

A POSSIBLE DREAM

RETAINING CALIFORNIA TEACHERS

SO ALL STUDENTS LEARN

RECOMMENDATIONS

1- Assess teaching conditions locally and continuously

To fully understand the problems teachers face in particular schools, the teachers themselves must be asked and must be asked often. Surveys and/or focus groups should be conducted regularly and continuously with all staff, including principals, to assess the quality of the teaching conditions in the school and district.

2- Elevate California's student funding to (at least) adequate levels

California currently ranks 43rd in the nation in per-pupil expenditures and some schools are not getting a fair share of even these reduced state resources. Future state budgets should increase the per-pupil expenditure—and make sure it is spent—with improved student performance and teacher retention in mind.

3- Resolve the bureaucratic conundrum

Bureaucratic impediments can make teachers leave, but our analysis also indicates that eliminating all bureaucratic structures is not the solution teachers are seeking. They want policies and procedures they can count on, ones that support rather than impede their teaching.

4- Refocus school leadership on instructional quality and high-quality teaching and learning conditions

School leaders will be most effective at improving student learning by focusing their attention equally on the quality of instruction and the quality of the school's teaching and learning conditions. Managing the work environment is no less essential to the success of the school than the functions provided by an effective instructional leader. Nor are they less demanding or complex or even separate from the instructional role. The two roles are positively reinforcing, with one leading directly to the other and back.

5- Establish statewide standards for school teaching and learning conditions

California now has some of the most rigorous academic content standards for its K-12 public schools. But merely expecting a lot from students does not, by itself, guarantee they will succeed academically, especially if the schools they attend are run-down, ill-equipped, and staffed with teachers who leave soon after they are hired. Policy makers must have equally high expectations for the quality of schools that students attend. This is possible if the state establishes clear statewide standards for the teaching and learning conditions that all schools are expected to meet.

6- Assess and address specific challenges in retention of special education teachers

Many factors responsible for special education teachers leaving or staying are the same for teachers working in general education classrooms. But there are school conditions that are uniquely problematic for special education teachers that must be addressed.