

# THE STATUS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION 2011

*SUMMARY REPORT*



This report was produced by The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning at WestEd in consultation with our co-sponsors: California State University; Public Policy Institute of California; and University of California, Office of the President.

Research and analysis by SRI International of Menlo Park, CA

**Funding for this initiative was generously provided by:**

**The S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation**

**The Stuart Foundation**

Writing by Andy Plattner of Plattner Communications & Public Affairs of Millersville, MD

Strategic communications by Stone's Throw Communication of Manhattan Beach, CA

Design by Capitola Design of Soquel, CA

Copyright © 2011 • All rights reserved.



# DIMINISHED OPPORTUNITY, DIMINISHED CAPACITY

If the quality of California's future rests to a large degree on how well it educates its youth, that future looks grim.

Through deep and continuing cuts in education spending over recent years, California has steadily reduced students' opportunities to succeed in an increasingly competitive world. Education budget cuts have played out in multiple ways that undermine the capacity and effectiveness of our schools. Professional development programs designed to ensure that teachers and principals have the necessary knowledge and skills to help students reach today's higher academic standards have been largely dismantled even as cost-cutting measures in school districts across the state have made the work environment ever more challenging: Teachers are being laid off or reassigned, class sizes are increasing, support staff are being let go, and textbook and supply purchases are delayed.<sup>1</sup>

This erosion of resources has been taking place at a time when California's K-12 schools are being asked to do more, not less. Chiefly, they are expected to prepare all students for success in higher education and in an economy that, in California and elsewhere, increasingly rewards workers' knowledge and analytic skills. While California has seen some improvement over the past several years in student scores on statewide assessments, much remains to be done, including upcoming implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Meanwhile, education attainment in the state as a whole continues to compare poorly to that in other states, just as education attainment in the United States as a whole compares poorly to that of many other countries.<sup>2,3</sup>

In this challenging high-stakes environment, the current emphasis on ensuring teacher effectiveness is intense. With it comes wide-ranging discussions about the need for better teacher

evaluation and professional development, as well as the need to develop an easier exit strategy for ineffective teachers who fail to improve even with the best of support.

Often lost in the discussion about teacher effectiveness is the vital role the principal plays in contributing to classroom success. Research shows that students are more successful in schools that have strong principals who provide instructional leadership for their teachers. Those who see on-the-job teacher development as a central strategy for improved teaching and learning in the classroom recognize the need to bring principals into the mix. Yet, despite the considerable pressure on principals to improve teacher effectiveness and raise student achievement in their schools, little data is available on the principal workforce, including the conditions that help or hinder them in carrying out their *own* jobs effectively. With that in mind, this year, in its 13th annual

<sup>1</sup> For relevant citations for these and other data from our research, please refer to the full report, *The status of the teaching profession 2011*: [http://www.cftl.org/Our\\_Publications.htm](http://www.cftl.org/Our_Publications.htm).

<sup>2</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. (2011). *The nation's report card: Mathematics 2011* (NCES 2012–458). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

<sup>3</sup> Fleischman, H. L., Hopstock, P. J., Pelczar, M. P., and Shelley, B. E. (2010). *Highlights from PISA 2009: Performance of U.S. 15-year-old students in reading, mathematics, and science literacy in an international context* (NCES 2011-004). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

## A New Normal for California Educators: Rising expectations and reduced support

report on the state of the California teacher workforce, the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning at WestEd (CFTL) has broadened its own focus to include the state of the principal workforce in California.

In each of its teacher workforce reports over the past dozen years, CFTL has combined solid research, thoughtful analysis, and plain language to describe who is teaching California's 6.2 million students. This year we have expanded that focus to include the California principalship because of its important role in supporting teacher effectiveness. Our 2011 report, summarized in this publication, takes an extended look at how California's school principals perceive their expanding role and how well prepared they are for their key responsibility of helping their teachers in becoming more effective educators. The full report drew on secondary data; survey results from a representative sample of over 600 California school principals; and follow-up interviews with a subset of principals and a selected group of teacher leaders from around the state. The sidebar, "A New Normal for California Educators," describes the challenging context in which principals and teachers alike are striving to improve student outcomes.

