

**AHEAD OF THE CURVE AND OUT OF THE BOX**  
**Presentation to Statewide Teacher Training Conference for Higher Education**

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It's not often that the leadership of any group of public institutions has the opportunity to comfortably think out loud about two of the greatest challenges educators face in this century. One is ensuring that an increasingly diverse population grows up to be literate and competent enough to participate meaningfully in the economy. Second is to ensure that high quality personnel are attracted and retained to classroom teaching.

Throughout the United States, especially in the heavily populated states, a wave of teacher retirements is outpacing the pipeline for high quality teacher replacements. And even without that projected drain, states like California have current teacher shortages in math, science, special education and for placements in low achieving schools. Given that California has 50% more children than the nearest populous state (Texas), the crisis in education here really is a threat to the productivity of the country, and the competence of our society.

In addition, if a ballot proposal for Universal Preschool passes, there will be a new challenge placed at the door of higher education. That challenge is to train thousands of certified teachers and classroom aides who will develop careers in early education within an eight year time period (2008-2016). Fortunately, this challenge comes with funding--over \$500 million will be appropriated to an array of institutions to create the child development degree programs, develop the faculty, and begin the training for these new teachers. As the infrastructure for the preschool system rolls out, the degree and credential programs will also unfold; two systems growing together on synchronous and parallel tracks.

Assuming the projections are correct, about 350,000 children will be in preschool programs within ten years from today. If you were starting from scratch, just doing the math, you'd have a completely infeasible task of developing over 35,000 new teachers and aides from thin air. That's over 6,000 students per year who are finishing B.A. or A.A. programs in proportion to the need in their geographic areas.

## **FRAMING THE CHALLENGE**

Fortunately, as the data from Whitebook and Bellm's studies show, there is a base workforce in place, with about 25% holding the B.A. degree and another 25% holding the A.A. degree. Moreover, many of the balance of current teachers have some college training. But even if none of these staff left the field, at least 15,000<sup>1</sup> new professionals will phase-in to programs throughout the state to upgrade their current educational status and to enter the early education profession.

The gift of providing children with a good foundation for learning comes at a price—both the direct cost of teaching them and the cost of developing the workforce. But working from a sound foundation will have at least a triple benefit—that of preparing children for school, easing the job of teaching in our “hard to place” elementary schools in addition to the long term positive outcomes for society.

How can we approach this challenge of workforce development? Let's start with the demography of the student population. The expected student base is composed of working adults who will not ever fit the mold of the full-time daytime student whose primary focus is their own schooling. These students will need a different entry point and a different process of learning within higher education to attain success.

Beyond the current workforce is an unknown pipeline of new entrants. These students will have selected early education as their career choice because, for the first time ever, a career ladder can be constructed in this industry. Some will be traditional students, but most are likely to be working at least part-time because of the rate with which we need to staff classrooms. The new entrants may be a mix of adult career changers, with and without degrees, full-time students with part-time jobs in the child development sector, and young adults who must work and attend school full or part-time.

Whether any of these groups (the current workforce and new entrants) have the chance to realize the promise of the PFA Initiative is somewhat dependent upon the leadership of public higher education.

The big questions are how will higher education institutions move nimbly and quickly to develop teacher training programs for this target group? How will they manage this new responsibility, knowing also that about 10,000 teachers a year may need to be recruited for K-12 classrooms?

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<sup>1</sup> *By Fall, 2006, we may have a better number in hand, because Whitebook, Bellm, and Kipnis will publish that statewide workforce study commissioned by First 5 California*

## **GETTING AHEAD OF THE CURVE – Now to July 2007**

Higher education institutions are designed to respond to change in a deliberate and thoughtful way. Moving quickly or nimbly could be considered an oxymoron. The concepts of *Getting Ahead of the Curve* and *Out of Box* could help define a shift in the way things gets done. The challenge ahead is to create a new infrastructure within higher education; in many cases developing new departments and new areas of specialization within departments, new undergraduate majors and concomitant academic personnel. Attach to that is the support staff as well as an inter- and intra-organizational relationships that make the transactions of such programs possible.

