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Issues

Update on California's Teacher Workforce Issues

The subject of teachers inevitably comes up in any conversation about educational quality in California today. The discussion usually focuses on two points: increasing teacher supply and strengthening teacher performance. Since 1997, state policymakers have tackled these issues through a wealth of new state policies and programs. They have tried to increase the number of applicants for teaching positions and create alternative paths to a full credential. At the same time they have placed higher expectations on both new and veteran teachers. Policymakers have also instituted some financial incentives to improve teacher pay, which many believe is essential to attracting and retaining talented teachers, particularly in the lowest performing schools.

This report briefly summarizes what California has done to address the challenges of teacher supply and quality that stand between the goal of school improvement and its realization.

California addresses the teacher shortage

The United States as a whole faces serious concerns about the supply of qualified teachers. The pressure is on across the country to recruit more people into teaching and to provide incentives that encourage them to stay in the profession. In California, these concerns are particularly pronounced as a result of an aging teacher workforce and projections for continued growth in student enrollment through at least 2008. Several organizations estimate that the state will need to hire nearly 300,000 new teachers during the next decade, the equivalent of its entire current teacher workforce. In addition, the state's desire to reduce the size of public school classes across all grades has been stymied in part because of the continuing teacher shortage.

A huge gap remains between supply and demand for many reasons

California started to address this need in the mid-1990s. Since 1995, the number of individuals earning teaching credentials here has grown annually, according to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC).

Despite this growth, a gap between the supply and demand for teachers remains. This gap exists, in part, because not all individuals who earn credentials become teachers or stay in the profession. All told, the number of new teachers has not equaled the large numbers of vacancies created by retirements, enrollment increases, and California's smaller K-3 classes.

The rapid adoption of the state's class size reduction (CSR) program in 1996 precipitated a teacher supply and recruitment crisis that has had far-reaching and long-lasting effects. At the time, schools scrambled to recruit teachers for grades K-3, often pulling them from upper grades and special education programs. They also hired large numbers of teachers on emergency permits. Schools have continued this practice in grades K-3 and are now also hiring teachers on emergency permits for their upper elementary grades, as was documented by the CSR Research Consortium in a June 2000 publication. Thus, California remains far from its goal of staffing each classroom with a qualified teacher, says the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (CFTL), in its most recent report on the capacity of the teacher workforce, *The Status of the Teaching Profession 2000*.

CFTL also raises a red flag regarding retirements. Drawing on statistics from the State Teacher Retirement System (STRS) that show that one-third of teachers are older than 50, they conclude that the rate of teacher retirements can be expected to increase steadily through 2007-08.

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The teacher supply issue also places constraints on state policies to improve schools. While both the public and educators have been pleased with the results of the CSR program, further class size reductions in the upper grades have not been a viable policy option in large part because of the teacher shortage.

The teacher shortage does not affect all schools equally

As Californians have focused more intently on the teacher shortage issue, CFTL as well as other groups have developed a clearer picture of how California's teacher workforce—and teacher shortage—is distributed. These experts stress that the shortage of qualified teachers does not affect schools uniformly.

Instead, the very schools that most need qualified teachers have the greatest difficulty recruiting them. Low performing schools serving predominantly poor and minority students have a disproportionate number of unqualified or underqualified teachers in their classrooms. A summary of this data is shown in Table 1. The CTC notes that these inequities often occur among schools in the same district.

Urban schools are also disproportionately affected by teacher shortages with an average of 20% of their teaching staffs underqualified, while suburban and rural schools average about 9%. Additionally, half of all suburban and rural schools reported having more than 95% qualified teachers, but only 19% of urban schools could say the same. These averages, however, tend to mask the severity of the situation in some rural districts, according to CTC staff. The data show very high proportions of underqualified teachers in some remote areas of the state. Extreme examples include a school site staff of six teachers in which four do not have full credentials.

For this analysis, “qualified” is defined as holding the appropriate and full teaching credential for a given position. Those who do not fit this description can include a teaching candidate in an internship program, a person with an emergency permit, or a person for whom a school district has secured a waiver.