California is one of 45 states and the District of Columbia that has adopted the Common Core State Standards in mathematics and English language arts. Developed under the aegis of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers, the standards are intended as a framework for better preparing students for success in college and the workforce. A new set of rigorous tests to accompany the standards is being developed by a multi-state consortium that includes California and is expected to be in place in school year 2014-15.

The higher expectations embodied in the Common Core would be challenging even if California students were already meeting current standards. They aren't. Only about half demonstrate 'proficiency' on the state's standards-based tests. Approximately one fifth of students fail to graduate high school at all. Six in 10 of those who do graduate and go on to California State Universities must take remedial courses before they are considered qualified to take college-level coursework.

California cannot be faulted for asking its educators and its students to do more. But, at the same time we're asking them to step up, we're providing them with fewer resources and less support. Consider these continuing trends:

- Over the last 4 years, California has cut school spending by 23 percent and has cut *more* dollars per student — \$1,414 — than any other state. Looked at another way, spending for each classroom of 30 students has been cut by more than \$42,000.<sup>4</sup>
- California's teachers now have more students in their classes than they did 3 years ago: The average class size in grades K-3 rose to 25 students during the 2010-11 school year, compared with approximately 20 students during the 2008-09 school year. Nine of the state's 30 largest districts had class sizes in excess of 30 students for some or all of grades K-3.
- The California teaching force has been cut significantly. Between 2009-10 and 2010-11, the size of the student population increased, but there were nearly 13,000 fewer teachers serving that population.
- Although we expect students to learn more, in 2011 many districts have cut the number of school days in the school year. If the state makes expected mid-year budget cuts, California schools could have among the lowest required instructional days of any state in the nation at 168 days, down from the standard 180 days.
- State-funded professional development programs for educators have been drastically reduced. With more districts spending categorical funds intended for teacher development on other purposes, the amount of total funds dedicated to professional development has gone down despite pressure on teachers to implement the new Common Core State Standards within the next few years.

<sup>4</sup> Oliff, P. & Leachman, M. (2011). *New school year brings steep cuts in state funding for schools*. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

## THE CALIFORNIA PRINCIPAL IN 2011

The majority of the state’s principals are relatively new to their role, with 51 percent having been a principal for no more than 5 years and 53 percent having been the principal at their current school for no more than 3 years. Those in charge of the state’s highest performing schools tend to have more experience at their current school than do those in lower performing schools. Nearly 90 percent of the state’s principals secured their administrative services credential through a professional preparation program.

Almost three quarters of principals surveyed reported having served as an assistant or vice principal immediately prior to assuming the role of principal. They come to this role with a wide range of content expertise. Thirty-three percent have a background in English, 24 percent in history/social science, 20 percent in mathematics, and 15 percent in science.

We expect a lot from our school leaders. This year’s annual report concludes that today’s California principals have more to do, less time to do it, and fewer sources of support, even as they and their teachers — and the students they serve — contend with higher stakes. One experienced middle school principal interviewed for the study put it this way: “In today’s world, principals are asked to be master teachers, curriculum directors, technology directors, chief budget officers, nurses, athletic directors,

“In today’s world, principals are asked to be master teachers, curriculum directors, technology directors, chief budget officers, nurses, athletic directors, crisis negotiators and managers, community liaisons, and fundraising wizards.”

crisis negotiators and managers, community liaisons, and fundraising wizards.” Not surprisingly, then, our principals report working long hours: 61 hours per week on average for high school principals, 58 hours for middle school principals, and 57 for elementary school principals.

**Principal as site manager.** As the national and state conversation has turned to teacher effectiveness, principals are being asked to assume an increasingly prominent instructional leadership role.

Yet many California principals reported that their ability to carry out this important aspect of their work is hindered by the time and effort needed in another area of responsibility for which they feel far less prepared: site management. More than half of the principals surveyed reported having had no prior experience, or minimal experience, in key job functions related to site management, such as

managing a school site budget (66%) or, even, just participating in the development of such a budget (59%). *See Figure 1.*

Compounding this lack of prior management-related experience have been budget-driven cuts in school support staff and in resources for training principals or providing them with mentors. Cuts have also reduced the number of other personnel — assistant principals, instructional coaches, and

other administrative staff — who, in the past, might have assisted with instructional leadership responsibilities or administrative duties, all of which now fall to the principal. A majority of principals reported, too, that other support staff — counselors, librarians, instructional aides, and custodians — had been eliminated at their school. A majority also reported rising class sizes for their teachers.

