



Governor's Committee on Education Excellence

REPORT SUMMARY

Background

In April 2005, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger established The Governor's Committee on Education Excellence to achieve these specific goals:

- Analyze current impediments to excellence;
- Explore ideas and best practices relevant to California; and
- Recommend changes and reforms to improve education in our state.

The Committee focused on four inter-related topics and a fifth related priority:

1. Strengthen Teaching and Leadership
2. Ensure Fair Funding that Rewards Results
3. Streamline Governance and Strengthen Accountability
4. Improve Data Systems and Use them Wisely
5. Create a Foundation for Continuous Improvement

For more than two years, the Committee – a bipartisan group of experts from the K-12 education, research, policy-making, and business sectors – held meetings across the state and spoke with numerous stakeholders, policymakers, and researchers from California and throughout the nation to learn from their ideas and experience. The Committee also had the benefit of an extensive array of 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.

Overview

The recommendations in this report will take a combination of common sense and courage to implement. Taken together, they propose a systematic overhaul that will reduce the achievement gap and create a constantly escalating cycle of continuous improvement in our education system. Therefore, it is essential that the proposed reforms be considered as a coherent, comprehensive package. Singling out and implementing individual recommendations on their own could make the current, intolerable situation even worse. Instead, policy makers and the public should commit to a systematic and consistent approach to reform that rejects business as usual.

Report Recommendations

Changing the system to focus on student success means embracing comprehensive, coherent changes by simultaneously addressing the following four inter-related priorities and a fifth key foundation.

1. Strengthen Teaching and Leadership

A students-first philosophy means that all schools must have a steady supply of highly effective teachers and administrators.

- Professionalize teaching as a career.
 - Create career advancement opportunities; provide on-going embedded professional development; base evaluations on professional standards and student achievement



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growth; and link compensation to performance that would reward teachers for their roles and achievements.

- Enhance leadership.
 - To attract and retain effective practitioners, provide ongoing professional development; fair, action-oriented evaluations; and compensation based on performance.
- Narrow the teacher and administrator quality gap.
 - The Committee recommends additional incentive pay for teachers and principals who demonstrate effectiveness and teach and lead in schools that serve high concentrations of low-income and minority students. In addition, have districts first determine and report the greatest shortages in particular schools, and then develop plans to address these needs.
- Expand the quality and supply of new teacher candidates.
 - The state must adopt a more proactive recruitment and preparation plan. Specifically, deregulate professional preparation, so that more entities can train and certify teachers – according to statewide professional standards.
- Expand and strengthen administrator training.
 - The Committee recommends three specific changes: deregulating the preparation of administrators by allowing county superintendents, districts, and others to offer integrated training; providing “induction” support to administrators; and creating an interdisciplinary school-turnaround training program to meet the challenges of ensuring accountability.

2. Ensure Fair Funding that Rewards Results

Funding must support the attainment of our educational goals for all students, recognizing students have differential needs.

- Transition to a student-centered funding model with financial incentives to reward schools that succeed.
 - Provide a base level of resources for every student and then provide additional resources for students who need the most help (particularly low-income students and English learners).
 - Ensure that targeted funding gets to the schools whose students generate it.
 - Limit the number of years that any student can generate funding as an English learner.
 - Make school budgets more understandable to the public.
 - Ensure equitable funding for charter schools.
- The state would provide financial rewards to school districts, or their charter school counterparts, on behalf of the schools that were determined consistently to be meeting achievement benchmarks; and simultaneously eliminate financial disincentives to succeed.
- Create greater funding stability.



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3. Streamline Governance and Strengthen Accountability

Transform the system from a culture of compliance to a culture of continuous improvement against rigorous state standards, through clarification of local and state roles and responsibilities.

- Provide greater local autonomy:
 - School districts – offer more support for local school improvement efforts.
 - Schools – successful schools should earn progressive increased autonomy.
 - County superintendents and offices of education – maintain oversight and intervention for districts' fiscal operations and provide support when direct intervention is needed.
- Streamline and deregulate the education system.
 - Replacing categorical programs, each with rigid rules, with student-centered funding is an important first step.
- Reform the convoluted state governance system.
 - The state agency that funds and support districts and schools should be separated from the agency that holds those same districts publicly accountable:
 - Secretary of Education – assume policy, finance, and program responsibilities.
 - Superintendent of Public Instruction – serve as an independent guarantor of success throughout the system, responsible for all accountability functions.
 - State Board of Education – provide guidance to the Secretary of Education and Governor.
- Create a regional support system to provide oversight for all districts and interventions for struggling districts.
 - These offices would: monitor local compliance with state and federal mandates; create academic crisis management and assistance teams to help districts that are academically bankrupt or otherwise require academic intervention; and directly intervene in failing districts.
- Institute a school inspection system.
 - To provide essential information on why a school's program is or is not working, the state should implement an inspection system similar to those used successfully in other states and countries.
- Institute clear intervention rules.
 - The state should move toward zero-tolerance for chronically low-performing schools/districts.
- Promote choice for families.
 - The Committee recommends full equalization of funding between district-operated schools and charter schools and full disclosure of the opportunities available to make real choices available to parents.



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4. Improve Data Systems and Use them Wisely

A student-centered system is driven by reliable, timely and valid information about outcomes and performance, resources, and opportunities – analyzed to promote improvement.

- Make performance, program and financial information transparent.
 - Provide this information to parents, educators, communities and the state.
- Create comprehensive data systems that link student, teacher, school, district, and state data, with the capacity to link to college, work, and social services data.
- Create the capacity to analyze data and programs to support local instructional improvement.

5. Create a Foundation for Continuous Improvement

A student-centered system recognizes that many learning needs are developed before students reach the classroom.

- Adopt a comprehensive early childhood package
 - Move toward universal preschool in phases.
 - Continue mixed-delivery system for preschool, but use consistent standards.
 - Make strategic investments in preschool quality.
 - Measure and provide incentives to promote preschool quality.
 - Expand full-day kindergarten and delay the age at which children enter kindergarten from December 2 (one of the nation's latest) to September 1.

Conclusion

We are confident that California is ready for changes of this magnitude. We have a Governor who has demonstrated strong leadership on issues ranging from stem cell research to global warming to taxes and public safety. We have a Legislature that has indicated a strong commitment to improve our schools. We have some of the country's strongest standards, most dedicated educators, and most talented students. With the public and our leaders aimed at creating a new system by which our schools improve continuously over time toward high standards we have set for all children.

This is a problem of systems, not individuals. But there are still impediments to achieving the goals outlined in this report. The involved stakeholders, all of whom have a clear sense of the changes and improvements needed to provide our youth with outstanding educational opportunities, must become more willing to work toward compromise and collaboration in order to move forward. The alternative is remaining stuck with the status quo. In addition, the traditional Capitol routine is to gridlock in lean times and add programs without re-examining the base in rich times. We are rarely given the opportunity to look at the entire system as a whole or its future in the long-term. We deserve better – for our economy, for our communities, and for the 6.3 million children who go to school every day counting on us to help them fulfill their dreams.

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