

TEACHERS AND TEACHING

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

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What has been learned about good teaching and effective teacher education over the last 10 years? The following points emerged from a two-day session of the California Education Policy Seminar:

- **Good teaching** has been identified by research as the key to school success and school reform.
- **Knowledge of effective teaching** and teacher education has been expanded and refined.
- **What works and what doesn't** in teaching and teacher preparation can now be clearly defined.

Research has confirmed that “the single most important measurable cause of increased student learning is teacher expertise” the keynote speaker, Linda Darling-Hammond of Teachers College, Columbia University, told the conference. “Teachers’ effectiveness is based on their knowledge of subject matter, child development, learning theory, curriculum development, and teaching methods,” she said.

But what has been done to apply this knowledge to revitalize teacher education programs?

What still needs to be done?

The more than 30 participants at the conference examined these questions in light of developments in the teaching profession since the California Commission On The Teaching Profession published its reform report, “Who Will Teach Our Children?” in 1985.

The conference focused on four main areas:

1. Teacher recruitment;
2. Preparation;
3. Induction;
4. Continuing professional development.

Conferees consisted of college and university faculty, school administrators, public school teachers, and others in the field of education as well as seven members of the California Legislature, representatives of the governor’s office and state agencies. The conference was held December 3 and 4, 1994 in Sacramento.

This publication presents the highlights of the conference discussions and a set of policy recommendations that call for important changes in how California prepares and further develops the teachers who run our classrooms.

TEACHER RECRUITMENT

UPDATE ON CONDITIONS

- o **Enrollments have risen** in teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities. The students are more qualified, and graduation standards are higher in California and nationally.
- o **The supply of new teachers is barely meeting demand** in California. Teacher shortages are expected to develop and grow in the coming years.
- o **Severe shortages remain in certain specialties**, particularly in the special education and bilingual fields. Shortages have contributed to increases in emergency credentials in California.
- o **Minority teachers also are in short supply** in California, where 80 percent of the teaching force is white and 58 percent of the students are minority. The percentage of minority students is expected to reach 65 percent by the year 2000.
- o **The huge growth in diversity among California students** underscores the need for more minority teachers.

WHERE WE SHOULD FOCUS

A blue-ribbon task force should be created to develop a long-range plan for recruiting teachers, and should include representatives from colleges and universities, school districts, the governor's office, the state Department of Education, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, and other interested parties.

Dramatic initiatives are needed, such as a statewide public service outreach campaign, which has proven effective by Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., on the national level. The state could develop its own campaign with the help of Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., or could customize that organization's advertising and information materials for use in California.

Urban school districts, which have the greatest

need for new teachers, and colleges and universities can play a major role in a recruitment campaign at the local level. They could distribute information, encourage media to carry public service advertising, and follow up on responses from prospective teaching candidates.

A statewide precollegiate recruitment campaign should be launched, based on research findings that over half of all new teachers decided to enter teaching while in high school or earlier. Several dozen local efforts scattered across California could be financially assisted and coordinated for greater effectiveness. "Future teacher programs" like those in South Carolina and Florida also could be started in California schools. Successful teaching magnet schools in Los Angeles and San Jose could serve as models for start-ups with state

TEACHER RECRUITMENT

“seed” money in other school districts.

An especially promising pool of prospective teachers is the state’s paraeducators or teacher aides. These individuals come from the local school community, they know their school, and they have a demonstrated interest in working to help children. This population is already being tapped through the Paraprofessional Teacher Training Program (PTTP), which became operational for the first time in 1995. Funding for this program could be increased to expand the pool of paraprofessionals pursuing teaching credentials.

A model “career corridor” should be developed by setting up “centers for teacher development” within school districts, combining the features of a professional development school and a magnet teaching academy. It would expose students to teaching at an early age and serve as a pathway to teacher education programs, which also would be connected to the centers.

The state loan-forgiveness program, which has been successful in recruiting promising individuals into teaching and serving hard to staff schools, should be expanded.

WHAT TO AVOID

Passive programs that do not reach out in aggressive and imaginative ways to students and others potentially interested in teaching.

