- Some school districts may also be hesitant to re-classify students because they would lose state funding targeted to non-English-speaking students. A state education official warns that “Schools and teachers need to take a very hard look at their past practices and past assumptions to make sure that neither financial incentives nor ideology are creating barriers for [English language learners].”
- The superintendent of Oceanside Unified School District warns that testing English language learners is in danger because some influential politicians worry that English immersion is working too well. He says, “The Latino Caucus does not want to lose bilingual education for good.”

HIGH-SCHOOL EXIT EXAM

- Based on data through early 2003, the overall passage rate on the English/language arts portion of the state high-school exit exam is above 80 percent, while the passage rate on the math portion is above 60 percent. Students in 2006 must pass both parts in order to obtain a diploma.

- It is estimated that by June 2004, 95 percent of students will have passed the English portion and 80 percent will have passed the math portion.
- An independent evaluation of the exam has found that schools with high levels of coverage of the state's academic content standards had much higher passing rates than those schools that had not implemented the standards as intensely.
- Most educators agree that the exam, which is aligned with the state standards, has acted as an incentive for schools to align their instruction with the standards. Students, teachers, and administrators say that the exam has helped students to get serious about their studies.

ADVANCED PLACEMENT TEST

- The proportion of California high schoolers taking the Advanced Placement (AP) exams has increased from 7.8 percent in 1986 to 19 percent in 2000.
- The increase in AP test-takers has occurred in all racial categories. For example, while 1.9 percent of African-American high-school graduates took the exam in 1986, 8.2 percent took the exam in 2000. In 1986, 2.8 percent of Hispanic graduates took the exam, while 12.3 percent took the exam in 2000.

DROPOUT AND GRADUATION RATES

- In 2001–02, California's graduation rate, which compares the number of students who started in the ninth grade with the number of students who graduated four years later, was 69.6 percent. This rate implies that 30.4 percent of students in the ninth-grade class four years earlier either dropped out or for other reasons did not graduate from high-school.
- With three out of 10 students not graduating, a state consultant on educational demographics says, "Clearly that's an indication that something is wrong."
- The low graduation rate undercuts the credibility of the state's dropout figures. In 2001–02, the state claimed that the four-year (ninth to 12th grade) dropout rate was only 10.9 percent.
- The state is trying to reform the dropout rate calculation. However, the new formula will not count as dropouts those students who earn a General Educational Development (GED) certificate, even though research shows that GED holders are indistinguishable from high-school dropouts in their performance in the labor market.

REMEDIAL INSTRUCTION

- In 2002, 59 percent of incoming California State University students had to take remedial courses in English and/or math. At CSU Dominguez Hills, more than 75 percent of freshmen needed remedial instruction in math and about 79 percent needed remedial help in English.

- CSU officials say that the failure of the K–12 system cannot be blamed on more students coming from non-English-speaking homes.
- In 1994, total K–12 education spending was about \$5,500 per pupil and 49 percent of entering CSU freshmen needed remedial English. In 2002, total education spending had risen to about \$9,000 per student and 49 percent of entering CSU freshmen needed remedial English. CSU chancellor Charles Reed says that “a whole generation of kids can’t read.”

COURSE DIFFICULTY

- Only 56 percent of California high-school graduates in 2000 had taken geometry/integrated math II compared to the national average of 74 percent and 95 percent in Texas.
- Of the 32 states reporting statistics, California ranked next to last in the percentage of 2000 graduates who had taken first-year chemistry. Only 35 percent of California graduates had taken that course.
- California was also next to last in the percentage of graduates in 2000 who had taken biology. California’s 67 percent edged out only Alabama, and was a 12-percent decrease from 1996 and an unbelievable 24-percent decrease from 1990.
- In 1999–00, only 34.8 percent of California high-school graduates had completed the core courses required by UC and CSU for admission eligibility.
- Despite the fact that research shows schools that implement the state’s academic content standards are more likely to be high performing, standards coverage in many schools still remains spotty.

SCHOOL FACILITIES AND CONSTRUCTION

- From November 2001 to November 2002, \$14.1 billion in local school facilities bonds have been passed. From 1998 to 2002, more than \$20 billion in state bonds for school facilities have been approved.
- School construction in California is a long and convoluted process. A Los Angeles commission found 117 steps in the school construction process. It usually takes five to six years to build a school.

TEACHER QUALITY

- In 2001–02, of the 306,940 teachers in California, more than 32,000, or 10.6 percent, held an emergency credential.
- The conventional view that teacher quality equates to the possession of a regular teaching credential is not supported by new research. An examination of 2000 and 2001 Stanford-9

test scores found that credential status was unrelated to student achievement. Subject-matter competence has proven a stronger indicator of teacher quality.

- In 2000, less than half of California's eighth-grade math teachers had majored in mathematics in college. In Texas, 66 percent of eighth-grade math teachers had majored in math.
- In 2000, less than half of California's eighth-grade life science teacher had majored in life science versus 58 percent in Texas.

TEACHER SALARIES

- In 2001–02, California ranked first among all states in teacher salary with an average salary of \$53,870. In 2001, per-capita income in California was \$32,702.
- Teacher salaries in California are not tied to either market demand or classroom performance. Uniform salary structures, regardless of teaching area, ignore the shortage of teachers in certain fields such as math and science. Also, performance-based pay has not been implemented because of the lack of objective measurement tools and opposition by the teacher unions.

TEACHER VERSUS NON-TEACHER RATIO

- In 2000–01, California's public school system employed 298,064 teachers and 241,237 non-teachers.

EXPENDITURES

- In 2002–03, Prop. 98 funding per pupil, based on money from the State General Fund and local property taxes, came to \$6,684. However, total funding per pupil, based on money from all state, federal, and local sources, came to \$9,216. Total education funding per pupil in 2002–03 was a 28.7 percent inflation-adjusted increase over the figure in 1992–93.
- In 2002–03, the state spent \$15 billion on general revenue limits, which are no-strings-attached funds sent to local districts, and \$12.4 billion on categorical programs, which are dollars earmarked for specific purposes.
- Categorical spending has been criticized for restricting local flexibility, fragmenting local programs, creating negative financial incentives, and blurring accountability for student needs. Most damaging, there is no conclusive evidence on the success of categorical funding.
- State officials admit that they have little idea how categorical funding is being used by local school districts. They are also in the dark about whether those funds are accomplishing program purposes.

CLASS-SIZE REDUCTION

- From 1996–97 to 2002–03, the state has spent more than \$10 billion on reducing the size of K–3 classes to 20 students per classroom. Annually, the state is spending about \$2 billion on the program.
- The final report of the research consortium charged with evaluating the class-size reduction program found only limited evidence linking gains in student achievement to class-size reduction. The report said that there was no clear relationship between student performance and class-size reduction.
- Los Angeles Unified School District superintendent Roy Romer has testified that the changeover to a new phonics-intensive reading program, and not class-size reduction, has lifted the achievement of elementary school students in his district.

SCHOOL CRIME

- Crime rates have increased in many school crime categories. From 1995–96 to 2000–01, crimes against persons, which include assault with a deadly weapon, battery, homicide, robbery/extortion, and sex offenses, increased by 33 percent. The rate of sex offenses during this period increased 94 percent.
- There has been a shift in the types of crime being committed on campus. In 1995–96, property crime accounted for 34 percent of the total number of school crimes, compared to 28 percent of the total for crimes against persons. By 2000–01, the order was reversed, with crimes against persons accounting for 35 percent of the total, and property crimes making up only 28 percent of the total.
- The type of crime being committed is likely to be more violent and directed against others. Research also shows that the increase in crimes is not the result of better reporting.

PROPOSED EDUCATION MASTER PLAN

- While the proposed state master plan for education contains some worthwhile ideas, it focuses on too many non-education issues, requires large increases in funding, advocates a variety of tax increases, and creates biased spending models.
- The plan would also undercut the credibility of the state’s Academic Performance Index.
- Besides errors of commission, the plan omits any reference to cutting-edge reform measures such as parental-choice options.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Use empirically proven research-based curricula.
- State schools must use empirically proven research-based teaching methods.
- Comprehensive use of the state academic standards as goals for student learning, guideposts for teaching, and tools for teacher professional development.
- Reform the state’s school accountability system by requiring all low performing schools to be subject to the system’s accountability measures.
- Implement a school-choice accountability option like the one being used successfully in Florida.
- Adopt value-added testing to measure the longitudinal performance of individual students.
- Reform education finance by block granting categorical funds and ensure wise use of funds by local districts through the school-choice accountability option.
- Implement differential pay for teachers based on shortage areas and consider merit pay for high performance.
- Reform the teacher collective bargaining process by streamlining or repealing those aspects that prevent the delivery of high-quality education services.

1

California's Accountability System

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

California's school accountability system is supposed to inform the public about the performance of the state's public schools and to reward or penalize those schools based on that performance. The question is whether the system, as it is currently structured, is effective in holding schools truly accountable for the achievement of their students.

ASSESSMENT

Although it has improved with the addition of standards-aligned testing designed to measure classroom instruction, there are still too many holes in the system, such as the omission of many low-performing schools from the system's accountability measures.

RECOMMENDATION

Not only should the system ensure that all low-performing schools are held accountable, sanctions such as a school-choice option should be added to give parents the ability to move their children out of failing schools.

INTRODUCTION

In April 1999, California passed the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA), the brainchild of newly elected Governor Gray Davis. The PSAA has three major components.

First, the Academic Performance Index (API) provides individual schools with a numerical score. It was intended that this be based on multiple measures of performance, e.g., test scores, dropout rates, and attendance rates. For the time being, however, the API is based exclusively on student test scores.

Second, the rewards program called the High Performing-Improving Schools Program (HP/ISP) awards schools and staff monetary bonuses if they meet or surpass API growth targets. The third component is the Immediate Intervention-Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP) that allows the state to intervene in schools that fail to meet targets for improving test scores. The intervention-program portion of the legislation also included sanctions, such as state takeover of individual schools, and monetary grants to pay for the interventions.

Every year, local school boards must issue a School Accountability Report Card for each school within the district. Each report card must include the most recent three years of testing data for student achievement by grade level in reading, writing, arithmetic, and other academic goals. Secondary school report cards will also list the percentage of seniors taking the SAT college admissions test and their average score on the test.

Also reported are dropout rates and suspension and expulsion rates, plus progress toward reducing class size. Finally, the report cards list the number of days of staff development and the number of teachers with regular credentials, emergency credentials, without credentials, and teachers working outside their areas of competence. The local board must send these accountability report cards to all parents.

THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE INDEX

From 1999–2001, the state calculated the API using only scores from the Stanford-9 standardized test. The State Board of Education chose the Stanford-9, which is a multiple-choice, nationally norm-referenced examination, to be the state's assessment device in 1997, several years before passage of the new accountability law. A norm-referenced test is a standardized exam that compares student performance within California to a national sample of students who have taken the same exam.

Thus, a student who scored a “38” in reading scored equal to or better than 38 percent of students in a national sample of students taking the test — with the flip-side being that he or she scored worse than 62 percent of students in the national sample. The Board chose this test, in part, because as an “off-the-shelf” exam it was readily available. As a nationally norm-referenced

test, however, the SAT-9 was not aligned with the state's academic content standards, meaning that it did not directly measure student performance relative to the standards.

The state used the Stanford-9 to test grades two–11, with students in grades two–eight tested in reading, mathematics, written expression, and spelling. Students in grades nine–11 are tested in reading, writing, mathematics, science, and history and social science. All students at each grade level took the exact same Stanford-9 exam. The state requires districts to provide individual student scores to parents. The state Department of Education's website publicly listed aggregate Stanford-9 scores by grade level for schools, districts, counties, and the state.

As part of California's high-stakes accountability system, the Stanford-9 has been less than optimal because, as mentioned previously, it was not aligned to the state's rigorous academic content standards.¹ Thus, if teachers in classrooms were teaching to the standards, then the Stanford-9 would not necessarily measure what students were learning. Under the accountability system, decisions about rewards and sanctions would be made based on the scores from the non-aligned test, with potentially perverse results.

In an ongoing effort to remedy this defect, the state picked out parts of the Stanford-9 that tested the topics listed in the content standards and developed a set of standards-aligned questions that were added onto the Stanford-9 exam. Later the state expanded this approach into separate standards-based tests called the California Standards Tests (CST). The CST is not a nationally norm-referenced test, but is a criterion-referenced test, i.e., a standardized exam aligned with the state's academic content standards that measures the performance of California students relative to those standards, as opposed to a national sample of students.

The state gives CSTs in English and mathematics in grades two–11. Students in grades four and seven are tested on writing, and those in grades nine–11 are tested on the state content standards in science, history, and social science.² Scores on the CSTs are categorized using performance levels: advanced, proficient, basic, below basic, and far below basic. The goal is for all students to score at the proficient level.

In 2001, results from the English/language arts CST were added to the Academic Performance Index calculation, counting for 36 percent of elementary and middle school scores and 24 percent of high-school scores.³ In coming years, the CSTs will take center stage. In grades two–eight, the English/language arts and Math CSTs will count for 80 percent of the Index calculation, with 20 percent from the norm-referenced test. For grades nine–11, the English, Math, and History/Social Science CSTs will count for 73 percent of the Index calculation, 15 percent from the High School Exit Exam, and 12 percent from the norm-referenced exam.⁴

From 2003, California will replace the Stanford-9 exam with another norm-referenced exam, the California Achievement Test-6 (CAT-6) which is aligned to California's academic content standards. The reasons for retaining a nationally normed test like the CAT-6 include the necessity

of having a “basic skills” test that acts as a check on how California’s self-assessed progress measures up against national norms of performance.⁵

When the state used the Stanford-9 exclusively, there was another drawback in addition to the exam’s lack of alignment with the state standards. Test questions did not change from year to year.⁶ As the state Legislative Analyst’s Office, the non-partisan research arm of the state legislature, points out, “Particularly with a high stakes test, it is important to vary test questions from year to year in order to minimize possibilities for literal ‘teaching to the test’ and outright cheating.”⁷

When questions fail to change from year to year, scores tend to rise each year as students become more familiar with the sort of questions on the test. Increasing scores may not, therefore, represent increases in true learning, but rather test preparation and gaming strategies. According to Joan Herman, co-director of the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing at UCLA, scores usually drop when test writers introduce new questions or forms and then rise again as the test becomes more familiar.⁸

Says Herman, testing specialists agree that “it’s not a good idea to give the same test form from year to year, or use exactly the same test items.”⁹

“By changing test forms or changing the items,” says Herman, “you prevent schools from over-focusing on the specific items that are on the test.”¹⁰

When using only Stanford-9 results, the state Department of Education calculated a score ranging from a low of 200 to a high of 1,000 for each school. The interim statewide API target for all schools is 800. The state Department of Education also ranked schools on a one-to-10 scale with 10 being the best. The department uses a separate “similar schools” ranking to compare schools having similar demographic characteristics. These various features will continue under the new assessment exams.¹¹

Schools scoring below 800 must close the gap between their current score and the state performance target by at least five percent to meet their growth target for the year. For example, if a school’s 1999 Academic Performance Index score was 500, the school’s growth target would be $(800-500) * \text{five percent} = 15 \text{ points}$.¹² This formula, however, results in growth targets so modest that for many schools meeting the state’s target score of 800 would take years, if not decades.

Each numerically significant ethnic or socio-economically disadvantaged subgroup at a school (that constitutes at least 15 percent of the school’s total pupil population and consists of at least 30 students) must have a growth target of 80 percent of the school’s growth target. Thus, if a

When questions fail to change from year to year, scores tend to rise each year as students become more familiar with the sort of questions on the test.

school's growth target was 15 points, each numerically significant subgroup at the school must improve by at least 80 percent of 15 points, i.e., by 12 points.

REWARDS AND SANCTIONS

The rewards portion of the accountability system includes several programs that are triggered when schools meet their growth targets and subgroup targets and have 95 percent of their students taking the Stanford-9 in grades K–8 and 90 percent taking the exam in grades 9–11. One program, the Governor's Performance Awards, sends state grants to individual school-site councils, which have the discretion to use the funds as they see fit.

In addition, state grants from the School Site Employee Performance Bonus program are to be divided equally among school site councils and all school site staff. Finally, the Certificated Staff Performance Incentives program targets staff at low-performing schools that have the highest growth rates. The program awards \$25,000 bonuses to 1,000 staff statewide, \$10,000 bonuses to 3,750 staff members, and \$5,000 bonuses to 7,500 staff members.

In 2000–01, the state allocated \$860 million to support the rewards, sanctions, and testing components of the accountability system. Since then, however, large state budget deficits forced the deferral of rewards funding in 2001–02 to 2002–03. Given the looming deficits in the coming years, it is difficult to predict when the rewards funding will be restored on an ongoing basis.

The II/USP intervention program originally applied to those schools that scored below the 50th percentile on the Stanford-9. More than 3,100 schools fell into this category. The state changed the program in 2000. Now schools that rank in the lower half of the Academic Performance Index and fail to meet their growth targets are eligible to apply for state interventionary assistance. Under these requirements, 938 schools were eligible. Once eligible, however, not all low-performing schools become part of the intervention program.

Participation is voluntary and schools must apply. From this pool, state officials select only 430 schools each year. As a result, many low-performing schools either do not apply or are not selected for the program. For example, in 2000–01, of the 938 eligible schools, only 532 applied for the 430 slots. In other words, 406 eligible low-scoring schools voluntarily decided not to apply, and of those that did 102 were not selected. As of early 2003, 1,288 schools are participating in the II/USP program.

The upshot is that some of the worst schools in the state, such as those ranked at the one level, are neither compelled to apply for the program nor guaranteed selection if they do apply. It is quite possible for a school with a four ranking to be chosen over a school with a one ranking.

Further, the school with the lowest Academic Performance Index score in the state may not be eligible for the program if it meets its incremental annual growth target.¹³ Thus, such a school would be ineligible to apply to the program while a higher scoring school may be eligible if the latter failed to meet its growth target.

Whether because of its voluntary nature or the quirks in the eligibility requirements, some schools will not be part of the II/USP accountability regime. Students at these latter schools are trapped. It is an unfair situation for those students and schools that recognize their deficiencies and actually try to improve.

Once selected for the program, schools in the first year receive \$50,000 planning grants to develop a comprehensive school reform plan. As part of this phase, schools must hire qualified external evaluators to assist in developing the reform plans. The plan must then be approved by the state Board of Education. After approval, the school receives annual implementation grants of up to \$200 per enrolled student. Schools receive the implementation grant for two years and may be granted a third year of funding if they continue to struggle to meet their Academic Performance Index growth targets.

A major weakness of the reform plan process is the lack of quality control over the recommendations made by the external evaluators. Some school personnel have complained that the external evaluators do little except put the ball in the court of teachers and principals to come up with a reform plan. Proponents of traditional learning have complained that all too many evaluators recommend progressive student-centered teaching methods, such as discovery learning, that, according to empirical evidence, do little to improve student achievement.

Schools in the program that fail to meet their growth targets may be subject to a number of sanctions. If a school fails to meet its target but there is evidence of significant growth, the school can continue in the intervention program and still receive funding. If the school fails to meet its growth target in 12 months and does not show significant growth, state officials may reassign the staff, negotiate various site-specific changes, or try other approaches. If a school fails to meet growth targets and to show significant growth after 24 months, the state superintendent of public instruction may take over the school, reassign the principal, and, in addition, do one of the following:

- Allow students to attend other public schools
- Allow parents to apply directly to the State Board of Education to transform the school into a charter school and allow parents to establish the charter school at the existing school site
- Turn the management of the school over to another educational institution
- Reassign certificated employees such as teachers
- Negotiate a new labor contract
- Reorganize the school
- Close the school
- Place a state trustee at the school for up to three years, to monitor and review school operations and with the power to stay or rescind the decisions of the school principal and the local school board

In fall 2001, Gov. Davis signed a bill that layered another state funding program on top of the existing intervention program. Under the funding program, called the High Priority Schools Grant Program (HPSGP), low-performing schools in Decile 1 could receive a \$50,000 planning grant and implementation funding at \$400 per student — double the II/USP amount. However, instead of being subject to independent external evaluation, as is the case under the present intervention program, the new funding program allows districts to evaluate their own schools.

Further, the sanctions timeline would be lengthened from two to three years, this time under district supervision. Even if they do not hit their annual growth targets, schools can get another year's reprieve if they simply show "significant" growth. It may be four years before any sanctions are implemented against failing schools under HPSGP.

As of early 2003, there are 683 schools in the HPSGP. There is significant overlap between the II/USP and the HPSGP. Of the schools in HPSGP, 307 are also in II/USP. Because of continuing budget deficits, there has been disagreement between Governor Davis and the legislature regarding the funding for the two programs.

In 2002–03, the governor favored cutting funding for both programs by 10.8 percent and eliminating funding entirely for a new cohort of schools under HPSGP. The legislature opted not to cut the programs' budgets as much as the governor proposed and funded a new cohort of schools under HPSGP that the state will be obligated to fund in 2003–04.¹⁴

Schools that are sanctioned under either II/USP or HPSGP receive \$150 per student for three years and can have the sanctions lifted if they make "significant growth" for two consecutive years in a three-year period.¹⁵

In 2002–03, 24 schools are subject to state sanctions. By 2003–04, 100 schools will be subject to sanctions, with sanctions estimated to hit 230 schools in 2004–05 and 330 in 2005–06.¹⁶ Whether those sanctions are actually imposed or not is an open question. Legislation introduced in 2003, sponsored by the California Teachers Association, would eliminate both the sanctions and rewards portions of the accountability system.¹⁷

A critical question about California's school accountability system is whether the system gives students, teachers, and administrators real incentives to improve. There are some positive signs. For example, the mammoth Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has implemented successful curricular reforms partly because the accountability system has exposed large numbers of low-performing schools in the district and because the sanctions eventually could be imposed on some of these schools.

In 1999, half of the 565 schools in LAUSD were either in Decile 1 or 2.¹⁸ In response, in 2001–02 LAUSD implemented the phonics-intensive Open Court reading program in elementary schools districtwide. As a result it has seen early elementary-grade test scores rise significantly, especially among African Americans and Hispanics.

On the negative side, as mentioned earlier, the growth targets for low-performing schools are incremental.¹⁹ Also, participation in the intervention program is voluntary, and even those that apply may be turned down in the state selection process. Thus, the lowest performing schools in the state may not be participating in the intervention program and, therefore, remain beyond the reach of the state's improvement efforts and sanctions. Further, if the lowest performing school in the state meets its minimal growth target, it is ineligible to apply for assistance under this program. These features reduce the incentive for schools to improve markedly.

OMISSION OF A FLORIDA-STYLE SCHOOL-CHOICE OPTION

There are other significant omissions from the California system that dilute the incentive to improve. Unlike Florida, students attending a failing California school are not eligible for a state-funded scholarship/voucher to attend a private school. This lack of a parental choice mechanism can trap students, especially students from poor households, in a failing public school. Without having to worry about the potential loss of their customer base, public-school officials have less incentive to improve student achievement.

In Florida, students at schools that receive a failing grade in that state's accountability system two years out of a four-year period are eligible for vouchers. The possibility that students could leave the public school system caused poor-performing public schools to adopt an array of performance-increasing reforms such as phonics reading programs, better teaching methods, and increased tutoring. The result was a positive "voucher effect" on the performance of failing public schools.

In his analysis of Florida's "A-Plus" opportunity-scholarship program, education researcher Jay Greene found that "schools that received F grades in 1999 experienced increases in test scores that were more than twice as large as those experienced by schools with higher state-assigned grades."²⁰ The implication, of course, is that schools threatened with vouchers worked harder to improve their performance. Greene concluded:

Companies typically anticipate competitive threats and attempt to make appropriate responses to retain their customers before competition fully

There are other significant omissions from the California system that dilute the incentive to improve. Unlike Florida, students attending a failing California school are not eligible for a state-funded scholarship/voucher to attend a private school.

materializes. Similarly, it appears as if Florida schools that foresee the imminent challenge of having to compete for their students take the necessary steps to retain their students and stave off that competition.²¹

It should be noted that in May 2003, Florida officials announced the biggest improvement ever on the state's standardized test with more students now scoring at grade level. Governor Jeb Bush attributed the success to Florida's accountability system: "We have seen continued rising student achievement across the state, regardless of ethnic background. This year brings the biggest improvement yet in student performance. These results prove that our commonsense approach to education reform through accountability works."²²

Ultimately, it is up to the discretion of the elected state superintendent of public instruction to use many sanctions available under California's accountability system. Political concerns clearly play a role in this process. Over the last several decades, the teacher unions have been strong allies of the state superintendents. Given the unions' antipathy to charter schools and re-negotiation of collective bargaining contracts, it is difficult to imagine a union-allied superintendent using many of the discretionary powers allocated under the 1999 accountability law.

Thus, many sanctions may end up as mere paper tigers, depending on the occupant of the superintendent's office. Such a situation, again, argues in favor of a sanction such as Florida's school-choice voucher option, which places sanction power in the hands of parents rather than a politician.

STUDENT, TEACHER, AND ADMINISTRATOR INCENTIVES

Under California's accountability law, there is little incentive for students to do their best on the state tests. Sanctions do not fall on them if they fail to perform well on the exam, although a bill passed in 2000 did allot increased funds for students who did well on the standards-aligned portion of the Stanford-9. Some commentators say that high-schoolers' scores are as low as they are

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because students give only a token effort when taking the state tests such as the Stanford-9, since they suffer no repercussions for such half-hearted behavior. This is not the case with the high school exit

exam, where students may not receive their high-school diplomas if they fail to pass the exam.

Indeed, in interviews with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, high-school students said that they do not care how they score on the state's standardized tests, with most giving minimal effort or randomly filling in the bubbles on the answer sheets.²³ Elena Moss, a sophomore at Berkeley High School, told the newspaper that: "The state tests make no difference in our lives. It's not like the

high school exit exam, or the SAT . . . something that matters for our futures.”²⁴ Another student said: “After our teacher told us the test didn’t affect our grades, people just started bubblin’ in whatever. I got through it in 10 minutes.”²⁵ State officials admit that they have no idea if students’ lack of motivation is undermining the accountability system.²⁶

As for teachers, the state rewards them with bonuses if they work at schools where students perform exceptionally better than before. However, in the accountability system, rewards and sanctions are not tied to individual teacher performance. Poor teaching by an individual teacher does not automatically invite

any sanction. Yet, recent research shows that teacher quality and effectiveness are perhaps the most important factors in determining student achievement. The lack of a nexus in the California

However, in the accountability system, rewards and sanctions are not tied to individual teacher performance. Poor teaching by an individual teacher does not automatically invite any sanction.

accountability system between individual teacher performance and student performance on state assessments constitutes a significant hole in the accountability system.

It should also be noted that the state’s schools of education, which prepare and produce California’s teachers, are also absent from the accountability system. If too many teachers in California are not performing well, the state’s schools of education must bear some of the responsibility. Yet, they are left completely out of the accountability equation.

Under the California system, principals, superintendents, and school boards are held to some accountability. Principals may be reassigned and the state can take over schools. However, if no one holds teachers individually accountable for their effectiveness, is it fair for principals and school boards to be held accountable? Is it fair to hold a principal accountable for student performance at his or her school if he or she cannot hold individual teachers at the school accountable for their performance? Given union collective bargaining contracts that give teachers tenure and seniority rights, it is difficult for principals to hire the right teachers and fire the wrong ones.

THE HIGH-SCHOOL EXIT EXAM AND THE STATE STANDARDS

Although not formally part of the 1999 accountability law, California has also created a high-school exit exam aligned to the state’s academic content standards. The American Institutes for Research developed the test for the state, and it covers English/language arts through the 10th grade and math through Algebra I. The exam is graded on a pass-fail basis and students in the class of 2006 must pass the exam to receive their high-school diploma.

In March 2001, about 350,000 high-school freshmen took the exit exam for the first time. A state advisory committee recommended that the cut point for a passing score be 70 percent. However, because of the poor performance by the students tested, the state Board of Education reduced the cut point for passage to 55 percent in math and 60 percent in English. Students will also get to take the exit exam multiple times if they fail to achieve a passing score. Exit scores will be part of the API for grades nine–11 starting in 2002–03.

Ever present in the background of the accountability law are California’s academic content standards. The state’s standards are among the best in the nation. In its 2000 survey of state standards, the Thomas B. Fordham Foundation ranked California’s standards for English, mathematics, history, and science as number one in the country or tied for number one.²⁷ California’s standards are rigorous, specific, comprehensive, and cumulative. Now that standards-aligned assessments form the bases of the accountability system, there will be greater incentive to teach to the standards as opposed to teaching to a non-standards-aligned Stanford-9 exam. Given the high quality of California’s standards, such a development should help improve learning in the classroom and increase true student achievement.

TEST REPORTING

The accountability system has problems in its reporting system. To the general public, the state reports scores and rankings on a school-by-school basis using school-wide averages. Local districts report individual test scores to parents. However, a key deficiency in the system is the state’s inability to track individual student test scores over time. Thus, it is impossible to discern the value added of curricula, programs, teaching methods, or other education policies on student performance. This situation, though, will be changing for the better.

In 2002, a law was enacted that would develop a longitudinal student data system called the California Student Information System (CSIS) to track student performance on the state’s various testing devices. The system would use a unique student identification number that would allow the tracking of individual student performance on state assessments through the student’s school career in elementary, middle, and high schools. Schools would benefit greatly from the collection of such data.

Many school districts were not previously able to track student achievement from one year to the next with the result that a teacher may have no prior-year student assessment information, and thus not know the strengths and weaknesses of students. Further, districts may not have received assessment information for students coming from another district. The new data collection will allow for fairer comparisons of secondary schools, since individual student performance data would be available for students coming from different elementary schools.

This longitudinal data can also be used for an array of value-added analyses. For example, the Florida Department of Education notes that under value-added analysis, “The progress of all stu-

dents in a school can be reported in terms of individual teachers who provide instruction to those students.”²⁸ Thus, it would be possible to tell what impact an individual teacher is having on classroom performance and to differentiate between effective and ineffective teachers by comparing the progress of students going through their classrooms.

SUMMARY

Even with its flaws, California’s accountability system has shed light on the performance of the state’s public schools. This frightens many entrenched education special interest groups. Rather than scrap or gut the accountability system, as these groups would like to do, the system should be made stronger. Holes in the system should be plugged and tough sanctions must be handed out for failing schools. Parents and their children should also be given better choice options to escape failing schools. Policymakers must build upon what has so far been accomplished in order to ensure effective school accountability in California.