Defining emergency permits and waivers

Teachers employed on **emergency permits** must possess a bachelor's degree, have passed the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST), and passed specific subject area requirements for the permit requested. They have not, however, completed their teacher preparation coursework and acquired a teaching credential.

Teachers on **waivers**, on the other hand, may not have passed all sections of the CBEST or even have a bachelor's degree. Waivers are also issued to credentialed teachers whose certificate is not in the appropriate field.

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Shortages in specialized areas remain

Teacher shortages also continue to be more pronounced in certain areas of specialization. Hiring enough certificated special education staff has been a perennial problem. In addition, schools have long struggled to find enough credentialed mathematics and science teachers. The 1998 expansion of the state's CSR program for 9th grade English and math further exacerbated the already critical shortage of credentialed high school math teachers. In 1999–2000, CFTL reports, 8% of teachers across all secondary areas were underqualified, but about 12% of all mathematics and science teachers did not have their full teaching credential.

This situation is even worse for schools that serve predominantly poor students. Mathematics and science teachers in these schools are twice as likely to be underqualified as they are in schools serving predominantly middle- or upper-class children. More rigorous state math standards—with algebra becoming a graduation requirement in 2004—raises the specter of even greater problems in the future.

California has implemented some simple recruitment measures

The governor and Legislature have taken several steps to try to attract more candidates to the profession. In 1997, they

created the California Center for Teaching Careers (CalTeach). Since its inception, CalTeach has had a rapidly increasing presence in recruiting and teaching circles. The center provides a web-based service (www.calteach.com) to link school district personnel offices with teaching candidates, plus credentialing information and other personal and phone services for prospective and current teachers.

During the 2000–01 school year, the state expects to establish six new regional teacher recruitment centers through the Teacher Recruitment Incentive Program. These centers will emphasize recruiting teachers to low performing schools, especially those with high numbers of teachers on emergency permits.

Lawmakers also took steps to tap into two other pools of additional teachers: those who have already retired and those from out of state. One new measure allows retired teachers to return to the classroom without reducing their retirement benefits. They may teach, support new teachers, or provide remedial instruction to students. Lawmakers also made it easier for teachers who earned their credentials in other states to obtain certification to teach in California.

In addition, some local school districts are looking at teacher recruitment differently. They increasingly employ recruitment strategies such as job fairs and long-distance interviewing using new technologies to expand their visibility and reach among potential candidates.

State supports alternative paths to a teaching credential

In an effort to further smooth candidates' way into the profession, California has committed several million dollars to expanding and strengthening both traditional preparation programs and programs that offer alternative paths to a teaching credential.

The California State University (CSU) system alone has received about \$25 million to increase the number of slots for teacher candidates, improve preparation programs, expand university-offered alternative credential programs, and fund CalTeach recruiting efforts. For example, CSU now offers programs in which undergraduates can earn their bachelor's degree and a preliminary teaching credential in four years. Previously, students had to complete a fifth year of college work to earn a credential. In addition, CSU offers CalStateTEACH, a preparation program that combines real classroom

Table 1
The Distribution of Underqualified Teachers Is Uneven

State data show that teachers who have not earned a full credential are unevenly distributed, with schools serving the neediest students more likely to have a substantial proportion of underqualified staff. In a 1999 publication, CFTL cites case studies indicating that when inexperienced, underqualified teachers constitute more than about 20% of a school's teacher workforce, it can have detrimental and long-term effects on the entire school community.

Schools with an average of 6% or fewer underqualified teachers	Schools with an average of 20% or more underqualified teachers
40% of all California schools (including 30% that report no underqualified teachers)	25% of all California schools
Highest quartile on API scores	Lowest quartile on API scores
Serve less than 25% poor students	Serve more than 75% poor students
Serve less than 30% minority students	Serve more than 90% minority students

teaching experience, like that of a district intern, with independent study through distance learning.

Through the 1990s, alternative certification programs have played an increasingly significant role in recruiting individuals into the teaching pool. The number of districts participating in intern programs, for instance, has nearly tripled since 1994, according to the CTC. They report that the number of participants in these programs has also increased steadily, with more than 11,000 having graduated between 1994 and 2000. Officials at the CTC theorize that these programs are particularly successful because the individuals who choose this route tend to be going through a career

Financial rewards for exemplary teacher performance

In recent years California has instituted two programs that reward teachers for their performance, an approach to teacher compensation that has historically been considered controversial.

