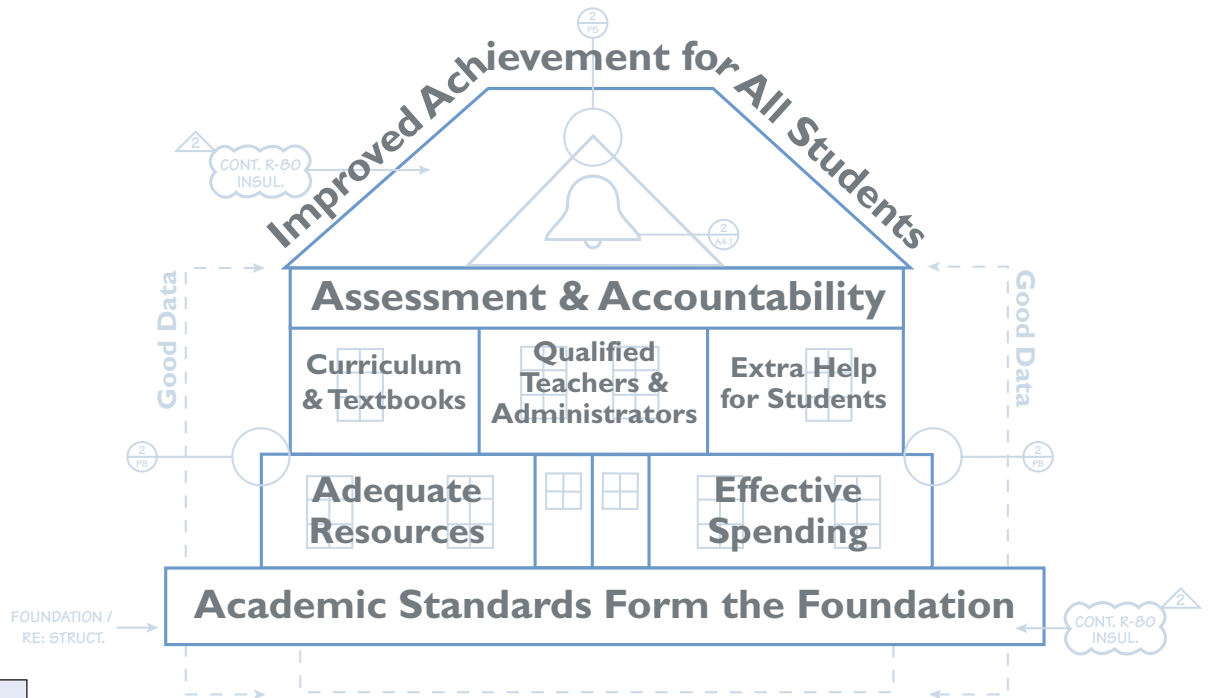




Clarifying  
Complex  
Education  
Issues

# Update: California's Education Reforms



## Inside This Report

Standards and Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability . . . . . 2

New API scores will emphasize state standards (Figure 1) . . . 5

Teacher and Administrator Issues . . . 7

Appropriate Support for Students and Schools . . . . . 11

Conclusion: Shifted Focus and Challenges Ahead . . . 15

**EdSource thanks the following foundations for their core support of our work: William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, and Stuart Foundation.**

Public education in California is at a critical point as 2002 comes to a close. Since 1996, the state's concerted effort to improve its schools has created dramatic changes in state education policy. Yet the process is not complete, and more change is on the horizon. Not only does the state have policies it has yet to fully implement, it must now do so while also complying with a wide-ranging new federal education reform law, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).

Meanwhile, the current economic downturn is presenting lawmakers and educators with financial challenges that could hamper improvement efforts and may threaten the viability of some recent state reforms. Waiting in the wings is a Master Plan proposal that recommends further change in the state's education system from pre-school through university.

In the midst of all this comes the November 2002 general election. Voters are about to choose the next Superintendent of Public Instruction and decide whether to re-elect their current governor. The entire state Assembly and half the Senate are also up for election. In addition, two state ballot propositions

would, if passed, substantially increase public funding for school facilities and after-school programs. In local elections, some voters will select school board members, and some will vote on local bonds or parcel taxes.

Through this election season, and in the ensuing months as new state and local leaders assume office, Californians need to take stock of the many state policies and programs that have been implemented since the mid-1990s when education reform began gaining momentum. By clarifying the goals of these reforms and assessing the state's progress toward meeting them, Californians will be better able to determine the best course of action for the next four years and beyond.

This report briefly reviews California's numerous, and at times confusing, public education reforms. Organized by reform topic, it provides a quick summary of what California has built in recent years and what is on the drawing board. Voters can use this information to put campaign rhetoric and promises into perspective. After the election, state and local leaders, along with their constituents, may find it helpful and informative as they set the course for the state's schools and young people in the immediate future.

Trish Williams  
EdSource Executive Director

## 2002–03 EdSource Board of Directors

Kelvin K. Lee, President  
Superintendent, Dry Creek Joint  
Elementary School District

Peter Schrag, Vice President  
Contributing Editor, Sacramento Bee

Lawrence O. Picus, Fiscal Officer  
Professor, Rossier School of  
Education, University of Southern  
California

Robert G. Haskell, Secretary  
Senior Vice President, Public Affairs,  
Pacific Life Insurance Company

Ray Bacchetti  
Scholar in Residence, Carnegie  
Foundation for the Advancement  
of Teaching

Pam Brady  
Vice President for Education,  
California State PTA

Davis Campbell  
President, CSBA Governance  
Institute

Susan J. Cochran  
President, American Association  
of University Women—California

Judy Davis  
Chair, League of Women Voters  
of California Education Fund

Jan Domene  
President, California State PTA

Joni E. Finney  
Vice President, National Center  
for Public Policy and Higher  
Education

Gerald C. Hayward  
Director, Policy Analysis for  
California Education

Ann Nkiruka Ifekwunigwe  
National Board Certified Teacher,  
Carthay Center Elementary School

Barbara Inatsugu  
President, League of  
Women Voters of California

Maggie Carrillo Mejia  
Superintendent,  
Montebello Unified School District

John B. Mockler  
President,  
John Mockler & Associates

Ted Olsson  
Manager, Corporate Community  
Relations, Western United States,  
IBM Corporation

Amado M. Padilla  
Professor of Education,  
Stanford University

Krys Wulff  
Past President, American Association  
of University Women—California

## Standards and Curriculum, Assessment and Accountability

*Clarity about what students should know and be able to do, through the creation of academic content standards, is the foundation for the concept of standards-based education that has been the driving force behind California's education reforms since about 1996. Curriculum and instruction aligned with those standards, assessments to measure students' progress, and school-level accountability for the results are key building blocks in such a system.*

### Standards and Curriculum: The school reform goal

State leaders have created standards that specify the content that students need to acquire in each subject area and at each grade level, and have provided curriculum materials that reflect that content. Local school officials and teachers are now responsible for selecting and using the instructional strategies that best deliver that content to their students.

### In California today: What the state has built

**State content standards are now in place.** Between 1997 and 1998, the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted content standards for the four core academic areas—English/language arts, mathematics, science, and history/social science. The content standards are at the core of the state's education improvement efforts. The SBE adopted state standards for Visual and Performing Arts in 2001, and standards in other subjects may follow. These additional subjects are not expected to be included in the state's mandatory assessment system.

**The state, expecting that districts will tailor instruction to the standards, has become increasingly influential in local curriculum decisions.** The SBE has adopted official curriculum frameworks based on the standards, which are intended to guide curriculum development and classroom instruction. Districts receive state funds to purchase textbooks and other instructional materials that either have been approved directly by the state (in grades K–8) or have been certified by the district as consistent with the state standards and frameworks (in grades 9–12). The state has provided school districts with more than \$2.3 billion for the purchase of standards-aligned materials since 1999. Although local implementation of the state standards and curriculum frameworks is theoretically voluntary, the state accountability system measures

and ranks schools' performance based on how well students do on basic-skills and standards-based assessments.