**Principal as teacher evaluator.** Few disagree that teachers should be evaluated regularly. Agreement about method and purpose remains more elusive. Should evaluation results be used to strengthen practice, to root out poor performers, or both? Should students' academic progress be measured as part of their teacher's evaluation and, if so, how and to what end? Are principals qualified to be effective classroom observers for formative or summative evaluation purposes?

California's relatively new principals bring varied experience in conducting teacher evaluation. Six in 10 survey respondents reported having had moderate or significant experience with formally evaluating teachers prior to becoming a principal. This leaves 4 in 10 with little or no experience. *See Figure 2.*

In California, like elsewhere in the nation, two evaluation methods are generating discussion and debate: the "value-added" approach, which attempts to measure a teacher's contribution to students' academic growth over the year, and meaningful classroom observation carried out by principals (or other instructional leaders). Six in 10 survey respondents reported that they

Figure 1

### Principals' Prior Experience with Site Management

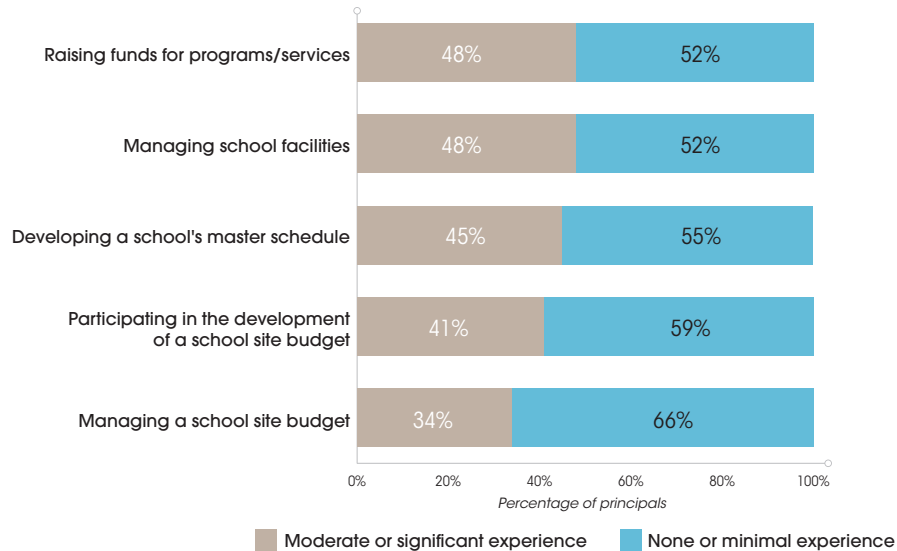


Figure 2

## Principals' Prior Experience with Instructional Leadership

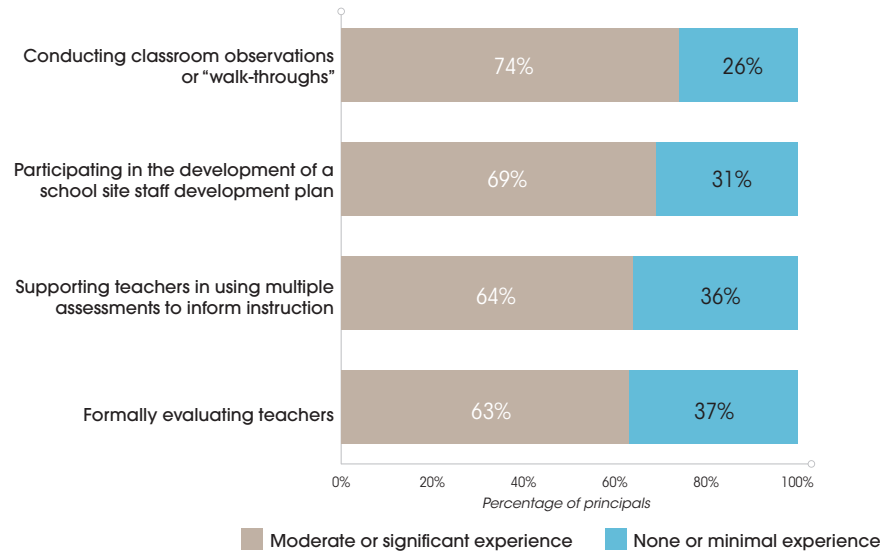
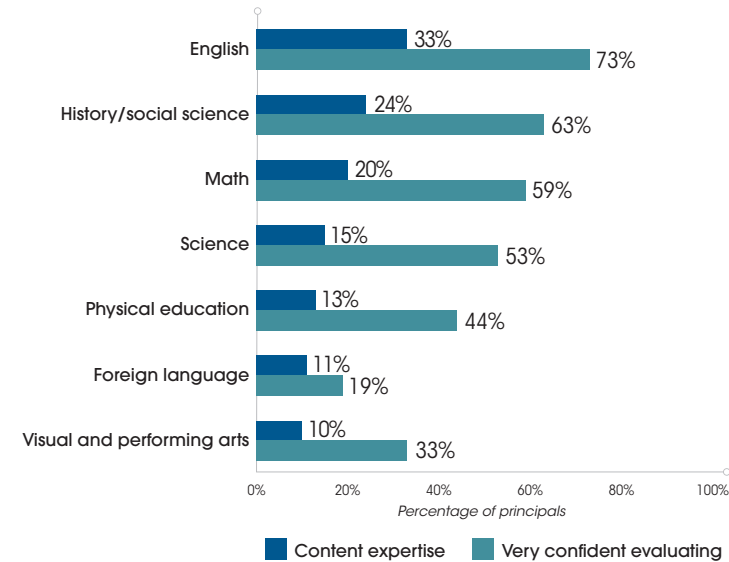