Even with its flaws, California’s accountability system has shed light on the performance of the state’s public schools. This frightens many entrenched education special interest groups.

2

Stanford-9 and California Standards Test

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

Although the Stanford-9 exam has been the main testing device in California, it is now being replaced by the California Standards Test as the key tool in judging the performance of students and schools. Results on the California Standards Test are a better indicator of the quality of the standards-based instruction that should be going on in every classroom in the state.

ASSESSMENT

While Stanford-9 scores have increased over the years, scores on the California Standards Test show that most of the state's students do not possess proficient knowledge in basic subject areas.

RECOMMENDATION

Low scores on the California Standards Test indicate that many schools need to do a better job of implementing standards-based instruction and learning in the classroom.

INTRODUCTION

California now utilizes two major standardized tests as part of its Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) system. From 1998 to 2002, the state used the nationally norm-referenced Stanford-9 exam for grades two through 11. In 2001, the California Standards Test (CST), a criterion-based test aligned with California's academic content standards, was administered for the first time.

The norm-referenced California Achievement Test, Sixth Edition (CAT-6) will replace the Stanford-9 in spring 2003. The CAT-6 will be aligned to California's academic content standards. It is expected that a methodology will be established that will allow CAT-6 results to be compared with previous Stanford-9 results.

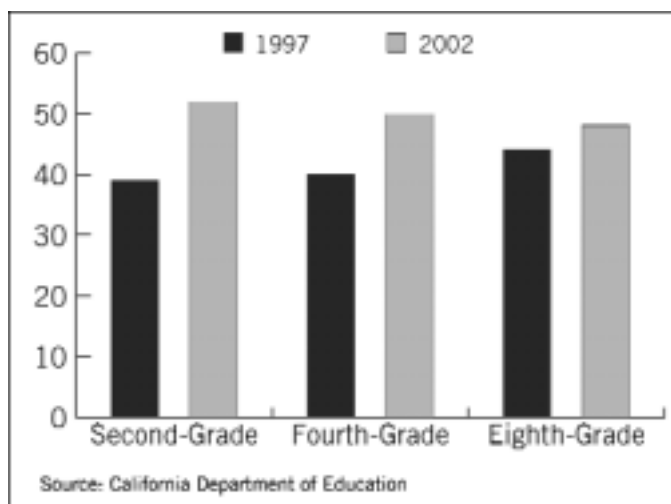
THE STANFORD-9

The Stanford-9 results are published as the national percentile rank (NPR) for the average performance of a group of students. One may compare, for example, the NPR for all California second-graders on the Stanford-9 reading test to a national norm that has the national average performance as the 50th percentile.

Stanford-9 reading scores in most grades in 2002 were up very slightly over scores from 2001. For example, the 2002 California second-grade reading score of 52 meant that 52 percent of second-graders scored at least as well or better than 52 percent of a national sample of students taking the test. In 2001, the state's second-grade score was 50. The 2002 fourth-grade score was 50 versus 47 in 2001. The eighth-grade scores in 2002 and 2001 were both 48. Indeed, eighth-, ninth- and 10th-grade scores were the same in both years, with 11th-grade scores up a tick from 37 to 38.

However, if one compares 2002 reading scores with those of 1997, the first year the Stanford-9 was given, the scores have gone up greatly. In 1997, the second-grade score was 39 versus the 52 in 2002. The fourth-grade score in 1997 was 40 compared to 50 in 2002, while the eighth-grade score in 1997 was 44 versus 48 in 2002.

FIGURE 1: STANFORD-9 READING SCORES



However, if one compares 2002 reading scores with those of 1997, the first year the Stanford-9 was given, the scores have gone up greatly.

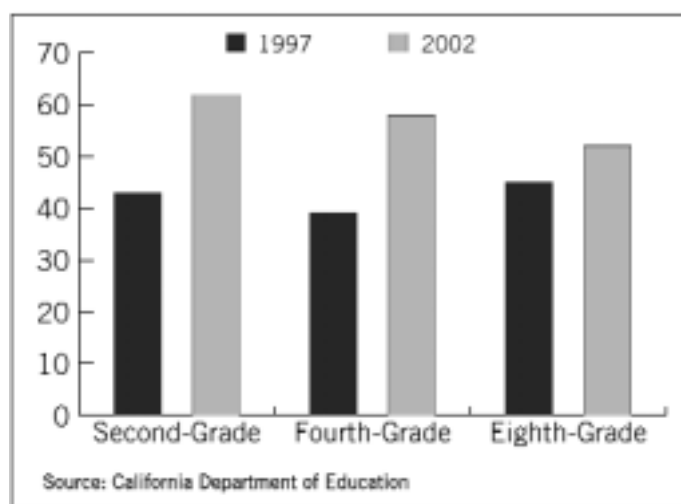
benefit from the state's recent standards-based reading reforms that have emphasized phonics-based reading instruction in the lower grades. Today's high-school students went through the elementary grades when California's failed experiment in whole language reading instruction was still ongoing.

Another reason for the poor performance of high schoolers may be that they are simply less motivated when they take the test. One high-school sophomore told the *Los Angeles Times*: "A lot of the students just think that it's another test and it doesn't really matter. They think if it's not the SAT, they can say, 'Whatever,' and forget about it."²⁹

California students have been doing better on Stanford-9 2002 math exam. The second-grade score in 2002 was 62 compared to 59 in 2001, while the fourth-grade score was 58 versus 54 the year before. The eighth-grade score was 52 in 2002 compared to the previous year's 51. Ninth- and 11th-grade scores in both years remained the same at 54 and 50 respectively. Scores in grades two through nine in 2002 were all above the national average.

Comparing 2002 math scores with those of 1997, the scores have gone up significantly. In 1997, the second-grade score was 43 versus 62 in 2002. The fourth-grade score in 1997 was 39 versus 58 in 2002, while the eighth-grade score in 1997 was 45 compared to 52 in 2002.

FIGURE 2: STANFORD-9 MATH SCORES



One continuing negative phenomenon has been the poor performance of high-school students. While students in the early grades hovered around the national average in reading, the 2002 10th-grade score was 33 while the 11th-grade score was 38. Some of this fall-off in achievement may be due to the fact that current high-school students did not

While officials, the media, and the public focus on reading and math scores, the Stanford-9 tests other subjects as well. In 2002, California's spelling scores in grades two through six were at or above the national average, while the scores in grades seven and eight were below the national average. These scores were an improvement over 2001 when only grades two and three

topped the national average. Science scores in grades nine through 11 were in the mid-forties in 2002, virtually the same as the year before. The language/writing scores in 2002 were also nearly the same as the previous year, with grades two through nine scoring above the national average and grades 10 and 11 below the national average. Finally, 2002 social science scores in grades nine and 10 were significantly below the national average, 44 and 38 respectively, while the score for grade 11 was 57. These scores were very similar to scores in 2001.

Stanford-9 scores for limited-English-proficient students, so-called English language learners (ELL), have increased, at least in the early grades. In 2002, the second-grade ELL reading score was 34, up three points over the year before; the fourth-grade score was 24, up three points from the previous year; the eighth-grade score was 19, same as the year before; and the 11th-grade score was 11, same as the year before. The 2002 second-grade ELL math score was 49, up five points from the previous year; the fourth-grade score was 38, up five points from the year before; the eighth-grade score was 29, up one point from the previous year; and the 11th-grade score was 29, same as the year before. Ron Unz, father of the anti-bilingual-education Proposition 227, says that the improved scores prove the success of his initiative.³⁰

For instance, a significant part of the lower-grade score increases can be traced to improvements in the performance of elementary schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District which adopted the structured phonics-intensive Open Court reading curriculum.

In all likelihood, increases in Stanford-9 scores are due to a combination of better curricula and teaching methods at the lower grade levels, such as greater focus on phonics-based reading and direct instruction teaching methods, plus non-academic factors such as test familiarity. For instance, a significant part of the lower-grade score increases can be traced to improvements in the performance of elementary schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District which adopted the structured phonics-intensive Open Court reading curriculum. The rise in Stanford-9 scores at Los Angeles elementary schools has outpaced the state as a whole.³¹

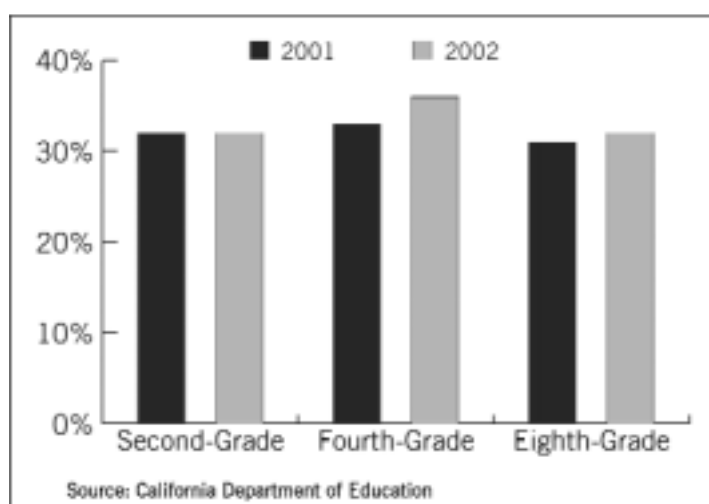
A *Los Angeles Times* analysis found that elementary schools have driven the score increases, with middle schools making smaller gains and high-school performance remaining flat.³² It is important to point out again, however, that the norm-referenced test, whether the Stanford-9 or the new CAT-6, will be a secondary measure in calculating API scores and rankings in the future. The standards-aligned CST will be the primary indicator of student performance.

THE CALIFORNIA STANDARDS TEST (CST)

In contrast to the Stanford-9 scores, the CST scores in 2001 and 2002 indicate much lower student achievement. The state sets performance benchmarks for the CST of advanced, proficient, basic, below basic, and far below basic. It is the state's goal that all students score at least at the proficient level on the CST, with proficient being defined as the acquisition of skills needed for entry into a four-year university. Unfortunately, relatively few students reach that level. Indeed, only about one-third of California students reach the proficient level or above in English/language arts, math, history, and science.

In 2002, 33 percent of students scored at or above the proficient level in English/language arts. Thirty-two percent of second-graders scored at or above proficient in 2002, the same percentage as the year before. Thirty-six percent of fourth-graders scored at or above proficient in

FIGURE 3: CST ENGLISH/LANGUAGE ARTS SCORES AT OR ABOVE PROFICIENT



2002, a three percent increase over the year before. Thirty-two percent of eighth-graders scored at or above proficient in 2002, one percent more than the previous year. Thirty-one percent of 11th-graders scored at or above proficient in 2002, two percent better than the year before.

Math scores were only slightly more encouraging. In 2002, 35 percent of students scored at or above the proficient level. Math scores in 2001 were not grouped at the various performance levels. Forty-three percent of sec-

ond-graders in 2002 scored at or above proficient. Thirty-seven percent of fourth-graders and 30 percent of sixth and seventh graders scored at or above proficient.

Sixty-one percent of eighth-graders took the general math CST, while 29 percent took the algebra I CST. The state standards say that eighth-graders should be taking algebra. Of those eighth-graders taking general math, only 20 percent scored at or above proficient, while 39 percent of algebra I eighth-grade test-takers scored at or above proficient.

In the ninth-grade, 33 percent of students took the general math CST, 32 percent took the algebra I CST, and 14 percent took the geometry CST. The standards say that ninth-graders should be taking geometry. Ten percent of ninth-grade general-math test-takers scored at or above proficient, while 19 percent of algebra I test-takers and 50 percent of geometry test takers scored at or above proficient.

In the 10th-grade, 21 percent of students took the algebra I CST, 24 percent took the geometry CST, and 14 percent took the algebra II CST. The standards say that 10th-graders should be taking algebra II. Nine percent of 10th-grade algebra I test-takers scored at or above proficient, while 21 percent of geometry test-takers and 39 percent of algebra II test-takers scored at or above proficient.

In the 11th-grade, 10 percent of students took the algebra I CST, 14 percent took the geometry CST, 19 percent took the algebra II CST, and 15 percent took the high-school summative CST. The standards say that 11th-graders should be taking the high-school summative CST. Seven percent of 11th-grade algebra I test-takers

scored at or above proficient, while 10 percent of geometry test-takers, 14 percent of algebra II test-takers, and 42 percent of high-school summative test-takers scored at or above proficient.

The math scores indicate that those students who are on the recommended standards pace do comparatively better on the CST than those who lag behind. However, the fact also remains that in most categories a large majority of students on the standards pace are scoring below the proficient level.

The percentages of students in 2002 in grades nine through 11 scoring at or above proficient in history, biology, earth science, chemistry, and physics were also low.

The percentage of ELL students scoring at the proficient level in 2002 in both reading and math was, in most grade levels, below 10 percent.

In 2002, state leaders preferred to focus on the incrementally positive trend in Stanford-9 scores rather than the disappointing CST results. Governor Davis, for example, said: “This not a time to pop champagne corks. But there’s also no question that we’ve shown improvements. All children, regardless of race or family background, are learning. We are making progress.”³³ The governor, however, overstates the positive.

While there has been some upward trend in Stanford-9 scores, it is certainly not the case that based on that positive trend all children are learning. As the above data indicate, about half or more of students, depending on the grade level, are scoring below the national average in reading. Also, 40 to 50 percent of students, depending on the grade level, are scoring below the national average in math. Low performance continues to be widespread in high schools. Also, according to the *Los Angeles Times* analysis, the statewide achievement gap between

As the above data indicate, about half or more of students, depending on the grade level, are scoring below the national average in reading. Also, 40 to 50 percent of students, depending on the grade level, are scoring below the national average in math.

poor and affluent students in reading and math has widened in every grade over the last five years.³⁴

The low CST results show that standards-based learning is not a reality for large numbers of California students. Not only do most students not perform at the proficient level, 37 percent of second-graders, 30 percent of fourth-graders, 33 percent of eighth-graders, and 39 percent of 11th-graders scored below basic or far below basic on the 2002 English/language arts CST.

Also, 32 percent of second-graders, 33 percent of fourth-graders, and 40 percent of seventh-graders scored below basic or far below basic on the 2002 math CST. Although the comparatively higher scores on the Stanford-9 attract the attention of the governor and other elected officials, Los Angeles-area principal Carolyn Horsley says that the Stanford-9 “is not a real concern for us.”³⁵ Rather, she rightly observes: “We want to look more at the [state] standards. That’s going to be our focus.”³⁶

The CST results, therefore, should be the main measuring device for student achievement. By that yardstick, California students have a long, long way to go.

3

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) allows for comparison of student performance between the states. The test allows the public to see how well California is doing compared to the national average and states with similar demographics like Texas.

ASSESSMENT

Not only do California's poor NAEP scores place the state near the bottom in many subject areas, the better performance of minority students in states like Texas indicates that fundamental problems in California's education system, and not the diversity of the state's student population, are to blame for low achievement.

RECOMMENDATION

California schools must better implement the state's rigorous academic content standards.

INTRODUCTION

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests basic skills in reading, math, science, and a variety of other subject areas at certain grade intervals. In California, NAEP tests students in fourth and eighth grades. NAEP subject exams are not administered every year, but are usually administered every few years on a staggered basis for each subject. Approximately 40 states participate in the NAEP, and the exams are one of the key instruments used to compare the achievement of students across the nation.

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) oversees NAEP and is responsible for determining the content and design of each NAEP subject area assessment. For each subject area, the NAGB develops an assessment framework to describe what students should know and be able to do at grades four, eight, and 12. The NAGB says that the frameworks are not meant to be a national curriculum, but a broadly accepted outline of what a national assessment should test.

NAEP uses matrix sampling, which is a testing technique that assembles different assessment documents covering aspects of a subject. These various assessments are administered to different sample sets of students. In other words, on the reading exam not every student answers the same questions. Aggregate scores for all students are then calculated. The major advantage of matrix sampling is that it allows for very wide coverage of subject content in limited testing time.

Since NAEP uses matrix sampling, it is impossible to compare scores among students, schools, or school districts. This is unlike the SAT-9 exam, which allows for such comparisons since all students take the same test and answer the same questions. NAEP produces statewide data and allows for comparisons of performances among states.

Also, unlike the Stanford-9, which scores students using a percentile ranking compared to a national norm, the raw numerical NAEP scores of students, which are termed “scale scores,” are categorized using performance levels of “advanced,” “proficient,” “basic,” and an implied fourth level of “below basic.” The NAGB says that to be “advanced” a student must display superior performance. To be “proficient,” a student must demonstrate a solid academic performance, i.e. they must demonstrate competency with challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real world situations, and appropriate analytical skills.

In contrast, to achieve the “basic” level, a student need display only partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at that grade level. The NAGB believes that all students should be able to achieve a “proficient” rating.³⁷

NAEP was most recently administered in California in 2000 for fourth- and eighth-grade math; in 2000 for fourth- and eighth-grade science; and 2002 for fourth- and eighth-grade reading.

NAEP READING EXAM (2002)

The 2002 NAEP reading exam was the most recently administered of the various NAEP subject tests. The reading exam was given to students in the fourth, eighth, and 12th grades, although scores were reported on a state-by-state basis only for the fourth and eighth grades. The previous NAEP reading exam was given in 1998.

On the 2002 reading exam, the average reading scale score of California public-school fourth-graders was 206. While an incremental improvement over the score of 202 in 1998,³⁸ it was well under the national average of 217.

According to the NAEP performance benchmarks, 21 percent of California fourth-graders scored at or above the proficient level in 2002, which was virtually the same as the 1998 proportion of 20 percent. Nationally in 2002, 30 percent of fourth-graders scored at or above the proficient level. Also in 2002, 29 percent of California fourth-graders scored at the basic level (meaning that 50 percent scored at or above the basic level) and 50 percent scored below basic. In 1998, 28 percent scored at the basic level (meaning that 48 percent scored at or above the basic level) and 52 percent scored below basic. In 2002, 38 percent of fourth-graders nationally scored below the basic level, an improvement over the 42 percent in 1998.

Like the overall scores, there was some slight improvement in ethnic group scale scores. The scale score of white California fourth-graders increased from 217 in 1998 to 223 in 2002; the scores of African Americans increased from 182 to 188; the scores of Hispanics increased from 181 to 192; and the scores of Asian Americans increased from 211 to 220.

These scale-score increases translated to increases on the performance benchmarks. These improvements, however, did not match the national trend. The percentage of white California fourth-graders scoring at or above the proficient level increased from 29 percent in 1998 to 35 percent in 2002, while nationally whites scoring at or above the proficient level increased from 36 percent to 39 percent. The California African-American percentage increased from seven percent to 11 percent, while the national African-American percentage increased from 10 percent to 12 percent. The percentage of California Hispanics increased from eight percent to 10 percent, while the national Hispanic percentage increased from 12 percent to 14 percent. Finally, the percentage of California Asian Americans increased from 31 percent to 34 percent, while the national Asian-American percentage increased from 27 percent to 36 percent.

The percentage of white California fourth-graders scoring at or above the basic level increased from 62 percent in 1998 to 70 percent in 2002, while nationally whites scoring at or above the basic level increased from 69 percent to 74 percent. The California African-American percentage increased from 32 percent to 37 percent, while the national African-American percentage increased from 34 percent to 39 percent. The percentage of California Hispanics increased from

28 percent to 35 percent, while the national Hispanic percentage increased from 36 percent to 43 percent. The percentage of California Asian Americans increased from 57 percent to 66 percent, while the national Asian-American percentage increased from 55 percent to 69 percent.

The percentage of white California fourth-graders scoring below the basic level fell from 38 percent in 1998 to 30 percent in 2002, while nationally whites scoring below the basic level fell from 31 percent to 26 percent. The California African-American percentage fell from 68 percent to 63 percent, while the national African-American percentage fell from 66 percent to 61 percent. The percentage of California Hispanics fell from 72 percent to 65 percent, while the national Hispanic percentage fell from 64 to 57 percent. The percentage of California Asian Americans fell from 43 percent to 34 percent, while the national Asian-American percentage fell from 45 percent to 31 percent.

Despite its slight improvement, California's national ranking among the states was still very low. Among the states that administered the NAEP reading exam in 2002, 32 ranked above California based on the percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient level. California was part of the bottom pack of 10 states that included Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, and South Carolina.

On the eighth-grade reading exam, California's average scale score dipped slightly from 252 in 1998 to 250 in 2002. The national average, on the other hand, rose slightly from 261 to 263.

Among the states that administered the NAEP reading exam in 2002, 32 ranked above California based on the percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient level.

According to the performance benchmarks, 20 percent of California eighth-graders scored at or above the proficient level in 2002, which was nearly identical to the 1998 proportion of 21 percent in 1998. Nationally in 2002, 31 percent of eighth-graders scored at or above the proficient level.

In 2002, 61 percent of California eighth-graders scored at or above the basic level, a slight decrease over the 63 percent in 1998. Thirty-nine percent of the state's eighth-graders scored below the basic level in 2002 versus the 37 percent in 1998. Nationally, 26 percent scored below the basic level in 2002 compared to 29 percent in 1998.

Breaking these figures down by ethnicity, the percentage of white California eighth-graders scoring at or above the proficient level decreased from 35 percent in 1998 to 33 percent in 2002, while nationally whites scoring at or above the proficient level increased from 37 percent to 39 percent. There was some good news, however, for African Americans and Hispanics. The California African-American percentage increased from nine percent to 13 percent, while the

national African-American percentage increased from 11 percent to 13 percent. The percentage of California Hispanics increased from eight percent to 10 percent, while the national Hispanic percentage increased from 13 percent to 14 percent. Finally, the percentage of California Asian Americans stayed the same at 25 percent, while the national Asian-American percentage increased from 30 percent to 34 percent.

The percentage of white California eighth-graders scoring at or above the basic level decreased from 82 percent in 1998 to 79 percent in 2002, while nationally whites scoring at or above the basic level increased from 79 percent to 83 percent. The California African-American percentage increased from 47 percent to 50 percent, while the national African-American percentage increased from 50 percent to 54 percent. The percentage of California Hispanics stayed the same at 46 percent, while the national Hispanic percentage increased from 52 percent to 56 percent. The percentage of California Asian Americans decreased from 71 percent to 67 percent, while the national Asian-American percentage increased from 73 percent to 75 percent.

The percentage of white California eighth-graders scoring below the basic level increased from 18 percent in 1998 to 21 percent in 2002, while nationally whites scoring below the basic level fell from 21 percent to 17 percent. The California African-American percentage fell from 53 percent to 50 percent, while the national African-American percentage fell from 50 percent to 46 percent. The percentage of California Hispanics stayed the same at 54 percent, while the national Hispanic percentage fell from 48 to 44 percent. The percentage of California Asian Americans increased from 29 percent to 33 percent, while the national Asian-American percentage fell from 27 percent to 25 percent.

Like its national position among the states on the fourth-grade exam, California's ranking on the eighth-grade exam was low. Thirty-two states ranked above California based on the percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient level. California was part of a bottom group of nine states that included Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and South Carolina.

Overall, California's low national rankings on the NAEP fourth- and eighth-grade reading exams plus the large percentages of California students scoring below the basic performance level would seem to indicate that the state still has a lot of work to do to improve the reading skills of children. Some, however, argue that the NAEP exam scores may not be a good measure of what is happening in California classrooms.

Eva Baker, an education researcher at UCLA, says: "The fundamental question is: How much of what NAEP is measuring is a good reflection of instruction kids are getting in California schools? NAEP is not intended to measure the California curriculum, but is intended to measure an amalgam of everyone's [curriculum]." ³⁹ While it is true that the NAEP exams are not aligned with California's academic content standards, this fact by itself should not cause the public to dismiss the importance of students' performance on the tests.

As the NAGB points out, the NAEP is supposed to cover a broadly accepted outline of knowledge that all students should possess. More important, California's low NAEP reading scores are mirrored, to a significant extent, in the low reading scores on the standards-aligned CST.

As the NAGB points out, the NAEP is supposed to cover a broadly accepted outline of knowledge that all students should possess. More important, California's low NAEP reading scores are mirrored, to a significant extent, in the low reading scores on the standards-aligned CST. Whereas about one-fifth of California fourth-graders scored at or above the proficient level on the 2002 NAEP read-

ing exam, around one-third of the state's fourth-graders scored at the proficient level on the 2002 CST English/language arts test. Both tests, therefore, show that large majorities of the state's students are reading below the proficient level.⁴⁰ NAEP scores, thus, should be taken seriously.

Because the NAEP scores are reported on a statewide basis, rather than by districts or schools, they cannot pinpoint which local jurisdictions are doing a better job of providing reading instruction. The NAEP cannot say, for instance, that Los Angeles Unified is doing better than Oakland Unified or vice versa. California's own assessment systems do give that important information, which allows state officials to determine the types of teaching methods and curriculum that are most effective. But despite this limitation, the NAEP scores give officials and the public a broad picture of student performance and should serve as incentive for systemic change and reform.

NAEP MATH EXAM (2000)

On the 2000 math exam, the average math scale score of California public-school fourth-graders was 214, which was an improvement over 209 in 1996. Further, while 11 percent of fourth-graders achieved a proficient rating in 1996, 15 percent hit that mark in 2000. Also 52 percent of fourth-graders were at or above basic in 2000 versus 46 percent in 1996. The percentage of fourth-graders that scored below basic dipped from 54 percent in 1996 to 48 percent in 2000.

The improvement on the 2000 test was widespread among all ethnic groups. The scale score of white fourth-graders increased from 223 in 1996 to 229 in 2000; the scores of African Americans increased from 188 to 193; the scores of Hispanics increased from 197 to 201; and the scores of Asian Americans increased from 218 to 227. Still, it should be noted that only two percent of African Americans achieved a proficient rating in 2000, unchanged from 1996, and only five percent of Hispanics achieved that rating, up just slightly from four percent in 1996.

Twenty-five percent of whites and Asian Americans achieved a proficient rating in 2000, up from the 17 percent for both groups in 1996. However, African Americans scoring at or above basic increased from 18 percent in 1996 to 25 percent in 2000, while Hispanics increased from 29 percent to 36 percent, whites increased from 63 percent to 71 percent, and Asian Americans jumped from 58 percent to 71 percent.

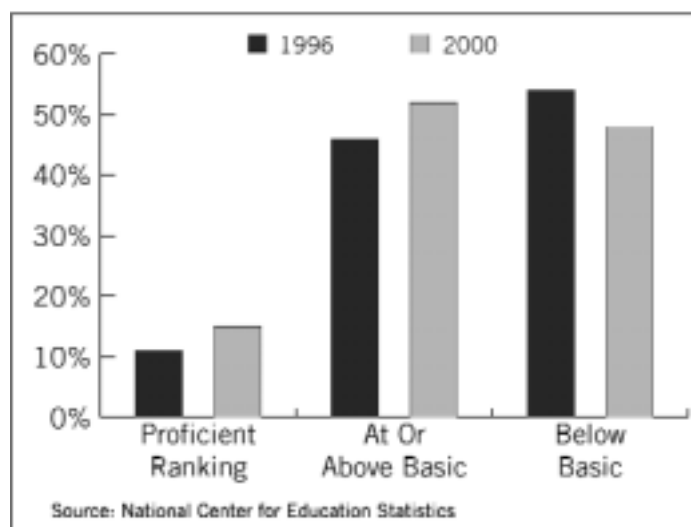
African Americans scoring below basic fell from 82 percent in 1996 to 75 percent in 2000, while Hispanics saw a decrease from 71 percent to 64 percent, whites from 37 percent to 29 percent, and Asian Americans from 42 percent to 29 percent.

Although there was improvement among fourth-grade African Americans and Hispanics in California, it should be pointed out that they still lag behind the national average for these ethnic groups and way behind the Texas averages. In 2000, the national average scale score for African-American fourth-graders was 205 compared to 193 for California African-American fourth-graders and 220 for Texas African Americans. The national average score for Hispanics in 2000 was 212 compared to 201 for California Hispanics and 224 for Texas Hispanics.

Also, five percent of African-American fourth graders nationally achieved a proficient rating and 39 percent achieved at or above basic. In California, only two percent of African Americans were proficient and 25 percent were at or above basic, while 12 percent of Texas African Americans were proficient and 60 percent were at or above basic.

For Hispanics nationally, 10 percent achieved proficiency and 48 percent were at or above basic. Five percent of California Hispanics were proficient and 36 percent were at or above basic, while 14 percent of Texas Hispanics were proficient and 68 percent were at or above basic.

FIGURE 4: 2000 NAEP MATH EXAM, CALIFORNIA FOURTH-GRADE TEST SCORES

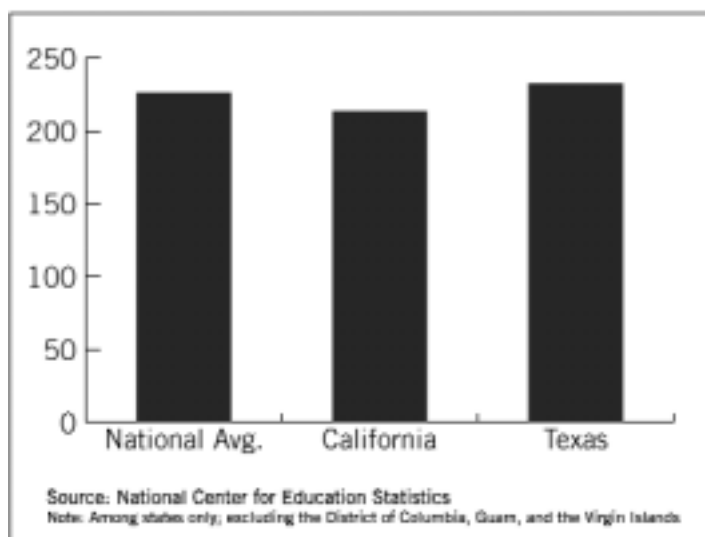


Although there was improvement among fourth-grade African Americans and Hispanics in California, it should be pointed out that they still lag behind the national average for these ethnic groups and way behind the Texas averages.

Nationally 61 percent of African-American fourth-graders and 52 percent of Hispanic fourth-graders scored below basic versus 75 percent of California African Americans and 64 percent of California Hispanics. A comparatively low 40 percent of Texas African-American fourth-graders and 32 percent of Texas Hispanic fourth-graders scored below basic.

Among states only (excluding the District of Columbia, Guam, and the Virgin Islands which also administer NAEP), despite its improvement, California's 2000 fourth-grade math score tied

FIGURE 5: 2000 NAEP MATH EXAM,
FOURTH-GRADE TEST SCORES



for next-to-last with New Mexico, with Mississippi bringing up the rear. California's average scale score of 214 was well below the national average of 226. Texas was tied for fourth best in the nation with a 2000 average score of 233.