### What's on the drawing board

**California has an established cycle for re-viewing its curriculum expectations.** The recent push for new academic content standards and curriculum alignment created upheaval in what had been a regular cycle of curriculum review. That cycle is now being re-established with some modification. The frameworks and materials are to be re-examined every six years in the core curriculum areas and every eight years in other subjects. The Legislature has sent a bill (Senate Bill 1367, Karnette) to the governor that would require the SBE, beginning in 2010, to periodically review the content standards and modify them as appropriate. The reviews of the standards would be coordinated with reviews of curriculum frameworks and instructional materials.

**For the most part, California's approach to standards and curriculum satisfies the NCLB requirements.** However, NCLB places a new and heavy emphasis on “scientifically proven” reading and instructional programs, as certified by the state. The SBE's January 2002 adoption of new instructional materials in reading, language arts, and English language development fits this requirement. School districts are likely to be required to select from these state-approved materials, in accordance with state law, in order to continue to receive federal funds through Title I.

### Up for debate

**The proposed California Master Plan calls for the establishment of “an academically rigorous standard curriculum for every high school student that prepares every student for a full array of post-high school options.”** Perhaps the most difficult issue to be settled in considering such a proposal is what such a cur-

riculum should look like including, for example, the balance between academic, career preparation, and arts courses. In the last legislative session, a similar proposal was defeated that called for the de facto high school curriculum to be the “a through g courses” required for University of California/California State University admission. Other questions include whether every high school has the capacity to offer more rigorous courses, as well as the extent to which the state should determine the “standard high school curriculum” versus having it vary according to local community preferences and needs as it does now.

In addressing issues around school readiness, the plan also recommends a substantial expansion of the state’s role in the operation of pre-kindergarten programs. The first question that arises within the K–12 community is the extent to which pre-K programs would compete for scarce funding. In addition, there is a long-standing philosophical debate regarding how much the state should be involved in the up-bringing of pre-K children versus early childhood development being strictly a parental responsibility.

## Assessment: The school reform goal

If they are to hold schools and districts accountable for student performance based on the content standards, state leaders need standardized measures for assessing progress. In turn, educators need assessments aligned to the standards in order to determine students’ progress, identify academic needs, and adapt instruction when necessary. Information about achievement by various subgroups of students is integral to the system in order to identify and address achievement gaps among groups.

## In California today: What the state has built

The mandatory Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program continues to evolve. The statewide testing system includes both a norm-referenced test and a criterion-referenced test. The former covers basic skills and provides percentile scores based on comparing California students to a national sample. (For example, a student in the 50th percentile has done as well as half the students in the national sample.) The criterion-referenced California Standards Tests (CSTs) are aligned to state content standards in the four core academic areas. In 2002, student performance on all these tests was for the first time reported by performance levels—state-determined criteria for expected student achievement based on the number of correct answers. A third component of STAR is the SABE/2, which tests Spanish-speaking students new to California schools in their native language.

*This report includes frequent references to the federal No Child Left Behind Act and the proposed California Master Plan for Education, both described here.*

### No Child Left Behind Act

In 1965, Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), federal education legislation aimed at supporting the education of the country’s poorest children. By law, Congress must reauthorize ESEA every six years. Each reauthorization creates and/or revamps several programs and policies, reflecting the priorities of the current administration and Congress. The 2002 reauthorization of ESEA, popularly known as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), strengthens the federal commitment and resolve that all states should be actively pursuing a reform agenda based on the tenets of standards-based reform. These include high academic standards for all students; extra support to help students and schools meet those standards; increased flexibility for local schools in order for them to do so; and greater accountability for the results, particularly as measured by student performance on standardized tests.

To qualify for funding under NCLB, states must meet certain regulatory requirements and procedures. California already has many of these in place; but to fully comply with federal law, the state will need to adjust some of its programs and policies.

State policymakers have already begun the work needed to comply with NCLB. For example, the California Department of Education (CDE) and the State Board of Education (SBE) have adopted NCLB’s goals and performance indicators. In addition, the state has submitted a preliminary application for the federal funds available under NCLB. This “first draft” outlines which requirements the state already meets and how it plans to satisfy the remaining requirements. A copy of the application is available at [www.cde.ca.gov/pr/nclb/nclb02.htm](http://www.cde.ca.gov/pr/nclb/nclb02.htm). Further, the state is creating a No Child Left Behind Liaison Team that will advise the CDE and SBE on implementation issues. The final NCLB application is scheduled to be approved by the SBE in May 2003.

### The California Master Plan for Education

In 1999 the California Legislature convened a joint Senate and Assembly committee to create a Master Plan for Education, a blueprint for a more cohesive system of public education from pre-kindergarten through university. The committee convened a number of working groups, made up of researchers, educators, activists, business people, and others from throughout the state. These groups explored ways that various education components—such as teacher preparation, funding, and assessment—could better work to help California achieve its educational goals at all levels of the system.

Based on the working groups’ reports, plus extensive public input, the committee completed its Master Plan recommendations and presented them to the Legislature and the public at the end of the 2002 session. This document is available at [www.sen.ca.gov/masterplan](http://www.sen.ca.gov/masterplan). In 2003, legislation necessary for implementation will be introduced as lawmakers see fit, potentially shaping the Legislature’s work on education reform during the coming session.

The STAR system reached an important milestone with the completion of all its key components in spring 2002. Concurrently, the state has been making some changes to be implemented in 2003. The California Achievement Test, 6th edition (CAT/6), provided by the Educational Testing Service, will replace Harcourt Educational Measurement's Stanford-9 as the program's nationally norm-referenced test. (The CAT/6 will not include history/social science at the high school level because the national tests do not align well with California's curriculum in this area.) Students will continue to take the CSTs. While the total STAR testing time will remain the same, students will spend more time taking the CSTs and less time on the norm-referenced tests. The reauthorization also called for consolidating the CSTs with the voluntary Golden State Exams when possible in order to eliminate redundancies and limit the impact on instructional time.

**Current law calls for the class of 2004 to pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in order to graduate.** Established by law in 1999, the CAHSEE has now been given to this first group of students. Scores are available at <http://cahsee.cde.ca.gov>. An official evaluation is also underway to determine whether the state can fairly hold students in the class of 2004 accountable for their exit exam performance.

**The California English Language Development Test (CELDT) will provide a consistent measure of English learners' progress toward proficiency.** School districts officially administered the test to more than 1.5 million students in 2001. It is aligned with state standards for English language development and will provide district- and school-level information about English learners and their eligibility to be reclassified as fully English proficient.

## What's on the drawing board

**California officials will continue to evaluate and refine STAR and other elements of the state testing system.** For one, Educational Testing Service (ETS) is conducting a research study that aims to link Stanford-9 scores to CAT/6 scores. This should enable the state to compare student and school performance on the Stanford-9 in 2002 to performance on the CAT/6 in 2003.

**California's testing system is consistent with most NCLB requirements.** Those requirements include participation in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and testing of all third through eighth graders annually in reading and math.

The state will need to expand its science assessments by the 2007–08 school year. To meet NCLB requirements, California must administer standards-aligned tests in science to all students in at least one grade at

the elementary, middle, and high school levels. California currently administers science tests in grades 9–11, but the tests are subject-specific (e.g., biology) and given only to students enrolled in specific courses. The state plans to develop science tests for middle and high school students that are based on “core” science standards from the relevant grades. The state had already planned to begin administering a standards-based science test in grade 5 in 2004.

The NCLB also requires that states provide achievement data to the public, including results by district and school level, student disability, English learner status, ethnicity, economic disadvantage, migrant status, and gender. While some minor adjustments may be needed, California already breaks out its testing data along these lines. Missing is an ability to track the progress of specific groups of students over time, a requirement which would necessitate substantial changes to the state's data system. (See more about this under Accountability below.)