- ✓ In 1999 the state's policymakers passed the Certificated Staff Performance Incentive Act. This program provides one-time performance bonuses of as much as \$25,000 apiece to certificated staff in low performing schools where performance on the API significantly exceeds expectations. The state announced the first rewards in spring of 2001, but a lawsuit postponed their distribution.
- ✓ California's National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) Certification Incentive Program encourages teachers to seek this highly respected certification by offering one-time \$10,000 awards. Teachers who do so and also agree to teach in low performing schools for at least four years receive an additional \$20,000 one-time award through this incentive program. The program also provides fee assistance to pursue the certification. (Teachers throughout the United States can apply for the nationally administered NBPTS program, which requires the candidate to complete a rigorous program of course work, peer review, and self-examination. Teachers from out of state who have earned this certification automatically qualify for a full California teaching credential.)

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change, have considered the range of consequences for making this change, and are committed to the decision once they have made it. In addition, these programs have the potential to help diversify the teaching force. Currently, the CTC reports, about 45% of internship program graduates are from ethnic minorities and about a third of those who become elementary teachers are male.

Lawmakers have shown some support for these alternative credential programs. To make it more possible financially for districts to expand intern programs, the Legislature in 2000 raised the reimbursement to districts and county offices operating such programs to \$2,500 per intern (Senate Bill 1666). Various legislative proposals introduced during the 2001 session called for the creation of more alternatives to the traditional credentialing process and further changes in credential requirements.

Compensation measures seek to address supply and distribution problems

Low pay is often cited as a key reason individuals choose not to enter teaching. Some regions, such as Silicon Valley, face particular challenges in this regard due to unusually high housing costs and a very competitive labor market. Thus far, California lawmakers are addressing this concern with two across-the-board strategies. First, in two successive years they worked to raise beginning teacher salaries, providing incentives for districts to increase the minimum to \$34,000 in 2000–01. Second, they offered active credentialed teachers income tax credits, with the amount of the credit based on teachers' years of service.

Recent policy changes have also emphasized helping hard-to-staff schools attract and retain the qualified teachers they need. The Assumption Program of Loans for Education was created in 2000 to encourage individuals to teach in high-demand subject areas, such as mathematics and science, and in schools that are low income, low performing, or employ a high percentage of teachers on emergency permits. Through this program, teachers who agree to teach in these designated areas or schools for at least four years will have their graduate education loans forgiven. They can also receive cash incentives of up to \$2,000 annually. In addition, new Governor's Teaching Fellowships offer \$20,000 to 250 graduate students to help them defer their tuition for teacher certification programs and for

living expenses. To qualify, fellows must agree to teach in a low performing school for at least four years upon completion of the certification program. The governor's budget proposal for 2001–02 includes increased funding for both these programs.

To help low performing schools develop their own programs to attract and retain qualified teachers, state lawmakers created the new Teaching as a Priority Block Grants. These competitive grants are only available to districts with schools that rank in the bottom half of the Academic Performance Index (API). The grants provide funds for recruitment incentives, such as signing bonuses, improved working conditions, increased compensation, and housing subsidies.

The hope is that these measures will at the very least produce some immediate benefits for low performing schools by making their teaching jobs more attractive. However, only time and experience will tell whether these kinds of financial incentives can have a substantial and sustained effect on the supply and distribution of teachers. Many experts say that state actions to date represent just a first step in this regard.

“These appropriations targeted at teacher compensation represent an important down payment,” says Margaret Gaston, co-director at CFTL. “But we still have to question whether, in the aggregate, this is enough. The achievement gap based on students’ economic backgrounds is still widening, and the pressure to find fully qualified and capable new teachers continues.”

State policymakers continue to focus on teacher quality

In 1996, California officials created a new set of performance standards for the teaching profession. These guidelines for teacher professionalism, the California Standards for the Teaching Profession, laid the groundwork for a continuing policy focus on improving the capacity and quality of California's teaching force.