Although California fourth-graders increased their math scores, there was less progress amongst eighth-graders. In 2000, the average scale score was 262, down slightly from 263 in 1996. The national average in 2000 was 274 and the Texas average was 275. The 18 percent of California eighth-

graders achieving a proficient rating in 2000 is a tiny improvement over the 17 percent in 1996. Likewise, 52 percent scored at or above basic in 2000 compared to 51 percent in 1996. On the flip side, 49 percent scored below basic in 1996 versus 48 percent in 2000.

Among ethnic groups, 27 percent of white California eighth-graders scored proficient in 2000, while four percent of African Americans, seven percent of Hispanics, and 33 percent of Asian Americans scored at this level. Seventy-one percent of whites were at or above basic, while 25 percent of African Americans, 34 percent of Hispanics, and 72 percent of Asian Americans hit this level. Finally, 29 percent of whites, 75 percent of African Americans, 66 percent of

It is truly stunning that three-quarters of African-American eighth-graders and two-thirds of Hispanics failed to achieve even a basic rating in math.

Hispanics, and 28 percent of Asian Americans were below basic.

It is truly stunning that three-quarters of African-American eighth-graders and two-thirds of Hispanics failed to achieve even a basic rating in math. These percentages were virtually the same as those

in 1996. The national and Texas 2000 averages for these ethnic groups were significantly higher than those in California.

Among states only, California eighth-grade math scores in 2000 ranked fourth from the bottom, beating New Mexico, Louisiana, and Mississippi.

NAEP SCIENCE EXAM (2000)

The NAEP science test was administered in California in 2000. The test was administered for the first time to fourth-graders. Eighth-graders also took the test, which was administered to students in that grade in 1996.

Among California fourth-graders, 14 percent scored at or above proficient, while 47 percent were at or above basic. Fifty-three percent scored below basic. California's scale score of 131 gave it a next-to-last ranking among the states, barely edging Mississippi. The Texas average scale score was 147, while the national average scale score was 148.

In 2000 in California, only four percent of African-American fourth-graders, five percent of Hispanic, 19 percent of Asian Americans, and 27 percent of whites scored at or above proficient on the NAEP science exam. Nationally, seven percent of African Americans, 11 percent of Hispanics, and 38 percent of whites scored at or above proficient (there were too few Asian Americans nationally to make up an adequate sample size). In Texas, 10 percent of African Americans, 12 percent of Hispanics, 38 percent of Asian Americans, and 39 percent of whites scored at or above proficient.

Seventy-two percent of California's white fourth-graders and 61 percent of Asian Americans scored at or above basic, while 72 percent of African Americans and 73 percent of Hispanics scored below basic. Nationwide, 79 percent of whites scored at or above basic, while 66 percent of African Americans and 58 percent of Hispanics scored below basic. In Texas, 84 percent of whites and 72 percent of Asian Americans scored above basic, while 55 percent of African Americans and 51 percent of Hispanics scored below basic.

The performance of California eighth-graders in 2000 fell from 1996. The eighth-grade average scale score in 1996 was 138, but came in at only 132 in 2000. Whereas 20 percent of eighth-graders scored at or above proficient in 1996, only 15 percent scored at that level in 2000. Forty-seven percent in 1996 scored at or above proficient versus 40 percent in 2000, which meant that 60 percent in 2000 scored below basic in contrast to 53 percent in 1996.

Among the states in 2000, California's scale score of 132 tied it with Hawaii for dead last on the eighth-grade NAEP science exam. The national average scale score was 149, with Texas at 144.

In 2000 in California, six percent of African-American eighth-graders, five percent of Hispanics, 29 percent of Asian Americans, and 26 percent of whites scored at or above profi-

cient. Nationally, seven percent of African Americans, 12 percent of Hispanics, 37 percent of Asian Americans and 41 percent of whites scored at or above proficient. It is instructive to note that 15 percent fewer California whites scored at or above proficient compared to the national average for whites, which undercuts the claim that California's lower test scores and rankings are due to the state's greater minority population.

In Texas, seven percent of African Americans, 12 percent of Hispanics, 40 percent of Asian Americans, and 36 percent of whites scored at or above proficient. Sixty-three percent of California's white eighth-graders and 55 percent of Asian Americans scored at or above basic,

Among the states in 2000, California's scale score of 132 tied it with Hawaii for dead last on the eighth-grade NAEP science exam.

while 75 percent of African Americans and 78 percent of Hispanics scored below basic. Nationwide, 74 percent of whites and 64 percent of Asian Americans scored at or above basic, while 74 percent of African Americans and

65 percent of Hispanics scored below basic. In Texas, 73 percent of both whites and Asian Americans scored at or above basic, while 76 percent of African Americans and 62 percent of Hispanics scored below basic.

Governor Davis has argued that California's 2000 NAEP scores do not show the impact of recent reforms, such as the state's school accountability system. While there may be some truth to this claim, it is nevertheless also true that California's average NAEP scores fall far below the national averages and below Texas, which, like California, has a diverse ethnic population. One can only conclude that California's public education system has been doing something fundamentally wrong.

4

SAT and University of California Admissions

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

Universities have long used the SAT as an important tool in their admissions policies. The University of California has criticized the SAT I and has gone to a so-called “comprehensive review” admissions system that downgrades grades and test scores and adds subjective factors such as “life experiences.”

ASSESSMENT

By giving less weight to merit indicators and considering subjective factors like “life experiences,” the University of California is trying to do an end run around Proposition 209.

RECOMMENDATION

The University of California should go back to its previous admissions policy of focusing on grades and test scores.

INTRODUCTION

Of all standardized tests, people are most familiar with the SAT. The test was formerly called the Scholastic Assessment Test, but the College Board, which produces the test, now simply calls it the SAT. It is used by colleges as a predictor of how well students will do if admitted. Taken by high-school seniors, the SAT consists of two types of tests. The SAT I is a multiple-choice exam with math and verbal sections of equal weight. The SAT II exams are devoted to single-area subjects such as history and social studies, biology, chemistry, physics, and foreign languages.

THE SAT

In the public's mind, the SAT is often viewed as an indicator of general student performance. But it is at best a crude measure of such performance. Unlike the California Standards Test or the Stanford-9, which test almost all students, or the NAEP, which tests scientifically representative samples of students, there is no control over who takes the SAT. The percentage of California

Thus, the real culprit for the decline in SAT scores is not the demographic change in the test-taking population, but the lower-quality public schooling received by those taking the test.

high-school seniors taking the test has increased from 30 percent in 1972 to 52 percent in 2002. Since SAT test-taking populations vary from year to year, using SAT results to say something definitive about general student achievement is problematic. Indeed, the College Board warns

that, "Since the population of [SAT] test takers is self-selected, using aggregate SAT I scores to compare or evaluate teachers, schools, districts, states or other educational units is not valid."⁴¹

This is not to say that revisionists are correct in their claim that drops in SAT scores have been caused by the increase in the number of test takers from minority and low-income groups. As PRI's 2002 report *They Have Overcome: High-Poverty, High-Performing Schools in California* explains, children from minority and low-income backgrounds can excel on standardized tests as long as they are getting effective classroom instruction. Thus, the real culprit for the decline in SAT scores is not the demographic change in the test-taking population, but the lower-quality public schooling received by those taking the test.⁴²

In response to criticisms that the SAT was too difficult, in the mid-1990s the College Board increased the time allotted to take the test, reduced the total number of questions, allowed calculators on the math section, and eliminated the difficult antonym portion of the verbal section. Because of these changes, in 1996 the scoring scale had to be changed or "re-centered" in order

to make scores comparable between years. This re-centering also had the effect of causing scores under the original non-re-centered scoring scale to increase under the new re-centered scale. Each portion of the SAT I, verbal and math, has a perfect score of 800, so that a perfect overall score would be 1600. A verbal score of 730, based on the original scale, now earns a perfect 800 under the re-centered scoring system.

Under the new re-centered scoring scale, in 2002 California's average verbal score was 496, while the average math score was 517. The 2002 verbal score was two points lower than the previous year. The math score was unchanged from the year before. In 1972, the average verbal score was 540, while the average math score was 517. The national average verbal score in 2002 was 504, while the national average math score was 516.

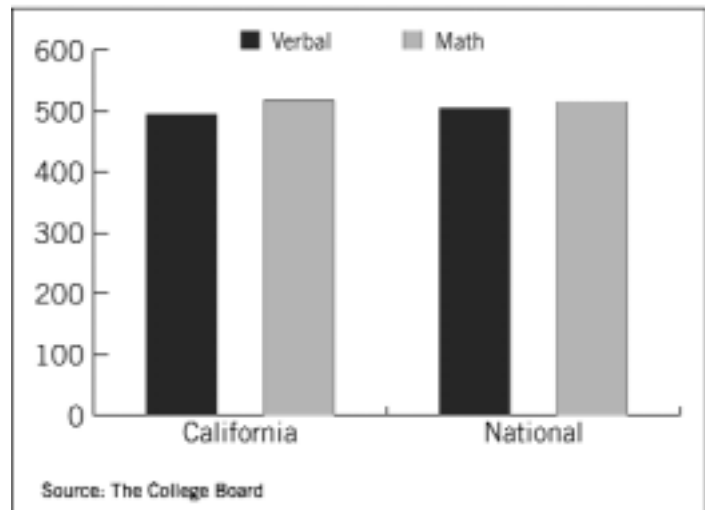
SAT I scores of African-American and Hispanic students have lagged significantly behind the state average. According to the state Department of Education, the 2001–02 average verbal score for African Americans was 426, while the average verbal score for Hispanics was 431. The average math score for African Americans was 427, with Hispanics scoring 447. Whites had a 530 average verbal score and a 544 average math score. Asian Americans had a 488 average verbal score and a 554 average math score.⁴³

Because of these disparities, a huge controversy continues regarding the worth and usefulness of the SAT I. The College Board has funded studies that have sought to discover whether the SAT I is a reliable predictor of success in college. The most comprehensive such study was conducted by the University of Minnesota. Released in 2001, the study used the meta-analysis technique to evaluate more than 1,700 other studies covering more than one million students.

The study found that the SAT is not only a good predictor of freshmen grade point averages, but also predicted GPA during later years in college, as well as study habits, persistence, and degree attainment.⁴⁴ Further, the study found that the SAT predicted the success of students in college regardless of gender or race and was not simply a measure of test-taking ability.⁴⁵ Despite such findings, critics of the SAT I have been working to undermine the exam.

In 2001, UC president Richard Atkinson called for the eventual elimination of SAT I scores from consideration in the UC admissions process. Atkinson portrayed the SAT I as “an ill-

FIGURE 6: 2002 SAT SCORES—
CALIFORNIA VS. THE NATIONAL AVERAGE



defined measure of aptitude or intelligence.”⁴⁶ Atkinson claimed that the test was perceived as unfair and that its results “can have a devastating effect on the self-esteem and aspirations of young students.”⁴⁷ He implied that the SAT I blocked African-American and Hispanic students from entering the UC system.

In reality, the SAT is not the greatest barrier to the UC for most African-American and Hispanic students. Rather, it is the failure to take the required college-preparatory curriculum. Regardless,

In reality, the SAT is not the greatest barrier to the UC for most African-American and Hispanic students. Rather, it is the failure to take the required college-preparatory curriculum.

Atkinson urged that the UC amend its admissions procedure and rely on SAT II scores temporarily, pending development of UC’s own subject matter entrance exams, and a so-called comprehensive review of applicants’ qualifications.

Atkinson also argued that a key reason for eliminating the SAT I was that the SAT II was a better predictor of students’ success in UC and that the SAT II

tests, since they were subject-area exams, were better indicators of what students were actually being taught in school. The UC subsequently produced data showing that the SAT II was a better predictor of student success.⁴⁸

However, critics pointed out that the UC study ignored the fact that while the UC requires students to take the writing and math SAT II tests, the subject area of the third required test is left up to students. The UC study did not limit its analysis to only the required writing and math tests that all applicants had to take, but also included student performance on the third test where all students did not take the same test.⁴⁹

Further, as their third SAT II, students can take the SAT II foreign-language exam. Showing proficiency in Spanish, for example, gives an obvious boost to Hispanic students who are already fluent in Spanish. These Spanish-speaking Hispanic students are more likely to score higher on this exam than native English speakers. Thus, eliminating the SAT I and relying instead on the SAT II increases the chances that Hispanic students could get into the UC.

It cannot be overemphasized that race was a significant underlying factor in Atkinson’s proposals. The powerful Latino Caucus in the State Legislature, for example, has placed great pressure on the UC to increase the percentage of Hispanic students in the system. UC Regent Ward Connerly observed that Atkinson is constantly pressed by minority legislators to “get our people in and we don’t care how you do it.”⁵⁰

Eventually, a compromise on the SAT I was struck between the UC and the College Board. The College Board agreed to include a new writing section, eliminate the difficult analogy section, and increase the difficulty of the math section. The writing section will include multiple-choice gram-

mar questions plus a written essay. Rather than the analogies, the SAT I will contain short reading passages and questions. The math section will expand to cover not just geometry and algebra I, but also algebra II. The College Board says that the new test will be administered for the first time in March 2005. This move has forestalled the UC's drive to eliminate the SAT I.

However, the new SAT I could have more problems than the current version. Scoring a written essay, even with solid guidelines, is a subjective activity. According to Brad Thayer of National Computer Systems, the nation's largest test-scoring firm:

If you give an essay [to score] to 100 teachers nationwide and even if you give them a scoring guide, they're going to approach it differently. Some will grade it more heavily on grammar. Others on content.⁵¹

Indeed, researchers have found that two trained scorers will agree only 60 to 80 percent of the time when grading an essay using a 1-to-5 scale.⁵² UC Regent Sherry Lansing, in response to the SAT I changes, wondered if essays could be graded objectively like math and science problems. Lansing observed, "I understand how you can objectively evaluate sentence structure and grammar, but beyond that it becomes entirely subjective."⁵³ Addressing her fellow regents, she said, "Each one of us at this table could read an essay and some would find it interesting and provocative, and some would find it dull."⁵⁴

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA ADMISSIONS POLICY

Although the SAT controversy has garnered headlines, the UC's new comprehensive review of applicants' qualifications may be having the biggest impact on who gets into which UC campus. Previously, the UC admitted a large chunk of students simply on high-school grades and test scores. Now, under comprehensive

review, in addition to grades and test scores, the UC looks at fuzzy categories such as academic accomplishment in light of life experiences and special circumstances. Life experiences and special circumstances could mean disabilities, low family income, first generation to attend college, need to work, disadvantaged social or educational environment, difficult personal and family situations, refugee status, or veteran status. Students are supposed to explain their life experiences in the essays they submit with their application forms.

Although the SAT controversy has garnered headlines, the UC's new comprehensive review of applicants' qualifications may be having the biggest impact on who gets into which UC campus.

UC campuses like Berkeley do not fix a set weight to either the academic or non-academic supplemental criteria. Thus, as PRI's 2002 report, *Preferences Versus Preparation: UC Regents Return to Race-Based Admissions*, points out, "it is impossible to discern why one student gained admission instead of another or why any particular student got in at all."⁵⁵ By fuzzifying up the admissions process, the UC can increase the number of African Americans and Hispanics admitted to the flagship campuses of UC Berkeley and UCLA even though these minority students may have lower academic qualifications than whites or Asian Americans.

Indeed, PRI's "*Preferences Versus Preparation*" report described what two UC regents saw for themselves when viewing the comprehensive review process in action:

Regents Peter Preuss and John Moores witnessed a politicized process where coming from a low performing or mostly minority high-school made admissions staff look favorably on an applicant. Preuss, who sat in on "norming" sessions at UC Irvine, where admissions staff discuss and implement any changes in admissions policy, noted that every seasonal "normer" (they made up half of the admissions staff) at Irvine was otherwise employed at the University Outreach program, an organization whose entire focus is bringing more "under-represented" minorities to campus . . . Regent Moores noted that the [admissions] readers were completely aware of school demographics and viewed each application through that lens. He claimed that readers became visibly excited by stories and achievements of students in "bad" schools.⁵⁶

Comprehensive review, therefore, is a back-door race-preference system. Pacific Legal Foundation attorney Sharon Browne, who has litigated important cases under Proposition 209, says that comprehensive review is unconstitutional discrimination based on U.S. Supreme Court decisions. Further, Browne notes that state court decisions under Prop. 209 make clear "that there is no 'diversity' exception to Proposition 209's prohibition against race preferences."⁵⁷

There are also subtler issues involving cultural discrimination, especially against Asian-American students. Comprehensive review is partly a reaction by UC against the fact that Asian Americans make up around 40 percent of its undergraduates despite being only 11 percent of the state population.

Under the new criteria, in 2001 UCLA admitted fewer Asians and whites, but admitted 19 percent more blacks and nine percent more Hispanics. Total system-wide black and Hispanic admissions are up significantly, exactly what UC wanted. Former UCLA admissions director Rae Lee Siporin says that the new comprehensive-review system was crafted to make the student body

reflective of the state's population. Further, Siporin baldly says that simply using poverty as the key criterion wouldn't work because it would "pull in" too many low-income Asians.⁵⁸

Also, admissions to UCLA from heavily Hispanic schools like South Gate High near Los Angeles are way up while admissions from heavily Asian/white schools like University High in Irvine are down. One South Gate High Hispanic female student was accepted by UCLA with a 940 SAT score, 380 points below the average score for students admitted. An Asian student at University High with a 1410 SAT score was rejected by UCLA and says that she hurt her chances by not dwelling on her family's hardships because "I didn't want too much of a pity party."⁵⁹

Another Asian high-school student laments: "I understand they're just trying to give more opportunity and bring success to the other [ethnic groups], but what about those Asians who were more qualified and got rejected

because of someone less qualified?

Do they not deserve success after

all their hard work? Since when

does a hard life make a person more

qualified than a person who worked

hard?"⁶⁰ She concludes: "If I can't

make it in just because I'm Asian,

why bother to try? Are these people

just trying to discourage all Asians

because it sure does discourage me from trying."⁶¹

An Asian student at University High with a 1410 SAT score was rejected by UCLA and says that she hurt her chances by not dwelling on her family's hardships because "I didn't want too much of a pity party."

The comments of Asian students underscore the culturally discriminatory aspect of UC's new admissions system. Many Asian cultures value stoicism in the face of difficulties. The Japanese, for example, speak of "gaman" which roughly means to just accept it when things are tough. Whining is disfavored. Hard work and quiet determination are preferred. Liberals claim, with little evidence, that standardized tests are biased against blacks and Hispanics, yet cheer when UC adopts an admissions system that is likely culturally biased against Asian Americans.

Even when high-achieving Asian-American applicants describe their hardships, many are rejected while lower-achieving black and Hispanic applicants with similar or lesser hardships are admitted. David Benjamin, who owns an SAT-preparation business, says ruefully, "It is simply shameful that it is worth less to be poor and Asian than to be poor and Hispanic."⁶²

The UC's new admissions policy is discriminatory. The gross subjectivity of the policy, the open comments by UC officials, the telling statistics, and the cultural bias of the process combine to equal discrimination with a capital "D."

5

English Language Learners

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

Around a quarter of all California public-school students lack fluency in English. Now that English immersion has replaced bilingual education as the main method of transitioning English language learners into English fluency, the question is whether this change in technique has produced positive results and whether school districts are re-classifying newly English-proficient students as fluent in English.

ASSESSMENT

Results on the new California English Language Development Test show that increasing numbers of English language learners are achieving English fluency.

RECOMMENDATION

School districts should abandon bilingual-education ideology, honestly implement English immersion, and reclassify newly English-proficient students as fluent in English.

INTRODUCTION

Up until recently in California, determining whether English language learners (formerly known as limited-English-proficient students) were gaining English fluency was a very inexact science. For example, inferences had to be made from the performance of English language learners on the Stanford-9 exam. Such indirect methods, however, have been displaced with the advent of the California English Language Development Test (CELDT), which was first administered in 2001.

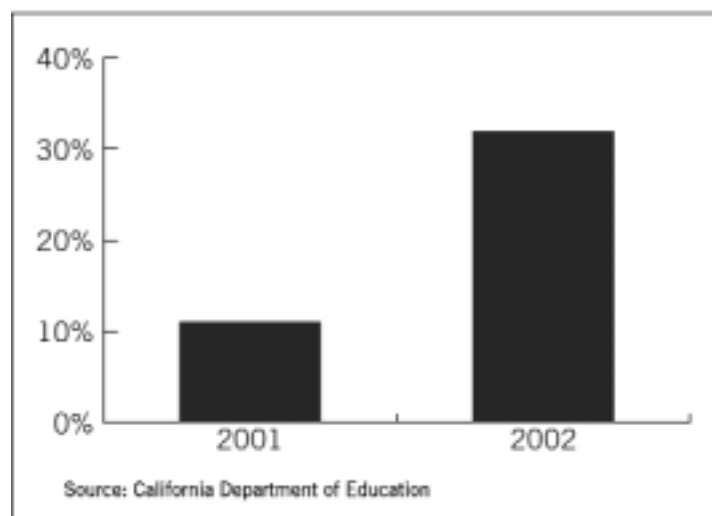
CELDT RESULTS

The CELDT is given annually to English language learners to measure their English fluency. In kindergarten and grade one, listening and speaking skills are tested, while in grades two through 12 listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills are measured. California is the only state to require the use of one state test to identify and monitor English proficiency.

In 2001, only 11 percent of English language learners scored at the proficient level, labeled “early advanced,” or above on the test. In 2002, however, the proportion of English language learners attaining English proficiency nearly tripled to 32 percent.⁶³ In some areas the increase was even more dramatic. In Ventura County, 30 percent of English language learners tested proficient in English in 2002 versus only one percent in 2001.⁶⁴

This progress is likely due in large part to the effects of Proposition 227, the successful 1998 ballot measure that requires one-year English immersion instruction for English language learners rather than the previous custom of multiple years of bilingual education.

FIGURE 7: 2001 AND 2002 CALIFORNIA CELDT TEST
PERCENTAGE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS
SCORING AT THE PROFICIENT LEVEL OR ABOVE



This progress is likely due in large part to the effects of Proposition 227, the successful 1998 ballot measure that requires one-year English immersion instruction for English language learners rather than the previous custom of multiple years of bilingual education.

Many teachers, administrators, and other observers credit the initiative with improving the English fluency and performance of limited-English-proficient students.⁶⁵ It is troubling, however, that in his press releases and media comments announcing the higher CELDT scores, state Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell makes no mention of this growing consensus on the positive effects of Prop. 227 and English immersion.⁶⁶

RECLASSIFYING STUDENTS AS ENGLISH FLUENT

Also worrisome is the fact that while the CELDT scores show that about a third of English language learners are now fluent in English, many school districts redesignate only a small fraction

of such students as English fluent. Although there’s nothing wrong with wanting English language learners to meet high academic standards, it’s important to note that subject-matter knowledge and English fluency are very different issues. Those who still support bilingual education continue to confuse the two issues.

For example, in the Garden Grove school district in Orange County, although nearly 41 percent of English language learners scored proficient or above on the CELDT in 2002, it is estimated that only four percent of them will be redesignated as fluent in English.⁶⁷

Historically, the redesignation rate statewide has been in single-digit percentages, with the rate in 2001

coming in at 7.8 percent. Thus, despite the increase in the percentage of students passing the CELDT, it is unlikely that the redesignation rate will keep pace when the 2002–03 redesignation figures are eventually released. Failure to change the status of these students blocks them from taking higher level courses in various subjects, effectively limiting their potential and blocking avenues to a college education.⁶⁸ Why the foot dragging?

According to state guidelines, redesignation involves not only CELDT scores, but also scores from the state’s academic subject-matter tests, student grades, teacher recommendations, and parental approvals. Local school districts take these guidelines and set their own performance benchmarks. Some districts have required English language learners to score higher on the subject-matter tests than recommended by the state guidelines. Other schools require that students not only pass their classes, but receive grades of B- and above to merit redesignation.⁶⁹

Although there’s nothing wrong with wanting English language learners to meet high academic standards, it’s important to note that subject-matter knowledge and English fluency are very different issues. Those who still support bilingual education continue to confuse the two issues. Shelly Spiegel of Californians Together, a statewide coalition of education and civil rights groups

that favor instruction in a student's primary language, says of the CELDT results, "It tells us kids are learning English, but it doesn't tell us how well they are doing academically."⁷⁰

While it is heartening to hear diehard bilingual advocates admit that students are learning English through Prop. 227's English immersion requirements, they still have things mixed up. English fluency is a means to acquiring knowledge, but doesn't guarantee that knowledge. Many native-English-speaking students do poorly on standardized tests and receive bad classroom grades. Should these students be labeled non-English-fluent as well? This absurdity underscores the need to keep separate English-fluency classification and academic subject-matter achievement.

In addition, teacher recommendations, even if based on academic criteria, involve some subjectivity. No doubt many teachers try to gauge accurately the English language proficiency of students. However, remember that teacher organizations were vociferous opponents of Prop. 227. It is not hard to imagine that some teachers may prefer to err against redesignation.

Finally, despite their high-minded claims, school officials may be motivated by baser concerns. Redesignation would cause schools to lose hundreds of dollars in government aid for every student labeled an English language learner.⁷¹ In an era of tight school budgets, the temptation to put off redesignation is great. Theresa Garcia, state assistant secretary of education, warns that "Schools and teachers need to take a very hard look at their past practices and past assumptions to make sure that neither financial incentives nor ideology are creating barriers for [English language learners]."⁷²

OPPOSITION TO ENGLISH IMMERSION AND TESTING

The picture for English language learners in California is brightening. Schools should accept this good news, redesignate their newly English-fluent students, and get on with the job of giving them the best education possible. Many lawmakers and education officials, however, are actually embarrassed by the good news of increasing English fluency among English language learners. The reason is that they simply do not want to give credit to Prop. 227 and English immersion instruction.

Jill Stewart, the incisive *Sacramento News and Review* journalist who covers the State Capitol, discovered that: "Four out of five Latino [state] legislators I sought out for comment on the great scores of Latino schoolchildren never called back. *La Opinion*, the biggest Spanish-language newspaper in

Many lawmakers and education officials, however, are actually embarrassed by the good news of increasing English fluency among English language learners.

California, didn't quote a single prideful Latino elected official dying to get in on the good news."⁷³ Stewart notes that lawmakers from the Legislature's Latino Caucus adamantly opposed Prop. 227, continue to be upset that voters passed the measure, and are doing the best to undermine English immersion and the CELDT test.

Stewart names names, saying, "Chief among those targeting immersion English, several sources tell me, are [Assemblyman] Marco Firebaugh, chairman of the Latino Caucus; Jackie Goldberg, chairwoman of the Assembly Education Committee; several members of the Latino Caucus; and seething lawyers left over from bilingual education's glory days."⁷⁴ Others share Stewart's conclusions.

Ken Noonan, superintendent of the Oceanside school district and former head of the state bilingual educators organization, originally opposed Prop. 227 but has become a staunch proponent of English immersion after seeing it work so well in his high-immigrant district. Noonan warns that "What you are going to see in Sacramento is a move away from testing because the

"The Latino Caucus," warns Noonan, "does not want to lose bilingual education for good."

tests show immersion English working too well — we've crunched the numbers on our own, and there's simply no debate about it."⁷⁵ "The Latino Caucus," warns Noonan, "does not want to lose bilingual education for good."⁷⁶

Currently bilingual-education proponents cling to a loophole in Prop. 227 that allows parents to obtain waivers from school districts to allow their non-English-speaking children to continue in bilingual education classes. According to Noonan, "if these tests remain, showing how little good bilingual is doing, there may be a movement to eliminate [bilingual education] totally."⁷⁷ That is why it is necessary for the Latino Caucus to kill the testing messenger.

State Board of Education member Nancy Ichinaga, a nationally recognized former principal who used English immersion and intensive phonics instruction to increase achievement among her low-income Hispanic students, echoes Noonan's view. Ms. Ichinaga, appointed to the board by Gov. Davis, says, "It makes you feel badly that the Latino politicians in Sacramento can't be trusted to do what's right for kids, and citizens are the ones who have to carry the load."⁷⁸

The racial politics of language instruction, however, has caused many knowledgeable people to become gun shy about speaking the truth. Jill Stewart quotes one unnamed state education official as saying:

Yes, we are expecting big hits on testing. But we all have to be really, really careful about what we say, and nobody wants their name attributed in talking with you on this issue because they will be personally targeted

in an ugly, ugly way — and Marco Firebaugh is the biggest slammer of all. Firebaugh is the one to be feared. You must be prepared, if you go against Firebaugh or the Latino Caucus on immersion English, to be called a racist. To go up against them as an employee of the state, you have to be Latino. We cannot have any white employees make any arguments for English immersion or against bilingual. We have to put our Latino employees out there.⁷⁹

The bully tactics and racially poisoned atmosphere in the State Capitol have intimidated many and created a seemingly Orwellian world where good is bad and bad is good.

Stewart notes that when Firebaugh visited the Los Angeles Unified School District and saw how its English immersion program was causing soaring achievement among English language learners, he remained unimpressed. An education expert told her: “Marco Firebaugh went to L.A. and saw the [English immersion] program working and said he hated it, and it’s crazy. Why does he hate it? Because it’s a crazy world, that’s why.”⁸⁰

It would be too easy, however, to chalk up the opposition of Latino politicians to English immersion as purely irrational. There is likely a more disturbing motive at work. Many of these politicians are not primarily concerned about objective achievement by Hispanic students. Rather, they are more interested in an ideology of ethnic culture that seeks to preserve supposedly authentic Hispanic community characteristics from being overwhelmed by majority mainstream American culture.

These authentic characteristics include the Spanish language. That is why these politicians and their allies ideological-

ly oppose successful English immersion, which allows non-English-speaking Hispanic students to assimilate into mainstream society. They would ignore low achievement and academic ghettoization of Hispanic students as long as the elements of authentic Hispanic culture, including language, were protected and promoted.

Many of these politicians are not primarily concerned about objective achievement by Hispanic students. Rather, they are more interested in an ideology of ethnic culture that seeks to preserve supposedly authentic Hispanic community characteristics from being overwhelmed by majority mainstream American culture.