## Up for debate

**The State Board of Education will be deciding whether to hold the Class of 2004 accountable for its performance on the High School Exit Exam.** The SBE has until August 2003 to postpone the requirement for one or more years. Concerns about fairness to students who have not had an adequate opportunity to learn the material on the test prompted state legislators and the governor to conduct an evaluation and give the SBE this option. On the other hand, postponement of the requirement could call into question the state's resolve regarding student and school accountability. Because of the high stakes and very real consequences it creates for students, families, and schools, the exit exam decision could have far-reaching effects.

## Accountability: The school reform goal

Through a highly public ranking of schools, state leaders hope to keep a spotlight on student performance goals and motivate schools to improve. Incentives for schools to do well also include financial rewards. Schools that are struggling receive extra help along with the negative publicity, but if they accept the extra resources they must show improvement to avoid sanctions, including the possibility of state takeover.

## In California today: What the state has built

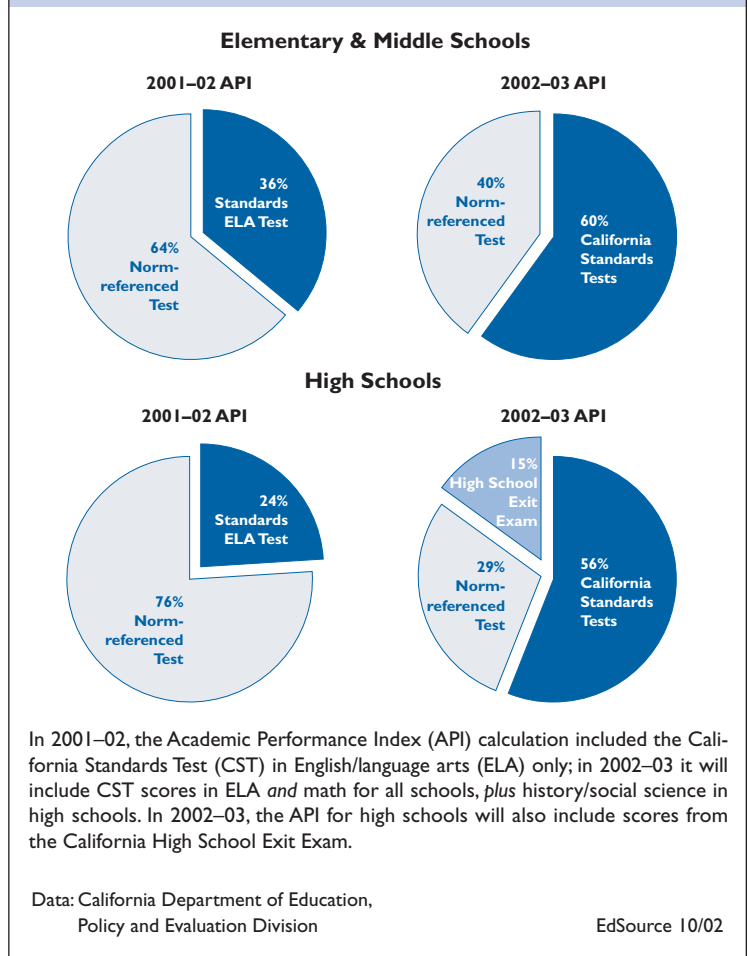
**California has a statewide system for holding schools and educators accountable for student performance.** This system came out of the 1999 Public School Accountability Act (PSAA). Its central component is the Academic Performance Index (API), which combines

student STAR scores to come up with a single number index used to rank schools statewide. The state specifies annual API growth targets for all schools and subgroups of students (based on ethnicity or income, for example) within schools. Success or failure in meeting its growth targets qualifies a school for state-administered rewards or sanctions. Along with receiving public recognition, successful schools qualify for monetary awards through the Governor's Performance Awards program. Those classified as "underperforming" are eligible and encouraged to apply for an intervention program. While this system has been in operation for three years, it is still evolving.

The state continues to add measures to the Academic Performance Index (API). As of 2002, the API includes the California Standards Test (CST) scores in English/language arts (ELA) and the Stanford-9. In January 2003, the API will also include the CSTs in math and history/social science, and the CSTs will be weighted more heavily in calculating the index. (See Figure 1.) This is consistent with the original legislative intent that the API emphasize tests aligned with California's content standards. For high schools, API scores will also include the High School Exit Exam, which could increase the pressure on educators to raise student achievement.

State officials continue to give monetary awards, but they have scaled back from the first year. For 1999–2000, the state gave \$677 million in rewards based on growth in schools' API scores through three programs—two aimed at staff and one for school sites. One program, only offered that year, gave bonuses to school site employees. Faced with a tightening budget, lawmakers also opted to discontinue another program that gave bonuses for staff with credentials. Thus, for 2000–01 and going forward, only the school-site program remains—the Governor's Performance Awards—which amount to about \$144 million annually. School sites received the money for the awards based on 2001 test scores in summer 2002. But the budget bill signed in September 2002 did not include funds for a third round, which would be based on 2002 test scores.

Currently, 1,290 schools are participating in the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP). The more than 3,000 schools that score in the lower half of the API rankings each year can volunteer to participate in the program, but only 430 of them are selected in any given year. In October 2002 as many as 130 of the original group of II/USP schools could face some type of sanctions for failure to improve. Meanwhile, in 2001, legislators created the High Priority Schools Grant Program (HPSG) to focus more sharply on the state's lowest performing schools and provide those schools with additional help. Budget limitations, combined with a need to integrate the program with the existing II/USP, delayed funding until the 2002–03

**Figure 1**
**New API scores will emphasize tests aligned with state standards**


school year. Funds are sufficient for every school in the bottom 10%, based on their API scores, to become an HPSG school in 2002–03.

The High School Exit Exam and a scholarship program are intended to hold high school students directly accountable. Convinced that student motivation was important, the state created two programs that directly affect high school students. Beginning in 2004, failure to pass the High School Exit Exam could keep students from graduating. Conversely, high scores on the Stanford-9 test have earned high school students \$1,000 per year in college scholarships through the Governor's Scholars program, begun in 2000.

California had to respond quickly to federal accountability measures related to parental choice. NCLB requires, beginning in September 2002, that districts provide students at failing schools—those that did not make "Adequate Yearly Progress" for two consecutive years—with the option of transferring to higher-performing schools elsewhere in their district. Students attending "persistently dangerous" schools also qualify for a school transfer. Each state establishes its own definition of ade-

## Chronology of Key Legislation, 1996–2001

### Curriculum and standards, assessment and accountability:

In 1995 the [California Assessment of Academic Achievement Act](#) put the state's standards-based reforms into motion by setting up a process for developing California's statewide content and performance standards. Subsequent laws have had an impact on which portions of this act, Assembly Bill (AB) 265, have actually been implemented.