Just to get our arms wrapped around this complex work scope we have to get “*Ahead of the Curve.*” I am not referring to trotting out an upfront leader or creative genius who’s got a bright idea about solving this problem. We could use the inspiration, of course, but we need early action to prepare and plan. We can get ahead of the curve by using the one year window between July 1, 2006 and July 1, 2007 to do some rigorous and high level “grunt work” to jump start implementation.

### ***Taking an Entrepreneurial Approach***

During the development of the Los Angeles Preschool Master Plan, our mantra was “*build on what we have and build on what we know.*” But we did this with an entrepreneurial approach based on a theory of organizational development for fast growing organizations. This required that we attack multiple tracks of organizational growth simultaneously rather than sequentially. It meant that we infused the planning process with a zeal that was infectious and resulted in an ambitious “can do” attitude among key stakeholders in diverse sectors of the community. Through consensus building among hundreds of participants, a Master Plan was developed and published within one year, and within the next year, the preschool system was successfully launched. The same or similar mantra accompanied by the energy to explore new ways of doing things is applicable to higher education.

We have in our public higher education systems, tremendous intellectual capital and administrative ability. But everyone is already working very hard and given fiscal pressures everywhere, there is not a lot of redundant capacity to just take on this new effort. In a fantasy world, I would suggest that we metaphorically round up the top 100 graduates of the public policy and business schools in the state and put them to work on this project for the next two years. The point to be made here is that we need external people with dedicated time to invest in this phase of the work. They need to have the energy, enthusiasm and absence of tradition to go at the analysis of training models,

and the analysis of workforce data to project how we can launch and ramp up new teacher training models. This data gathering and aggregation project would provide our institutional leadership with sufficient content to consider which models have applicability to their local conditions.

### ***Data Analysis and Consolidation (State Trends)***

By August 2006, Marcy Whitebook's workforce study will be available for each county, and another project that I am affiliated with is currently analyzing preschool supply and demand (AIR/KHS Statewide Technical Assistance Project 2006). We also have some research on the state of higher education programs in early childhood education by institution (Whitebook and Bellm, 2005). With robust statistical analysis and some creative geo-coding we will be able to see not only how much, but where, throughout the state we need to aggressively expand or develop early education degree and teacher training programs. Hopefully by the end of 2006, these data will be ready in congruent data sets so those faculty and administrators in local higher education can move forward in a strategic manner to develop the metrics that will apply to their respective institutions.

### ***Developing a statewide case library on teacher-training innovations***

Many of the educators participating in this meeting are already in the middle of innovations with community-based teaching, weekend classes, online instruction and alternative pathways to teacher credentialing. But we need to know more about the universe of efforts across the country, particularly those that demonstrate success with accelerated and non-traditional learning. While the PFA Initiative calls for a B.A. degree with a minimum number of units in child development, we could refine that further by designing programs that answer the question, "What does a teacher really need to know?" The same could be said for the A.A. degree programs for classroom assistants who may still take on the career path to teacher. Given the time line on completion, we should also pay a lot of attention to examining pathways to embedded credential/B.A. degree models.

With a statewide consolidated library of information developed by June 2007, each institution or group of institutions can draw upon this content to develop its own "business plan" for workforce development. You can extend your platform of "what is" to a conceptualization of "what can be" for ECE teacher training. Even if much of the case work is already known, June 2007 may mark the first time the literature on models can be examined in the context of data on the labor pool and weighed against local and statewide goals for developing new teachers.

### ***Developing Metrics***

Another part of getting ahead of the curve is developing the metrics that will dictate the feasibility of one model over another in a given situation. The metrics will drive costs and the identification of accountability measures for each institution's program. Costs are not going to be uniform because multiple models will be in various stages of implementation in different locations. But the State will look for cost against output (number of teachers produced) within contexts in its criteria for funding programs.

For example, some of the programs are already doing "extended" or community based classes for credit and/or online instruction. Others may already be engaged in on-line instruction. Once you know the lay of the land and the number of students that will be coming through your program you have to estimate FTE requirements, facility requirements and overhead attached to those variables. Every metric of productivity carries with it costs. Though the figure of \$500 million for institutional support was derived analytically based on current costs, efficiency and leveraging will remain important.

The 2008 roll-out of public teacher training programs will vet the theory of workforce development against implementation. In some respects the launch of these new teacher development and training programs will be like a controlled quasi-experiment.