Yet, though these Latino politicians wield immense power in Sacramento, they may be vulnerable to grassroots revolts by their own Hispanic constituents. Consider the case of Nativio Lopez, a longtime school board member in Santa Ana and a firebrand proponent of bilingual education. Lopez used his position on the school board to bully the district to keep bilingual education, even though many immigrant Hispanic parents strongly supported their children learning English as quickly as possible. Fed up with Lopez and his reactionary politics, his mainly Hispanic constituents recalled him in 2003 and he was defeated soundly by more than 70 percent of the vote, which included a majority of Hispanic voters.

The defeat of Lopez should serve as a warning to Latino politicians that if they try to eliminate the CELDT exam and bring back bilingual education through some backdoor they could meet the same fate.

6

High-School Exit Exam

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

California's high-school class of 2004 was supposed to pass an exit exam in order to receive diplomas. That requirement has now been postponed until 2006. Proponents say that the exam is needed to ensure that the diploma has academic meaning and to ensure that schools teach to the state standards, while opponents claim that it is unfair to deny diplomas to students who fail the exam.

ASSESSMENT

The exam is working as an incentive for students to get serious about their studies and for schools to teach to the state standards.

RECOMMENDATION

California must keep the exit exam.

INTRODUCTION

In 1999, the special session of the Legislature that approved Governor Davis's accountability program also passed legislation requiring all high-school students to pass a high-school exit exam before they could receive their diploma. Aligned to the state's academic content standards, the exit exam would, at least initially, only cover English/language arts and mathematics. Students would have to pass both sections of the test, although not necessarily at the same time, in order to graduate. The newly developed test was to be administered in March 2001, with the class of 2004 slated to be the first students required to pass the exam.

When the exam was being developed, it was initially envisioned that students would have to answer 70 percent of the questions correctly in order to pass. However, because early indications showed large failure rates with the 70 percent standard, the bar was lowered to the current requirement that students answer 60 percent of the English/language arts questions and 55 percent of the math questions correctly. Both sections of the test contain multiple-choice questions. The English section also contains two essay questions.

Students are allowed to take the exam multiple times during the school year. For instance, a 10th-grader who failed to pass the exam in 2002 still had seven additional chances to retake and pass the test. In 2001, freshmen high schoolers were allowed to take the test, but from 2002 onward only students at the sophomore level and above could take the test. Since students can now start taking the exam in the 10th grade, the difficulty of the exam is geared to up to a 10th-grade level.

In spring 2002, of the 182,515 10th-graders that took the English/language arts section of the exam, 54 percent passed, while of the 248,328 10th-graders that took the math section, 32 percent passed. The lower math passage rate is likely attributable to the fact that algebra is included on the math test and many 10th-grade students taking the exam had not yet taken an algebra course. As these students continue in high-school and take algebra courses, the math passage rate should increase. Also, the reason for the differences among the number of students taking each section is due to the fact that some students had previously passed only one section of the test.

The passage rate among various student subgroups was even worse. In 2002, only 20 percent of African-American test-takers passed the math section, while 46 percent passed the English section. Among Hispanics, 22 percent passed the math section, while 42 percent passed the English section. And although 74 percent of whites passed the English section, less than half, 49 percent, passed the math section.

Combining the overall 2001 and 2002 results, only approximately 48 percent of students scheduled to graduate in 2004 passed both parts of the exam, with 64 percent passing the English/language arts section and 52 percent passing the math section. Such statistics caused

some state education officials to voice misgivings about the possibility of withholding high-school diplomas from a potentially large number of students.

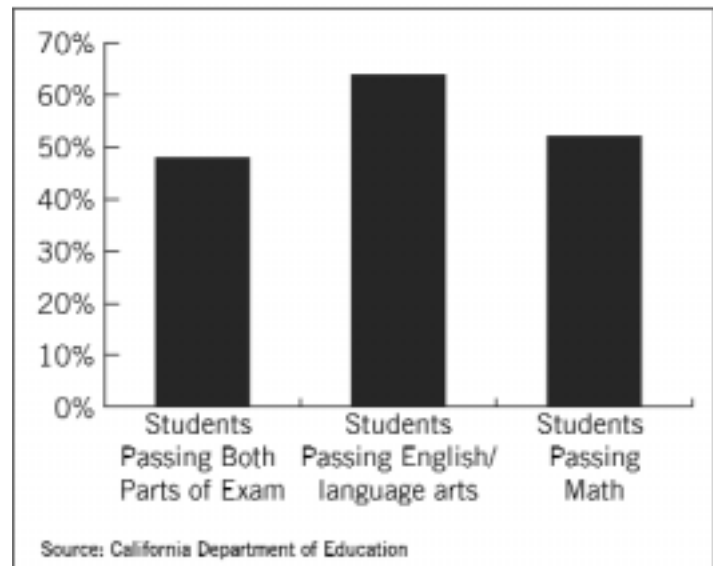
In June 2003, Jack O'Connell, state Superintendent of Public Instruction, announced that he would not administer the July testing session of the exit exam. He also said that he would recommend that the effects of the exam be postponed until 2006. In July, the State Board of Education followed O'Connell's lead and voted to have the exit exam be a requirement for graduation for the class of 2006 rather than the class of 2004.

Although they waved the white flag, state officials should have considered some important points. First, as mentioned previously, students had multiple chances to pass the exam so there was still time to improve passage rates before 2004. The most recent analysis of the passage rate data is contained in an independent evaluation study of the high-school exit exam prepared for the California Department of Education.

Based on data through early 2003, the study found that: "For English-language arts . . . , the overall passing rate is now above 80 percent. If the cumulative rate continues to increase at about 10 percent per year, it should reach roughly 95 percent by June 2004."⁸¹ In math, the passing rate is now just over 60 percent, with roughly 80 percent estimated by June 2004.⁸² Although these figures meant that some students would not have earned a diploma, the numbers were not disastrously high and were heading in the right direction.

California should also look at the experience of other states. In Massachusetts, which implemented a similar high-stakes high-school exam, critics predicted that huge numbers of students would fail the test and have their diplomas withheld. However, for the class of 2003, the percentage of students passing the test increased from 68 percent in 2001 to 90 percent in 2003, due in large part to a variety of educa-

FIGURE 8:
CALIFORNIA HIGH-SCHOOL EXIT EXAM RESULTS
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS PASSING BASED ON
COMBINED 2001 AND 2002 TEST RESULTS



Although these figures meant that some students would not have earned a diploma, the numbers were not disastrously high and were heading in the right direction.

tion reform measures.⁸³ California officials should consider the view of Massachusetts House Speaker Thomas Finnerman. “It’s important,” he said, “that Massachusetts not retreat to the pre-education reform years when I think a Massachusetts diploma was essentially meaningless.”⁸⁴

Indeed, low test scores act as a diagnostic tool to indicate where schools need to improve. Massachusetts schools receive detailed reports about each student’s strengths and weaknesses based on his or her test scores. Tutorials and other remedial programs are then set up for the students. Such programs have helped increase the passage rate. Massachusetts education commissioner David Driscoll says, “There were a lot of doubters a few years ago,” but previously low-performing students “are now getting attention and they are succeeding.”⁸⁵

California school districts are required by law to provide supplemental standards-aligned instruction to students who fail to pass the exam. Further, since the exit exam is aligned with the standards, which cover core subjects such as English, math, science, and social studies, schools that want their students to pass the exam should be concentrating on emphasizing the

The independent evaluation of the exit exam found that the exam “has been a major factor leading to dramatically increased coverage of the California Content Standards at both the high-school and middle school levels and to development or improvement of courses providing help for students who have difficulty mastering these standards.”

standards in classroom instruction.

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According to the evaluation, in 1999 only about 20 percent of high schools surveyed in the report covered at least three-quarters of the standards, whereas in the 2002–03 school year more than 80 percent of the schools reported

such in-depth coverage.⁸⁷ The report found that schools with high levels of standards coverage had much higher passage rates on the exit exam than schools that had not implemented the standards as intensely.

For example, on the English portion of the exam, 100 percent of the schools in the survey which had high levels of standards coverage had passage rates of 75 percent or greater. In contrast, only 59 percent of schools that had lower standards coverage had passing rates of 75 per-

cent or greater.⁸⁸ Further, it was found that “Passing rates were significantly higher for schools reporting early alignment to the California Content Standards covered by the [exit exam].”⁸⁹

Referring to the evaluation, state assistant secretary of education Theresa Garcia points out that “Teachers and principals interviewed for the study credited the exam with being a major factor in driving schools to increase alignment with California’s nationally renowned academic content standards.”⁹⁰ Ms. Garcia observes that the exit exam serves “as an important tool for helping students gain the skills they need to succeed in high-school and beyond.”⁹¹

The *Los Angeles Times* has also noted that “Educators say the tests have had a significant impact in schools, forcing teachers to pay closer attention to California’s new academic content standards, while prompting students to get more serious about their studies.”⁹²

In the Los Angeles Unified School District, superintendent Roy Romer says that low scores offer an opportunity to correct the problems of large urban high schools. Romer, who has implemented a phonics-intensive reading program that has increased test scores of students, especially minority students, in the early elementary grades, has also launched a phonics-rich literacy program for secondary-school students who read at low levels. Also, Romer’s district now offers new courses aligned to the state’s rigorous English and math standards, which are tested on the exit exam, and after-school programs for students who are having trouble passing the exam.⁹³

Finally, withholding a diploma is an incentive for many students to take school more seriously and work harder.

“We have a system,” says Romer, “in which the culture has been to give [students] a D and let them pass.”⁹⁴ He vows to change that thinking.

Finally, withholding a diploma is an incentive for many students to take school more seriously and work harder. Massachusetts legislator Peter Larkin, education committee co-chair in the state House of Representatives, notes: “The high-stakes test has its own motivation as well. For the first time, there is as much motivation for students to learn as there is for teachers to teach.”⁹⁵ Jack Leonard, chief academic officer at Dorchester High School in Massachusetts, observes, “I’ve never seen kids as serious about their academics as they have been under the shadow of the [exit exam].”⁹⁶

The education research organization EdSource points out that middle and high-school students are “notorious for a lack of self-motivation.”⁹⁷ In California, however, students were getting the message that they need to focus and get serious about their studies. Mary Burns, an 11th-grader at Chula Vista High School in San Diego County, failed the math section of the test several times, but supports the exit exam saying, “I need to learn and really try, but I know I’m getting a

diploma that I really deserve.”⁹⁸ She observed that some of her friends who graduated before the exit exam requirement did not study very hard or learn very much.⁹⁹

Jenn Oates, a science teacher at Elk Grove High School in Sacramento County, teaches in a program designed to get minorities interested in the sciences. She points out: “The test isn’t that hard. Kids should be able to pass it, and if they can’t, we shouldn’t let them out of high-school, period. Second, remember that it is the high-school exit exam. If they don’t pass it in the 10th grade they will have numerous opportunities to do so by the time they get to graduation.”¹⁰⁰ Indeed, if a 12th-grader cannot pass a 10th-grade-level test when given up to 10 or more opportunities to do so, then it is difficult to see why such a student deserves a diploma.

Gwen Espino, a counselor at Richmond High School in the Bay Area, says that students were finally beginning to realize the importance of the test: “They’re concerned, they’re focused. Students who are sophomores now are even realizing, ‘Oh, we better get on the ball.’”¹⁰¹ Espino supports the test and opposed postponing its effects. In response to the argument of critics that the exam be suspended until adequate resources are provided to all students, she replies: “That may take forever. We can’t depend on that.”¹⁰²

Other teachers agreed that the consequences for non-passage should not be put off. The independent evaluation of the exam quotes one teacher who says:

The Class of 2004 should be held accountable for [the exit exam] because the junior class has spent the last two years focusing on this test and thought it was going to count. Students have been taking the test repeatedly, taking summer classes to pass, and finally passing. Teachers have spent extra time and resources to prepare them for the test. Delaying would send a message to other classes that the requirement will be removed at the last minute. Start with the first class that has been putting the time in, the Class of 2004.¹⁰³

Critics of the test also claim that students who believe that they cannot pass the test will drop out of school. The early data do not seem to support this concern. Then state superintendent Delaine Eastin noted after the 2002 results were released that the exam “does not seem to be affecting the state’s dropout rate.”¹⁰⁴ She observed that “Students so far are choosing to stay in school and meet the challenge.”¹⁰⁵

In Massachusetts, there have so far been no conclusive data showing an increase in student dropouts because of the state exit exam. There has been some shrinkage in the size of the 2003 class, the first class of Massachusetts students required to pass the exit exam. However, this shrinkage can be explained by other factors such as the fact that, in response to the exam,

Massachusetts schools have begun to eliminate the discredited practice of social promotion and are holding back failing students. According to James Peyser, chairman of the Massachusetts Board of Education, “I don’t see a stampede of seniors out of the building because of [the exit exam].”¹⁰⁶

In a strongly worded 2002 editorial, the liberal *Boston Globe* summed up the case for a high-school exit exam with tough consequences. Although acknowledging that there were disparities in achievement between whites, African Americans, and Hispanics, the *Globe* pointed out:

But the tests did not create the problem. They should be hailed for highlighting the poor education that has been tolerated for years at too many schools, many with high enrollments of poor and minority students. [The exit exam] can help remedy this situation. In Boston, for instance, Superintendent Thomas Payzant says students are doing three to four times as much writing as before — with positive results. Yes, improvements could and should have been made without the threat contained in the [exit exam] graduation requirement, but it didn’t happen. [The exit exam] is proving to be an effective, and needed, incentive.¹⁰⁷

The *Globe* concluded that “the revolutionary high-stakes premise — that a diploma should signify a level of learning and not merely attendance — should not be compromised.”¹⁰⁸

After reviewing testing guidelines laid down by the American Educational Research Association, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council for Measurement in Education, the independent evaluation of the exit exam concluded that the exam “meets all of the test standards for use as a graduation requirement.” With the California State University system having to provide remedial instruction to half its incoming freshmen, now is not the time to back down on accountability and higher expectations. The high-school exit exam has improved the quality of instruction for students, which in turn will improve their achievement. Now that State education officials have blinked on when the exit exam will affect students, one wonders whether students will continue to take the exam seriously.

The high-school exit exam has improved the quality of instruction for students, which in turn will improve their achievement.

7

Advanced Placement Test

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

High-school seniors who have completed college-level courses can take the Advanced Placement test and receive college credit. Some question whether the courses and the test are equally available to all students.

ASSESSMENT

There has been an increase in the rate of test taking by students of all major ethnic groups in California.

RECOMMENDATION

As California ratchets up the rigor of classroom instruction, schools should make Advanced Placement courses more widely available.

INTRODUCTION

The Advanced Placement (AP) test is taken by high-school seniors who have completed one of 29 AP college-level academic classes. These students may receive college credit for achieving a sufficiently high test score, usually a three or above on a scoring scale of one to five.

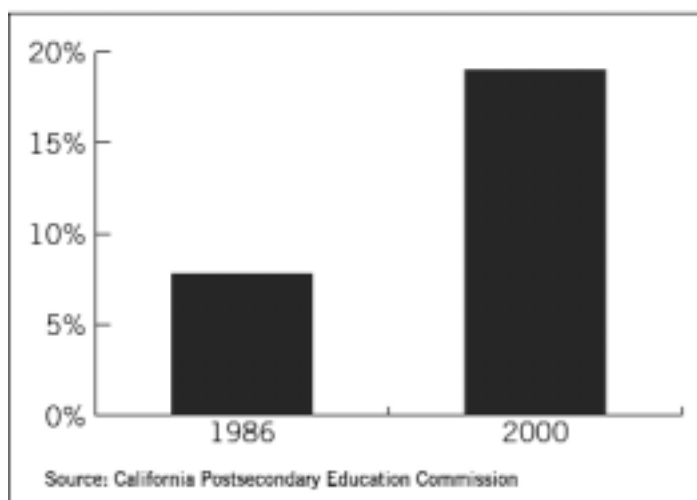
The number of twelfth-graders in California taking the exam has grown from 19,633 in 1986 to 58,871 in 2000. This increase in the rate of students taking the AP greatly exceeded the rate of increase in K–12 enrollment during this period. As a proportion of all high-school graduates, the percentage of AP test-takers has increased from 7.8 percent in 1986 to 19 percent in 2000.

Increases in AP test taking are viewed as an encouraging sign because they indicate that more students wish to pursue further academic study in colleges and universities.

The rate of test taking has increased among all major ethnic groups in California. As a proportion of each ethnic group’s high-school graduates, 33.9 percent of Asian Americans took the AP exam in 2000 versus 13.2 percent in 1986; 8.2 percent of African Americans took the exam in 2000 versus 1.9 percent in 1986; 12.3 percent of Hispanics took the exam in 2000 versus 2.8 in 1986; and 17.6 percent of whites took the exam in 2000 versus 6.3 percent in 1986.

The results of the AP exams are reported according to a so-called “qualifying rate” per 100 high-school juniors and seniors. Thus, for example, in California, the qualifying rate was 3.4, which meant that 3.4 students per 100 high-school juniors and seniors achieved an AP score of three or better. Over the years, the qualifying rate has risen from 3.4 in 1984 to 14.8 in 1999, a 335-percent increase.

FIGURE 9: PERCENTAGE OF CALIFORNIA TWELFTH-GRADERS TAKING THE ADVANCED PLACEMENT TEST



8

Dropout and Graduation Rates

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

It is difficult to determine the real number of dropouts in California because of the state's inability to track individual students. The dropout and graduation rates give two very different pictures of the state's dropout situation.

ASSESSMENT

Because the dropout rate relies on a questionable methodology, the graduation rate is a better, but not perfect, indicator of how many students drop out of school. In California, three out of 10 students do not graduate from high-school.

RECOMMENDATION

The dropout rate calculation needs to be improved through student tracking and by counting students who earn their GED as dropouts.

INTRODUCTION

Although they may seem to measure the same phenomenon, dropout rates and graduation rates involve two very different calculations. The rates also give a contrasting picture of how well the public school system retains students.

THE DROPOUT RATE VERSUS THE GRADUATION RATE

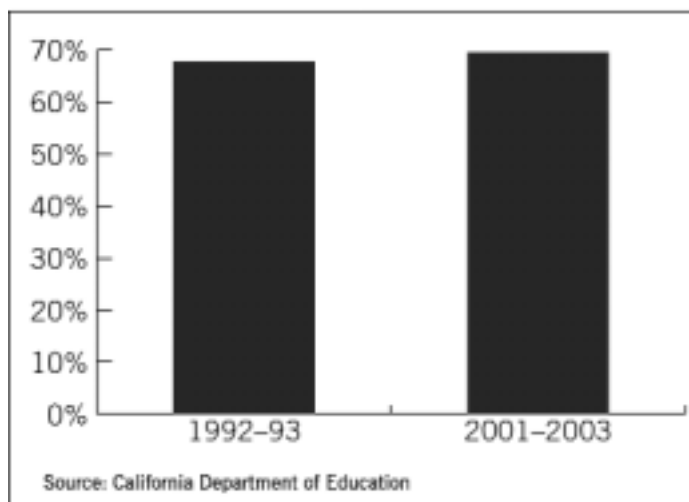
The dropout rate can be calculated in one of two ways. The one-year dropout rate, which is often mentioned in the media, is computed by comparing enrollment and dropout figures for the high-school grades in the same academic year. This rate is usually small. In 2001–02, the one-year dropout rate in California was 2.7 percent. The one-year rate has been falling over time. In 1992–93, for example, the rate was five percent.

The second method of calculating the dropout rate is the four-year rate. This rate compares the number of dropouts in grades nine through 12 against the total enrollment in those grades. Calculating the dropout rate in this way yields a higher number than the one-year rate. In 2001–02, the four-year dropout rate was 10.9 percent. Like the one-year rate, the four-year rate has been declining over time. In 1992–93, the rate was 19 percent.

The graduation rate does not count dropouts per se. Instead, the graduation rate is calculated by comparing the number of students graduating from high-school during a given academic year with the ninth grade enrollment four years earlier. In other words, of the students who started the ninth grade, how many were left at graduation four years later, and what percentage did they represent of the ninth grade total? In 2001–02, the graduation rate was 69.6 percent. This rate implies that 30.4 percent of students in the ninth-grade class four years earlier either dropped out or for other reasons did not graduate from high-school.

Donna Rothenbaum, a state consultant on educational demographics, says that with three out of 10 students not graduating, “Clearly that’s an indication that something is wrong.”¹⁰⁹ Unlike

FIGURE 10:
CALIFORNIA HIGH-SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES
PERCENTAGE OF NINTH GRADE TOTAL
GRADUATING FOUR YEARS LATER



the two dropout rates, the graduation rate has stayed fairly consistent. In 1992–93, the rate was 67.9 percent.

Of these various rates, which is the better indicator of how many students actually leave school and do not return? The problem with both dropout-rate calculations is that they under-

Donna Rothenbaum, a state consultant on educational demographics, says that with three out of 10 students not graduating, “Clearly that’s an indication that something is wrong.”

count the actual number of dropouts. Through the 2001–02 academic year, the California Department of Education defined a dropout as a student in grade 7–12 under the age of 21 who has left his or her school for 45 consecutive days and has not enrolled in another public or

private school nor received a high-school diploma or its equivalent. Under this definition, many students slipped through the cracks and were never counted as dropouts.

For example, a student may supposedly transfer to another public school but never show up at the second school. Because school districts are lax in tracking transferring students, the student often is not counted as a dropout. Also, because the dropout definition does not focus on a 12-month period, but rather emphasizes a 45-consecutive-day absence period during the school year, students who drop out of school during summer vacation and fail to enroll in the fall are not counted as dropouts. Further, schools could also eliminate a dropout from their records by transferring a student’s records to an independent study program without verifying what had actually happened. Schools could also claim that a student has moved out of state without any supporting evidence.

For its part, the state does not audit the dropout reports put out by school districts. Then-state superintendent of public instruction Delaine Eastin admitted the problems with the state’s dropout-rate methodologies saying that she was “reluctant to emphasize this positive trend [in dropouts] because of difficulties associated with collecting quality dropout data.”¹¹⁰

The graduation rate is also not perfect. Since the rate is calculated simply by comparing the total number of high-school graduates with the total number of ninth-graders four years before, and does not track students who leave school, there will be some students who will have left California for another state, will have enrolled in a private school, or will have completed graduation requirements in adult school. However, studies have shown that such deficiencies are relatively minor.¹¹¹ The graduation rate is, therefore, a better gauge of how many students actually drop out of school than the dropout rates.

Delaine Eastin acknowledged that even allowing for the minor deficiencies in the graduation rate methodology, the graduation rate is still a better indicator of the real rate of dropouts.¹¹²

Eastin also accepted the primary importance of the graduation rate by saying, “the focus needs to be on improving graduation and completion rates.”¹¹³ Also interesting is the fact that EdSource, the respected education research organization, lists the state graduation rate but not the state dropout rate in its most popular publication.¹¹⁴

THE GED AND REFORMING DROPOUT RATE METHODOLOGY

In order to improve the dropout rate calculation, the state Department of Education adopted a new definition of dropout for the 2002–03 school year. Under this new definition, which is based on the definition used by the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the 45-day rule is no longer in use. Schools report dropouts for a 12-month period beginning on the first day of school for the 2002–03 school year and ending on the day before the first day of school for the next year. This eliminates the problem of the summer-vacation dropout.

The state Department, for instance, uses the example of a student who completes the tenth-grade school year, but does not begin attending the eleventh grade at the school to which he or she was expected to attend. That student would be considered a dropout. There are problems, however, with the NCES definition.

For example, the NCES guidelines list a variety of situations in which a student is not to be considered a dropout including if the student has re-enrolled and is attending school; has transferred to and is attending another public or private school leading toward a high-school diploma or its equivalent; has become seriously ill or has died; has left the United States; has transferred to a college; has verified intent to enroll late; has graduated from high-school; or has received a General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Allowing the GED to substitute for a regular high-school diploma and, therefore, to count against dropout status ignores the empirical evidence that the two are not the same.

In their groundbreaking 1993 study, Nobel prize-winning University of Chicago economist Stephen Cameron and his colleague James Heckman came to some sobering conclusions regarding the worth of high-school equivalent degrees such as the GED. Cameron and Heckman found that GED-certified persons are much less likely than high-school graduates to attend four-year colleges or undertake any postsecondary education.¹¹⁵ Even those GED-certified persons who do go on to higher education are less likely than high-school graduates to finish the programs they begin.¹¹⁶

Perhaps most worrisome, though, was the finding that GED-certified persons were indistinguishable from high-school dropouts in their performance in the labor market. According to Cameron and Heckman, both dropouts and exam-certified persons had comparably poor wages, earnings, hours of work, unemployment experiences, and job tenure.¹¹⁷ They also found evidence that employers discounted the worth of GEDs.¹¹⁸

Of special interest to today's discussion of dropout rates versus graduation rates, Cameron and Heckman found that what mattered most was the number of years of actual schooling completed

Perhaps most worrisome, though, was the finding that GED-certified persons were indistinguishable from high-school dropouts in their performance in the labor market.

by individuals. Dropouts, GED-certified persons, and high-school graduates who had the same number of years of schooling actually had roughly similar earnings. High-school graduates earn statistically higher wages, however, when compared to GED-recipients or dropouts who have fewer years of schooling.¹¹⁹ As Cameron and

Heckman point out, "There is no cheap substitute for classroom instruction."¹²⁰

A 1998 U.S. Department of Education study that examined 50 years of research data on the value of the GED came to many of the same conclusions as professors Cameron and Heckman. According to the federal study, in 1995, GED test takers had completed a mean of 9.9 years of school. High-school graduates had completed 2.1 more years of schooling, which translated into 861 more hours of core curriculum courses.¹²¹ This disparity has real-world consequences. Once in the labor market, GED-recipients earned less, worked less, and had higher job turnover than high-school graduates.¹²² As in the Cameron and Heckman study, the federal study found that all differences in earnings between dropouts, GED recipients, and high-school graduates could be explained by differences in years of secondary schooling completed.¹²³ In other words, the data once again proved that there is no substitute for classroom instruction time.

Based on these and other findings, the federal study recommended that "the common practice of counting GEDs as high-school graduates in educational statistics should be reconsidered."¹²⁴ Others are even more pointed in characterizing how GED recipients should be listed.

Joan Auchter, executive director of the GED Testing Service, which develops the test and establishes passing benchmarks, is blunt about how GED recipients should be counted in education statistics: "They are dropouts. That is what they are. They are dropouts that went on to get a certificate."¹²⁵

Jay Greene, senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute for Public Policy Research and one of the nation's top education researchers, says that there may be a perverse result in allowing a GED to substitute for a high-school diploma. According to Greene, "There is some evidence to suggest that the availability of relatively easy GED certificates may entice students to drop out of school."¹²⁶ "The public mythology that the degrees are equivalent," warns Greene, "only makes dropping out of a regular high-school to pursue a GED instead more attractive."¹²⁷

Including GED recipients as high-school graduates masks the real extent of the dropout problem. Greene notes that when one removes GED recipients from the number of high-school graduates in NCES data, the number of graduates plummets and the number of dropouts increases. For this and other reasons, he says, “GED recipients should not be combined with regular high-school graduates in education statistics.”¹²⁸ Given, however, California’s adoption of the NCES definition of dropouts, with the GED mitigating factor, one should not expect to see a true accounting of the real number of dropouts in the state.

Given the pitfalls of the dropout rate calculations, even using the NCES guidelines, Californians should keep an eye on the graduation rate as the better indicator of how many students drop out of school. Since it does not include GEDs, the graduation rate informs the public as to the number of students not getting crucial classroom instruction time. Those not getting it, whether they be dropouts who never earn a GED or those who do, are not being given all the skills they need to function successfully in today’s economy. In order to do something about this problem, policymakers must be honest about the scope of the problem. And that means having an accurate methodology to calculate the dropout rate.

Based on these and other findings, the federal study recommended that “the common practice of counting GEDs as high-school graduates in educational statistics should be reconsidered.”

9

Remedial Instruction

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

It is assumed that students who graduate from high-school possess basic skills and knowledge in core subjects such as English and math. This assumption may be wrong, based on the performance of entering college freshmen on basic skills tests administered by universities.

ASSESSMENT

The California State University system accepts the top one-third of the state's high-school graduates, but nearly six out of 10 entering freshmen in 2002 needed remedial instruction in either English or math.

RECOMMENDATION

The public schools must do a better job of imparting basic knowledge and skills through the use of standards-based instruction.

INTRODUCTION

The tragedy of failing and under-performing students in California public schools is not limited to children from low-income, minority, and immigrant backgrounds. Continuing high remedial instruction rates at California universities indicate that even supposedly “good” students are graduating from high-school with seriously deficient English and math skills.

The California State University (CSU) system admits students from the top one-third of the state’s high-school graduating class. To determine their level of proficiency, entering CSU freshmen must take placement tests in English and math. Those who fail must enroll in remedial courses. In 2002, 37 percent of first-time freshmen required remedial math and 49 percent needed remedial English. Combined, a shocking 59 percent of CSU freshmen had to take remedial courses in English and/or math.

Even this high figure probably understates the educational deficiencies of the new students since the difficulty level of the CSU’s math test was lowered nearly two years ago in order to gear the test to non-science and non-engineering majors. Indeed, while 63 percent of freshmen passed the math exam in 2002, an increase of nine percent over 2001, CSU officials acknowledge that at least four percent of that increase was due to the easier test.¹²⁹

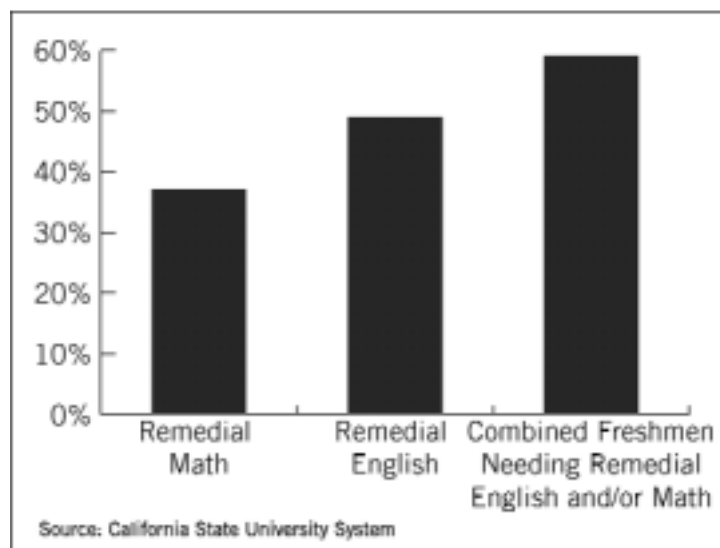
The story is even worse when one examines various subcategories.