[School Accountability Report Cards \(SARCs\)](#) must be published by school districts annually, including on the Internet, in order to provide the community with vital statistics about individual public schools in California. (Education Code 33126: originally enacted in 1988, with amendments in 1993, 1994, 1997, and 2000)

[Standardized Testing and Reporting Program \(STAR\)](#)—Senate Bill (SB) 376, 1997—requires districts to administer an achievement test to every student in second through 11th grade, including Limited English Proficient and Special Education students not exempted by their Individualized Education Program (IEP). The 2001 reauthorization of STAR made some important changes in the program, including reducing the norm-referenced component of STAR and expanding the standards-based component. (SB 233, 2001)

[Pupil Promotion and Retention Law](#) mandates that each school district develop an official policy regarding the promotion and retention of students. Local districts have discretion over how they identify children who need to be retained as well as those who are at risk of being retained. (AB 1626, 1998)

[High School Exit Exam](#) requires California high school seniors to pass a state-adopted, standards-aligned exam to receive a diploma. The class of 2004 is expected to be the first required to pass the test (SB 2x, 1999). In 2001, some changes to the original law were made including accommodations for Special Education students and an extra evaluation to make sure the test requirement would be fair to all students. This evaluation must be completed by May 2003 and could lead the SBE to delay the passing requirement for a year or more. (AB 1609, 2001)

[Public Schools Accountability Act \(PSAA\)](#) created a system for holding public schools accountable for student performance. It includes the Academic Performance Index (API), the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP), and the Governor's Performance Awards (GPA) program. (SB 1x, 1999)

[Teacher Incentives](#) provided one-time awards to California public school teachers and other credentialed employees. This program was funded only in 1999–2000. (AB 1114, 1999)

[Governor's Scholarship Programs](#) provides \$1,000 college scholarships per year directly to high school students who score well on the state achievement tests, and additional rewards for those who demonstrate high achievement in math and science. (SB 1688, 2000)

[AP Challenge Grant Program](#) provides competitive grants to schools and is intended to increase high school students' access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses. (SB 1689, 2000)

[High Priority Schools Grant Program \(HPSG\)](#) expands state support for schools with the lowest 10% of API scores. In return, those schools must participate in the II/USP, develop an improvement plan, and participate in state-approved professional development programs. (AB 961, 2001)

quate progress and unacceptable danger. California provided some preliminary language in July 2002 as part of its NCLB application and has a list of the schools available online. For more information go to: [www.edsource.org/edu\\_cho\\_cal.cfm](http://www.edsource.org/edu_cho_cal.cfm)

California law has required a system for school choice within school districts for nearly a decade. This federal requirement essentially gives first preference for such choice to students in troubled schools and requires districts to make sure transportation is available.

### What's on the drawing board

Lauded as a model of a “strong state accountability system,” California's approach meets most NCLB requirements. The federal law requires most of the elements of the state's PSAA. However, to comply with NCLB fully, California will need to adjust its data collection system to provide data consistent with national guidelines.

NCLB calls for the collection of specific data, some of which requires tracking individual students from year to year and school to school. For example, the state must collect schools' graduation rates. Accurate graduation-rate data means tracking individual students so that schools and the state can determine whether a student dropped out or simply transferred to another school. This is not currently possible for two reasons. First, California has not assigned each student a unique code (akin to a Social Security number) that would allow records to follow the student over time and from school to school. Second, many school districts do not have data systems to track students within their own district, let alone to or from other districts. The voluntary California School Information Services (CSIS) program, now in development, would create a student identifier system and enhance school districts' ability to collect and transmit data. In addition, the governor signed a bill in September requiring the creation of a longitudinal database and student identifier system that would contain students' state test scores.

NCLB provides funds to states to create comprehensive information systems and to link together their assessment and information systems. NCLB also provides funds for independent analysis of district achievement data.

**The non-testing measures intended to be part of the API are still not available.** The original PSAA legislation called for the API to include performance measures, such as student/staff attendance and student graduation rates, in addition to test scores. However, school-level data for these measures are not considered reliable, and there is no projected date for when they will be included in the API. The completion of a student-based data system would help make these data available.

### Up for debate

The proposed Master Plan calls for the completion of the API index to include non-testing measures. One question is whether the specific measures that were included when the index was originally created are still the most desirable or if others should be considered. The requirements of NCLB and the creation of a more robust data system are both likely to prompt state leaders to revisit this question in more detail.

The rewards and sanctions portions of the Public School Accountability Act are both at a pivotal point. By passing a budget for 2002–03 that did not include money for the Governor's Performance Awards, state leaders put the future of the program in question. Some education groups have gone on record opposing the rewards and may seek to make the omission permanent. Yet many see the rewards as a cornerstone of the state's accountability program and an important incentive for school improve-

ment. The first application of sanctions to non-improving II/USP schools is likely to trigger some additional discussion around that program as well.

### To Learn More

For in-depth information on these topics, see the following EdSource publications, which can be ordered on our website, [www.edsource.org](http://www.edsource.org), or by calling our office, 650/857-9604. Parent guides (which are in English and Spanish) and EdFacts can be downloaded for free.

- ✓ *California Student Achievement: Multiple views of K–12 progress* (June 2002)
- ✓ *Is California on the Right Track? Speakers debate how best to meet rising expectations for K–12 education* (May 2002) (Also can be downloaded for free from our website)
- ✓ *Parent Guide: California's New Mathematics Standards* (September 2001)
- ✓ *Parent Guide: California's New High School Exit Exam* (October 2001)
- ✓ *EdFact: California's Student Data System: In Need of Improvement* (May 2002)
- ✓ *California's Student Testing System: Hard choices and new directions* (June 2001) (Also can be downloaded for free from our website)

## Teacher and Administrator Issues

*The professionals who teach children and who run California schools are integral to the state's ability to implement its reforms. Issues of recruitment, preparation, credentialing, retention, compensation, evaluation, and continuing professional development are closely related.*

### Teacher and Administrator Supply and Demand: The school reform goal

California faces serious problems staffing its schools, particularly its lowest-performing schools, with qualified and experienced teachers and administrators. The teacher situation became acute in the wake of the state's efforts to reduce class sizes in kindergarten through third grade, which began in 1996. Reform efforts have focused on enlarging the pool of candidates interested in teaching as a career, improving their preparation so they come to the classroom better qualified to teach to the state's academic standards, and doing a better job retaining them in the classroom. The state also needs to address a shortage of well-qualified candidates willing to assume leadership positions as school principals and district administrators.

### In California today: What the state has built

California has made a concerted effort to increase the number of teaching candidates and encourage them to work in low-performing schools. The state created a new infrastructure to provide information about teaching opportunities, including regional recruitment centers. Lawmakers have also passed measures intended to ease entry into the classroom for candidates who were qualified to teach—such as teachers from other states and private schools. This included eliminating requirements that many viewed as duplicative, allowing candidates to test out of credentialing requirements, and recognizing equivalent work in other states. The state has also created a range of alternative pathways into the teaching profession, including internships and a “career ladder” program for paraprofessionals.

State leaders have also attempted to make teaching more financially attractive. In 2000 they passed an incentive program to encourage districts to raise beginning teacher salaries. Thanks both to that measure and an increase in state funding, in 2000–01 many districts gave raises of 10% or more. State leaders also created new financial incentives, including cash awards and student loan assumptions, to encourage teachers to work in low-performing schools. Through the Teaching as a Priority Program (TAP), the state provides incentive funds to low-performing schools to help them recruit and retain qualified teachers.

**Concerned about new teachers' qualifications and abilities, state lawmakers in 1998 passed Senate Bill (SB) 2042, which is still being implemented.** In response to this comprehensive law, the state developed standards for teacher preparation programs and new credential requirements. New standards for subject-matter knowledge, teacher preparation, and induction—all directly linked to K–12 academic content standards—were put into place in 2001 after three years of development. These standards reflect the state's new emphasis on a standards-based curriculum and include new performance assessments of teachers. Colleges and universities seeking state accreditation of their teacher preparation programs have until Dec. 31, 2003, to demonstrate that they meet these standards. The state has set the same deadline for approval of teacher induction programs.

Concurrently, the state created new requirements for earning a teaching credential. California now has a two-tiered credentialing system. The first tier provides for a preliminary credential entitling individuals to become classroom teachers. Within five years, as part of the second tier, teachers must complete further requirements to receive a professional credential, including an induction program. Teaching candidates must continue to demonstrate their subject-matter competency through a state-approved academic major or a state-adopted subject-matter examination.

## What's on the drawing board

New legislation passed in August 2002 seeks to alleviate the shortage of school principals. This bill provides an alternative, streamlined credential path for administrator candidates who can demonstrate their competency by passing a state-adopted exam. The legislation also allows for alternative routes to an administrator credential and alternative providers for administrator preparation. As an emergency statute, it takes effect immediately.