### ***Team Building***

Higher education institutions are not like corporations, where the workforce embraces a corporate culture and knows his or her first obligation is to produce for the benefit of the company. The foundations of academe rest on fostering the academic freedom and singular achievements of individual faculty. When the achievements of the members are combined, the institution derives recognition of collective attainments. This is an oversimplification, but a core value of academic culture is to support independence and specialization, especially at 4-year institutions. At the risk of stereotyping, getting faculty groups to line up behind collective goals is often difficult for administrators to achieve. It is akin to herding cats into a group performance.

In an effort such as workforce development, which serves the public interest, there has to be collective commitment to a broad goal. Synergies have to be found so individual faculty interests and program goals can be enmeshed. The ideal would be for senior faculty to take leadership supported by junior faculty, field specialists, and administrative and technical support. However, in some cases, the workforce development funds will and should be spent on faculty recruiting and development so that ambitious or responsive leadership, interested in spearheading a large applied program, can get

teacher training off the ground. If most of the department doesn't support the program for whatever reason (e.g. preschool doesn't belong in a k-12 training program), it's not ideal. However, in communities with high unmet need, someone has to be responsive.

### **GETTING OUT OF THE BOX: IMPLEMENTATION**

The phrase "out of the box" suggests doing something completely new. But at best, we can do old things in a completely new way. If we continue using the concept of the public entrepreneur, most of you will be taking on new partners. Some may be community-based programs that serve as training or lab facilities; others may be institutional partners that supply students to your programs. Currently, for example, the UC and community college systems have transfer relationships to facilitate articulation between lower division preparation and upper division degree completion. We may need to consider formalized relationships but with a specific focus on ECE teacher preparation. Also, we will need to look to foundations and other funders to support research on the effectiveness of various models that get rolled out throughout the state.

#### ***Content before Form***

The case library that was developed to get ahead of the curve should reveal models your institutions will want to consider for adoption, adaptation and implementation. To be completely out of the box, one would plan an implementation strategy without regard to the current form of your institutions. But to be effective, the goal is to extend and test the limits of what has always worked and then see if your current form can map to what you are trying to accomplish. Minimize sequential actions, push for concurrent transactions. This is the heart of innovation. To build on what you have, but not be slavish about it.

Knowing child development theory, I am confident that much of the content thought to be important in teacher training may be preserved, but the form of these programs will need to be radically different than what typical teacher training programs look like. That's why content comes first, because without the integrity of the knowledge base, quality will be compromised. But the form it takes should map to the environmental context of the student population.

#### ***Form follows Content***

What are the new "forms" of program models that we might expect to develop. Here's a laundry list from the preliminary review of efforts currently underway in this and other states. They include:

- Abandoning traditional classroom on the college site except for building cohorts' sense of community, affinity and affiliation with the institution;
- Reaching out to communities, identifying the outstanding programs that can display and model best practices. Working in partnership with these practitioners to define and disseminate information about best practices to students.
- Creating new models of faculty development such as a supervising professor who guides field-based mentors in teaching at the college level. This may result in pursuit of advanced education among the mentors, who later become professors. This builds on the classic professor/ student TA model, but reconfigured and repurposed for a different kind of goal.
- Using funds to bring in standard bearers of excellence in early education who can provide the content leadership. This might include working a private public match model to create endowed professorships in ECE at major institutions throughout the state.
- Identifying current talent in our PhD programs who are possible candidates for tenure track positions who can embrace and push these teacher training programs forward.
- Reconsidering the practicum training (i.e. doing half of it at the community college level, with the theory courses at the upper division level, polished off with a final practicum during the senior year). This might solve the problem of transfer losses among community college students who think they've got their major and child development permit taken care of only to find that not having taken all 24 units of child development in the community colleges will cost them an additional year toward getting their B.A. degree.
- Offering theory in upper division classes, using the practicum and work experience as the pathway to understanding the relevance of theory to teaching.
- Creating processes and structures for aggressive counseling, mentoring, encouraging a very diverse and often fearful workforce through the life transition of a degree and credential program.
- Starting preparation programs for ECE professionals who are also English language learners which will run concurrent or in sequence with dual language college instruction.