Systemwide, among freshmen Mexican Americans, 67.1 percent needed remediation in English, while 68.6 percent of freshmen African Americans needed remedial help in that subject. In math, 54.4 percent of Mexican Americans and 65 percent of African Americans needed remedial instruction.

Remediation, however, is not a black-brown phenomenon.

Continuing high remedial instruction rates at California universities indicate that even supposedly “good” students are graduating from high-school with seriously deficient English and math skills.

FIGURE 11: PERCENTAGE OF CALIFORNIA FIRST-TIME CSU FRESHMEN REQUIRING REMEDIAL COURSES IN ENGLISH AND/OR MATH (2002)



More than 30 percent of white freshmen and 64.6 percent of freshmen Asian Americans needed remediation in English, and more than a quarter of both groups, 26.9 percent for whites and 28.9 percent for Asian Americans, needed remedial help in math.

The remedial rates at particular CSU campuses were shocking. At CSU Dominguez Hills in Southern California, 75.4 percent of entering freshmen needed remedial instruction in math and 78.9 percent needed remedial instruction in English. At CSU Los Angeles, 64.3 percent of entering freshmen needed remediation in math and 77.9 percent needed English remediation. Also, among Mexican Americans, who constitute the largest ethnic group in the CSU Los Angeles 2002 entering class, 85.4 percent needed English remedial instruction. At CSU Northridge, 63 percent of entering freshmen needed English remediation, including 41.6 percent of white freshmen.

It is important to realize that these abysmal numbers have come about despite increased spending on public education. In 1994-5, total K-12 spending per pupil was about \$5,500. In 1994, 49 percent of entering CSU freshmen needed remedial English. In 2002-03, total K-12 spending per pupil had risen to around \$9,000. Yet, in 2002, 49 percent of entering CSU freshmen still needed remedial English. And for those who say that this consistent record of failure is

CSU system chancellor Charles Reed says that the remedial test results show a long-term systematic failure in the public schools. According to Reed, "A whole generation of kids can't read."

due to more students coming from non-English-speaking homes, CSU officials such as executive vice president David Spence say that this argument can't be used as an excuse.¹³⁰ Remedial students can place a heavy burden on the learning process at univer-

sities. A CSU Fresno official has observed: "[Remedial students] are not at the same competitive level [as other students]. They either dragged the class down, or bright students tried to pull them up by the bootstraps. They placed a huge strain on the faculty."¹³¹

In 2001, after taking remedial courses 79 percent of the freshmen needing remediation became proficient in the subject area. This quick turnaround points to something seriously wrong in the K-12 system. CSU system chancellor Charles Reed says that the remedial test results show a long-term systematic failure in the public schools. According to Reed, "A whole generation of kids can't read."¹³² Steve Teixeira, a CSU Los Angeles official, observes that the poor English placement test scores "say something about the meltdown going on in the K-12 schools."¹³³ CSU, however, is not blameless in the K-12 disaster.

CSU schools of education produce a majority of California's public school teachers. PRI's 2001 report *Facing the Classroom Challenge: Teacher Quality and Teacher Training in California's Schools of Education* analyzed the guiding principles, course descriptions, and required reading at a sample of CSU schools of education. The PRI report found that these CSU teacher-training programs largely ignored empirically proven teaching methods that emphasize traditional teacher-centered-and-directed presentation of lesson content, followed by student practice, testing, and teacher correction and feedback.

These traditional methods are, for instance, characteristic of many effective phonics reading programs. In contrast, CSU training programs pushed so-called "progressive" student-centered teaching methods that emphasize students discovering or constructing their own information and knowledge, with teachers acting as mere facilitators rather than imparting knowledge to children.¹³⁴

Famed Harvard education researcher Jeanne Chall, after reviewing years of data, found that "the traditional teacher-centered approach generally produced higher academic achievement than the progressive student-centered approach."¹³⁵ So, to the extent that graduates of CSU teacher training programs employ less effective methods in the classroom, CSU bears partial responsibility for poor student performance.

To be fair, however, CSU is also trying to improve the remedial rates. First, CSU has created outreach programs aimed at high schools to improve student readiness for college-level work. Also, CSU has implemented a get-tough policy to kick out freshmen who take remedial courses and fail to pass an end-of-course subject competence exam. Students who fail the exam can forestall disenrollment if they can show some extenuating circumstance. However, CSU has started to disenroll increasingly large numbers of remedial freshmen.

At the end of the 2001–02 academic year, CSU had dismissed 8.2 percent of the nearly 37,000 freshmen admitted during that fall. This percentage was up from the 6.7 percent of the year before and the 5.1 percent in 1998–99.¹³⁶ The CSU hard line sends the clear message to students and the K–12 system that English and math proficiency must be top priorities.

CSU has a goal of reducing the remedial rate to 10 percent by 2007. Given the current sky-high remediation rates, it is difficult to see how this goal can be met.

The new remedial instruction numbers are another indication that for all the talk of reform and accountability, the public school system is failing to educate adequately the bulk of its students, even the supposedly better ones.

10

Course Difficulty

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

While tests and standards help to ensure a rigorous academic education, students should also be expected to take challenging coursework. Failure to take such coursework undermines reforms aimed at improving student achievement and also prevents students from becoming eligible for admission to the University of California and the California State University.

ASSESSMENT

Fewer students in California are taking difficult math and science courses compared to the national average and to states like Texas, and a large majority is not taking university preparatory courses.

RECOMMENDATION

Students must receive effective standards-based instruction in the early grades in order to prepare them for higher-level courses in middle and high-school.

INTRODUCTION

It should come as no surprise that so many entering college students need remedial math instruction when one considers that California students take fewer difficult math and science classes than their peers in most other states. Although a high-school diploma may be better than a GED, this fact does not mean that those receiving the diploma have necessarily taken rigorous coursework. Indeed, the lack of rigor in the coursework taken by California high-school graduates brings into question the quality of the diploma and argues in favor of having a high-school exit exam as a quality guarantor. While it is true that California has a very diverse student population and all the challenges that go with such diversity, states such as Texas, which have similar diversity, do much better in getting their students to take higher-level classes.

MATH

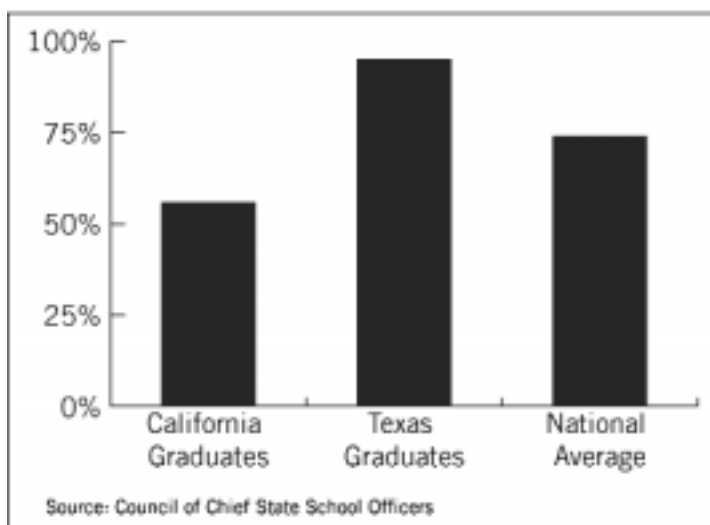
Higher-level math courses are generally divided into five levels: 1) Algebra/Integrated Math (Level One), 2) Geometry/Integrated Math II (Level Two), 3) Algebra II/Integrated Math III (Level Three), 4) Trigonometry/Pre-Calculus (Level Four), and 5) Calculus/AP Calculus (Level Five).

According to the latest report of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), for 2000 graduates California ranked at the national average in percentage of students who had taken Level One courses, but below the national average in the other four levels.¹³⁷ Indeed, in several of the levels, California ranked near the bottom. This lack of rigor is of concern since the CCSSO points out that,

“Research on patterns of student achievement in math and science has consistently shown that the amount of time in instruction and the number and level of secondary courses students take are strongly related to achievement.”¹³⁸

Only 46 percent of California’s 2000 high-school graduates took Algebra II/Integrated Math III, a three-percent drop from the 1996 percentage. Of the 30 states plus Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia that reported statistics,

FIGURE 12: PERCENTAGE OF HIGH-SCHOOL GRADUATES WHO TOOK GEOMETRY/INTEGRATED MATH II IN 2000



California beat out only Minnesota, Alabama, and Puerto Rico in this category. For comparison, 72 percent of Texas graduates had taken Algebra II/Integrated Math III, while the national average was 62 percent.¹³⁹

For Geometry/Integrated Math II, 56 percent of California 2000 graduates had taken that course, which put the state ahead of only Tennessee, South Dakota, Minnesota, and New Mexico. California's 2000 percentage was a one-percent drop from 1996. More than 95 percent of Texas graduates had taken Geometry/Integrated Math II, while the national average was 74 percent.¹⁴⁰

The 24 percent of California 2000 graduates that had taken Trigonometry/Pre-Calculus, which was a one-percent drop from 1996, allowed the state to beat out New Mexico, Nevada, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The national average was 37 percent, and Texas had 32 percent.¹⁴¹

Finally, 12 percent of California 2000 graduates had taken Calculus/AP Calculus versus the national average of 17 percent. Texas led the nation with a whopping 40 percent of its graduates having taken that course.¹⁴²

California's woeful performance is particularly worrying given the correlation between higher-level high-school math courses and completing a bachelor's degree. Finishing a math course beyond Algebra II/Integrated Math III more than doubles the odds that a student will complete the college degree.¹⁴³

SCIENCE

The three science courses viewed by experts as benchmarks are First-Year Chemistry, First-Year Physics, and First-Year Biology. As in math, California ranks near the bottom in terms of high-

Of the 32 states and the District of Columbia reporting statistics, California ranked next to last in the percentage of 2000 graduates who had taken First-Year Chemistry.

school graduates who have taken these challenging science courses.

Of the 32 states and the District of Columbia reporting statistics, California ranked next to last in the percentage of 2000 graduates who had taken First-Year Chemistry. California's 35 percent beat only New Mexico, and was a four-per-

cent drop from 1996. The national average was 54 percent, while 58 percent of Texas graduates took the course.¹⁴⁴

California was also next to last in the percentage of 2000 graduates who had taken biology. California's 67 percent edged only Alabama, and was 12-percent decrease from 1996 and an

unbelievable 24-percent decrease from 1990. Texas matched the national average in 2000 of 95 percent.¹⁴⁵

In physics, 16 percent of California's 2000 graduates had taken physics, which was a two-percent dip from 1996. The Texas and national averages were both 23 percent.¹⁴⁶

CORE COURSES

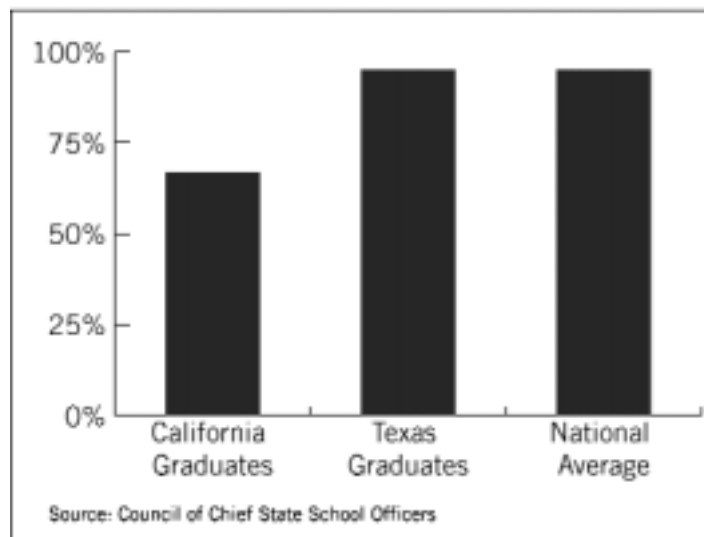
Another indicator of coursework difficulty is the percentage of students taking the "A-F/G core courses." These courses, required by both UC and

CSU in order to be eligible for admission, include specified numbers of classes in history, English, mathematics, laboratory science, foreign language, and advanced course/elective. The CSU also adds an extra requirement of a class in visual/performing arts.

In 1999–00, 34.8 percent of California high-school graduates had completed this university-preparatory curriculum, which was a drop from the 1997–98 rate of 36.6 percent. It was still somewhat higher than the 1989–90 rate of 31.3 percent. Nevertheless, in 1999–00, 65.2 percent, or nearly two-thirds of California's graduates, did not complete this core curriculum.¹⁴⁷

Although UC president Richard Atkinson has tried to heap blame on the SAT for keeping out minority students from his university system, the truth is that failure to take a university preparatory curriculum is the main obstacle to increasing minority admissions. In 1999–00, only 24.7 percent of African-American high-school graduates, less than a quarter, had taken the A-F/G university preparatory curriculum, a drop from 29.1 percent in 1996–97 and 25.4 percent in 1989–90. The rate in 1999–00 amongst Latinos was even worse, with only 21.5 percent taking the curriculum, the lowest rate since the beginning of the decade. On the other hand, 54 percent of Asian-American graduates and 40.2 percent of white graduates in 1999–00 completed the curriculum.¹⁴⁸

FIGURE 13: PERCENTAGE OF HIGH-SCHOOL GRADUATES WHO TOOK BIOLOGY IN 2000



11

Standards

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

California's rigorous academic content standards have been widely praised. The standards, however, will only be effective in raising student achievement if they are implemented in the classroom.

ASSESSMENT

Classroom implementation of the standards has been inconsistent.

RECOMMENDATION

Implementation of the standards must be the goal of all schools.

INTRODUCTION

California has adopted academic content standards that are regarded as among the best in the nation. Organizations such as the Fordham Foundation have given California's standards, especially those in English and math, top marks. The standards are the crucial core components of the state's accountability system and curricula. Thus, state tests are now aligned to the standards as are the subject textbooks approved by the state Board of Education. However, the battle over standards in California is not over. Having rigorous standards will only have real meaning if those standards are implemented in the classroom.

Some schools and school districts are making a concerted effort to implement the standards. For example, in Pacific Research Institute's report on high-performing California public elementary schools with large low-income student populations, a common factor in these schools' success was their intense focus on implementing the state standards. This implementation occurred through various means including effective use of standards-aligned curricula, emphasis on standards-related teacher professional development and course preparation, and use of standards-aligned state test results as diagnostic tools to improve both student and teacher performance.¹⁴⁹

At Hudnall Elementary School in Inglewood in Southern California, which rated an eight on the 2002 state API and has 95 percent of its students on the government-subsidized lunch program, principal Dr. Norma Baker says that when she came to the school, "One of the things I wanted teachers to focus on was content standards."¹⁵⁰ She requires all teacher lesson plans to be aligned specifically to the standards.

She also has teachers fill out a checklist that has the standards in one column and the dates on which the teachers covered each standard. The school uses the structured phonics-intensive Open Court reading curriculum that she says "is very closely aligned with California's standards."¹⁵¹ "Because the teachers are focused on the standards and everything is centered around the standards," observes Dr. Baker, "we have done well with a curriculum that emphasizes the standards."¹⁵² She also gives teachers materials related to standards covered on the state's standardized tests.

Dr. Baker opposes the view that California's standards are set too high for students from low-income and minority backgrounds. She says, "if you set high expectations for children

Dr. Baker opposes the view that California's standards are set too high for students from low-income and minority backgrounds. She says, "if you set high expectations for children and communicate that to them, then they in turn will work hard to meet those expectations."

and communicate that to them, then they in turn will work hard to meet those expectations.”¹⁵³ The ability of a child to read, according to the standards, “has nothing to do with your socioeconomic level; it has nothing to do with your ethnicity or any of these things.”¹⁵⁴

At Robert Hill Lane Elementary School in Los Angeles, which posted an eight on the 2002 API and had nearly 90 percent of students eligible for government-subsidized lunches, standards charts are posted in classrooms and weekly standards goals are highlighted so children know exactly what they must learn. Then-principal Sue Wong explained, “We have used the frameworks and content standards to identify all the grade-level standards, and when and where are they taught in the text.”¹⁵⁵ Standards-aligned subject matter is also the focus of teacher professional development.

Other studies have found agreement among many local educators that the state’s standards are a key to improving student achievement. A 2002 EdSource survey of 155 principals in California found positive attitudes towards the state’s standards-based reform efforts. EdSource noted that “Many of these educators, who are struggling to raise achievement in California’s lowest performing schools, seem hopeful that state academic standards can help lead to improvement.”¹⁵⁶ High-school principal John Soletti observed that for improving student achievement, the standards “provided a blueprint for making major headway.”¹⁵⁷

Despite this recognition of the centrality of the standards to increasing student achievement, many school districts have been slow to implement the standards even though they have now been on the books for at least five years. For instance, a Los Angeles school board member said in 2002, “It’s only in the last year that we have focused on teaching the standards.”¹⁵⁸ The *Los Angeles Times* noted that Los Angeles school officials admitted that their schools must do a better job of incorporating the standards into classroom lessons.¹⁵⁹

As noted previously, the 2003 independent evaluation of the state high-school exit exam found increasing use of the standards in middle and high schools in response to the standards-aligned exit exam. Whereas in 1999 about 20 percent of the high schools surveyed reported covering at least three-quarters of the standards, in 2002–03 more than 80 percent of high schools surveyed reported at least 75 percent coverage of the standards.¹⁶⁰ Also, the independent evaluation found that “The number of remedial programs designed to help students who do not initially master relevant content standards has increased dramatically.”¹⁶¹ Still, even with this positive trend there are many schools that have not fully implemented standards-based instruction.

For example, the independent evaluation found in its survey of high-school teachers that 489 English courses were using English Language Arts textbooks adopted before 1999, that is, before textbooks were aligned with the standards. As a consequence, only 37 percent of these courses were highly aligned with the standards.¹⁶² In comparison, 288 high-school English courses had textbooks adopted in 2002–03, which meant that the textbooks were now

aligned with the standards. Of these courses, 67 percent were highly aligned with the standards.¹⁶³

At the middle school level, 216 English courses had textbooks adopted before 1999, with only 37 percent of these courses highly aligned with the standards. In contrast, 346 English courses had textbooks adopted in 2002–03, with 74 percent of these courses highly aligned with the standards.¹⁶⁴

The independent evaluation concluded that “there was a clear relationship between how recently the textbook was adopted and the likelihood that the course would be rated as having very great alignment.”¹⁶⁵ Thus, as more schools adopt newer standards-aligned textbooks, course alignment and instructional alignment will increase. However, with many schools still using non-aligned textbooks, many students will continue to receive instruction that does not pay adequate attention to the standards. Again, although standards implementation is improving, overall implementation must be judged to be spotty.

More worrisome are the reports of what amounts to willful undermining of the standards.

According to a commentary in *La Prensa San Diego*, at San Diego’s Johnson Elementary School the already-purchased standards-aligned reading textbooks have

not been distributed to classrooms because the district claims that teachers have not been trained to use the new textbooks. Yet, “according to teachers who have been at the training sessions for the new textbooks, the district and its training consultants have been telling teachers to ignore the new state-approved textbooks and merely use them as ‘resource’ books, but not the core text for student instruction.”¹⁶⁶ The effect is to ignore the state standards with which the textbooks are aligned.

With the new prominence of the standards-aligned California Standards Tests, there will be greater pressure for schools to implement the standards in the classroom. Also, recent research has found that coverage of the state standards in middle and high schools has increased significantly over the last three years.¹⁶⁷ Still, the ideological opposition by parts of the public education establishment to fundamental elements of the standards makes universal honest implementation questionable.

Thus, as more schools adopt newer standards-aligned textbooks, course alignment and instructional alignment will increase. However, with many schools still using non-aligned textbooks, many students will continue to receive instruction that does not pay adequate attention to the standards.

Efforts by the California Teachers Association to gut the school accountability system by eliminating the system's rewards and sanctions regime would remove key incentives to implement the standards in the classroom. The result would be to turn the state standards into a paper tiger. Whether the attack on the standards involves ideologically motivated foot-dragging or overt efforts to neuter them, the victims will be California's schoolchildren who will be consigned to the dungeon of low expectations.

12

School Facilities and Construction

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

Over the past few years, California voters have approved large numbers of expensive state and local school facilities bonds. Despite the availability of construction funding, it takes many years to build a new school in California.

ASSESSMENT

The complex regulatory process in California forces long delays in school construction and other factors, such as prevailing wage rules, increase the cost of school projects.

RECOMMENDATION

The school construction process should be simplified and made more cost effective.

INTRODUCTION

Increases in the student population and policies such as class-size reduction have created constant pressure for more classrooms and school facilities. Lawmakers and education officials have addressed this problem mainly by putting expensive bond measures on the ballot.

At the state level, a series of huge bond measures have been and will be put before voters. In 1998, a then record-breaking \$9.2 billion bond measure was placed on the ballot and approved by voters. This bond amount was surpassed in November 2002 when a \$13 billion school facilities bond was passed. Of the \$13 billion, \$11.4 billion is designated for K–12 construction, while \$1.6 billion is slated for higher education facilities. Within the \$11.4 billion for K–12 construction, \$6.3 billion is to go to new construction, \$3.3 billion for modernization projects, and \$1.7 billion for overcrowded schools.

The November 2002 bond, however, was just the first of a two-part bond strategy. A \$12.3 billion school construction bond is scheduled to appear on the March 2004 ballot. If that bond is passed, Californians will have approved \$34.5 billion in state school bonds in six years.

Despite the avalanche of new school facilities bond money, voters who approved these bonds should not expect to see a lot of new schools and classrooms appearing any time soon. School construction is one of the most complex and lengthy processes in California government.

Further, whereas prior to 2001 local school bonds needed a two-thirds majority to pass, California now has a 55-percent majority requirement. As opposed to the two-thirds rule, where around half of local bonds passed, 100 percent of the bonds on the November 2001 passed. These 23 bonds were valued at \$1.2 billion. In March 2002, 50 bonds, representing 88 percent of the total number on the ballot and worth \$3.5 billion, passed. In

November 2002, 82 bonds, representing 85 percent of the total and worth \$9.4 billion, were approved. One can see that the reduced majority requirement has given increasing incentive for more school districts to put facilities bonds on the ballot. In the last three elections \$14.1 billion in local bonds have been passed.

The burden of paying back state bonds is shouldered by all taxpayers since bond repayment comes out of the state general fund. Local bonds, however, are paid back through increases in local property taxes. Thus, local homeowners and property owners are left to foot the bill.

Despite the avalanche of new school facilities bond money, voters who approved these bonds should not expect to see a lot of new schools and classrooms appearing any time soon. School

construction is one of the most complex and lengthy processes in California government. Kathi Littmann, a former top school construction official for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), says: “School construction is radically different from any other public event. There are so many regulations.”¹⁶⁸ According to Littmann, “there are so many hurdles you can’t believe it.”¹⁶⁹

A LAUSD commission found 117 required steps in the school construction process, including: an assessment to determine where schools are needed; finding a site; condemning the land and acquiring it; commissioning a design; getting approval of various environmental permits; mitigating environmental problems; relocating existing residents or tenants; applying for state funds; and placing contracts out for bid.¹⁷⁰ Attorney Constance Rice, a member of the commission, notes that “Even when you’ve got competent public school districts, there’s nothing more difficult to build than a school.”¹⁷¹

The state sets all the regulations, reviews applications, and eventually approves or disapproves the applications. In an effort to speed up the process, the state is sending officials down to local districts to instruct local administrators on how to prepare and submit applications. However, it should be pointed out that none of the regulations can be ignored or circumvented.¹⁷²

Guy Mehula, LAUSD’s deputy chief for new construction, says that it takes about a year to find and obtain a school site, another year to get regulatory approvals, and three years or more to design, bid for, and construct a school.¹⁷³ In all it takes about five to six years to build a school. Of course, that is if things go smoothly. If roadblocks such as unforeseen environmental problems come up, then the process could be bogged down for years longer. Thus, a student could be in the first grade when a new school is contemplated, but could have graduated from elementary school before the new facility opens its doors.

The school construction process is made even more expensive because of project labor agreements (PLAs). PLAs require that government building projects be contracted to union-only construction firms. Since these firms usually have higher labor costs, the projects are more expensive. Local school boards can approve PLAs and many school construction projects in California are now governed by these agreements.

The need for additional school facilities has been exacerbated by the state’s class-size reduction program. From 1996–97 to 2002–03, the state has spent more than \$10 billion to reduce class size to 20 students per classroom in grades K–3. Those funds, which although sizeable, have not been able to cover all the operational costs associated with class-size reduction, such as added personnel costs.

More important, at least from a fiscal standpoint, the program’s funding does not address the need for more facilities that results from the class-size-reduction mandate. Given the lack of convincing evidence that reducing class size has improved student performance (see the class-size reduction section in this report for a more detailed discussion of the research evidence), it is dif-

difficult to understand why taxpayers must pay for new school facilities necessitated by a program that is failing to produce.

Finally, in order to discuss the school facilities problem fully and honestly, one must touch upon the issue of immigration. While immigration policy is a federal issue, the effect of that policy is felt sharply in a large border state like California, and nowhere more keenly than in the state's schools. There are about six million students in California public schools. Of that total, about a quarter, or 1.5 million, are students whose primary language is not English. Some of these non-English-speaking students are legal or illegal immigrants, while others are the children of legal or illegal immigrants.

Regardless of their official status, federal immigration policies are responsible for placing an enormous fiscal burden on California taxpayers, whether it be de jure policies such as easy chain immigration of family members of legal immigrants or the de facto inability of U.S. government authorities to secure the nation's borders. Had stricter and more effective federal policies been in place over the past decades, California would be dealing with fewer students in its public school system, reducing the need for expensive school construction.

In politically correct California, where the term "diversity" has become a mantra, immigration is like the elephant in the middle of the room that no one wants to talk about. However, given the gigantic bond amounts that voters are being forced to confront, it is imperative to acknowledge one of the key reasons for the increase in student population. More and more tax dollars are a mere band-aid solution to the school facilities problem.

13

Teacher Quality

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

There is general agreement that teacher quality affects student performance. The question is whether teacher quality should be defined by mere possession of a regular teaching credential or by other factors such as subject matter knowledge in a teaching field.

ASSESSMENT

Recent research in California shows that there is no connection between having a regular teaching credential and improved student performance.

RECOMMENDATION

Rather than focusing on paper credentials issued from university schools of education that often emphasize failed teaching techniques, teacher quality should be judged by a teacher's willingness and ability to implement empirically proven curricula and instructional methods.

INTRODUCTION

Empirical research shows that high quality teachers increase student performance.¹⁷⁴ What, however, defines “high quality”?

Teacher quality is conventionally measured in several ways. One common yardstick is to equate possession of a regular teaching credential, earned through a university program or approved alternative credentialing process, with quality. Prior to the institution of class-size reduction in 1996–97, most teachers possessed a regular teaching credential. With the increased need for teachers after class-size reduction was introduced, though, more teachers were hired who possessed only an emergency credential or who were in an internship program run by a university or a school district.

In 2001–02, of the 306,940 teachers in California, more than 32,000, or 10.6 percent, held an emergency credential.¹⁷⁵ This total was a slight reduction from the year before. In 2000–01, of 301,361 teachers in the state, more than 34,000, or 12 percent, held an emergency credential.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, during this span, the number of pre-interns/interns more than doubled from more than 6,300 in 2000–01 to 15,311 in 2001–02.¹⁷⁷ No doubt this latter increase was due, at least in part, to emergency-credentialed teachers going into an internship program which would eventually lead to a full credential.

TEACHER CREDENTIALS AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

With a greater number of teachers holding emergency credentials or in internship programs, the natural assumption would be that these supposedly less qualified teachers would have a negative impact on student performance. Indeed, the proposed state master plan for education makes this assumption in its recommendation to eliminate emergency credentialed teachers and phase out teachers in internship programs. Politicians, education officials, and others commonly use the relatively high number of emergency-credentialed teachers as a convenient excuse to explain why California students are performing so poorly. The empirical evidence, however, is less clear that having a regular teaching credential necessarily improves student achievement.

In its comprehensive study of California’s class-size reduction program, a research consortium that included RAND, the American Institutes of Research, WestEd, Policy Analysis for California Education, and EdSource not only looked at the effect of class-size reduction on student achievement, but also examined the impact of various teacher characteristics on student performance. The consortium studied data from six large school districts, which had six percent of all third-graders in California and which had “hired more less-experienced, not-fully-credentialed, and less-educated teachers than smaller districts in order to meet the increased demand for teachers in newly created classrooms.”¹⁷⁸ The consortium wanted “to examine the importance of these teacher characteristics in promoting student achievement in reduced-size classes.”¹⁷⁹ In particular, the consortium was “interested in getting districts with teachers who had emergency credentials.”¹⁸⁰

The six districts had a variety of student populations. One district was mostly white and Hispanic, another almost half African American, another almost entirely Hispanic, and the others with various mixes of white, Hispanic, African American and Asian students. In terms of the percentage of teachers holding emergency credentials, the range ran from 28 percent in one district down to one percent in another. The consortium also looked at length of teacher experience and teachers with less than a master's degree.¹⁸¹

Based on Stanford-9 test scores from 2000–01 and 2001–02, the consortium found that “teacher characteristics were generally not related to achievement gains.” While there was some correlation between teacher experience and student achievement, credential status and having a master's degree “appeared to be unrelated to student achievement after controlling for student and classroom characteristics.”¹⁸² In other words, in terms of affecting student achievement it does not seem to matter whether a teacher possesses a regular teaching credential versus an emergency credential.

The consortium study cites recent parallel research by leading education researchers Eric Hanushek and S.G. Rivkin. According to Hanushek and Rivkin, while teacher quality is important, differences in teacher quality cannot be explained by commonly used measures such as teacher certification, education, and experience. The consortium concluded, “The results of our study do not imply that teacher characteristics do not matter, but that the teacher variables that are easily measured and conveniently obtained do not seem to matter.”¹⁸³

The independent evaluation of the state high-school exit exam also looked at the impact of teacher credentials and other conventional qualifications on the quality of standards-based instruction. According to the report's authors: “We also investigated the possible impact of teacher qualifications, defined by their credentials and years of experience, and professional development programs for the teachers on the effectiveness of standards-based instruction. There was no clear evidence that teacher qualification was an important factor.”¹⁸⁴

The consortium's conclusions regarding the impact of a regular teaching credential are not surprising. Pacific Research Institute's 2001 report *Facing the Classroom Challenge: Teacher Quality and Teacher Training in California's Schools of Education* described the curriculum, required readings, and teaching methodologies at California State University schools of education.¹⁸⁵ The report found an overwhelming bias in favor of “progressive” student-centered teach-

While there was some correlation between teacher experience and student achievement, credential status and having a master's degree “appeared to be unrelated to student achievement after controlling for student and classroom characteristics.”

ing methods that emphasize students discovering and constructing their own knowledge with teachers acting merely as facilitators rather than transmitters of knowledge.