**SB 2042 will continue to drive change in teacher preparation and credentialing.** Teaching credential

programs will be changing in accord with the new state regulations and in alignment with the new standards. In addition, new assessments of teacher ability are in development, most notably the California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET), which assess teachers' knowledge and competency in the subjects they will teach.

**The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) puts attention on the pressing need for qualified teachers and the unequal distribution of credentialed teachers.** The federal law sets guidelines for states to use in defining a "highly qualified" teacher. Further, it mandates that only teachers fitting the state description are to be hired at schools that receive Title I funding, beginning on the first day of the 2002–03 school year. Teachers hired before that must meet the same qualifications by 2005–06. California has until then to make sure the state and NCLB credentialing requirements are consistent.

With the proportion of less than fully credentialed teachers still at about 14%, and the problem most pressing at low-performing schools, California already faces serious challenges in meeting these NCLB requirements. However, the state's emerging approach to credentialing based on SB 2042 appears to be largely consistent with the federal intent. State officials submitted a proposed definition of a "highly qualified" teacher as part of the preliminary NCLB application in July 2002, which initially caused some federal concern. State and federal officials have since met to clarify how California's credential system is changing and discuss related issues. Those discussions will likely continue until the state's final NCLB plan is completed in May 2003.

Regarding other personnel matters, NCLB established federal requirements for the qualifications of paraeducators—non-credentialed teaching assistants—in Title I schools, which serve disadvantaged children. Those requirements took effect in January 2002. The law also includes funds to support the recruitment of qualified candidates as teachers and school principals.

## Up for debate

**The NCLB and the proposed Master Plan both set the goal that every teacher be adequately prepared before having independent responsibility for a classroom.**

The Master Plan explicitly proposes that emergency permits be abolished in favor of "pre-intern" status, which requires participation in an approved teacher-training program and provides support in passing the required subject-matter exams. However, local school districts will still face the dilemma of how to make sure every classroom has a teacher when the supply of interested, let alone qualified, candidates is insufficient.



The Master Plan recommendations also focus on raising the qualifications of the teaching force most quickly at low-performing schools. The plan calls for the state to provide additional resources to attract and retain teachers in hard-to-staff schools. Pressure to more equitably distribute qualified teachers among schools is increasing—thanks in part to the new federal requirements for Title I schools. In many school districts, union contracts give senior teachers first choice of teaching assignments, and they often choose not to work in the lowest-performing schools. If voluntary state incentives prove ineffective—and local districts and teacher unions fail to address such teacher distribution issues quickly and in a meaningful way—a push for state-level policy action could be next.

## Professional Development: The school reform goal

Standards-based education creates new expectations that many practicing teachers and school administrators have not been trained to meet. High quality, appropriate professional development opportunities are crucial to these education reforms. Constructive evaluation of teacher and administrator performance can also contribute to improvements in professional practice and ultimately in student learning.

### In California today: What the state has built

California's state-supported professional development efforts have been redesigned based on a state-run program to give all teachers the additional skills necessary to implement standards-based reform and school principals the skills to lead their staffs in doing so.

California has revamped its state-supported professional development program for teachers and is in the process of implementing those changes. First, California created Professional Development Institutes (PDI) to provide models for intensive teacher training programs tied to the state's academic standards in the four core subject areas—English/language arts, mathematics, history/social science, and science. The institutes, which began with reading in 1999, included summer workshops for teachers followed by ongoing support during the school year. During the first two years of these programs, participants received a stipend and the state emphasized providing this training to teachers in low-performing schools.

In an effort to make such training more widely available to schools throughout the state, lawmakers provided some funding for school districts to arrange for training directly, with the provision that the training must be based on the PDI model. Districts can develop their own training programs or hire a provider, but the State Board of Educa-

tion (SBE) must approve their program before the state will provide funds. Through the end of the 2001–02 school year, 338 districts had received that approval.

California teachers are encouraged to earn National Board Certification. Through this rigorous national program, teachers demonstrate that they meet high professional standards. California rewards them with a one-time bonus of \$10,000 and offers an additional \$20,000 to those who then commit to teaching in a low-performing school for four years. As of November 2001, more than 1,300 experienced California teachers had earned this certification, including 516 in 2001 alone. The program is not intended for beginning teachers.

The support and evaluation of new and experienced teachers has become more systematic. State leaders created a statewide teacher induction program called the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment System (BTSA) to address a severe problem of attrition among new teachers in California, and it has proven to be effective. Further, participation in an induction program such as BTSA became a requirement for earning a “clear” professional teaching credential beginning in 2002. Full implementation of this requirement will be completed in 2003. In 1999 the state replaced its existing mentor teacher program with the Peer Assistance and Review Program (PAR). Almost 90% of districts now participate and receive funds to operate PAR programs. Once the basic program requirements for PAR are met, districts can use remaining funds to run BTSA programs or other professional development efforts.

A new state program aims to improve training for school site principals and vice principals. Through the Principal Training Act, the state offers incentive funding to local districts to provide specially designed and approved professional development to their school site principals. Districts select training providers from a list approved by the SBE. As of August 2002, 34 training providers have been approved and 476 districts have applied for the incentive monies to pay for principal training, including some of the state's largest districts.

### What's on the drawing board

The state has made a sizable investment in new professional development programs tied to standards, but the work is not complete. These efforts are still in their early stages, and their effectiveness will continue to be evaluated. Further, the programs so far have been available to only a portion of the teaching force. Making them generally available will require adequate funding of the new district-based programs and the development of similar local programs in other subject areas. Historically in California, professional development programs have been among the first things cut when education budgets

are reduced. New federal funds may help prevent that this time around.

It appears that the state's professional development efforts will meet the new federal requirements. NCLB calls for "scientifically based professional development" that provides ongoing support rather than depending on one-day or short-term workshops. It places particular attention on reading, and California has qualified for \$871 million in federal funds to improve reading instruction over the next six years. However, as the professional development programs are

implemented, the state will need to collect and analyze relevant data to evaluate the effectiveness of its efforts. It will also need to show that the number of teachers receiving high quality professional development is increasing.

### Up for debate

The proposed Master Plan makes a specific recommendation that the state eventually fund 10 days of professional staff development at all public schools, beginning with the lowest performing. The plan also calls for more professional development

## Chronology of Key Legislation, 1996–2001

### The recruitment, preparation, credentialing, professional development, and evaluation of teachers and administrators:

Prior to 1996, California had begun addressing issues of teacher supply and quality by creating the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) induction program, establishing a "career ladder" program for instructional aides at schools, and providing funding to support locally operated intern programs, creating an alternative pathway to a teaching credential for qualified individuals. Activity in this area of policy has accelerated in recent years.

**California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP)** (1997) provide guidelines for teacher educators and new teachers as they define and develop their professional practice.