Central to this effort was Senate Bill 2042, passed in 1998. This law outlined a comprehensive process for upgrading the quality and rigor of teacher preparation, induction, and professional development. As a result, the state is on its way to creating a new process for people to receive and maintain a teaching credential. This two-tiered system provides

various options for achieving a preliminary credential and then requires that the candidate complete a two-year induction program in order to attain a full credential. It specifies professional development teachers must undertake in order to maintain their credentials. The state has also provided funds for new professional development institutes to be run through the University of California (UC) system.

However, these policies related to teacher quality have not yet been fully implemented, and in some cases the programs have been somewhat disjointed. The issues of teacher quality are likely to be a subject of continuing debate and legislative action in the near term.

Induction program takes aim at retention problems and quality issues

While increasing the number of new teachers is an important goal, encouraging those who take teaching jobs to stay is equally crucial for alleviating the teacher shortage. Data on teacher retention in California can be elusive because the state does not have a database that tracks the comings and goings of teachers. However, the problem of new teachers quickly becoming disenchanted and leaving the profession is widely acknowledged.

Researchers and educators agree that high quality induction programs can be instrumental both in keeping new teachers and improving their practice. In passing SB 2042, California lawmakers expressed their commitment to improving the induction of new teachers by scaling up the existing Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) Program. Since its inception in 1992, BTSA has grown from serving 1,000–2,000 new teachers annually to a projected 26,000 in 2000–01. A recent evaluation, validated by the CTC, showed that the program has resulted in marked improvements in teacher retention, benefiting students and reducing school district recruitment costs.

Senate Bill 2042 puts changes into motion, but much work remains

In compliance with SB 2042, the CTC has completed a comprehensive overhaul of the current standards guiding subject matter preparation for elementary teachers, professional teacher preparation programs, and teacher induction programs. An extensive review of this work, including field review and public hearings throughout the state, began early in 2001.

Upon the completion and official adoption of the standards, the CTC will then develop a Teaching Performance Assessment. Future teachers will be required to pass this assessment, demonstrating minimal competency, in order to qualify for a preliminary credential. An advisory group will have the task of making sure that assessment is aligned with the state's academic content standards for students.

The state's approach to professional development abruptly changes

Beginning in the 1998–99 school year, state lawmakers required that California students had to be in class 180 days. Districts had previously been able to take up to eight days from the school instructional year for locally determined, mandatory professional development programs. Along with this change, the state provided support for three days of voluntary professional development outside of the student instructional year.

This rather sudden decision represented a dramatic change in professional development programs, not only in terms of the quantity offered but also in terms of school districts' ability to require teacher attendance. In a recent EdSource survey, many middle and high school principals reported that the loss of these paid professional development days had seriously affected their school staffs' ability to stay current on standards-based reforms, develop appropriate new curricula, and plan together.

Part of this current concern, as reflected in the survey responses, may be because comprehensive new state-run professional development programs have not yet become fully operational. Professional development for both new and experienced teachers has certainly been an area of increased state investment during the last few legislative sessions. Lawmakers have recently created a variety of new programs aimed at providing districts and teachers with consistent, high-quality, standards-based training and support. However the survey responses no doubt also capture local school administrators' frustration over the loss of a program they largely controlled. Many worry that a centrally controlled system for professional development may not allow them to address unique local needs and circumstances. This tension between consistent program quality and local flexibility is a recurring theme as California strives to implement standards-based reform.

New policies and programs are not yet fully implemented

Meanwhile, since 1999 the governor and Legislature have begun to put substantial funds into new Professional Development Institutes. These University of California–run programs operate in partnership with other higher education institutions around the state. In the 1999 session, the Legislature created institutes for reading, English/language arts, and mathematics. The first few thousand teachers to participate in these programs did so during the summer of 2000. For 2000–01, lawmakers expanded the existing programs to accommodate more teachers and started new institutes for science and social studies, as well as Algebra Academies. These will not get under way until the summer of 2001.

A key goal of these institutes is to support teachers' ability to teach the state's academic standards, which often means increasing their subject-matter knowledge. For over a decade, the UC and the California State University campuses offered content-related professional development in all core subject areas through the California Subject Matter Projects (CSMP). Funding for the CSMPs has also been renewed, and the two programs are expected to work together and complement each other.