Although there is little or no quantitative empirical evidence to support these progressive teaching methods, prospective teachers are schooled in these ineffective techniques and then go into the school system, armed with a regular full teaching credential, and try to teach children using these ineffective techniques. It is hardly surprising, then, that the consortium could find no relationship between a teacher possessing a regular teaching credential and student achievement.

Further, a number of the principals interviewed in Pacific Research Institute's 2002 report *They Have Overcome: High-Poverty, High-Performing Schools in California* said that they would rather have emergency-credentialed teachers than fully credentialed teachers.¹⁸⁶ According to the principals, emergency-credentialed teachers would be more likely than fully-credentialed teachers to have an open mind regarding empirically-proven teaching methods such as direct instruction which emphasizes drill and practice and which are disfavored by university the schools of education. Many of the high-poverty, high-performing schools profiled in the PRI report have large percentages of emergency-credentialed teachers on staff and yet have stunningly high levels of student achievement.

Sue Wong, the principal who raised Robert Hill Lane Elementary School in East Los Angeles to a high API rating, said that her emergency-credentialed teachers "are very strong" and "come with a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of energy and want to be here."¹⁸⁷ She says that, "They are very focused on how well they perform their jobs."¹⁸⁸ In contrast, Ms. Wong found, "I have people that have completed a credential that may not be as strong as when you interviewed them, and they don't seem to have the skills."¹⁸⁹

Further, she says, "I find you can hire a probationary teacher who has gone through the [credentialing] process and is just not willing to take on suggestions, be flexible, or work on some of the issues they should."¹⁹⁰ The consortium study makes some of the same points brought out by Ms. Wong by positing that "There are likely to be many variables that can be observed by the school district such as teacher motivation and energy, that are very important and also difficult to measure."¹⁹¹

State Board of Education member Nancy Ichinaga, famed former principal at Bennett-Kew Elementary School in Inglewood (9 API rating), bluntly says that:

The teachers who have gone through the credential programs at the colleges come with baggage. They think they know better because they've been brainwashed and those are the teachers we have trouble with. There is resistance from them.¹⁹²

The lesson, then, is that willingness to implement empirically proven curricula and teaching methods are more important to student achievement than whether teachers hold regular teaching credentials.

SUBJECT-MATTER KNOWLEDGE OF TEACHERS

While possessing a regular teaching credential is not a good indicator of teacher quality, there are other more promising measurements. Research shows that a teacher's subject-matter knowledge has an impact on student performance.¹⁹³ That is why, especially in middle and high schools, it is important for a teacher to have a background in the field in which he or she teaches. Majoring in the subject that he or she teaches is an important measure of a teacher's subject matter knowledge. The most recent data collected

Research shows that a teacher's subject-matter knowledge has an impact on student performance.

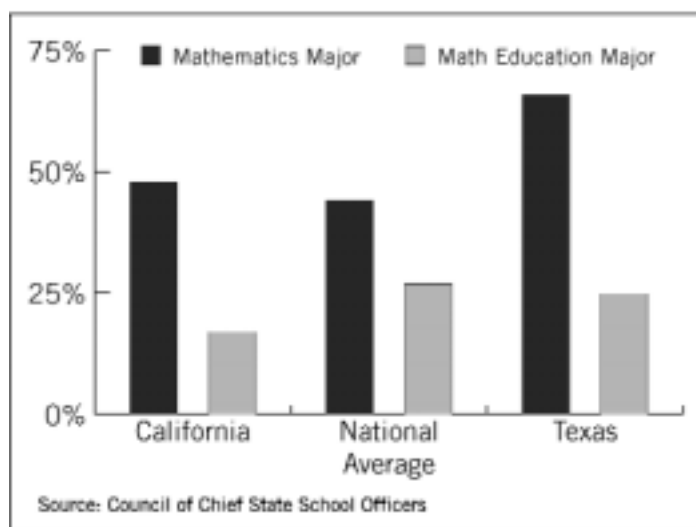
by the Council of Chief State School Officers focuses on eighth-grade math and science teachers.

In 2000, 48 percent of California eighth-grade math teachers had majored in mathematics, a five percent increase over the proportion in 1996. Also, in 2000, 17 percent of the state's eighth-grade math teachers had majored in math education, a nine percent rise over the percentage in 1996. The national average in 2000 was 44 percent for eighth-grade teachers with a math major and 27 percent with a math education major. In 2000, 66 percent of Texas eighth-grade math teachers had majored in math and 25 percent had majored in math education.¹⁹⁴

Also in 2000, 47 percent of California eighth-grade life science teachers had majored in life science; 31 percent of eighth-grade physical science teachers had majored in physical science; 14 percent of eighth-grade earth science teachers had majored in earth science. Further, 17 percent of eighth-grade science teachers had majored in science education.

The national average in 2000 was 39 percent of eighth-grade life science teachers with a life science major, 20 percent of physical science teachers with a physical science major, 19 per-

FIGURE 14: IN 2000, PERCENTAGE OF EIGHTH-GRADE MATH TEACHERS WHO HAD MAJORED IN MATHEMATICS OR MATH EDUCATION



cent of earth science teachers with an earth science major, and 35 percent of eighth-grade science teachers with a science education major.

In 2000, 58 percent of Texas eighth-grade life science teachers had majored in life science, 25 percent of physical science teachers had majored in physical science, 45 percent of earth science teachers had majored in earth science, and 40 percent of eighth-grade science teachers had majored in science education.¹⁹⁵

By these statistics, California is doing somewhat better than the national average in a number of categories, but lags below a comparable state like Texas. Further, even where it is doing better than the national average, often much more than half of eighth-grade math and science teachers in California did not major in their subject field. This may indicate a reason why student performance in California often falls off considerably in the post-elementary grades.

14

Teacher Salaries

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

Teacher pay is an important factor in the total cost of public education in California and plays a key role in attracting people into the profession. There are many questions, however, concerning how teachers are paid.

ASSESSMENT

While California ranks number one in the level of teacher pay, salaries are usually not linked to student performance in the classroom or to demand for teachers in particular fields.

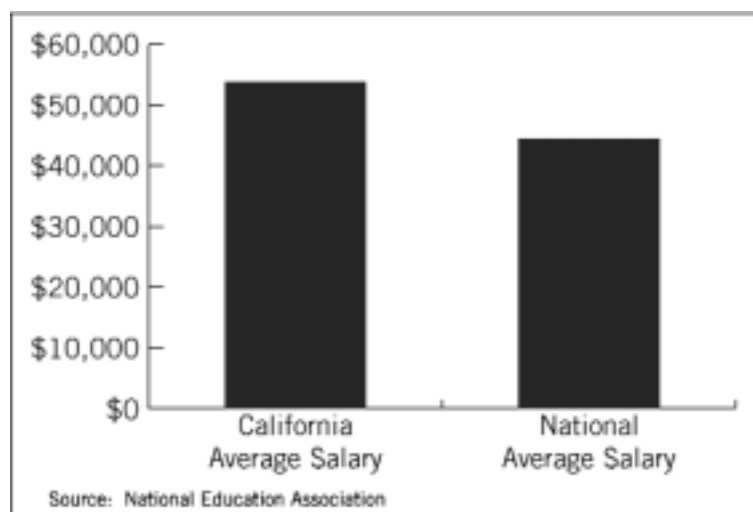
RECOMMENDATION

Teacher salary decisions must consider market demand based on subject field and should link pay to objective performance measures.

INTRODUCTION

According to the National Education Association, in 2001–02, California ranked first among all states in teacher salary with an average salary of \$53,870. The national average was \$44,499,

FIGURE 15: RANKING OF CALIFORNIA TEACHERS' SALARIES, 2001–02



with 36 states paying salaries below that level.¹⁹⁶

This increase in California's teacher salary average and ranking is significant. In 1997–98, the U.S. Department of Education ranked California tenth among all states with an average salary of \$43,725.

California teacher salaries also compare favorably with the state's average per-capita income. In 2001, per-capita income in California was \$32,702.¹⁹⁷

Despite California's number one ranking in teacher salary, many point out that the state's high cost of living dictates that California teachers should be paid more than their peers in other states. While there is truth to this argument, there are also complicating factors as well. Teachers normally get 10 weeks of vacation, which is much more than most other workers. Former Los Angeles school board member Caprice Young has pointed out that teachers can make more money by teaching during time off. She also says that they can also teach night school or take on coordinator positions.¹⁹⁸

The result, according to Ms. Young, is that in Los Angeles 10 percent of teachers earn more than \$80,000. About 300 teachers earn \$100,000 or more. Ms. Young notes that "You can be a teacher and not be poor."¹⁹⁹

Teachers who decide not to work during their vacation time are making an economic decision. They value their longer vacation more than the added money they could be making. The value of

Teachers who decide not to work during their vacation time are making an economic decision. They value their longer vacation more than the added money they could be making.

that longer vacation period should not be forgotten when looking at teacher salary figures.

Further, teacher salaries are not tied to either market demand or classroom performance. For example, teachers are paid

according to a uniform salary structure regardless of their teaching subject. An English teacher makes the same salary as a physics teacher. Although there is a lot of discussion about a general teacher shortage, the real scarcity is in specific fields such as math and science. Individuals with college degrees in math and science can get much higher salaries in private industry than they can in teaching.

The inability of educators and policy-makers to think outside of the box of uniform wages hampers any effective effort to address the shortage problem. Currently, any differentiation in teacher pay is based on years on the job and additional schooling, such as having a masters degree. Yet, as one education expert has written, “It’s crazy to pay the same salaries to people in high-demand subjects (e.g., high-school science and math) as to those in high-supply fields (e.g., middle school social studies).”²⁰⁰

Further, salary schedules are set in collective bargaining between teacher unions and local school districts. The state is not presently involved in setting the basic salary schedules, although the state does inject state dollars into teacher compensation through programs such as the Governor’s Performance Awards, the Certificated Staff Performance Incentive Awards, and other programs aimed at entry-level teachers. Local collective bargaining would have to change to accommodate differentiated compensation.

Another problem with collective bargaining contracts is that most do not allow for paying teachers based on the performance of students in their classrooms. Pay-for-performance plans have also been hampered by the fact that many are based on subjective evaluations of teachers and inadequate objective measurement tools. California, however, is in the process of setting up a statewide database to track student performance over time. This longitudinal data could be used to make value-added assessments of individual teacher performance based on how much better or worse students in that teacher’s classroom performed.

Even though California’s teachers may be the highest paid in the nation, there may still be some merit to the argument that they should be paid more. However, pumping more money into a teacher compensation system based on an antiquated industrial union model makes no sense. Teacher salary decisions must consider market demand based on subject field and should link pay to objective performance measures. A uniform salary structure with automatic non-performance-based pay raises does not provide a good basis for recruitment of better and needed teachers, nor, as a consequence, does it help increase the achievement of students.

Teacher salary decisions must consider market demand based on subject field and should link pay to objective performance measures.

15

Teacher Versus Non-Teacher Ratio

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

Bureaucracy in education drains money that could be going into the classroom. The ratio of teachers to non-teachers indicates the extent of bureaucracy in the system.

ASSESSMENT

Although more teachers have been hired in California because of class-size reduction, about 45 percent of employees in the public education system are non-teachers.

RECOMMENDATION

The entire school finance system needs to be streamlined and overhauled in order to target funding to the classroom rather than school district bureaucracies.

INTRODUCTION

One way of inferring the extent of education bureaucracy in California is to examine the ratio of non-teaching personnel to teachers in the public school system. The higher the number of non-teachers compared to teachers, the greater the likelihood of more bureaucracy, which siphons off tax dollars that should go into the classroom.

According to the latest figures from the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, California's public education system had 539,301 employees in 2000–01. Of these, 241,237 were non-teachers and 298,064 were teachers. Teachers represented 55.3 percent of the total.

Compare these figures with those in 1996–97. During that year, there were 468,246 employees in California's public school system. Of these, 219,389 were non-teachers and 248,857 were teachers. Teachers represented 53.1 percent of the total.

The increase in the number and percentage of teachers is due largely to California's class-size reduction program. However, the still large number of non-teachers in the system indicates that the question of bureaucracy still remains, especially when one considers the lean administration in private-school systems such as the Roman Catholic parochial system.

The Little Hoover Commission, the state's efficiency watchdog agency, has pointed out the problems with siphoning money away from the classroom to pay for legions of non-teaching personnel:

Millions of dollars are spent on process rather than product. Dollars that never make it to the classroom and arguably do nothing to teach a child to read or do arithmetic include the salaries for: an attendance clerk at school so that per-pupil daily revenue based on daily attendance counts can be captured and justified; an accountant in the district office to fill out state forms proving that transportation funds have not been diverted to pay for chalk and paper clips; a specialist to tell the district how to align its programs to gain a bigger share of categorical funding; and an auditor for the State to ensure paperwork compliance — not that schools are doing their job of educating but that they are following procedures. Multiply these individuals many times over and it begins to be clear that the cost of complexity is high and largely irrelevant to the task at hand — educating children.²⁰¹

16

Expenditures

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

There are different ways to calculate the amount of money spent on education in California. More important is whether tax dollars going to education are being spent efficiently and effectively.

ASSESSMENT

Inflation-adjusted total education spending per pupil has gone up significantly over the past decade, but too many education dollars are wasted on state programs that have no record of success.

RECOMMENDATION

Local school districts should be given greater flexibility to use education funds for local needs, and they should also be held accountable for results through the addition of a school choice option in the state's accountability program.

PROPOSITION 98 VERSUS TOTAL SPENDING

The amount of state spending on education is guided by Proposition 98, the 1988 voter-approved state constitutional amendment that established a minimum funding level for K–12 schools and community colleges. Proposition 98 contains three different formulas or “tests” that dictate the level of state education funding. Which of the three formulas are used depends on the economic condition of the state. The requirements of Proposition 98 may also be suspended under certain circumstances.²⁰²

In general, so-called “Prop. 98” funding includes state General Fund spending on education plus local property tax revenues devoted to schools. It is this Prop. 98 spending figure that is often used by state officials, education officials, and the media to describe how much California spends on education. In 2002–03, \$26.4 billion in state General Fund education spending plus \$13 billion in local property tax revenues combined to equal \$39.4 billion in Prop. 98 funding, a 34.3 percent real inflation-adjusted increase over Prop. 98 funding in 1992–93.²⁰³

Prop. 98 spending, however, does not tell the whole education-funding story. There are other sources of education revenues that go to California schools. For example, in 2002–03, the federal government contributed \$6.6 billion to education spending in California. Included in this federal contribution are funds for poor and disadvantaged students (the Title I program), special education funding, child nutrition, plus a variety of other programs.

Also omitted are hundreds of millions of dollars in state funds allocated annually to pay for school capital costs, i.e. debt service on state school facilities bonds. This omission is important since elected officials, educators and others who support these bonds usually claim that a vote for the bond is a vote for children’s education. How, they ask, can children learn if they are forced to sit in run-down, overcrowded classrooms? Yet, once these bonds are approved, the annual cost of the bonds is not included in the Prop. 98 spending figure. In 2002–03, \$810 million was spent on bond payments.

In addition, in 2002–03 the state lottery contributed \$800 million in education revenues and various local funds totaled \$4.7 billion. General Fund spending on teacher retirement and other programs not counted in Prop. 98 came to \$1.9 billion, while other various state funds amounted to \$113 million.

Thus, if one added all these other education revenues to the \$39.4 billion in Prop. 98 funding, total education funding in California in 2002–03 came to \$54.3 billion, or 38 percent higher than the Prop. 98 figure.²⁰⁴

This \$54.3 billion is also a 49.9 percent real-inflation adjusted increase over total education funding in 1992–93. One can see then that inflation-adjusted total education funding increased more than inflation-adjusted Prop. 98 funding — 49.9 percent versus 34.3 percent.

Of course, simply adding up the sizes of the pots of education dollars does not take into consideration the size of California's student population. Much may be spent on education, but the state has the largest number of students in the country and their ranks have swelled over the years. For this reason, the key spending figure cited in education policy debates is how much is spent per pupil. Per-pupil spending is calculated by dividing the aggregate education funding figure by the average daily attendance (ADA), which measures the number of students attending school each day averaged over the school year.

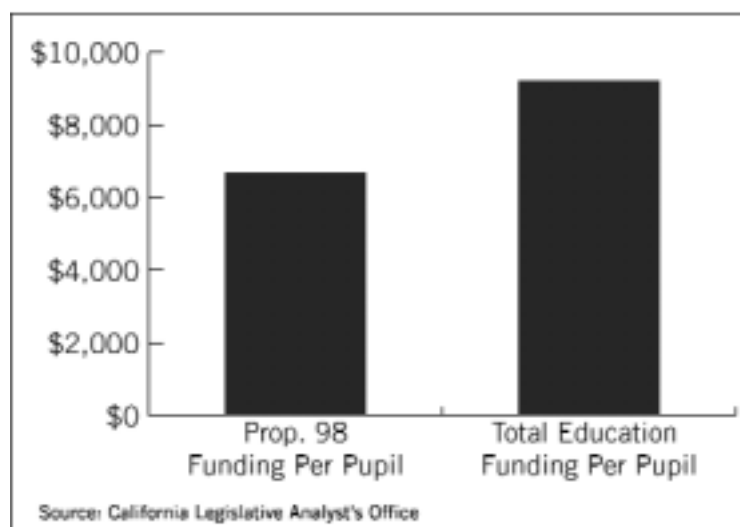
In 2002–03, ADA was 5.9 million students compared to 5.1 million in 1992–93. Based on this ADA, Prop. 98 per-pupil funding in 2002–03 came to \$6,684, which is a 15.3 percent real inflation-adjusted increase over Prop. 98 per-pupil funding in 1992–93.

Total education funding per pupil in 2002–03 amounted to \$9,216, which is a 28.7 percent real inflation-adjusted increase over total education funding per pupil in 1992–93. Real inflation-adjusted total education funding per pupil therefore increased at almost twice the rate as real Prop. 98 funding — 28.7 percent versus 15.3 percent.

According to the state Legislative Analyst's Office, while special attention is often paid to Prop. 98 per-pupil funding, "A more comprehensive measure of per-pupil spending is total funding from all sources."²⁰⁵

The aggregate and per-pupil spending figures cited above are taken from data calculated by the state Legislative Analyst's Office.²⁰⁶ It should be pointed out that there is a difference between the ways in which the Legislative Analyst's Office and the California Department of Finance calculate state General Fund education funding. The Department of Finance does not include certain child-

FIGURE 16: PROP. 98 AND TOTAL FUNDING PER-PUPIL IN 2002–03



According to the state Legislative Analyst's Office, while special attention is often paid to Prop. 98 per-pupil funding, "A more comprehensive measure of per-pupil spending is total funding from all sources."

care funds, while the Legislative Analyst's Office does. The result is that the Department of Finance figures for both Prop. 98 funding and total education funding, and the consequent per-pupil figures, are somewhat less than those of the Legislative Analyst's Office.²⁰⁷

Regardless of their different methodologies, in the debate over whether Prop. 98 funding or total education funding gives a better overall perspective on education finance, it is instructive to note that in Governor Davis's budget documents, the much larger total education funding and per-pupil spending amounts are given greater prominence over Prop. 98 figures.²⁰⁸

When states are ranked according to their per-pupil spending by organizations such as the National Education Association and the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for

The sad reality, unfortunately, is that education spending in California has been structured in such a way as to ensure systematic waste and ineffectiveness.

Education Statistics, the rankings are based on current operating expenditures by the states. These expenditures are not comprehensive and do not include items like school construction and facilities funds. Since these rankings do not take into account all education spending plus include, at times, incorrect data, they can give an incomplete and skewed picture of

the real education funding situation in California compared to other states.²⁰⁹

For this reason, this report will not list California's position in these national rankings. Given that total education funding gives the most comprehensive view of education finance in a state, it would be better if rankings were based on this measure of spending. However, at this time no ranking of the states based on this measure exists.

The bottom line is twofold. First, California is spending much more on education per pupil than it has in the past. Even Governor Davis's 2003–04 budget proposal, which contains some cuts in education funding, will cause total education per-pupil spending to dip only slightly and still be considerably higher than in years past.²¹⁰

More important, higher education spending does not guarantee higher student achievement. As the Legislative Analyst's Office rightly observes:

Education spending is an *input*, not an *output*. That is, spending is a measurement of what goes into the educational process, not what results from it. With its accountability reforms of recent years, the Legislature has recognized the importance of focusing on outcomes. Thus, the state should continue to be concerned more with how its students perform rather than on how state spending compares with other states.²¹¹[italics in original]

Further, the Legislative Analyst's Office makes the crucial point that "Research and experience suggest that how we spend available education resources is at least as important as how much we spend on education."²¹² The goal should be to ensure that the state has the right structures and incentives "to assure that all educational funding is spent to maximum effect."²¹³ The sad reality, unfortunately, is that education spending in California has been structured in such a way as to ensure systematic waste and ineffectiveness.

CATEGORICAL SPENDING

Revenues devoted to education are allocated in one of two main ways. First, local school districts receive both state and local general revenue limits which are no-strings-attached funds that districts may spend as they see fit. The second method of distributing state education dollars is through state and federal categorical funds which are tax dollars sent down to local school districts but which are earmarked for specific purposes such as reducing class size or desegregating schools. In 2002–03, the state spent \$15 billion on general revenue limits and allocated \$12.4 billion for more than 80 different categorical programs.

Both revenue limits and categorical programs have been plagued by built-in inefficiencies. According to the Little Hoover Commission, the state's efficiency watchdog agency:

Each of the 1,000 [school] districts each year calculates its revenue limit using a 30-page form that accounts for the myriad of adjustments, additions and subtractions that districts are allowed or forced to take. In addition, categorical programs have their own paperwork, justifying district eligibility and documenting expenditures. Teams of district personnel to fill out the paperwork are matched by teams of state workers to check it. In addition, most school districts of any size spend money on consultants for advice on how to maximize funding or pass audits.²¹⁴

The Commission also noted that districts with high amounts of categorical funding spent a disproportionate amount of money on administration linked to those programs.²¹⁵ The huge cost of this red tape and paper pushing could only be guessed: "While no one the Commission talked to could estimate the cost on all sides, most agreed it was in the multi-millions of dollars statewide."²¹⁶

Red tape, however, is just a symptom of more fundamental problems inherent in California's categorical funding system. The state Legislative Analyst's Office laid out the major failings of categorical programs:

- **No conclusive evidence on the success of categorical programs.** Most programs are never evaluated. Categorical programs that have been evaluated reveal a mixed record of success.
- **State rules restrict needed local flexibility.** Complex and detailed requirements in some programs reduce the flexibility needed by schools to maximize the impact of funds on improving student achievement.
- **A fragmentation of local programs.** Without a local strategy for integrating categorical programs with the basic educational program, process requirements of the categorical programs shape local responses rather than the needs of students.
- **Funding formulas create negative incentives.** Some categorical programs create financial incentives that encourage schools to act in ways that are not in the best interests of students.
- **Blurred accountability for meeting student needs.** Creating separate programs for specific student needs creates confusion about who is responsible for improving student achievement.²¹⁷

These failings have been documented by outside investigators as well. In a multi-part series of articles in the *Sacramento Bee*, reporter Deb Kollars delved into the complexities and misworkings of the state’s categorical programs and came to a dismal conclusion: “A monumental mess. That is the only way to describe how California handles a \$12 billion section of the state education budget known as ‘categorical funding.’”²¹⁸ She described the categorical funding system as “a massive and convoluted web, filled with deep disparities, outdated programs and cash streams accountable to no one.”²¹⁹

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the categorical morass is the fact that the state does not know where or how funds are being used. For example, Ms. Kollars found that the state

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does not monitor the Tenth-Grade Counseling program, which is supposed to give high-school sophomores an extra dose of counseling and which is funded at \$11 million in 2002–03. According to Paul Meyers, a consultant with the

California Department of Education’s counseling and student support office, “We don’t monitor it, and we never have.”²²⁰ Mr. Meyers admits, “No one knows if this program is effective, or if it is even being done.”²²¹ Further, he says, astonishingly: “We don’t know how the money is being used. We wish we did.”²²²

Even school districts that receive Tenth-Grade Counseling funds do not know where the money eventually goes. For instance, the Sacramento City Unified School District divvies up

tenth-grade counseling money among its high schools, but does not keep track of how many students participate in the program.²²³

The Tenth-Grade Counseling program, which has received \$162 million in its 20-year existence, is far from unique when it comes to the “where-do-tax-dollars-end-up” mystery. Ms. Kollars looked at the English Language Acquisition Program, which is supposed to help English-language learners in grades four through eight. The program has received about \$226 million since its creation in 1999. It gives out \$100 per student classified as an English language learner, but it is anyone’s guess if children’s language skills are being raised:

Carolyn Macchiavellie, who helps oversee the program at the state Department of Education, was blunt when asked where the money goes or what the program accomplishes. “I have no idea,” she said. “There’s no audit. There’s nothing.”²²⁴

Another problem with categorical funding is the unevenness with which the funds are spread. Economic Impact Aid, one of the largest state categoricals with a price tag of \$445 million in 2002–03, is supposed to help disadvantaged youth, with attention to non-English-speaking students. According to Ms. Kollars:

The amount of Economic Impact Aid varies widely from district to district because of a highly complicated formula created years ago. A computer analysis by *The Bee* found that some schools in California get as much as \$1,300 per student. Among districts in the four-county Sacramento region, the Del Paso Heights Elementary District was near the top of the list, receiving about \$275 per student through Economic Impact Aid. In comparison, Rocklin Unified received only \$6 per student from this program in the 2000–01 school year.²²⁵

Some try to rationalize this disparity by arguing that some districts have more low-income or poor-performing students than others and, therefore, deserve more categorical funding. However, categorical funding often ignores the differences in student factors:

A classic case is the Miller-Unruh reading program, created in 1965 to pay for reading specialists to help struggling readers. Once schools get Miller-Unruh positions, they are allowed to keep them for years and years, leaving other deserving schools out of the loop. For example, the

Rescue Union School District in El Dorado County, which has some of the highest reading scores in the region, gets about \$50,000 from Miller-Unruh. Across town, the North Sacramento School District gets no money from this fund, despite reading scores well below average.²²⁶

Unevenness in funding can also result from the difference in the ability of districts to work the system. “When it comes to categoricals,” writes Ms. Kollars, “the schools that get more are frequently those with bigger staffs or more aggressive administrators who have mastered the art of writing grant proposals and navigating state bureaucracy.”²²⁷

Based on Ms. Kollars’s findings, *Sacramento Bee* columnist Dan Walters, a long-time observer of state government, concluded that categorical programs had become “a form of educational

Walters, though, makes the important point that the intense opposition to reforming categorical funding from groups that benefit from the pork “illustrates the sclerosis that afflicts government at all levels – a chronic inability to overhaul existing services, program or streams of money once the recipients and beneficiaries become accustomed to receiving them.”

pork,” and “since those with vested interests in maintaining the pots of pork resist any reforms, their numbers grow and their accountability becomes steadily weaker.”²²⁸

Walters, though, makes the important point that the intense opposition to reforming categorical funding from groups that benefit from the pork “illustrates the sclerosis that afflicts government at all levels — a chronic inability to overhaul existing services, program or streams of money once the recipients and beneficiaries become

accustomed to receiving them.”²²⁹

“It’s why government,” says Walters, “tends to do many things poorly rather than fewer things competently.”²³⁰ It should be pointed out that in March 2003 State Senator Charles Poochigian (R-Fresno) spurred legislative action that requires the State Auditor to investigate and report on the state categorical funding system.

Despite the wide and deep problems with categorical programs, the funding continues and grows year after year, seemingly impervious to criticism. In 1988–89, categorical funding accounted for about 22 percent of the state education budget. By 2001–02, that proportion had increased to 31 percent.²³¹ “It’s like cockroaches or zucchini,” according to education consultant Bob Blattner.²³² “You can’t kill ‘em, and they keep on spreading.”²³³

The flip side of increased reliance on categorical funding is the reduction in the proportion of discretionary funds available to local school districts. The Legislative Analyst's Office observes that "this decline in local discretion over spending runs counter to the increased emphasis the state has placed on accountability."²³⁴ Lack of discretion to meet local challenges means that local districts cannot make the necessary changes to improve their programs.

The legislature has made some attempt to increase flexibility in categorical spending. Up to 20 percent of some categorical funds can be shifted by local districts to other categorical spending areas, i.e. shifting funds between specified categorical programs. Also, a pilot program was enacted for 2001–02 that allowed a few school districts to combine many categorical programs into three categories and gave those districts greater discretion over how to spend the money.²³⁵ Overall, however, the categorical funding system remains marked by rigidity and complexity.

One solution to the Gordian Knot of categoricals would be to block grant the categorical dollars down to the local school districts. In essence, this procedure would cut the strings on categorical funds, allowing districts to have greater discretion over how to spend these dollars. In his 2003–04 budget proposal, Governor Davis seeks to consolidate 64 categorical programs into a \$5.1 billion block grant that schools could use for teacher professional development, instructional materials and technology, specialized and targeted instructional programs, school safety, and student services.

Under the governor's block-grant proposal, only a few state requirements would not be eliminated, including the requirement that districts purchase standards-aligned textbooks and spend one-half of one percent of its general purpose funding on maintenance. The governor correctly believes that the added flexibility will help make up for any education spending reductions that are enacted.

The governor's proposal is on the right track, but it has two key problems. First, a number of expensive and ineffective categorical programs such as class-size reduction are not included in the plan. The problems with class-size reduction are analyzed in greater detail in another section of this report.

An even more important problem than exempting ineffective categorical programs is the lack of rigorous accountability for local districts that use their newfound spending flexibility unwisely. For instance, Sacramento school superintendent Jim Sweeney says that although he welcomes the increased flexibility, he worries that block-grant dollars could simply land on the collective bargaining table and end up increasing union employee salaries and benefits instead of buying textbooks, maintaining buildings, and providing specialized services to students. In order to ensure that the needs of students are given priority, schools must be given a real incentive to use their funds effectively.