**The Pre-intern Program** provides funding for locally operated alternative certification programs for individuals with a bachelor's degree who do not have either subject-matter preparation or have completed a teacher preparation program. (Assembly Bill or AB 351, 1997)

**Teacher Credentialing Bill** called for sweeping changes in teacher preparation and credentialing, including requiring development of new teacher preparation program standards, creating multiple paths for earning a teaching credential, and establishing a tiered credential system. The standards for teacher preparation were officially adopted in 2001 and must be implemented by Dec. 31, 2003. (Senate Bill or SB 2042, 1998)

**Credentialing for Out-of-State Teachers** was addressed in a series of bills that created alternative standards and procedures for issuing California teacher credentials to applicants trained and credentialed in other states, and provided special consideration for teachers with National Board Certification. (AB 1620, 1998; AB 858, 1998; and AB 877, 2000)

**Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) Program** (replaced the state's Mentor Teacher Program) calls for experienced teachers to help their peers improve their teaching. (AB 1x, 1999)

**Teacher Incentives** provided one-time awards to California public school teachers and other credentialed employees. The program was funded only for 1999–2000. (AB 1114, 1999)

**Professional Development Institutes** created programs to provide high quality professional development in subject areas aligned with standards. (AB 2x, 1999; AB 2881, 2000; and Education Code 99220)

**Cal Grant T Program** provides awards to pay tuition and fees for students to attend full-time professional teacher preparation programs. (SB 1644, 2000; and Education Code 69530–69547)

**Beginning Teachers' Salaries Program** provides funds to encourage school districts to raise the minimum beginning salary for credentialed teachers to \$34,000 annually. (SB 1643, 2000)

**Teachers: Recruitment and Incentives** created a wealth of new state programs related to teacher quality. They included the Teacher Recruitment Initiative Program, which set up regional teacher recruitment centers. Teaching as a Priority (TAP) Block Grants are meant to attract credentialed teachers to low-performing schools and keep them there. This bill also included the National Board Certification incentives and the Governor's Teaching Fellowship Program that provide up to \$20,000 annually toward tuition and living expenses for students enrolled in an approved teacher certification program. (SB 1666, 2000)

**Mathematics and Reading Professional Development Program** gives incentive funds to local school districts to provide their own standards-based professional development programs for teachers and paraprofessionals in mathematics and reading, patterned after the Professional Development Institutes. (AB 466, 2001)

**Fast-track Credentialing** allows a teacher with appropriate experience in an accredited private school to be hired in a public school without completing the state's teacher preparation program. (SB 57, 2001)

**Principal Training Act** provides financial incentives for districts to provide state-approved principal training aligned with the state's standards-based reform goals. (AB 75, 2001)

**Alternative Administrator Credentialing** provides a streamlined path for qualified candidates who want to become school administrators. (SB 1655, 2002)

in technology. This would almost certainly require additional funding, which is an obstacle. But the more difficult debate would likely revolve around how much control local school districts should have over how the time and money are spent and what the state could do to make sure quality programs were developed and implemented.

The Master Plan also recommends that the state support specific district practices related to teacher compensation. The plan calls for state action to encourage districts to include teaching excellence as a factor in compensation decisions and create career ladders that encourage exceptional teachers to stay in the classroom. Local districts and teacher unions are currently free to bargain over and implement both of these ideas. Official state support could take many shapes, from incentive funding for a few model programs to statewide categorical funding as was done with

the PAR program. The level of financial commitment to these changes—and the extent to which they remained optional—could determine the parameters of the debate and the strength of support or opposition.

### To Learn More

For in-depth information on these topics, see the following EdSource publications, which can be ordered on our website, [www.edsource.org](http://www.edsource.org), or by calling our office, 650/857-9604.

- ✓ *Teacher Pay in California: Is It Fair? Is It Competitive? Is It Enough?* (April 2002) (Can be downloaded for free from our website)
- ✓ *Update on California's Teacher Workforce Issues* (March 2001)
- ✓ *Help Wanted: Top Administrators to Lead California's Schools* (March 2001)

## Appropriate Support for Students and Schools

*Standards-based education assumes that all students can meet higher expectations and that the public school system has the responsibility to provide them with an education that will give them the opportunity to do so. School sites are being held accountable for their ability to improve student performance. In turn, school districts and the state have a reciprocal responsibility to make sure schools have the resources they need to adequately support the learning needs of all students.*

### Extra support to help students learn: The school reform goal

When the expectations for all children are high, the services provided to students must be sufficient so each one has a chance to be successful. All need effective instruction, but some will need extra time or individualized help to meet the expectations the state has established.

### In California today: What the state has built

Prior to creating state standards, California committed to a massive K–3 Class Size Reduction (CSR) program to improve learning among the youngest students. Established in 1996, CSR costs the state about \$1.65 billion per year. It was founded on the belief that reducing class sizes in all primary grade classrooms (from about 30 students to 20) would help further the goal of all children reading at grade level by the end of third grade. Implemented rapidly, it exacerbated some existing facility and teacher supply problems to the particular detriment of many schools that serve the neediest students.

California has created several separate programs to provide extra services to struggling students. The state provides districts with funds to run a number of supplemental instruction programs geared to specific students and/or subject matter. Most have to be offered outside the regular school day. There are currently more than a half dozen different programs of this type. Many of these

programs overlap in concept and purpose, but each has its own operating and reporting requirements. Achievement data indicate that many students are in need of the extra help these programs are intended to provide.

State and federal funding have grown for after-school programs aimed at improving student achievement. The federal government created the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program (CLC) in 1998. California followed suit the next year, putting \$50 million into the After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program, which was later expanded to include programs before school. Interested schools and districts apply for grants to create the programs. Designed for K–9 students, these programs include enrichment and tutoring activities. In 2001–02, the two programs supported after-school activities in about 20% of the state's public schools, including some high schools.

### What's on the drawing board

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) turns over to state officials the administration of the federal after-school program and requires coordination with other federal youth development and learning support programs. State officials will be reconciling the requirements of the state and federal programs and providing administrative support to current grantees. Under a new federal Title IV, local schools and districts will also have more flexibility to blend the after-school programs with other federal programs such as Safe and Drug-Free Schools.

## Chronology of Key Legislation, 1996–2001

### Support for student learning

**Class Size Reduction, K–3** provided incentives for school districts to reduce K–3 classes to a pupil-teacher ratio of no more than 20 to 1. Almost all classes have been reduced. (Senate Bill or SB 1777, 1996)

**Class Size Reduction, 9th grade** (1998) provided funds to expand an existing program to reduce ninth-grade class sizes to an average of 20 in core academic subjects. (SB 12, 1998)

**Core Academic Summer School** (existing summer school law was amended) provides funds for summer school instruction for all grades, K–12, in core curriculum areas and in English as a second language.

**Remedial Supplemental Instruction Programs** provides funds for supplemental instruction through summer school, after school, Saturday, and intersession programs to students who are either retained or at-risk of being retained. Two programs provide support for grades 2–6, and 7–9 respectively. (Assembly Bill or AB 1639, 1998)

**Remedial Summer School** provides supplemental instruction for students in grades 7–12 not demonstrating sufficient progress toward passing the High School Exit Exam. (SB 2x, 1999)

**Elementary School Intensive Reading Program** funds supplemental instruction and/or enrichment for up to 10% of a district's students, with first priority for pupils in grades K–4 having difficulty learning to read. (AB 2x, 1999)

**English Language Acquisition Program** funds can be used by districts to supplement regular school programs targeted to English learners in grades 4–8. (AB 1116, 1999)

**Before- and After-School Learning Program** provides support for out-of-school programs that involve schools and community organizations, merging academic improvement strategies with other activities offered to students in kindergarten to 9th grade. (SB 1756, 1999; and AB 6, 2001)

**English Language Intensive Literacy Program** provided one-time funds to districts to offer intensive instruction to English learners in grades K–12 outside of regular school hours, particularly during summer or intersession. (SB 1667, 2000)

**Intensive Algebra Academies** funds intensive algebra-related instructional programs outside regular school hours for 7th and 8th graders to both help students who are struggling and enrich instruction for those who are not. (SB 1688, 2000)

### Up for debate

In November 2002 Californians will vote on Proposition 49, which would greatly expand the state's after-school program. This initiative aims to provide state support for after-school programs at every elementary and middle school in California. It would make funding for

these programs a permanent part of the state's K–12 budget. Those who favor the initiative point to statistics about the effectiveness of such programs. Opponents raise fiscal concerns because the measure would lock in additional state expenditures without generating new revenues. (See the September 2002 EdSource voter guide for an analysis of this proposition: [www.edsource.org/pub\\_abs\\_prop49.cfm](http://www.edsource.org/pub_abs_prop49.cfm))

The evaluators of California's K–3 Class Size Reduction program have recommended some changes to this massive program to better align it with the state's other reforms. The policy recommendations included ending the program's status as a free-standing categorical program, allowing districts greater flexibility on the 20-to-1 cap, and conducting some controlled experiments to evaluate other ways to configure a CSR program. The evaluators' rationale is that while smaller classes have strong support, evidence suggests that California's approach could be improved. The strongest supporters of CSR, including parent and teacher organizations, worry that any changes to the program would represent an erosion of the state's commitment to smaller classes.