The Professional Development Institutes, which will have curricula aligned with the state's academic standards, are meant to help teachers build their content knowledge, teaching skills, and ability to use assessments to identify student learning needs. The institutes provide educators with an intensive 40 (or more) hours of instruction during summers and breaks. During the following school year they participate in an additional 80 to 120 hours of professional development. Teachers receive stipends of \$1,000 to \$2,000 for participating. Priority goes to teachers who work in low performing schools, schools that have a high percentage of uncredentialed teachers, and schools that serve high-poverty communities. In January 2001, California Governor Gray Davis proposed further expansion of the institutes for reading and mathematics for the next three years, recommending an \$830 million investment.

In 1999, the governor and Legislature also established the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) Program to help veteran teachers improve their classroom practice. Each participating district has a

PAR panel that includes teachers. This panel selects teachers to serve as PAR consultants who perform classroom observations, give teachers feedback on their practice, and provide custom-designed assistance to help them develop the knowledge and skills necessary to improve their instruction. The state provided financial incentives to encourage districts to implement this voluntary program, and to do so quickly. PAR replaced the state's mentor teacher program in 1999–2000.

It will be many years before California will have its new standards-based programs for teacher preparation and professional development fully implemented. It will be even longer before the state can accurately assess their effectiveness. Concerns have also arisen that the existing and new systems of teacher recruitment, pre-service, induction, ongoing professional development, and advanced certification are fragmented and not well aligned with California's academic standards and other reforms. In an attempt to address those concerns, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin has convened a Professional Development Task Force. This group is charged with envisioning a comprehensive system of professional development and addressing ways one could be created in California. Their report was scheduled to be completed in the first half of 2001.

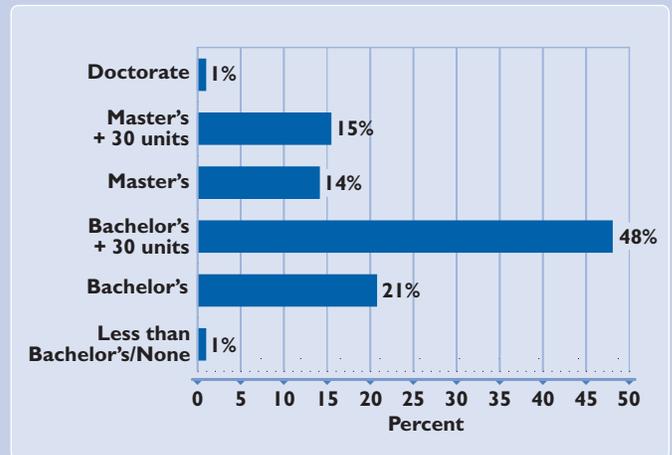
An ample supply of skilled teachers is crucial to student achievement

California needs an ample supply of skilled, highly capable teachers if it is to achieve its goal of raising student performance. But it is unclear whether the state will be able to increase the pool of candidates for the profession while simultaneously making the preparation and credentialing process more rigorous. Perhaps this increased rigor will enhance the status and thus the attractiveness of the profession by making clear the challenges and rewards it can provide to an intelligent, talented, and dedicated individual. However, a commensurate improvement in teacher working conditions and compensation may also be essential.

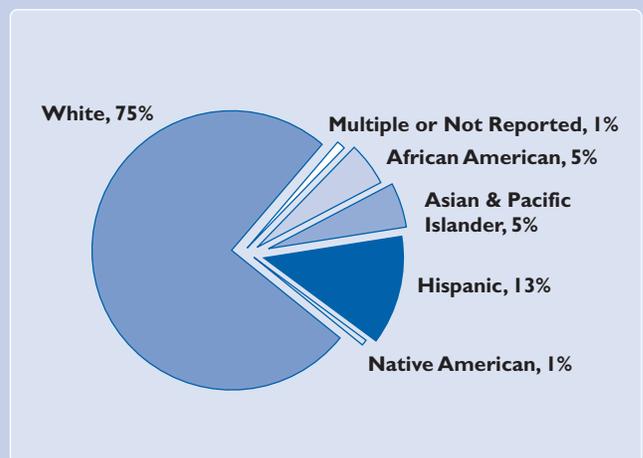
In the coming years, California faces the challenge of pulling its myriad teacher workforce strategies into a coherent system aligned with the state's other goals for educational improvement. The outcome will be critical for the state's future, as California's greatest hope for meeting its student achievement goals rests on the ability of the teacher in each and every public school classroom.

