



Governor's Committee on Education Excellence

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The education fight in California has been waging for years. Why come together now to fix this problem?

We simply cannot wait any longer. Recent studies show that our system has become so convoluted, constrained, and bureaucratic that it actually impedes educators from teaching our students effectively. Research even tells us that many of our best successes occur where educators figure out ways to get around the system. It's no wonder, then, that only seven in ten California students graduate in four years, perform poorly against our own state standards, and rank among the lowest in the country in several key areas. California's children and their futures are in our hands. As discouraging news about the state's economic and budget crises continues to emerge, it would be tempting to postpone these discussions until the fiscal situation improves. However, the state's budget problems do not free us of the responsibility to provide better schools and a better education for California's children.

California is facing a multi-billion dollar deficit next year. How can we afford comprehensive and sweeping reforms of the K-12 education system?

We understand that the state of California is facing a budget deficit which creates additional challenges for providing immediate funding for necessary reforms. But these recommendations are for broad, system-wide changes which would happen over a period of years, rather than in a single 365-day time frame.

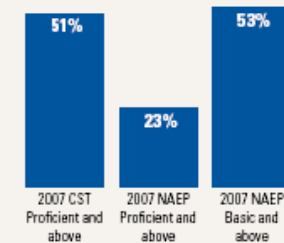
While we can't fix the system overnight, we can begin to lay the groundwork for change by agreeing on a framework for both funding and reform over a multi-year period. A number of our proposals can be implemented immediately at little or no cost. If we can agree on a necessary set of changes now, we will be prepared to move aggressively as resources become available.

How can we expect to reach a consensus among people who have disagreed so strongly for so long?

Many sides have been drawn into this issue with parties disagreeing on how to fix the state's failing K-12 education system. The diversity of the Governor's Committee on Education Excellence is a testament that individuals with different political, social, educational, and philosophical backgrounds can agree on solutions to address education reform. Continued temporary and piecemeal changes will not make a difference; we must adopt and follow a coherent plan that takes the entire system into account for reform.

Reading/ English Language Arts

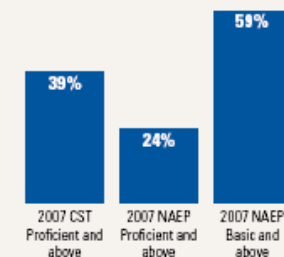
Grade 4 Overall Reading/ELA Performance California Standards Test (CST) and NAEP



Source: California Department of Education and National Center for Education Statistics

Mathematics

Grade 7 and 8 Overall Math Performance California Standards Test and NAEP



Source: California Department of Education and National Center for Education Statistics



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What are the reforms the Committee recommends in this new report?

Overall, the Committee recommends a transformation of the system from a culture of compliance to a culture of continuous improvement toward rigorous standards. These recommendations include a structural change with regard to both finance and governance, moving away from a Sacramento-based operation to one that grants increased local autonomy to districts and schools, while supporting them and holding them firmly accountable. Finance changes recommend moving toward a system that allocates funding based on program outcomes tied to incentives to promote student achievement and away from the current system that allocates monies based on compliance with rules. Based on the report findings, the Committee recommends the following interdependent actions:

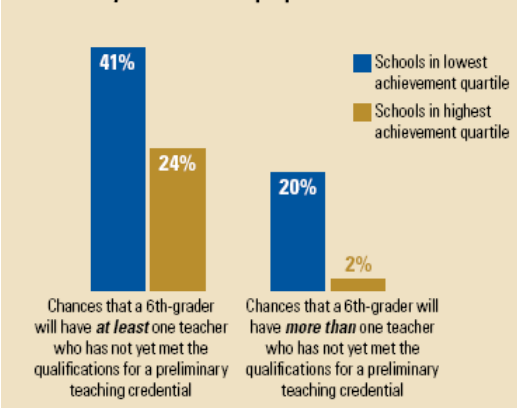
- Strengthen teaching and leadership;
- Ensure fair funding that rewards results;
- Streamline governance and strengthen accountability; and
- Improve data systems and use them wisely.

How will the Committee's recommendations be part of the solution to reform California's education system?

If implemented successfully as part of the proposed systematic reform, the Committee's recommendations should empower educators to successfully help improve student performance by:

- Better preparing and supporting teachers and leaders to provide more effective teaching;
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities at the state, county, district, and school levels;
- Aligning policy, finance and programs in the Governor's office with ultimate accountability for the system;
- Transitioning to an accountability system that relies on the *growth* in student academic achievement; and
- Moving responsibility for assistance away from Sacramento, closer to schools and classrooms.