## Finance and education governance: The school reform goal

*The process of funding schools and deciding how those funds are spent should logically be in alignment with the operating principles of a standards-based system. Schools need resources adequate to do what is expected of them, and they must spend those resources wisely. State and federal leaders can use their control of school funding to hold local schools accountable for results. But for that to be rational, they must give local schools sufficient flexibility so they can do what they believe works in their communities. School districts—as both fiscal agents and the local policymaking entity—play a critical intermediary role as they distribute resources, bargain with local unions, adopt curriculum, and evaluate school performance.*

## In California today: What the state has built

The state and federal governments' new standards-based education policies are creating a de facto redefinition of the roles of local, state, and federal officials. The federal government, through actions like the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), is using its programs to leverage changes in state operations. States are setting the expectations for student achievement and holding local schools accountable for their progress toward student learning goals. Local schools, in turn, are asking for adequate resources and more flexibility if they are to make sound instructional decisions aimed at meeting those goals.

All of this has been overlaid on a school finance and governance system that has changed little in recent years.

**The basic structure of California's state-controlled school finance system has changed little in recent years.** The governor and Legislature largely control California's school finance system through the annual state budget process. Within some constitutional guidelines, they determine how much money school districts receive annually; and by earmarking funds for specific programs, they can also control how districts spend some of it. The federal government provides about 10% of school district revenues in California, all of which are allocated for specific purposes. The extent to which funds are earmarked has increased steadily since 1990, with about a third of funds allocated for specific purposes.

School district officials set priorities and make decisions within these constraints. Further, personnel costs typically represent more than 80% of the cost of district operations and are largely fixed from year to year, with changes subject to union contracts with employees. (For a thorough explanation of California's school finance system, see the School Finance section of EdSource Online: [www.edsource.org](http://www.edsource.org))

**Charter schools represent an experiment in school funding and governance.** The charter concept is for a limited number of schools to be substantially freed from state and district regulations in return for being fully accountable for their students' performance. Since charter schools were first allowed in California in 1992, the number has increased to well over 300. Meanwhile, state leaders have enacted a series of new laws related to the funding of charters, their relationship to local school districts, and various operational concerns, such as requiring all teachers at charter schools to be appropriately credentialed.

**From 1996 to 2000 California's booming economy boosted school funding, but that has changed.** When the state embarked on its ambitious education reforms, it enjoyed a general prosperity that funded many new education programs. For the first time in nearly a decade, California made sustained progress toward the national average for expenditures per pupil. But starting early in 2001, the state economy took a downward turn, and lawmakers faced a multibillion-dollar deficit as they crafted the budget for 2002–03. While the provisions of Proposition 98 protected K–12 education from cuts, the outcome for schools did not match previous years. In part because of contractual obligations they made in those better years, many school districts are facing serious financial problems in 2002–03. It is unclear how much this will affect school improvement efforts.

**A long-term school facilities problem, which was made worse by class size reduction in 1996, is being addressed in various ways.** Many school districts in California have found their ability to improve education hampered by facilities that are old and often overcrowded. In 1997, voters approved a state bond that provided \$6.7 billion in funds for new construction and renovation of K–12 schools. Then Proposition 39, passed in 2000, lowered the threshold for local approval of general obligation bonds for school construction from two-thirds to 55%. And lawmakers passed a measure in 2002 to place two state bond measures on the November 2002 and March 2004 ballots totaling \$25.35 billion for K–12 and higher education.

## What's on the drawing board

**The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) projects that it will take the state at least five years to bounce back from its current budget shortfall.** While Proposition 98 protects general funding for schools to a certain degree, the economic situation will continue to put pressure on local school districts as they attempt to maintain salary commitments made to employees during better times, cover their basic operational expenses, and provide the extra support both educators and students need to meet higher, standards-based achievement expectations.

**NCLB allows for increased local flexibility to transfer federal funds among programs.** As part of its promise of increased local flexibility, the new federal law allows states and districts to make their own spending decisions with up to 50% of their federal funds. However, they cannot take funds out of their Title I allocation, which supports schools serving disadvantaged students. While federal funds increased substantially in 2001 and 2002, it is unclear whether such increases will continue.

## Up for debate

**Voters will decide whether schools get more funding for facilities.** The November 2002 ballot includes Proposition 47, a state bond that would provide \$11.4 billion for repairing and maintaining existing K–12 schools and building new ones. (See the September 2002 EdSource voter guide for an analysis of this proposition: [www.edsource.org/pub\\_abs\\_prop47.cfm](http://www.edsource.org/pub_abs_prop47.cfm))

**A lawsuit charges that the state has not met its school funding obligations.** *Williams v. California*, a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union, charges that state officials have not met their constitutional responsibilities with regard to California's school children. Plaintiffs want the state to create and monitor standards for minimal educational conditions, and address school and district failures to meet those standards.

## Chronology of Key Legislation, 1996–2001

### School finance and governance

Through a series of court decisions, legislative actions, and voter initiatives, Californians have created a school funding system that is largely controlled by the state. Some key events included the *Serrano v. Priest* court decision in 1976, Proposition 13 passed by voters in 1978, Assembly Bill (AB) 8 in 1978, and Proposition 98 in 1988. In 1991, AB 1200 set up new requirements for review of school district budgets by county offices of education. In 1992 Senate Bill (SB) 1448 authorized the creation of charter schools in California. Since 1996 the state has not taken substantive action to change its overall approach to school finance. A few measures have made minor changes.

A redefinition of Average Daily Attendance (ADA) by counting only the students who are actually at school each day, and not those whose absence is excused for reasons such as illness. (SB 727, 1997)

**Charter School Law Revisions** made significant changes in charter school policies, including raising the statewide cap on the number of charter schools; allowing nonprofit corporations to operate charter schools; allowing the State Board of Education to grant and revoke charters; changing the charter-petitioning requirements; and requiring charter school teachers of core academic subjects to hold certification equivalent to what other public school teachers are required to hold. (AB 544, 1998)

**Charter School Block Grants** changed charter school funding so they receive funds directly from the state in the form of a block grant (effective for all charters beginning in 2002–03). (AB 1115, 1999)

**Proposition 39** (2000) created a new option for local general obligation bond measures, allowing districts to secure passage with 55% voter approval instead of two-thirds, but also adding specific requirements.

**Various Charter-Related Bills in 2001** made changes in funding, support for facilities, and some additional regulations related to operations and accountability. (SB 675, SB 955, and SB 740, 2001)

Attempts to settle the case have failed, and it is scheduled to go to trial in the summer.

The Master Plan recommendations call for a fundamental change in how schools are funded, including categorical programs. The proposal calls for the state to develop a “quality model for education” and then adequately fund schools based on that model, doing away with the separate funding streams for most categorical programs. Extra resources would then be allocated to schools with students who need extra help (such as children in poverty, English learners, and Special Education students) and to districts that face special circumstances

(such as extremely small districts). A third category of extra funding would support new initiatives and pilot programs proposed by lawmakers. The plan also calls for the state to re-examine its process for funding facilities.

These proposed changes to the school finance system are dramatic and potentially controversial. They could also lead to a call for more K–12 funding, which quickly pushes against the state’s budget constraints and creates the need to increase the tax base for schools. Another component of the plan addresses that concern by recommending that the state give local school districts more ability to raise their own funds and establish greater local autonomy or “home rule” within set parameters. This would require an amendment to Proposition 13, a move that would certainly involve sharp debate.