Failure to challenge notions that teachers are born and not made, which may discourage some from entering the teaching profession and could undermine support for greater investment in teacher recruitment and education.

TEACHER PREPARATION

UPDATE ON CONDITIONS

- o The research-based model of effective teacher education features:
 - 4 A college curriculum built on knowledge of how children learn and develop in diverse ways, how they acquire language, differences in learning styles, varied instructional strategies, and diagnosis and assessment methods for use by teachers.
 - 4 Heavy emphasis on the content of academic subjects, each taught in ways best understood by children.
 - 4 Extensive and intensively-supervised internships in schools, preferably lasting one year and integrated with teacher-education coursework to enable teachers to transfer theory into practice.
 - 4 New teachers assuming gradual responsibility for classroom teaching in an “observing-assisting-teaching” framework, supervised by college faculty or other educators knowledgeable about learning theory and teaching methods, and assisted by highly-qualified mentors in schools.
 - 4 Public accountability for quality control of training programs through adherence to common rigorous requirements, external reviews of program performance, and documentation of opportunities for teaching candidates to meet new standards of excellence in teacher education.
- o The best teacher preparation programs require a bachelor’s degree in a subject field; a fifth year of study in child development, learning theory, curriculum development and teaching methods; supervised internships in schools; and strong support and assistance in the first years of teaching.
 - 4 Many teacher education programs have adopted higher standards reflecting increased knowledge about what constitutes good teaching, but the failure of some to do so remains the main barrier to improving teacher education.
 - 4 The mission of schools has changed. All students are expected to learn, and teachers must know how to diagnose, prescribe, and apply learning strategies for a wide spectrum of student abilities.
 - 4 Greater diversity heightens the need for excellence in teacher training, since classrooms of heterogeneous students require both teachers with more knowledge about the learning characteristics of culturally-different students, and effective strategies for teaching them.
 - 4 Alternate-route programs that bypass conventional preparation have increased. Successful ones have carefully designed curricula focused on learning theory, subject matter content, internships linked to course matter, and gradual induction into classrooms with mentors. Unsuccessful ones are short term, fail to cover essential knowledge, lack mentors, have high

TEACHER PREPARATION

teacher dropout rates, and report lower student test scores.

4 *Teach for America*, one widely known alternate-route program, has recruited and trained 2,800 teachers, including 700 in California. It

looks for people with strong personal characteristics, such as commitment, persistence, and leadership qualities. But critics have questioned whether its training, support and accountability standards are adequate.

WHERE WE SHOULD FOCUS

- For greater public accountability, all teacher education programs should be evaluated against the new model of teaching effectiveness.
- Directors of teacher education programs should be asked to insure that current knowledge about effective teaching has been incorporated into the teacher training process.
- State policy on school improvement and reform should be shaped around teacher competence as the key to raising student achievement and enabling schools to cope with the greater diversity of students.
- Teacher education institutions and school districts should be required to develop and document a working relationship. The goal would be to promote an effective transfer of teaching theory into practice by new teachers.
- Public accountability measures, such as regular progress reports and external assessments, should be required to document that all teacher education programs are moving toward the new model of teaching effectiveness.

WHAT TO AVOID

- Simply adopting higher standards, based on advances in knowledge about teaching, without actually incorporating these advances into university and college training programs.
- School-based reforms that do not incorporate the latest knowledge about teaching, and do not focus on teaching effectiveness as the key component.
- Withholding from the public the results of teacher training assessments. Public understanding of teacher training issues will provide important leverage for bringing about knowledge-based improvements.
- Alternate-route programs that are short term, weak in research-based knowledge of teaching and in subject matter content, and are not designed to use mentors consistently.

INDUCTION INTO TEACHING

UPDATE ON CONDITIONS

- Research underscores the critical need for providing professional assistance to new teachers as they make the transition from college or university preparation programs to classrooms.
- The most successful transitions allow new teachers to assume classroom responsibility gradually, under the supervision of college or university advisers and experienced and well trained mentor teachers.
- The trend is toward greater numbers of new teachers being introduced to classrooms through supervised internships or residencies in schools while still enrolled in teacher education programs. However, many new teachers still are not given sufficient support and are left to “sink or swim” in classrooms.