One such incentive would be for California to couple increased spending flexibility for local districts with an exit voucher for students at under-performing schools. As mentioned earlier, Florida offers exit vouchers to students at failing schools so that they can attend local private

A school-choice accountability measure in California would avoid intrusive rulemaking from Sacramento and allow parent-driven market forces to provide incentives for public schools to use block-grant money to improve student achievement rather than fatten union contracts.

schools. Public schools in that state have responded by, among other things, switching to more effective curricula, improving instructional methods, and requiring weekend tutoring.

A school-choice accountability measure in California would avoid intrusive rulemaking from Sacramento and allow parent-driven market forces to provide incentives for public schools to use block-grant money to improve student achievement rather than fatten union contracts.

The state categorical funding system is a black-hole travesty. Calls by lawmakers, school officials, and education special interests to increase taxes to prop up education spending should fall on deaf ears as long as the state continues to squander billions of tax dollars on programs that are not accountable to anyone and which simply do not work.

17

Class-Size Reduction

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

Many people believe that reducing class size will allow teachers to provide more individualized instruction, thereby improving student achievement. Others point out, however, that class-size reduction reduces the overall quality of the teacher corps, which negatively affects student performance.

ASSESSMENT

Class-size reduction in California has not been shown to improve student achievement significantly, and has caused numerous problems such as funding distortions.

RECOMMENDATION

Class-size reduction should be eliminated and the funds re-directed to areas/programs that have a better track record of improving student achievement.

INTRODUCTION

California's class-size reduction law was enacted in July 1996. The law funds the reduction of K–3 classes to 20 students per classroom. From 1996–97 to 2002–03, the state has spent more than \$10 billion on the class-size-reduction categorical program, with annual spending now near \$2 billion. It is a very popular program with lawmakers, education officials, and parents. Indeed, rather than making it a part of his proposal to block grant most categorical funds, Governor Davis kept class-size reduction as a separate categorical program.

Support for the program stems from the belief that smaller classes mean more individualized attention and instruction, less disruption in the classroom, and better learning. The ultimate goal of the program, says the state Department of Education, is to “increase student achievement, particularly in reading and mathematics, by decreasing the size of K–3 classes to 20 or fewer students per certified teacher.”²³⁶ The question is whether, after spending so much money, class-size reduction has resulted in the desired improvement in student performance.

Unlike most categorical programs, a research component was attached to class-size reduction. A consortium of top research organizations, including RAND, the American Institutes of

The consortium found that whether using statewide average Stanford-9 test scores or more refined school-level analysis, there was no association between the total number of years a student had been in reduced-size classes and differences in academic achievement.

Research, WestEd, Policy Analysis for California Education, and EdSource, analyzed data relating to the program and issued reports at various intervals. The consortium issued its capstone report in 2002 and its conclusions were not encouraging.²³⁷ According to the capstone report,

“Student achievement has been increasing in California since CSR implementation, but we could find only limited evidence linking these gains to CSR.”²³⁸

After the full implementation of class-size reduction in 2001, the consortium tracked achievement gains in cohorts of students that were exposed to different amounts of class-size reduction from kindergarten to the third grade. The consortium found that whether using statewide average Stanford-9 test scores or more refined school-level analysis, there was no association between the total number of years a student had been in reduced-size classes and differences in academic achievement.²³⁹

In its school-level analysis, the consortium compared a group of schools, called Group A, where successive cohorts of students all had reduced size classes in grades one to three, with a second group of schools, called Group B, where cohorts of students had different exposures to reduced size classes. The consortium found that math test scores increased for both groups over time and that the increases were almost exactly the same.²⁴⁰

According to the consortium, “In fact, the increase in scores in group A cannot be explained by CSR at all, because each successive cohort of students had exactly the same exposure [to CSR].”²⁴¹ Further, “The results were similar when we examined reading and language scores and when we focused the analysis on schools with high percentages of minority students.”²⁴² The report also stated, “we did not find greater effects among disadvantaged students.”²⁴³ In sum, the report sub-heading says it all: “New school-level analysis finds no relationship between CSR exposure and student achievement.”²⁴⁴

Acknowledging the popularity of reduced class sizes, the consortium observed that “the lack of clear relationship between CSR and student achievement will be disappointing.”²⁴⁵ Perhaps, but this bad news will stay bad only if policymakers ignore it and continue to pour billions of tax dollars into a program that has no conclusive evidence of success. Given the huge expense of the program, the lack of clear empirical support argues strongly for the program’s elimination and shifting of program funds to uses that will result in higher student performance.

Part of the reason for the difficulty in determining whether class-size reduction has improved student achievement is the fact that other reforms have been implemented during the same time period, including the tough state standards, the return to phonics-based reading instruction, the end of bilingual education, and the school accountability system.²⁴⁶ For example, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) has implemented the phonics-intensive Open Court reading curriculum in all district elementary schools.

LAUSD superintendent Roy Romer, testifying before the California Postsecondary Education Commission in 2001, gave full credit to the new curriculum for the increase in lower-grade test scores. He specifically denied that class-size reduction had anything to do with the score increases. He pointed out that LAUSD had been reducing class sizes in elementary grades for a number of years with little effect. It was only when the district switched to the new reading curriculum that scores shot up.²⁴⁷

Because class-size reduction has required the hiring of many more teachers, there has been a change in the composition of the state’s teaching corps. In 1995–96, the year before class-size reduction, most schools, including those in disadvantaged neighborhoods, had fully credentialed teachers. After the enactment of class-size reduction, more teachers with emergency credentials were hired and were distributed unevenly in schools. According to the consortium report, “In 2000–01, more than one in five K–3 teachers were not fully credentialed in schools (primarily

large and urban) with high percentages of low-income, EL, minority, or Hispanic students.”²⁴⁸ Further, “in the most economically disadvantaged schools in 2000–01, about one in four K–3 teachers had three or fewer years of experience, compared with fewer than one in five teachers in the least economically disadvantaged schools.”²⁴⁹ Finally, “about one in three teachers in the most economically disadvantaged schools had fewer than 30 units of credit beyond a bachelor’s degree (the category used for reporting), compared to about one in six in the least economically disadvantaged schools.”²⁵⁰

Although class-size reduction has resulted in more individual attention for students, the curriculum and instruction remained the same in reduced size classes and non-reduced size classes.²⁵¹ Teachers in both types of classes also reported spending similar amounts of time and covering

Thus, if the curricula and teaching methods used by schools and teachers were ineffective, then reducing class size and having more individualized attention probably had little effect.

similar amounts of curriculum in language arts and math.²⁵² Thus, if the curricula and teaching methods used by schools and teachers were ineffective, then reducing class size and having more individualized attention probably had little effect. For example, a student is not likely to benefit from having more individual attention from a teacher using ineffective progressive student-centered teaching methods.

One of the worst aspects of class-size reduction is that earmarked state funds are not sufficient to cover the costs of the program. Many districts cut back on other programs, such as teacher professional development, library services, computer programs, facilities maintenance, and administrative services, in order to pay for class-size reduction.²⁵³ Also, many districts reduced classroom space for after-school care, child care, special education, music and the arts, and athletics to make room for reduced size classes.²⁵⁴

The bottom line again is that there is no conclusive evidence that class-size reduction has resulted in increased student achievement. Although Stanford-9 test scores have gone up, other factors and reforms may have been responsible for the rise, and the score increases have not matched the pattern of class-size reduction implementation. According to the consortium study, because “the magnitude of the changes in test scores did not track with the incremental changes in CSR,” then “attribution of gains in [test] scores to CSR is not warranted.”²⁵⁵ While the consortium makes mild recommendations to reform class-size reduction, it would seem that given its huge cost and ineffective results, class-size reduction should be scrapped and the money redirected to efforts better guaranteed to produce improved student performance.

18

School Crime

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

Parents not only expect that schools will educate their children, they also want them to provide safe learning environments. School crime destroys the safety of that environment and makes it more difficult for children to concentrate on the knowledge and skills they are expected to learn.

ASSESSMENT

School crime in California is rising in a number of categories and has become more violent.

RECOMMENDATION

School officials must crack down on school violence, and students at violent schools should be given a school-choice option to attend safer private schools.

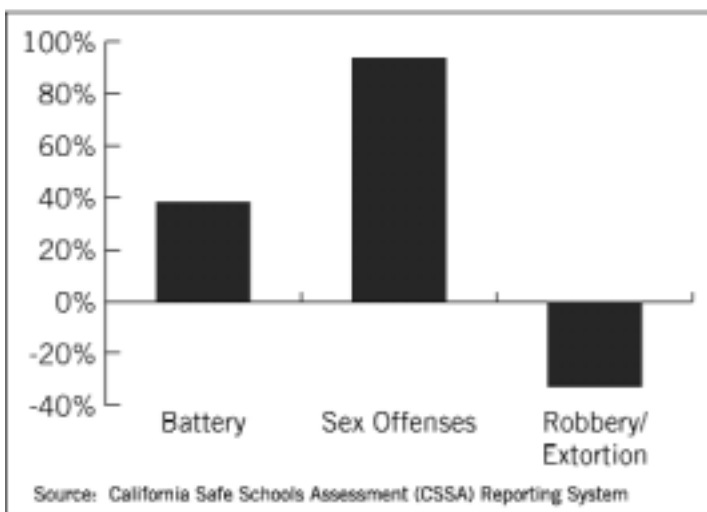
INTRODUCTION

To track crime on school campuses, the state Department of Education has implemented the California Safe Schools Assessment (CSSA) reporting system. The CSSA collects only data on the most serious incidents that occur at school or during school-sponsored activities. The four major crime categories include crimes against persons, drug and alcohol offenses, property crimes, and other crimes. Each category is broken into various subcategories. The latest data are for the 2000–01 school year and they show that campus crime has been increasing.²⁵⁶

Crimes against persons include assault with a deadly weapon, battery, homicide, robbery/extortion, and sex offenses. This group of crimes showed the largest jump, 27,970 incidents to 32,869, or 16 percent, from 1999–00 to 2000–01. Among the subcategories, battery rose 18 percent, assault with a deadly weapon increased 14 percent, and sex offenses rose 19 percent. Robbery/extortion fell 14 percent.

If one goes back a bit farther and compares 1995–96 figures with those from 2000–01, one

FIGURE 17: INCREASE/DECREASE IN CAMPUS CRIME
2000–01 COMPARED TO 1995–96



finds that there has been a 33–percent increase in crimes against persons over this longer period.

Batteries rose 38 percent and sex offenses rose 94 percent.

Robbery/extortion, however, declined 33 percent.

Drug and alcohol offenses include the use, possession, and sale of drugs and alcohol. As a group, these offenses rose from 23,943 incidents to 25,973, or seven percent, from 1999–00 to 2000–01.

Possession of drugs increased five percent, use of alcohol/drugs rose

five percent, possession of drug paraphernalia jumped 18 percent, and sale and/or furnishing alcohol or drugs shot up 32 percent. On the other hand, possession of alcohol dropped four percent and possession of alcohol/drugs for sale fell by 11 percent.

Comparing 1995–96 rates with those in 2000–01, drug and alcohol offenses climbed 14 percent. Use of alcohol/drugs jumped 19 percent, possession of drug paraphernalia rose 53 percent, sale and/or furnishing of alcohol or drugs increased 25 percent, possession of alcohol rose 15

percent, and possession of drugs rose two percent. Only in possession of alcohol/drugs for sale was there a decrease, declining 20 percent.

Property crimes include vandalism, theft, burglary, graffiti, and arson. As a group, these offenses rose from 25,430 incidents to 26,219, or just one percent, from 1999–00 to 2000–01. Vandalism increased eight percent and graffiti climbed 10 percent, but arson rates remained the same, theft dipped four percent, and burglary dropped 13 percent. Despite the overall increase in property crime, the dollar value of losses declined from \$24 million to \$18 million.

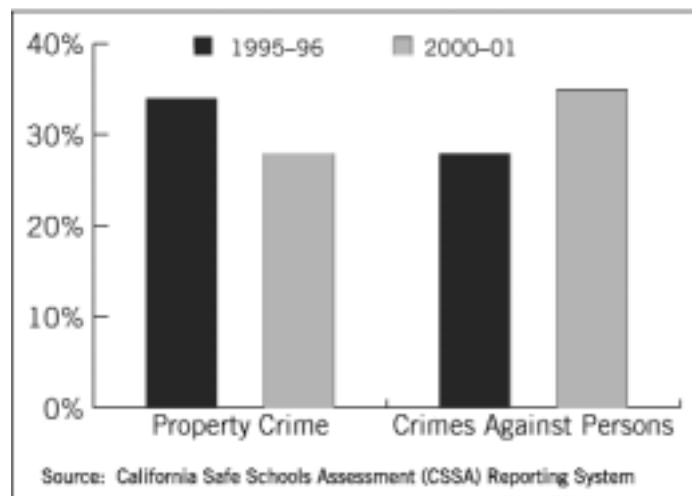
The property crime rate actually fell 13 percent from 1995–96 to 2000–01. Although vandalism rose five percent and graffiti increased 19 percent, arson declined 29 percent, theft dropped 11 percent, and burglary decreased by 52 percent.

Finally, the miscellaneous category of “other crimes” includes possession of weapons, loitering/trespassing, destructive/explosive devices, and bomb threats. This category saw a decline of 9,535 incidents to 9,236, or five percent, from 1999–00 to 2000–01. While possession of weapons rose six percent and destructive/explosive devices increased 11 percent, loitering/trespassing fell 50 percent, while bomb-threat rates remained the same. Among the weapons confiscated on campuses, knives increased 11 percent, while firearms dropped 20 percent.

These other crimes fell even more from 1995–96 to 2000–01. Overall, the category saw a decline of 17 percent, with possession of weapons dipping one percent, loitering/trespassing dropping 63 percent, and destructive/explosive devices falling 23 percent. Only bomb threats increased by 20 percent.

In terms of trends, besides the general rise in school crime, there has been a shift in terms of the type of crime being committed on campus. In 1995–96 property crime was the most common, accounting for the 34 percent of the total number of school crimes. Crimes against persons were second at 28 percent of the total. By 2000–01, that order was reversed, with crimes against persons topping all other types of crimes, accounting for 35 percent of the total, with battery being the most common specific crime. Property crimes and drug/alcohol offenses tied for second with 28 percent of the total. What this shows is that not only is crime increasing on school campuses, it is more likely to be violent and directed at others.

FIGURE 18: TREND TOWARDS INCREASING VIOLENCE ON CAMPUS



The victims of violent school crimes are overwhelmingly other students. Students account for 87 percent of victims of assaults with a deadly weapon, 90 percent of batteries, 89 percent of robberies/extortions, and 97 percent of sex offenses.

Looking at crime by type of school site, crimes against persons were the most frequently reported at elementary and middle schools. Drug and alcohol offenses were most common at high schools. High schools experience the highest crime rate in three of the four different crime categories, with middle schools having the highest rate in crimes against persons.

One question regarding school crime statistics is whether the crime increases are real or simply the result of better reporting. It is true that reporting improved. The CSSA program conducted 100 validation visits in 2000–01 to assist local education agencies with the accuracy of their data. These visits resulted in increases in the number of crimes reported. Due to the validation visits, 5,000 more crimes were reported in 2000–01 by those agencies receiving visits over the totals submitted for 1999–00.

According to the state Department of Education, “Validation clearly results in improved reporting by those agencies.”²⁵⁷ The department, however, points out that, “Although validation results demonstrate that data are being reported more accurately than ever, this improved performance in reporting does not account for the continued increase in the category of Crimes

What this shows is that not only is crime increasing on school campuses, it is more likely to be violent and directed at others.

Against Persons and only partially accounts for the increase in the incidence of Drug and Alcohol Offenses.”²⁵⁸ In other words, the rise in school crime is real and not a statistical reporting phenomenon.

19

Proposed Education Master Plan

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

Given California's education problems, it seems sensible to create a new reform-oriented master plan for education. The question is whether the proposed master plan contains recommendations that will really reform the system.

ASSESSMENT

The proposed plan's recommendations are expensive and do not guarantee improved student achievement.

RECOMMENDATION

Any plan for California's education future should focus less on new spending programs and more on empirically proven methods to improve student achievement and to increase parental choice.

INTRODUCTION

The proposed state education master plan was issued in October 2002 by a joint legislative committee and is supposed to provide a framework to guide state and local policymakers on education issues such as student performance, accountability, and funding. There are some positive aspects to the proposed plan. However, it also suffers from many serious flaws, which in the end outweigh the benefits.

The proposed master plan is organized in four main sections with recommendations for each. The sections include: access to quality education, achievement of students, accountability for learner outcomes and institutional performance, and affordability of a high quality education system.

There are some positive aspects to the proposed plan. However, it also suffers from many serious flaws, which in the end outweigh the benefits.

The plan covers both pre-K–12 and higher education. The analysis that follows focuses only on the plan’s pre- K–12 portion. Also, given that the plan is 150 pages long, not including appendices, and contains 56

major recommendations plus several times that many sub-recommendations, a complete point-by-point analysis is outside the scope of this report. However, by spotlighting key issues and themes, it is possible to make an overall judgement about the document.

On the plus side, the proposed master plan does acknowledge the importance of a rigorous standards-based education. For example, Recommendation 20 says, “To target learning support adequately and complement state testing, the State should establish as standard practice the use of classroom-based diagnostic assessments that specifically link to interventions aimed at enabling students to meet California’s academic standards and postsecondary education entrance and placement requirements.”²⁵⁹

This recommendation not only recognizes that meeting the state standards must be the goal of school activities, it also emphasizes the importance of using classroom testing for diagnostic purposes so that children’s weaknesses can be addressed. In its explanation for this recommendation, the plan says that measurement is important and that “Learning must not be left to chance, nor can instructional strategies remain inconsistent, unfocused, or focused on the wrong things.”²⁶⁰

The plan also recognizes that school principals are often hampered in the ability to improve student performance by inflexible personnel rules. These rules often prevent placing the right teacher in the right classroom at the right time. In Recommendation 16.1, the plan says, “The state should encourage and support school district efforts to provide school principals with

greater authority to use human and fiscal resources in different ways to achieve success in promoting student achievement.”²⁶¹

While this recommendation is useful, the fact is that teacher union collective bargaining agreements are the source of many of the inflexible personnel rules, such as teacher seniority rights, that hamstringing the authority of principals. It would have been better if the plan explicitly acknowledged this reality and based its recommendation on reforming the collective bargaining process.

It should be noted that an early draft of the master plan contained a recommendation that said: “An examination of collective bargaining should be undertaken to determine the extent to which bargaining agreements may constrain the ability of school districts to ensure the provision of essential non-personnel resources to students.” That language does not appear in the final version of the proposed plan.

The proposed master plan, therefore, does offer some worthwhile ideas. The plan’s negatives, however, outweigh these positives.

A major problem with the proposed plan is that it focuses on too many non-education issues. For instance, the very first recommendation says: “The State should consolidate and expand funding for all infant and toddler services and enhance developmental screening in the earliest years of life.”²⁶² What would this recommendation entail? According to the plan, these services include: preventative health screenings and assessments; early intervention services aimed at infant and toddler developmental problems; adequate health coverage, presumably provided by government, so that all parents could seek health screenings and assessments for their children; and universal access to preschool, which would be the means to deliver these health and intervention services.²⁶³ The plan admits that these issues “may not be entirely educational in nature.”²⁶⁴

In Recommendation 2.1 the plan urges that the state fund “School Readiness Centers to give families access to essential services to meet young children’s developmental needs.”²⁶⁵

Further, in Recommendation 2.2, “schools should make facilities available where students and their families may access essential services from community health and social providers.”²⁶⁶ In other words, the plan wants to set up school-based health clinics.

Whether these services are good or not, the point again is that they are certainly not traditional education issues. Then-assemblyman George Runner of Lancaster, who served on the joint committee, wrote a dissenting letter in which he said:

A major problem with the proposed plan is that it focuses on too many non-education issues.

First, our schools are already burdened with a host of responsibilities, and, as indicated in the report, many are already struggling to fulfill these charges. I believe it is counterproductive to add social and health obligations that may only serve to shift the focus of schools away from teaching the fundamentals of knowledge. Schools are not one-stop social service centers, nor should they be. Schools should concentrate on education and should focus their attention on teaching world-class curriculum. They should not be forced to address childhood factors that are the responsibility of parents, or serve as *de facto* childcare providers.²⁶⁷

Taking on these non-education health and social service responsibilities would also be extremely costly. Indeed, in Recommendation 53, the proposed master plan says that the state should “fund a per-child allocation model for financing early child care and education,” which would provide “an allocation for all children, birth to kindergarten, to provide school readiness to them and their families through local School Readiness Centers, and an initial allocation, to be phased in until it becomes a guarantee, to fund early child care education services and flexible support services for all low-income families with children from birth to age three.”²⁶⁸

No estimate is given for how much this massive new program would cost, but it would certainly be huge. Further, the recommendation turns a good chunk of education into a kind of welfare entitlement program. In contrast, in his 2003–04 budget proposal Governor Davis seeks to shift early childhood development programs out of the education budget and place them under health and human services.

Given the state’s huge budget deficit for 2003–04, and the predicted future deficits, money for these new programs could not come from existing state funds. Knowing this reality, the plan, in Recommendation 53.1, calls for “new sources of revenue to augment existing funds,” code for new and higher taxes, to pay for per-child funding of all children from birth to kindergarten, plus the School Readiness Centers and early child care.²⁶⁹

Not only would the actual services require a large increase in taxpayer funding, but the facilities needed to house these services would be costly. California has already approved tens of billions of dollars in state and local school facility bonds, with the added tax burden that such bonds entail. In Recommendation 54.1, the proposed plan recommends that “The State should increase the number of school facilities serving young children.”²⁷⁰ Also, in Recommendation 54.2 the state is asked to “provide incentives to stimulate facility construction and development.”²⁷¹ The cost of adding a whole new layer of facilities for pre-K children would be enormous and would very likely necessitate more bonds and a higher tax burden for Californians.²⁷²

Cost problems are endemic to the proposed plan. State senators Charles Poochigian of Fresno and Pete Knight of Palmdale, who were members of the joint committee, and who also filed a dissenting letter, observed that the proposed plan “seems to move away from the state’s more recent and deliberate attention to ‘outcomes’ and performance measures and instead returns to the prevailing focus in previous decades on ‘inputs,’ i.e. money, personnel resources, program expansion, etc.”²⁷³ George Runner estimates that the universal pre-school proposal alone would cost at least \$2 billion annually.²⁷⁴

Indeed, the proposed plan reads much like a spending wish list. For example, in addition to more tax money for early childhood services, in Recommendations 6.6 through 6.11 and Recommendation 10, the plan

says that the state should increase funding for higher teacher pay and more teacher services.²⁷⁵ In Recommendation 16.3, the plan urges that administrators in low-performing schools receive higher salaries, with no suggestion that these pay hikes be tied to increases in student performance.²⁷⁶ Recommendation 18 wants more money for counselors.²⁷⁷ The plan is replete with phrases such as: “the state should provide funding,” “the state should provide additional resources,” “the state should expand funding,” “the state should guarantee,” “schools should provide additional services,” and “school districts should provide more resources.”

The plan is replete with phrases such as: “the state should provide funding,” “the state should provide additional resources,” “the state should expand funding,” “the state should guarantee,” “schools should provide additional services,” and “school districts should provide more resources.”

Perhaps most troubling, in Recommendation 44, the plan would set up a California Quality Education Commission that would develop a “California Quality Education Model” and use this model to recommend “adequate” levels of state funding for public education.²⁷⁸ What factors would be considered in the development of this model? The recommendation says that the model would “be consistent with the parameters set forth in this Plan” and explains that the commission’s work and the funding model “should reflect the policy goals and structure of this Master Plan.”²⁷⁹

Given that so many of the goals of the proposed plan involve large spending hikes, the commission’s funding recommendations almost certainly would be biased toward much higher spending levels. Since the plan defines “quality” as meaning more spending, the commission would end up as another spending lobby in the halls of the State Capitol.

Defining what represents “adequate” funding is extremely problematic. Mr. Runner observes that “it is unclear how one even begins to define ‘adequacy.’”²⁸⁰ He rightly notes that “What may be adequate for one district may be considered inadequate for another.”²⁸¹ Mr. Runner says it would be easy for the proposed commission “to throw money at problems and hope that things improve.”²⁸² “There needs to be a clear, demonstrable link,” he says, “between funding increases and performance improvement, and a greater emphasis on results.”²⁸³ Unfortunately, under most of the higher spending recommendations contained in the plan, there is no requirement that increased spending result in increased student achievement.

Besides recommending spending increases, the plan gives greater taxing power to school districts. Recommendation 46 says that the state should provide local school districts “with options for generating revenue locally.”²⁸⁴ Under Recommendation 46.1, school districts could band together to propose sales and use tax increases in countywide elections.²⁸⁵ Also, in Recommendation 46.2, the plan envisions a state constitutional amendment to allow districts to increase property taxes beyond Prop. 13 limits.²⁸⁶

Not only would these measures greatly increase the tax burden on local taxpayers, no accountability guarantees are attached to ensure that these new tax dollars result in higher student performance. Again, the plan’s motto seems to be “give us more money, trust us for results.”

Besides the non-education aspect of the plan and its massive cost, the plan makes numerous wrongheaded policy proposals. For example, in Recommendation 41.1, the plan says that “The K–12 Academic Performance Index (API) should be expanded in statute so that it includes grade promotion and other indicators of academic outcomes, in addition to multiple measures of student achievement and indicators of opportunities for teaching and learning.”²⁸⁷ Currently, the API is based on student scores on the state’s standardized tests. Adding factors such as grade promotion to the API would not enhance the informational value of the API but, rather, would severely weaken it. Public education is still plagued by widespread social promotion of students and grade inflation.

Adding portfolios of student classroom work to the API may also seem attractive, but portfolio assessment systems in Kentucky and Vermont have ended in failure. Also, the plan apparently defines “indicators of opportunities for teaching and learning” as “analysis of opportunities and outcomes by racial, ethnic, linguistic, and gender populations, and among students assigned to various programs.”²⁸⁸

It is absurd, however, to include in the API the fact that, say, a female African-American student has been assigned to a particular state or local program. Most government education programs are not required to demonstrate that they result in higher student performance and there is no guarantee that simply because a student is participating in a program that he or she will perform better. Thus, Recommendation 41.1 could potentially dilute the API into meaninglessness.

The recommendations that urge increased teacher pay fail to acknowledge that teacher shortages are felt most keenly in subjects such as math and science. Thus, the plan fails to consider that differential pay based on subject field would better address the shortage problem. Further, the pay recommendations make no mention of linking pay to performance. This omission is especially amazing considering that California has approved a new data collection system that will allow longitudinal analysis of student test scores which can provide an objectively measurable foundation for merit pay based on the value added a teacher contributes to students' classroom performance.

There are problems with the recommendations involving governance of the public education system. Recommendation 26.2 says that members of the state Board of Education should be "drawn from and represent distinct geographical regions, and should reflect the ethnic and gender diversity of the state's populace."²⁸⁹ This recommendation comes perilously close to saying that there should be an African-American seat, an Asian-American seat, a Hispanic seat, and so forth on the board. It seems also to recommend that half the seats be male and half female. Basing appointments more on these racial and gender factors rather than on merit, competence, knowledge, and experience could exclude high-quality individuals from service on the board, which would end up hurting California's students.

In Recommendation 26.1, control of the state Department of Education is transferred to the governor's office, with the governor appointing a cabinet-level chief education officer to head the department. Recommendation 26 gives the governor's office responsibility for all fiscal and financial issues including fiscal audits of school districts, plus oversight of academic standards and adoption of textbooks. All this may seem to make the state superintendent of public instruction, who currently heads the Department of Education, superfluous.

Rather than doing away with the state superintendent completely, however, in Recommendation 27 the plan keeps the state superintendent as an elected position responsible for overseeing the state accountability system, excluding fiscal accountability. How the state superintendent will do all this without the use of the Department of Education is not spelled out. And no reason is given why the governor's office and the new chief education officer could not oversee the entire accountability system.

It seems that the state superintendent was kept because the plan's authors did not have the political will to eliminate the superintendent's position completely. Keeping the superintendent, however, will continue the problem of conflicting leadership voices in state education policymaking. Since education is usually one of the top issues for Californians and given that it is usually an important issue in gubernatorial elections, it would be better if the governor were given complete control of education policymaking.

Since Californians pay more attention to what a gubernatorial candidate says about education issues, he or she should be given maximum opportunity to enact his or her agenda upon assum-

ing office. In contrast, the down-ticket race for state superintendent receives little attention from the media and voting public. State superintendent candidates and their issue positions are little known by the electorate. Most disturbing, the states superintendent's position has been captured by public-education special interests, especially the powerful teacher unions. The teacher unions pour large amounts of money into races for state superintendent with the result that candidates supported by the unions invariably win. Instead of keeping this special-interest sinecure, even in diminished form, the position should be eliminated outright.

While the plan is plagued by wrongheaded policy recommendations, it is also marked by a failure to think outside the conventional box, which results in the omission of important reform tools and opportunities.

For example, the plan omits any reference to parental choice options. As mentioned previously, Florida Governor Jeb Bush has succeeded in implementing a targeted voucher plan that allows

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students at failing public schools to receive opportunity scholarships in order to transfer to private secular or religious schools. Early research indicates that Gov. Bush's school choice option has caused Florida public schools to change to better curricula and teaching methods and to focus on achievement. Similarly, research has shown that the

Milwaukee voucher program, which has bipartisan support in Wisconsin, has spurred the Milwaukee public school system to improve itself. Charter schools are likewise ignored.

While the plan makes numerous recommendations aimed at improving teacher quality, its basic assumption is that a regular teaching credential equals quality. However, that assumption is seriously flawed. The proposed master plan fails to recognize the fundamental problems with teacher training at the schools of education and, indeed, does not mention the education schools at all. The plan should have considered options such as taking away the ability of schools of education to award teacher credentials if their graduates fail teacher competency tests or do poorly in value-added measurements of student performance.

In summary, although the proposed master plan does put forward some thoughtful ideas, it has many significant flaws of commission and omission. Unless these flaws are addressed, California is likely to get a public school system in the future that is much more expensive, but with little guarantee that it will be higher performing.

Conclusion

THE CONTINUING CRISIS

The news is not all bad for public education in California. For instance, since passage of Proposition 227 and the implementation of English-immersion instruction in the classroom, more children from non-English-speaking backgrounds are becoming fluent in English. The state's academic standards are among the best in the nation, and with the advent of the standards-aligned California Standards Test there will be increased pressure on schools to teach to the standards.