**Master Plan recommendations for changing the oversight of public education encompass state, regional, and local governance structures.** At the state level, the plan suggests the operational authority and ultimate responsibility for public education should lie clearly with the governor, in part through an appointed cabinet-level position. The elected Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), who is currently in charge of the California Department of Education (CDE), would instead be responsible for all aspects of accountability for public education, with the exception of financial accountability. The appointment process for State Board of Education members would also be changed.

The plan further calls for increased clarity around the role of local school district governing boards and recommends some changes in district configurations. The latter could include bringing all districts into a unified K–12 structure (in contrast to the separate elementary and high school districts, which are now common). Other recommendations touch both on the responsibilities of county offices as oversight agencies and their possible consolidation into regional entities in some areas of the state. In these areas of governance, competing interests and a natural bias toward maintenance of the status quo would make change difficult.

**The California Teacher’s Association (CTA) wants the scope of collective bargaining to be expanded to include many more elements of standards-based reform.** In the 2002 session, the Legislature dropped a bill that would have given teachers and their representatives the right to bargain about issues such as curriculum, textbooks, and teacher training. CTA says teachers and their union representatives are the most qualified to make such decisions. Opponents argue that such things as textbook selection are not appropriate matters to be bargained alongside salary issues and that the effect could be to undermine standards-based re-

## To Learn More

For in-depth information on these topics, see the following EdSource publications, which can be ordered on our website, [www.edsource.org](http://www.edsource.org), or by calling our office, 650/857-9604. EdFacts can be downloaded for free from our website.

- ✓ Annual School Finance update
- ✓ *How California Ranks: A national perspective on the state's K–12 education expenditures* (September 2002)
- ✓ *How Much is Enough? Funding California's Public Schools* (April 2000)
- ✓ *Understanding School Finance: California's Complex K–12 System* (February 2000)
- ✓ *EdFact: Who are California's Students?* (June 2002)
- ✓ *EdFact: How California's Education Dollars Are Spent* (October 2001)
- ✓ *Collective Bargaining: Explaining California's System* (March 1999)
- ✓ *Expansion of Out-of-School Programs Aims at Improving Student Achievement* (February 2002)
- ✓ *California's School Facilities Predicament* (April 1998)

form. In a September 2002 mailing to the public, CTA promised that it would, if necessary, take its case directly to voters through the initiative process.

## Conclusion

*As a state-led reform movement, standards-based education is both complicated and comprehensive. While it is based on some fundamental building blocks—such as the development of rigorous academic standards and the alignment of assessment and instruction to those standards—it necessarily looks different from state to state. Certainly in California, the basic structure must be customized to effectively address unique challenges. As newly elected and continuing policymakers roll up their sleeves to continue the work of improving California's public schools, it is important to first take stock of the significant number of policies enacted thus far.*

## California's focus has shifted

California has come a long way since 1996 when the concerted push for change in its public education system began in earnest. The education conversations and the emphasis have clearly shifted. There is a new and sustained focus on student achievement, even when that is

## Standards-based reform has drawn criticism

California's new approach to education policy is not without its critics. Some say it relies too heavily on standardized testing as the measure of school effectiveness and student learning, and that those tests detract from regular instruction. Others worry that the emphasis on academic achievement strictly defined is pushing out other important aspects of a well-rounded education that help to cultivate children's humanity and creativity, such as community service and the arts.

This report does not go into that important and evolving debate. Rather, it describes the current momentum in state and federal policy within the theoretical framework government leaders have adopted and are pursuing in their efforts to improve public education.

difficult to define or people disagree about what constitutes progress. The accountability system has put a bright light on the achievement gap among groups of students and among schools as a critical issue to address if the state is to adequately educate all its young people. And both educators and policymakers are recognizing that they need to provide additional resources and extra help to enable some students to achieve the standards.

State leaders have also recognized that educators are key to improving student achievement. California has responded aggressively to a teacher supply problem that many said had reached crisis proportions. Further, the state's teacher preparation, credentialing, and professional development efforts are also being aligned with the standards. The state is starting to address administrator issues as well.

While much work has been accomplished and many efforts begun, California's standards-based education system is still a work in progress. Much of the task ahead lies in the details and realities of implementation, not only of the state initiatives but also of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The challenges include:

- ✓ Creating a mandatory statewide education data system—with student and teacher identifiers—that will enable local educators, statewide evaluators, and education researchers to more accurately assess the impact of school reforms.
- ✓ Completing the Academic Performance Index by adding valid and meaningful non-testing measures.
- ✓ Ensuring that student accountability policies, such as the High School Exit Exam, are fair and effective.

- ✓ Developing local, and if necessary, statewide policies that will help ensure that schools serving the neediest of students will get a fair share of the most qualified teachers.
- ✓ Developing the state and district level capacity to effectively intervene—or to provide students and families with alternatives—when the lowest performing schools cannot or will not improve.
- ✓ Addressing the complex challenges of providing California schools with adequate resources—and with flexibility in the use of those resources—to meet the public's higher performance expectations and to narrow student achievement gaps.


## Major challenges lie ahead

To date, California's official conversations about standards-based accountability have revolved around school sites, as exemplified by the Public School Accountability Act and its API system. Missing has been serious consideration of the responsibilities of the state and school districts in standards-based reform. Certainly some of this conversation relates to school funding, and it is by virtue of their power over funding that state and federal officials have taken an aggressive role in furthering standards-based reform. But it is also about effective management of schools and adequate support so that teachers can do their best to help students achieve all that they can. California would benefit from a serious and frank discussion about the appropriate responsibilities of decision makers at the local, state, and federal level in a standards-based system. Such a discussion could enhance clarity and begin to build some consensus regarding how the various parts of the system can work together most effectively to further the common goal of improved student achievement.

California has not yet tried to address these related issues of school governance and

finance in a meaningful way. They are complex and politically difficult. Yet because they determine the structure of the education system, and the flow of resources into that system, they may ultimately be the most important for assuring that all the other reforms are sustained over time. They are the foundation that will either undergird or undermine the entire structure of standards-based reform.

That said, bringing the state's vision of a standards-based system to fruition depends heavily on the quality of implementation at the district and school level. More time will tell which schools are embracing standards-based instruction in a whole-hearted effort to improve student learning; which need district or external expertise and other support to mobilize their efforts; and which are resistant to the changes.

The pressure to improve the state's public schools cannot be expected to diminish any time soon. Education remains a top priority for parents and business leaders, and public opinion supports the notion of higher standards and clear accountability. If student achievement does not steadily improve, the public is likely to hold both policymakers and local educators accountable. 

### To Learn More

- ✓ For additional background and to follow the continuing debate, see the Education Issues section of EdSource Online. Go to [www.edsource.org](http://www.edsource.org) and click on Education Issues in the yellow bar at the top of the home page.
- ✓ For facts and figures on these issues, see EdSource's *2002 Resource Cards on California Schools* (January 2002). They can be ordered online or by calling our office at 650/857-9604.



*This report has been prepared by:*

**Mary Perry, writer**

**Katherine Rynearson, researcher**

**Jackie Teague, researcher**

**Susan Frey, editor**

EdSource is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization established in California in 1977.

Independent and impartial, EdSource strives to advance the common good by developing and widely distributing trustworthy, useful information that clarifies complex K–12 education issues and promotes thoughtful decisions about California's public school system.

To learn more about our organization, please contact:

**EdSource**  
**4151 Middlefield Road**  
**Suite 100**  
**Palo Alto, CA**  
**94303-4743**  
**650/857-9604**  
**Fax: 650/857-9618**

**E-mail:**  
**[edsource@edsource.org](mailto:edsource@edsource.org)**  
**Or visit us on the web:**  
**[www.edsource.org](http://www.edsource.org)**

For data about every school and district in California, visit the Education Data Partnership:  
[www.ed-data.k12.ca.us](http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us)