Students in Lowest-Performing Schools Are Most Likely To Have Underprepared Teachers



What is the Committee's recommendation for strengthening teaching and leadership in our K-12 schools?

The Committee's findings point to a few overlapping solutions. The most effective way to close the student achievement gap requires extensive changes in how we recruit, prepare, train, compensate and hold accountable teachers and administrators. To attract and retain effective practitioners for these challenging positions, the state must develop a true professional model that supports teacher growth and development, rewards accomplishments, and holds them accountable. Based on the Committee's findings, educators should be held accountable for steady gains in student learning, and administrators should earn increased autonomy and additional resources based on the performance of their schools.

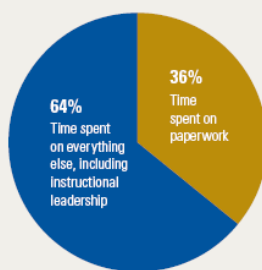


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How can fair funding of schools be ensured under the Committee's recommendations?

Based on the Committee's findings, a new funding structure will incorporate fiscal incentives that are aligned to support a focus on achievement and reward excellence, thereby promoting systemic behavioral changes. In the current system, districts, schools, and employees receive the same funding for various actions - regardless of whether they produce results. In order to effect change, the Committee recommends financial incentives to reward districts, or their charter school counterparts, on behalf of the schools that consistently meet achievement benchmarks. Also recommended is professional pay that rewards teachers and principals for their responsibilities and demonstrated effectiveness; and who teach and lead in schools that serve high concentrations of low-income and minority students.

Principals Spend One-Third of Their Time on Paperwork



Source: Association of California School Administrators

How can school governance be streamlined with increased accountability if the state's education system itself is part of the problem?

Ultimately the state is responsible for the education of California's students. The current problem is that everyone is in charge and yet no one with responsibility is held accountable. The Committee recommends returning the primary decision-making authority in K-12 education to local schools, districts, and counties, and away from the state bureaucracy. To streamline the current convoluted governance system, local entities would receive more autonomy which in turn would require administrators to work with teachers, parents, students, and other stakeholders to set the direction for the school, and review data aimed at improving student engagement and achievement. The Committee additionally recommends

separating the state agency that oversees districts and schools from the agency that holds the same districts publicly accountable.

Why is improving data systems and using them wisely an important part of reforming the current education system? Aren't we currently using data to determine schools' and students' needs?

Though some student data is currently collected and examined, this information is too often inaccessible to most parents, teachers and researchers. The Committee recommends the creation of a completely accessible statewide student longitudinal data system that would translate data collected into information that local districts and schools can learn from and use to improve instruction. A comprehensive data system such as this would link student, teacher, school, district and state data – with the capacity to link to college, work, and social services data – providing a complete student profile for educators and administrators. Implementing such a data system would require the state to waive laws and regulations that currently impede the effective use of student data.



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How will the four main priorities (strengthening teaching and leadership, ensuring fair funding, streamlining governance and accountability, and using data wisely) all lead to the creation of a foundation for continuous improvement?

The four priorities specified by the Committee will move the state's K-12 education system to a student-centered program. These priorities also acknowledge that learning begins before children ever reach the first day of Kindergarten. Pursuing a comprehensive early childhood package in addition to K-12 reforms includes moving toward universal preschool in phases; investing in preschool staff training; and aligning curriculum to ensure that what children are learning in preschool is preparing them to be successful in Kindergarten. Proposed Kindergarten reforms include delaying the Kindergarten entry birth date, and expanding full-day Kindergarten to more disadvantaged students. By strengthening the foundation of education during early childhood, we can better prepare California's future students and increase their chances for success moving forward.

How are these recommendations different from past reports and audits of California's K-12 education system?

The Committee's recommendations are based upon an extensive array of the latest research on education; prior studies of the California education system; and reports from other states, cities, and countries seeking to dramatically reform their school systems. The recommendations are interdependent and should be considered a coherent, comprehensive package. Singling out and implementing individual recommendations on their own could make the current education system more intolerable and ineffective. Given the ideological differences of the Committee, the ability to reach a consensus on these recommendations indicates the true need for transformation and a commitment to implement the sweeping changes that will greatly impact our education system.

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