- Looking at high school students for the pipeline of “new career” entrants with a six-year development plan, inclusive of actual paid employment, post-secondary schooling, and career development in the ECE profession.
- Constructing multiple models and pathways to completion of teacher training programs for the already employed.
- Creation of a multi-institution sponsored entity to promote Careers in Early Education that is responsible for visiting high schools, publicizing partnerships, and heightening the profile of early education as a promising career alternative with opportunities in the public and private sector.
- Investing also in management development for ECE programs. Look at the UCLA Residential program for Head Start Directors and the Friday program for non-profit center directors (foundation financed).
- Advancing the cohort rather than class-based modules; converting clock hours of classroom and content exposure into units.
- Creating a core of knowledge for all ECE programs statewide, with an emphasis on language development and language acquisition.
- Integrating content to extend the new ECE credential for teaching PreK-3.

### ***Conducting the Symphony***

I use an orchestra metaphor because each program and its leadership need a conductor, not just an administrator. Conductors provide inspiration, foster processes that produce great performances and constantly monitor how well the orchestra is doing because so much is at stake each time they face the audience. The California effort to train a workforce for a new system of early education will be history-making. A strong performance will make a difference for the profession as a whole.

### **BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTATION**

If we are successful in getting ahead of the curve and the “talented tenth” can get out of the box, what will be the barriers to implementation?

We are all familiar with the top three: territoriality, intransigence, and complexity.

Territoriality is manifested in political maneuvering, guerilla tactics, lying and obfuscation of the issues in order to stall progress and preserve the status quo. One tension that will be immediately obvious is the long standing debate between access for all and preservation of standards. As the community college leadership can tell anyone, there is a lot of talent and potential residing among the many students whose point of access is restricted by poverty, work and family obligations, and mistrust of academic institutions. That does not mean the purpose of “higher” education is exclusion but to identify and cultivate that talent, even through unconventional programs, to its full potential.

Intransigence is a common characteristic of a mature organization which wants to protect and insulate its structure, thus taking it out to another level will be a challenge. Huge leaps in growth, new domains of responsibility, and new ways of doing things, all threaten the equilibrium of a tested and enduring institution. Training 15,000 new teachers certainly will threaten that equilibrium. But there is an over-arching protection created by the legislation to depressurize the tension with good planning and adequate resources to do the job, which can be well managed by the addition of staff and resources.

It pains me to think that complexity could be the downfall of the teacher training effort, when, after all, we are talking about the state’s leading minds coming together to develop this system. But when you have to move thousands of people from one point of knowledge to another, maybe we need to sort out the complexity so the charge can be explicated with simplicity. Let’s focus on a complex distillation of the many variables that are in this organizational equation. A good metaphor would be performing a giant regression analysis that produces the best fit line for predicting how to get from a teacher deficit to a fully deployed system in less than ten years.

There is a final caveat. A vacuum in leadership will have dire consequences. One downside of delay and disinterest is negative exposure on equity. Teacher training has been framed as a social investment that should be available in our public higher education system. If students, particularly those who plan to teach in areas of low achievement, do not have access to a program that is supposed to be available at the public institutions, there will be legal action. Another problem is that lagging behind on development of programs when students are trying to get ahead means they will not and cannot wait for programs to be established. Student financial aid, which is in a separate pool, will be rapidly consumed by tuition and fees as ambitious proprietary or private institutions will seize the opportunity to step into the teacher training breach. The financial aid will be exhausted before our targets are reached because the student

aid will have been spent on private infrastructure development. And the public investment to finance that infrastructure development in our state higher education system will be seriously compromised.

That gets me to my concluding statement: Marcy Whitebook compares workforce development to traveling down a multi-lane highway with on ramps and off ramps for students who are in a process that has options and supports to guide them to their destination.

My main concern is that we not get so overwhelmed and bogged down by the scale of this endeavor that our workforce ends up in a parking lot. That is what happens to them today—where recent research shows that staff quality has gone down and wages have stagnated in real dollars during the past 20 years. Teachers who would like to move forward are stuck in dead end jobs with no career ladder. The opportunity in the Preschool for All effort is to create a major turnaround with a tough but doable timeline; with ample venture capital to invest wisely in both institutional development, but also career development of thousands of people who never dreamed teaching four-year-olds would ever be a self-respecting and important career in this society.