California's school accountability program, while certainly not perfect, has at least put an accountability structure in place that focuses on improving student achievement. Finally, although some of the increase may be due to non-academic factors, it is still the case that student test scores on the Stanford-9 exam have increased significantly since the test was first administered in 1997–98. All that having been said, many other indicators point to continued crisis in California's public education system.

Large majorities of students are failing to score at the proficient level on the new California Standards Test. Scores on the NAEP exam show that California often lags far behind the national average and states like Texas with comparable demographics. Many students are not taking tougher courses and the graduation rate is still below 70 percent. Remedial instruction rates at California State University campuses are shockingly high, indicating that even supposedly good students are graduating from public schools with deficient knowledge and skill levels. Total education spending is at historic highs, but there is also too much waste and misallocation of tax dollars to ineffective programs.

There is some reason for hope, however. In 2002 and 2003, the State Senate Select Committee on Central Valley Economic Development, chaired by Senator Charles S. Poochigian of Fresno, has held hearings in various parts of the state which have focused on the findings of PRI's report *They Have Overcome: High-Poverty, High-Performing Schools in California*. As mentioned previously, the PRI report profiles eight public elementary schools with low-income student populations that annually achieve top ratings on the state's Academic Performance Index. These schools should serve as models for the numerous low-performing schools in the state and the intent of the hearings has been to expose local education officials and educators to these models.

The enthusiastic and positive response of local superintendents, district administrators, principals, teachers, and parents at the Senate hearings to the report's findings indicates that many local schools are now ready to adopt methods that are proven to work. Indeed, some school dis-

tricts, like Los Angeles Unified School District, have made great gains in student achievement by implementing research-based, structured, phonics-intensive reading programs that rely on teacher-centered, direct-instruction techniques.

WHAT POLICYMAKERS NEED TO DO

In order to improve learning in the classroom, and promote more efficient and effective delivery of education services at both the state and local levels, PRI makes the following recommendations:

- **California must use empirically proven research-based curricula.** The state Board of Education has done an excellent job in developing standards-aligned subject-matter curriculum frameworks and approving standards-aligned textbook series. It is imperative that local school districts ensure the full and comprehensive implementation of these curricula in the classroom.
- **Schools must use empirically proven research-based teaching methods.** The state schools of education still promote ineffective student-centered teaching methods and ignore successful teacher-centered direct instruction techniques. Teaching methods in the classroom will have to change if student achievement is to improve.
- **Comprehensive use of the state academic standards as goals for student learning, guideposts for teaching, and tools for teacher professional development.** In too many schools, standards-related activity is spotty or even non-existent. The standards must inform all academic activities and meeting the standards must be the key goal for all schools.
- **Reform the state's accountability system.** There are too many holes in the current accountability system, with large numbers of low-performing schools not subject to the system's accountability measures. Accountability should be mandatory for all schools; there should be no hesitancy to impose tough sanctions on failing schools; and higher test-score growth targets should be implemented.
- **Implement a school-choice accountability option.** Florida includes a school-choice component in its accountability system. Students at failing public schools can use a school-choice voucher to attend a private school. Florida public schools have responded by improving the quality of education in their classrooms.
- **Adopt value-added testing.** California is in the early stages of establishing a database that will include longitudinal data on individual student test scores. This database could form the basis for a value-added measure of student achievement that would allow policymakers to see how education programs and individual teachers affect student performance in the classroom. Such a testing system would make it easier to design teacher merit pay systems based on objective performance.

- **Reform education finance.** The state's categorical programs are largely ineffective and inefficient. Funding for these programs should be block granted to local districts. Popular programs like class-size reduction should not be exempted. In order to ensure that block grant money is used effectively, it is imperative that the school-choice accountability option be available so that the threat of children exiting the public schools acts as incentive for school districts to focus block grant funds on improving student performance.
- **Implement differential pay for teachers.** The teacher shortage in California is most acute in math and science. Instead of uniform wage structures and pay increases based on years of service and additional schooling, teachers in subject areas where there is a shortage should be paid more than teachers in non-shortage subject areas. Merit-pay systems could reward truly excellent teachers in non-shortage areas.
- **Reform collective bargaining.** Teacher collective bargaining agreements are a huge impediment to improving education. Through seniority rights, complex grievance procedures, and other devices, these agreements prevent principals from hiring the right teacher for the right classroom at the right time. The state should re-examine the collective bargaining process and streamline or repeal those aspects that prevent the delivery of high quality education services.

Student achievement in California can be lifted from mediocrity and failure if policymakers are willing to focus on what works and eliminate what does not. Although this advice seems simple, it is also incredibly difficult, especially given the powerful players with a vested interest in keeping those things that do not work.

Standing up to these special interests will require a great deal of political will and courage. To that end, policymakers should keep in mind that the education system exists not for special interests but for the benefit of California's children and their future.

Notes

- 1 Barbara Miller of EdSource, quoted in Erika Chavez , “High-school test scores stagnant: Frustrated educators are trying to figure out why teens aren’t doing better,” *Sacramento Bee*, August 17, 2001.
- 2 In late 2001, the State Board of Education announced plans for a history test in grade eight (and elimination of the current history test in grade nine) as well as a science test in grade five.
- 3 “Lowest Performing Schools,” Palo Alto, CA: EdSource, February 2003: 4.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 Suzanne Tachney in David Fleishhacker and Tacheny, “Arguments: Do Tests Add Up?” *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 2, 2001; Larry Crabbe, quoted in Erika Chavez , “School test results out this week,” *Sacramento Bee*, August 13, 2001.
- 6 In contrast, the California Standards Tests are “refreshed” with a significant proportion of new questions each year.
- 7 “Analysis of the 2001–02 Budget Bill,” Sacramento, CA: Legislative Analyst’s Office, February 2001: E-93.
- 8 “California’s Student Testing System: Hard choices and New Directions,” Palo Alto, Calif.: EdSource, June 2001: 7. This report is an account of the April 2001 EdSource forum on “Tests and More Tests: The Road Ahead for Student Assessment.”
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 According to EdSource, “Whenever new elements are added to the [Academic Performance Index], Base scores [from 1999] are adjusted so that they are comparable to the Growth scores from the previous cycles.” See “Lowest Performing Schools,” *op. cit.*: 4.
- 12 The state Department of Education uses this example.
- 13 “Analysis of the 2001–02 Budget Bill,” *op. cit.*, E-101.
- 14 “Analysis of the 2003–04 Budget Bill,” Sacramento, CA: Legislative Analyst’s Office, February 2003: E-115.
- 15 *Ibid.*, E-114.
- 16 *Ibid.*, E-124.
- 17 For an analysis of the effects of the legislation, see Lance T. Izumi, “Teachers union up to old tricks,” *Orange County Register*, March 7, 2003.
- 18 “Lowest Performing Schools,” *op. cit.*, 4.
- 19 For schools scoring above the state-recommended API target of 800, the annual growth target is a single point. *Ibid.*, E-94.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *Ibid.*, 8-9.
- 22 “Governor Jeb Bush Announces Biggest Improvement Ever on FCAT,” Office of the Governor, Tallahassee, FL, press release, May 15, 2003.
- 23 “Why kids give state tests short shrift,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 7, 2003: A1.
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 *Ibid.*, A13.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 See “The State of State Standards 2000,” Chester Finn and Michael J. Petrilli, eds., The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, Washington, DC, January 2000.
- 28 Florida Department of Education, “FCAT Briefing Book,” Tallahassee, FL, February 2001: 5.
- 29 “Test Scores Rise; Goals Still Unmet,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 30, 2002: A1.
- 30 “Students fall short of goals,” *San Jose Mercury News*, August 30, 2002: A1.
- 31 “Scores Rise; Goals Still Unmet,” *op. cit.*
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 “Schools inch up in state testing,” *Sacramento Bee*, August 30, 2002: A1.
- 34 “Test Scores Rise; Goals Still Unmet,” *op. cit.*
- 35 *Ibid.*
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 Cheri Person Yecke, “Virginia Education Report Card,” The Family Foundation, 1996: 21. See also <http://www.nagb.org/about/achieve.html>.

- 38 All score figures are taken from the National Center for Education Statistics website: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/sitemap.asp>. Scale scores are on a 0-to-500 measurement system.
- 39 “Grade 4 Reading Scores Stay Put,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 20, 2003: A1.
- 40 Of course, the performance benchmarks of the two tests have not been calculated in the same way. However, it is still significant that under both performance benchmark systems, large majorities of California students are achieving at below proficient levels.
- 41 “2001 College-Bound Seniors: A Profile of SAT Program Test Takers (California Report),” The College Board, 2001.
- 42 Lawrence C. Stedman, “An Assessment of the Contemporary Debate over U.S. Achievement” in *Education Policy 1998*, Diane Ravitch, ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1998): 61.
- 43 These statistics can be found on the California Department of Education website at <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/SatAct1.asp?cYear=2001-02&cChoice=SAT1b>, which also includes data on Native Americans and gender breakdowns.
- 44 “SAT Study Shows Test Reliably Predicts College Success,” University of Minnesota press release, April 26, 2001, available at http://www1.umn.edu/urelate/newsservice/newsreleases/01_04SAT.html.
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 “SAT study adds to UC debate,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, April 27, 2001: A1.
- 47 Thomas Sowell, “Back-Door Quotas Are On the Rise,” *Contra Costa Times*, February 26, 2001: A15.
- 48 See “Analysis is critical of exam UC leader wants eliminated,” *San Jose Mercury News*, October 26, 2001: A27.
- 49 *Ibid.*
- 50 Lance T. Izumi, “Atkinson’s Bad Idea,” *Capital Ideas*, Volume 6, Number 9, Pacific Research Institute, March 8, 2001.
- 51 “Can Essay Tests Really Make the Grade,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 31, 1997: A24.
- 52 *Ibid.*
- 53 “SAT I, ACT changes offered,” *Contra Costa Times*, May 16, 2002: A6.
- 54 *Ibid.*
- 55 Matt Cox, “Preferences Versus Preparation: UC Regents Return to Race-Based Admissions,” Pacific Research Institute, San Francisco, CA, April 2002: 5. UCLA has a weighting system that gives extra points to students for various life challenges. *Ibid.*, 7.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 8.
- 58 Lance T. Izumi, “University of California Shuts Out Asians,” *San Francisco Business Times*, August 30, 2002, available at <http://sanfrancisco.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/stories/2002/09/02/editorial2.html>.
- 59 *Ibid.*
- 60 E-mail letter to the author, May 16, 2003.
- 61 *Ibid.*
- 62 Lance T. Izumi, “University of California Shuts Out Asians,” *op. cit.*
- 63 See “State Schools Chief Announces Significant Gains in Percentage of English Learners Reaching English Proficiency,” California Department of Education, News Release, REL#03-16, March 25, 2003. A notable criticism of the data released by the state Department of Education focuses on the Department’s use of matched samples of scores from 2001 to 2002. Matched-sample methodology uses the same group of students in both years and compares their performance. The matched sample used by the Department, however, made up less than half of the total sample. Further, high-performing English language learners in 2001 were not included in the matched sample because they were redesignated as English fluent in 2002 and thus did not have to take the CELDT in that year. It is argued that this fact resulted in a sampling bias since these high-performing students were taken out of the pool of 2001 English-language-learner students used to compare performance between 2001 and 2002. The performance of the pool of matched sample students in 2001 was, therefore, artificially lowered by the absence of the higher performing students in the pool. The gain between 2001 and 2002 would then be artificially inflated. Those criticizing the matched-sample methodology argue that total samples of students in 2001 and 2002 should be compared. Using this methodology, students passing the CELDT increased from 25 percent to 34, which is still an impressive increase. More amazing, only 16 percent of students whose parents obtained waivers to keep them in bilingual classes, and who account for 10 percent of English language learners, scored in the top two levels on the CELDT compared to 36 percent of English language learners in non-waivered instructional programs. In grades K-3, only 10 percent of students in waived classrooms scored in the top two levels. The big picture is that no matter what methodology is used, bilingual education is less effective than other methods,

including English immersion, when it comes to transitioning English language learners quickly into English fluency. For information on the critique of the state Department of Education’s methodology, contact Williamson Evers, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-6010.

64 “Gains Posted by Limited-English Schoolchildren,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 26, 2003: B6.

65 *Ibid.*

66 Jill Stewart, “Politically Incorrect,” *Sacramento News and Review*, April 3, 2003: 11.

67 “Test just one gauge of English knowledge,” *Orange County Register*, March 26, 2003, available at <http://www2.ocregister.com/ocrweb/ocr/article.do?id=31778§ion=LOCAL&subsection=LOCAL&year=2003&month=3&day=26>.

68 The Santa Ana school district is now using passing CELDT scores to put students into mainstream classes even if they have not met the passing requirements on other indicators such as the state’s standardized tests, classroom grades, etc. Superintendent Al Mijares says that students need to be in English-language mainstream classes as soon as possible because, “I don’t want them to be ineligible to go [to college] because of an anemic curriculum.” See *Ibid.*

69 *Ibid.* Irvine and Capistrano school districts in Orange County, for example, require higher achievement on the other indicators than recommended by the state guidelines.

70 “Gains Posted by Limited-English Schoolchildren,” *op. cit.*

71 A school could get up to \$700 or more extra per student to help English learners in 2002, although that amount will shrink a bit because of the state budget crisis. See “Test just one gauge of English knowledge,” *op. cit.*

72 “Gains Posted by Limited-English Schoolchildren,” *op. cit.*

73 Jill Stewart, *op. cit.*, 11.

74 *Ibid.*, 12.

75 *Ibid.*

76 *Ibid.*

77 *Ibid.*

78 *Ibid.*

79 *Ibid.*

80 *Ibid.*

81 “Independent Evaluation of the California High-School Exit Examination (CAHSEE): AB 1609 Study Report – Volume 1,” Human Resources Research Organization (prepared for the California Department of Education), Alexandria, VA, May 1, 2003: 63.

82 *Ibid.* Still, the report found that: “Overall, half of California’s high schools have passing rates lower than 50 percent for the math portion of [the exit exam]. Passing rates are above 75 percent in only about a quarter of all high schools.” *Ibid.*, 65.

83 “90% of Seniors Pass MCAS,” *Boston Globe*, March 4, 2003, available at http://www.boston.com/dailyglobe2/063/metro/90_of_seinors_pass_MCASP.shtml.

84 “State Touts Success for 81% After 2nd MCAS Retest,” *Boston Globe*, September 6, 2002: A1.

85 “90% of Seniors Pass MCAS,” *op. cit.*

86 “Independent Evaluation of the California High-School Exit Examination (CAHSEE): AB 1609 Study Report – Volume 1,” *op. cit.*, ii.

87 *Ibid.*, ii-iii.

88 *Ibid.*, iii.

89 *Ibid.*, 66. Of the 10 percent of high schools that had implemented wide coverage of the English Language Arts standards before 1999, 100 percent had a high passage rate, defined as more than 75 percent, on the exit exam. *Ibid.*

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91 *Ibid.*

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93 *Ibid.*

94 *Ibid.*

95 “MCAS Scores Improve as Minorities Narrow Gap,” *Boston Herald*, August 30, 2002: 6.

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- 97 “Lowest-Performing Schools,” EdSource, Palo Alto, CA, February 2003: 20.
- 98 “Fewer than half pass both exit exams,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, October 1, 2002: B1.
- 99 *Ibid.*
- 100 “Foes target high-school exit exam,” *Sacramento Bee*, October 5, 2002: A1.
- 101 “State finds only 48% pass school exit exam,” *Contra Costa Times*, October 1, 2002: A1.
- 102 *Ibid.*
- 103 “Independent Evaluation of the California High-School Exit Examination (CAHSEE): AB 1609 Study Report – Volume 1,” *op. cit.*, 78.
- 104 “Eastin Releases Spring 2002 California High-School Exit Exam Results,” *op. cit.*
- 105 *Ibid.*
- 106 “Pioneer Class is Shrinking Critics Scrutinizing Data on Dropout Rate,” *Boston Globe*, January 16, 2003: B1.
- 107 “Mixed News on MCAS,” *Boston Globe*, August 31, 2002: A14.
- 108 *Ibid.*
- 109 “No Improvement in Dropout Rate,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 24, 2003: B4.
- 110 “Half get diplomas,” *Los Angeles Daily News*, June 8, 1999.
- 111 Richard Fossey and Jim Garvin, “Cooking the Books on Dropout Rate,” *Education Week*, February 22, 1995: 36.
- 112 “Bad data hid poor graduation rates,” *Sacramento Bee*, June 8, 1999: A1.
- 113 “Half get diplomas,” *op. cit.*
- 114 “2003 Resource Cards on California Schools,” Palo Alto, CA: EdSource, March 2003: 22.
- 115 Stephen V. Cameron and James J. Heckman, “The nonequivalence of high-school equivalents,” *Journal of Labor Economics*, 1993, 11(1) Part 1: 18.
- 116 *Ibid.*
- 117 *Ibid.*, 43.
- 118 *Ibid.*, 44.
- 119 *Ibid.*, 31.
- 120 *Ibid.*, 43.
- 121 David Boesel, Nabeel Alsalam, Thomas M. Smith, “Educational and Labor Market Performance of GED Recipients,” U.S. Department of Education, February 1998.
- 122 *Ibid.*
- 123 *Ibid.*
- 124 *Ibid.*
- 125 Jay Greene, “The GED Myth,” *Texas Education Review*, Spring/Summer 2002, Volume II, Number 1: 24.
- 126 *Ibid.*, 23.
- 127 *Ibid.*
- 128 *Ibid.*, 25.
- 129 “CSU freshmen lag in English, math,” *Sacramento Bee*, January 29, 2003: A3.
- 130 *Ibid.*
- 131 “Fresno State drops students over remedial requirement,” *Fresno Bee*, August 30, 1999.
- 132 *Ibid.*
- 133 “CSU Ousts 8.2% Over Weak Skills,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 29, 2003: B2.
- 134 See Lance T. Izumi with K. Gwynne Coburn, “Facing the Classroom Challenge: Teacher Quality and Teacher Training in California’s Schools of Education,” Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy, San Francisco, CA, April 2001.
- 135 Jeanne Chall, *The Academic Achievement Challenge* (New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2000): 171.
- 136 “CSU Ousts 8.2% Over Weak Skills,” *op. cit.*
- 137 Rolf K. Blank and Doreen Langesen, “State Indicators of Science and Mathematics 2001,” Washington, DC: Council of Chief State School Officers, 2001: 32.

138 *Ibid.*, 27. CCSSO notes that analyses of recent NAEP results show that high mathematics proficiency has a high correlation with the level of mathematics courses students have completed.

139 *Ibid.*, 32.

140 *Ibid.*

141 *Ibid.*

142 *Ibid.*

143 Clifford Adelman, “Answers in a Tool Box: Academic Intensity, Attendance Patterns, and Bachelor’s Degree Attainment,” U.S. Department of Education, June 1999. It should be pointed out, however, that the number of students taking Algebra I may be increasing. Since Algebra I is part of the state’s high-school exit exam, a state-sponsored study has found that, “Middle-grade feeder school principals report significant increases in the proportion of students taking some Algebra by the 8th grade.” See “Independent Evaluation of the California High-School Exit Examination (CAHSEE): AB 1609 Study Report – Volume 1,” *op. cit.*: iv.

144 “State Indicators of Science and Mathematics 2001,” *op. cit.*, 37.

145 *Ibid.*

146 *Ibid.*

147 “California Performance Indicators of 2001,” California Postsecondary Education Commission, Sacramento, CA, April 2002: 46.

148 *Ibid.*, 47.

149 Lance T. Izumi with K. Gwynne Coburn and Matt Cox, “They Have Overcome: High-Poverty, High-Performing Schools in California,” Pacific Research Institute, San Francisco, CA, September 2002.

150 *Ibid.*, 15.

151 *Ibid.*, 16.

152 *Ibid.*

153 *Ibid.*, 18.

154 *Ibid.*

155 *Ibid.*, 31.

156 “Lowest-Performing Schools,” *op. cit.*, 23.

157 *Ibid.*

158 “Test Scores Rise; Goals Still Unmet,” *op. cit.*

159 *Ibid.*

160 “Independent Evaluation of the California High-School Exit Examination (CAHSEE): AB 1609 Study Report – Volume 1,” *op. cit.*, ii-iii.

161 *Ibid.*, 61.

162 *Ibid.*, 48.

163 *Ibid.*

164 *Ibid.*

165 *Ibid.*, 47. The independent evaluation looked at courses in which the textbooks were adopted in 2002–03, 2001–02, 2000–01, 1999–00, pre-1999, or where no text was available. Of the total 1,536 high-school English courses surveyed, based on teacher responses, only 46 percent were highly aligned with the standards. Of the 1,156 high-school math courses surveyed, 57 percent were highly aligned with the standards. Of the 928 middle-school English courses surveyed, 54 percent were highly aligned with the standards. Of the 804 middle-school math courses surveyed, 64 percent were highly aligned with the standards. See *Ibid.*, 48.

166 Mike MacCarthy, “SDCS Payment to ‘Facilitator’ — \$10,000,” *La Prensa San Diego*, March 28, 2003.

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176 “Resource Cards of California Schools 2002,” EdSource, Palo Alto, CA, 2002: Card 29.

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180 *Ibid.*

181 *Ibid.* In its data analysis, the consortium controlled for student characteristics (gender, race/ethnicity, special education status, English-language-learner status, and for poverty, i.e., eligibility for government-subsidized lunch program) and classroom variables (percentage of girls in the class, percentage of students in each race/ethnicity group, percentage in special education, percentage of English language learners, and percentage eligible for government-subsidized lunch).

182 *Ibid.*

183 *Ibid.*

184 “Independent Evaluation of the California High-School Exit Examination (CAHSEE): AB 1609 Study Report – Volume 1,” *op. cit.*, iv.

185 See Lance T. Izumi with K. Gwynne Coburn, “Facing the Classroom Challenge: Teacher Quality and Teacher Training in California’s Schools of Education,” Pacific Research Institute, San Francisco, CA, April 2001.

186 Lance T. Izumi with K. Gwynne Coburn and Matt Cox, “They Have Overcome: High-Poverty, High-Performing Schools in California,” *op. cit.*

187 *Ibid.*, 32.

188 *Ibid.*

189 *Ibid.*

190 *Ibid.*

191 G.W. Borhnstedt and B.M. Stecher (Eds.), “What we have learned about class size reduction,” *op. cit.*, Appendix D.

192 See Lance T. Izumi with K. Gwynne Coburn, “Facing the Classroom Challenge: Teacher Quality and Teacher Training in California’s Schools of Education,” *op. cit.*, 67.

193 For a discussion of the research literature, see Rolf K. Blank and Doreen Langesen, “State Indicators of Science and Mathematics 2001,” *op. cit.*, 71. Also, see Lance T. Izumi with K. Gwynne Coburn, “The California Index of Leading Education Indicators 2000,” Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy, San Francisco, CA, February 2000: 43–44.

194 *Ibid.*, 73.

195 *Ibid.*, 74.

196 “California’s public school teachers highest paid,” *Los Angeles Daily News*, November 22, 2002, available at <http://www.dailynews.com/cda/article/print/0,1674,200%257E20954%257E1006242,00.html>.

197 “California Statistical Abstract 2002,” Sacramento, CA: California Department of Finance, December 2002: 67.

198 “LAUSD Pay Soaring in Romer Era,” *Los Angeles Daily News*, March 5, 2002: N1.

199 *Ibid.*

200 Chester Finn, “What teacher shortage?,” *The Gadfly*, September 14, 2001, available at <http://www.edexcellence.net/gadfly>.

201 Little Hoover Commission, *op. cit.*, 4-5.

202 For a useful summary of the Proposition 98 spending formulas, see “Analysis of the 2003–04 Budget Bill,” *op. cit.*, E-10.

203 See figures contained in “Analysis of the 2003–04 Budget Bill,” *op. cit.*, E-34 and “Analysis of the 1993–94 Budget Bill,” Sacramento, CA: Legislative Analyst’s Office, February 1993: E-7. The real inflation-adjusted growth is calculated using the U.S. Consumer Price Index deflator.

204 “Analysis of the 2003–04 Budget Bill,” *op. cit.*, E-34.

205 “Analysis of the 2000–01 Budget Bill,” Sacramento, CA: Legislative Analyst’s Office, February 2000: E-63.

- 206 “Analysis of the 2003–04 Budget Bill,” *op. cit.*, E-34.
- 207 Compare “Analysis of the 2003–04 Budget Bill,” *op. cit.*, E-34 with “Governor’s Budget Summary 2003–04,” Sacramento, CA: Governor’s Office/Department of Finance, January 2003: 77–78. The Department of Finance calculates that in 2002–03, Prop. 98 per-pupil funding totaled \$6,536, while total education funding per pupil came to \$9,072, 39 percent greater than the Prop. 98 amount.
- 208 See “Governor’s Budget Summary 2003–04,” *op. cit.*, 77–78.
- 209 For a good discussion of this issue, see “Analysis of the 2000–01 Budget Bill,” *op. cit.*, E-61-E-64.
- 210 Under Governor Davis’s proposed budget, total education funding per pupil in 2003–04 would drop to \$8,899 from \$9,072 in 2002–03. The governor says that Prop. 98 funding per pupil would actually increase from \$6,536 in 2002–03 to \$6,708 in 2003–04. See “Governor’s Budget Summary 2003–04,” *op. cit.*, 77–78.
- 211 “Analysis of the 2000–01 Budget Bill,” *op. cit.*, E-65.
- 212 *Ibid.*
- 213 *Ibid.*
- 214 Little Hoover Commission, *op. cit.*, 38.
- 215 *Ibid.*
- 216 *Ibid.*
- 217 Legislative Analyst’s Office, “Analysis of the 1997–98 Budget Bill,” Sacramento, CA, February 1997: E-70.
- 218 “A labyrinth of spending,” *Sacramento Bee*, February 2, 2003: A1.
- 219 *Ibid.*
- 220 “Paying for schools: Counseling for sophomores – A program adrift,” *Sacramento Bee*, February 4, 2003, available at http://www.sacbee.com/content/news/projects/paying_for_schools/v-print/story/6058852p-7015218c.htm.
- 221 *Ibid.*
- 222 “A labyrinth of spending,” *op. cit.*
- 223 “Paying for schools,” *op. cit.*
- 224 “A labyrinth of spending,” *op. cit.*
- 225 *Ibid.*
- 226 *Ibid.*
- 227 *Ibid.*
- 228 Dan Walters, “Education categoricals just another pot of political pork,” *Sacramento Bee*, February 7, 2003: A3.
- 229 *Ibid.*
- 230 *Ibid.*
- 231 “A labyrinth of spending,” *op. cit.*
- 232 *Ibid.*
- 233 *Ibid.*
- 234 “Analysis of the 2001–02 Budget Bill,” *op. cit.*
- 235 EdSource, *op. cit.*, 1.
- 236 See <http://www.cde.ca.gov/classsize/facts.htm>.
- 237 G.W. Borhnstedt and B.M. Stecher (Eds.), *op. cit.*
- 238 *Ibid.*, 34.
- 239 *Ibid.*, 35-36.
- 240 *Ibid.*, 36.
- 241 *Ibid.*
- 242 *Ibid.*
- 243 *Ibid.*, 37.
- 244 *Ibid.*, 35.
- 245 *Ibid.*, 36.

246 *Ibid.*, 34. A 2002 study by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) found that class-size reduction increased the percentage of third-grade students who exceed the national Stanford-9 test score by roughly four percent in math and three percent in reading. However, while the PPIC regression analysis controlled for differences in student demographic composition, including percentage in subsidized lunch programs, percentage black, percentage Hispanic, percentage Asian, and percentage of English language learners, it did not consider the possibility that the increase in student scores may have been due to other factors, such as better standards, curricula, and teaching methods, which were implemented contemporaneously with class-size reduction. The PPIC finding of improved test scores, therefore, may be the result of these other factors rather than any positive impact of class-size reduction. This oversight casts doubt on the PPIC finding. The PPIC study, which was released before the consortium's capstone report, also criticized the consortium's previous interim reports for only looking at state-level data and not using school-level data. The consortium's capstone report, however, does use school-level data and comes to the conclusion that there is no relationship between student exposure to class-size reduction and achievement. See Christopher Jepsen and Steven Rivkin, "Class Size Reduction, Teacher Quality, and Academic Achievement in California Public Elementary Schools," Public Policy Institute of California, San Francisco, CA, 2002.

247 See Lance T. Izumi, "Some Good News about Los Angeles Schools," *Capital Ideas*, Volume 6, Number 45, Pacific Research Institute, December 12, 2001.

248 G.W. Borhnstedt and B.M. Stecher (Eds.), *op. cit.*, 40.

249 *Ibid.*, 40–41.

250 *Ibid.*, 41.

251 *Ibid.*, 7.

252 *Ibid.*

253 *Ibid.*, 46.

254 *Ibid.*, 8, 47.

255 *Ibid.*, 6.

256 All data in this section are taken from "California Safe Schools Assessments: 2000–2001 Results," Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education, 2002.

257 *Ibid.*, 29.

258 *Ibid.*, 9.

259 "The California Master Plan for Education," Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education, Sacramento, CA, October 2002: 68.

260 *Ibid.*

261 *Ibid.*, 47.

262 *Ibid.*, 19.

263 *Ibid.*

264 *Ibid.*, 18.

265 *Ibid.*, 20.

266 *Ibid.*

267 *Ibid.*, Appendix A.

268 *Ibid.*, 144–145.

269 *Ibid.*, 145.

270 *Ibid.*

271 *Ibid.*

272 It is true that the proposed master plan does suggest that California switch its facilities funding model from one that relies on state and local bonds to an annual state-financed per-pupil capital-outlay allocation that is protected within the budget. The plan argues that such a change would allow greater planning certainty. It would, however, increase the state General Fund budget significantly. Given the current and predicted state budget deficits, it is hard to see this recommendation being enacted any time soon. In the absence of this facilities funding change, the current reliance on bond money to finance facilities will continue. See Recommendations 47 and 47.1. *Ibid.*, 136–137.

273 *Ibid.*, Appendix A.

274 *Ibid.*

275 *Ibid.*, 30–31, 36.

276 *Ibid.*, 47.

277 *Ibid.*, 49.

278 *Ibid.*, 133.

279 *Ibid.*

280 *Ibid.*, Appendix A.

281 *Ibid.*

282 *Ibid.*

283 *Ibid.*

284 *Ibid.*, 135.

285 *Ibid.*, 136.

286 *Ibid.*

287 *Ibid.*, 112.

288 *Ibid.*

289 *Ibid.*, 93.

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