WHERE WE SHOULD FOCUS

- Require that school districts provide professional assistance to new teachers through internships, residencies, or other cooperative relationships with teacher education programs that reflect the new model of teaching effectiveness.
- Invest more in teacher education. Staffing should be expanded both within teacher education programs and for assisting new teachers in school districts with intensive, field-based internships or residencies.
- Adopt a review and accreditation process for school districts and teacher education programs, based on successful transition models from preparation to practice.
- Spotlight model school districts that produce team efforts toward professional improvement by integrating induction activities for new teachers with in-service development for practicing teachers.
- Urge districts to provide new teachers with more access to information and resources to help them succeed.
- Change state law to make it easier for school districts to permit beginning teachers to serve in school internships and residencies.

INDUCTION INTO TEACHING

WHAT TO AVOID

- Supporting preparation programs that lack formal and professional induction experiences offered through internships and residencies.
- Funding programs that place new teachers in schools without adequate support services.
- Maintaining school structures and routines that deprive new teachers of the time needed for sound induction activities.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

UPDATE ON CONDITIONS

- The best professional development programs are part of the daily work of teaching. Improvement is ongoing, classroom isolation is broken by creating networks and collaboratives among teachers, and content is derived from partnerships of teachers, district administrators, and colleges and university faculty.
- In effective programs, time and space are set aside for teachers to learn on a regular basis. Teachers are given access to good sources of information and professional organizations, and they participate in study groups and networks.
- The best of these district-based professional development programs incorporate the same teaching effectiveness knowledge upon which model teacher education programs are based.
- Together with the sound preparation of new teachers, good professional development of practicing teachers is the most effective way to improve student learning.
- Professional development still is too often characterized as a “parade of too many workshops,” conducted by consultants on a piecemeal basis, producing very limited success.
- Districts that provide excellent professional development programs often restructure their master class schedules to provide the necessary time. They rearrange schedules by creating larger blocks of classroom time on fewer days of the week, having administrators and other academic staff teach classes or allowing new teachers to supervise students in informal learning activities while practicing teachers learn how to improve.
- Staffing in districts is still geared to student remediation, rather than student success. About 50 percent of the schools’ resources typically are spent outside of classrooms—much of it on specialists such as psychologists, curriculum advisers, and counselors, who end up attempting to remediate the problems created by inadequate resources for teaching and learning. Teachers are still seen in 19th century terms as semiskilled workers with narrowly defined, highly regulated, and closely supervised responsibilities.

WHERE WE SHOULD FOCUS

- Policy makers, from the governor to school district middle managers, should recognize and promote the idea that it is not possible to create conditions of learning for students if they don’t exist for practicing teachers.
- State funding of professional development should require that the new model of effective in-service training be incorporated in school district staff development programs.
- Policy makers involved in school reform should place teachers at the center of their efforts by using professional development as the vehicle for

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- school improvement and reducing remediation staff.
- The new model of effective professional development should be made a basis for accreditation of school districts.
- School district funds should be redirected to professional development of teachers, and away from staff whose purpose is to remediate problems created by inadequate resources for teaching.
- School districts should rearrange class schedules to create more time for professional development activities.

WHAT TO AVOID

- Professional development programs that are created by administrators, with little or no say from teachers about their content.
- Programs that focus only on teachers having the greatest need for improvement, ignoring others who want and deserve professional growth opportunities.
- Programs that consist only of workshops conducted by outside consultants.

RESOURCES FOR FOLLOWUP

The California Education Policy Seminar (CEPS) sponsors nonpartisan forums for education policy makers in California. CEPS is sponsored by the Education Commission of the States and the Institute for Educational Leadership. It is funded by the ARCO Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Walter S. Johnson Foundation, the Pacific Telesis Foundation, Rockwell, and the Pioneer Fund.

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