

About the Committee

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger created the Governor’s Committee on Education Excellence in April 2005 to examine K–12 education in California and recommend an action plan to improve performance in the state’s public schools. The Committee seeks to promote the best system of schools, in which all students achieve at high levels and are being prepared for success in continued education and, ultimately, their careers and lives.

The Governor charged the Committee to analyze current impediments to excellence, to explore ideas and best practices relevant to California, and to recommend long-term and short-term changes and reforms. The Committee was charged with focusing its inquiry and recommendations on four inter-related issues:

- **Finance.** Analyze the distribution, efficient and effective use, and sufficiency of education funding to support student learning and meet California’s education standards.
- **Governance.** Examine the functioning and effectiveness of governance structures and make recommendations to simplify structures and promote public accountability and transparency.
- **Teacher recruitment, education, and distribution.** Examine issues across the professional continuum that impact California’s ability to provide a well-qualified and motivated teacher for every classroom.
- **Administrator preparation and retention.** Explore current and potential preparation practices and analyze impediments to successful leadership careers to enhance school leadership throughout the state.

The Committee was created as an independent, non-governmental body that could operate free from partisan influence. Although its leadership maintained close contact with the Governor through his Secretary of Education and other representatives, the Committee received no government funding. Its operations were fully financed through the generous support of The Broad Foundation, The Doris and Donald Fisher Fund, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the Stuart Foundation. Beyond the initial charge, the Committee received no direction from the Governor or his administration. Committee members were chosen to represent all points on the political spectrum and encompass a broad range of backgrounds, including educators, civic leaders, researchers, entrepreneurs, policymakers, representatives of business, and locally elected officials. However, members were not organized as being representative of stakeholder groups and did not represent any communities or constituencies *per se*. Committee members include:

- Ted Mitchell (*Chairman*), *CEO*, New Schools Venture Fund; *President*, State Board of Education
- Dede Alpert (*Vice Chair*), Nielson & Merksamer LLP; *State Senator (retired)*
- Arlene Ackerman, *Christian Johnson Professor*, Columbia University
- Russlynn Ali, *Executive Director*, The Education Trust-West
- Jeffrey Camp, *Education Chairman*, Full Circle Fund
- Ernesto Cortes, *Southwest Regional Director*, Industrial Areas Foundation
- David Gordon, *Superintendent*, Sacramento County Office of Education
- Eric Hanushek, *Paul and Jean Hanna Senior Fellow in Education*, Hoover Institution

- Thomas Henry, *President and CEO*, Education and Management Assistance Corporation
- Sherry Lansing, *CEO*, The Sherry Lansing Foundation
- Peter Mehas, *Fresno County Superintendent of Schools (retired)*
- Irene Oropeza-Enriquez, *Principal*, Prairie Elementary School, Woodland
- Mark Rosenbaum, *Legal Director*, ACLU Southern California
- Lewis Solmon, *President*, National Institute for Excellence in Teaching
(Dr. Solmon passed away shortly after the Committee completed its work.)
- Sau-Lim (Lance) Tsang, *Board Member*, Oakland Unity High School
- Randolph Ward, *San Diego County Superintendent of Schools*
- John White, *Principal*, Mulholland Middle School, Los Angeles
- Caprice Young, *President and CEO*, California Charter Schools Association

Two additional members served on the Committee for more than one year, but conflicting obligations caused them to resign their seats. These members were:

- Jim Doti, *President*, Chapman University
- Jose Huizar, *President*, Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education

Staff support was provided to the Committee by Stephen Blake, who previously served as chief consultant to the Legislature’s Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education, and Robert Manwaring, who had been director of K–12 Education for the California Legislative Analyst’s Office. The Committee contracted for additional support with several researchers, consultants, and graduate students.

The Committee’s Approach

The Committee held meetings across the state on a monthly basis for more than two years, using these meetings for intensive review, analysis, and discussion of a wide array of issues consistent with the Committee’s charge. To maximize the operational capacity of the Committee, members were organized into subcommittees that tracked the Committee’s charge areas. These subcommittees met and conducted background research and deliberated in addition to the regular activities of the full Committee. The subcommittees established the parameters for research and deliberation in each issue area and conducted the initial review of studies and policy recommendations related to those issues.

From its inception, the Committee sought to ensure that its recommendations would be supported by research demonstrating that effective student achievement gains will result from them. To this end, the Committee reviewed extensive existing research on education from the United States and other countries and reviewed prior studies of the California education system and reports from other states and cities seeking to reform their school systems. The Committee also commissioned independent research in limited instances. The Committee collaborated with the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Legislature, and the Secretary of Education to secure a set of research projects related to the key components of an effective education and the funding needed to provide it. This emerged as the Getting Down to Facts research project, whose findings first were published in 2007.

The Committee spoke with numerous stakeholders, policymakers, and researchers from California and throughout the nation to learn from their ideas and experience. Committee meetings regularly included presentations by and collaborative deliberations with these individuals, and Committee leadership maintained regular, informal liaison with statewide education entities, as well as with numerous organizations in the civic and business sectors.

In addition to its core investigations toward the development of this report, the Committee regularly collaborated with other policy leaders on other education matters. Committee leadership provided ongoing, informal policy advice to the administration and responded to specific information requests from the Governor. In conducting research, Committee leaders regularly met with representatives of the Office of the Secretary of Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O’Connell, Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez, and Senate President Pro Tempore Don Perata regarding education policy reform. Finally, the Committee maintained a close working relationship with Superintendent O’Connell’s P–16 Council — including joint meetings.

The Committee quickly learned the magnitude of the challenges facing California’s education system. The breadth of the input that the Committee received from these myriad sources helped members to define the problems the state faces and extended the scope of the Committee’s inquiry. While the state’s problems are significant, the process of interacting with these other stakeholders provides optimism that effective solutions can be identified and collaborative partnerships can be generated to carry out those solutions. Collaboration began from within. Despite the remarkable diversity among its members, the Committee developed its recommendations and report by consensus. Remarkably, there was little philosophical difference among members regarding purpose, principles, or the bases of the recommendations. Our work has led to a report that we believe sets the foundation for a system of schools that will meet the needs of Californians today and into the future, with the expectation that the system will continue to improve to meet the needs of future generations.

Acknowledgments

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