A Profile of California's Teachers in 1999–2000

- ✓ California schools employed more than 292,000 teachers.
- ✓ 71% of them were female.
- ✓ Three out of 10 held advanced degrees.



- ✓ On average they had more than 12 years experience.
- ✓ First- and second-year teachers made up more than 15% of the teaching force.
- ✓ Best estimates are that 86% were fully credentialed, but 14% were teaching under some form of emergency permit or waiver. (Estimates are from the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning.)
- ✓ California's teaching force is predominantly white.



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Related EdSource publications

Strengthening Teacher Quality in California (4/99)

Collective Bargaining (3/99)

EdFact: *How California Recruits, Prepares, and Assists New Teachers* (4/99)

Resources for practicing and aspiring teachers

California Center for Teaching Careers (CalTeach) provides information, referrals, and counselor-assisted services to prospective teachers. 6000 J St., Sacramento, CA 95819-6018; 888/CALTEACH; fax 916/278-5014; www.calteach.com

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) provides information about credential requirements for all certificated positions. 1900 Capitol Ave., Sacramento, CA 95814-4213; 916/445-0184; www.ctc.ca.gov

National Teacher Recruitment Clearinghouse is a new website that matches candidates and job opportunities nationally. www.recruitingteachers.org

American Federation of Teachers (AFT) provides a comprehensive web-based national listing of "Loan Forgiveness and Educator Award Programs." www.aft.org/edissues/teacherquality/recruit2.htm

Research and data on teachers and the teaching profession

The CSR Research Consortium published *Class Size Reduction in California: 1998–99 Evaluation Findings* in June 2000. A summary of these findings is available online at: www.classize.org For copies of the technical report, contact Ed Schrufer, AIR, 1791 Arastradero Road, Palo Alto, CA 94304-1337; 650/493-3550; fax 650/858-0958; e-mail: eschrufer@air.org

Education Commission of the States (ECS) posts on their website a national overview on the issue of teacher quality plus round-ups of legislative activity and initiatives in other states. See the issue section of their website at www.ecs.org under Teacher Quality.

DataQuest, the California Department of Education's database on California schools, provides staffing information for schools, school districts, counties, and the state. <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (CFTL) has published numerous studies on teacher quality issues in California, including *The Essential Profession: California at the Crossroads* in February 2001 and *Teaching and California's Future: The Status of the Teaching Profession 2000*. 133 Mission St., Suite 220, Santa Cruz, CA 95060; 831/427-3628; fax 831/427-1612; www.cftl.org

The Education Trust published a comprehensive look at the issue of teacher quality in Spring 2000, entitled *Honor in the Boxcar: Equalizing Teacher Quality*. 1725 K St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, D.C. 20006; 202/293-1217; fax 202/293-2605; www.edtrust.org

ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education provides national information and extensive links on a breadth of issues. www.ericasp.org

Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy (CTP), a university research consortium, provides online access to publications investigating the relationship between excellent teaching and policymaking at national, state, and local levels. University of Washington, College of Education, Box 353600, 203C Miller Hall, Seattle, WA 98195; 206/221-4114; fax 206/616-6762; www.ctpweb.org

Upcoming developments and recommendations

The State of California Little Hoover Commission has convened a Teacher Workforce Study Advisory Committee to develop recommendations for addressing the state's teacher shortage. Information is available from the commission. 925 L St., Suite 805, Sacramento, CA 95814; 916/445-2125; fax 916/322-7709; www.lhc.ca.gov

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction's Professional Development Task Force is scheduled to publish its recommendations in the first half of 2001. www.cde.ca.gov

The governor and state Legislature will be considering new legislation related to teacher recruitment, compensation, and professional development during the 2001 session. To keep track of the legislative debate, go to their website. www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html



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