Figure 3

## Principals' Content Expertise and Confidence in Evaluating Teachers' Content Expertise



always review student results on state tests when evaluating teachers; this suggests that 40 percent of principals do not typically consider state test results in teacher evaluation, in spite of state law requiring them to do so.

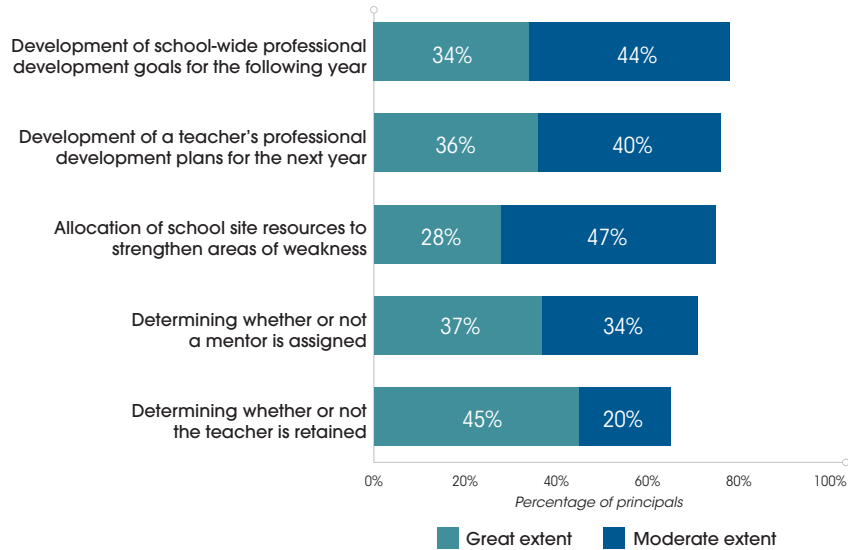
Asked about their experience with conducting classroom observations to see teachers in action, nearly three quarters of responding

principals reported having had moderate or significant experience conducting such observations. While having such experience may be better than not having any, experience alone does not necessarily translate into effective observation or evaluation. Once on the job, only about a third of principals reported that they received professional development to any great extent in either evaluation or in how to conduct classroom observations.

Nonetheless, many principals expressed confidence in their ability to evaluate their teachers — even when they did not have expertise in the subject matter being taught by a teacher. *See Figure 3.* Our interviews with teachers indicate, however, that teachers wish they could receive feedback and support from content experts that would help them to improve their practice.

Figure 4

### Extent to Which Formal Performance Evaluations Inform Activities to Improve Teaching Quality

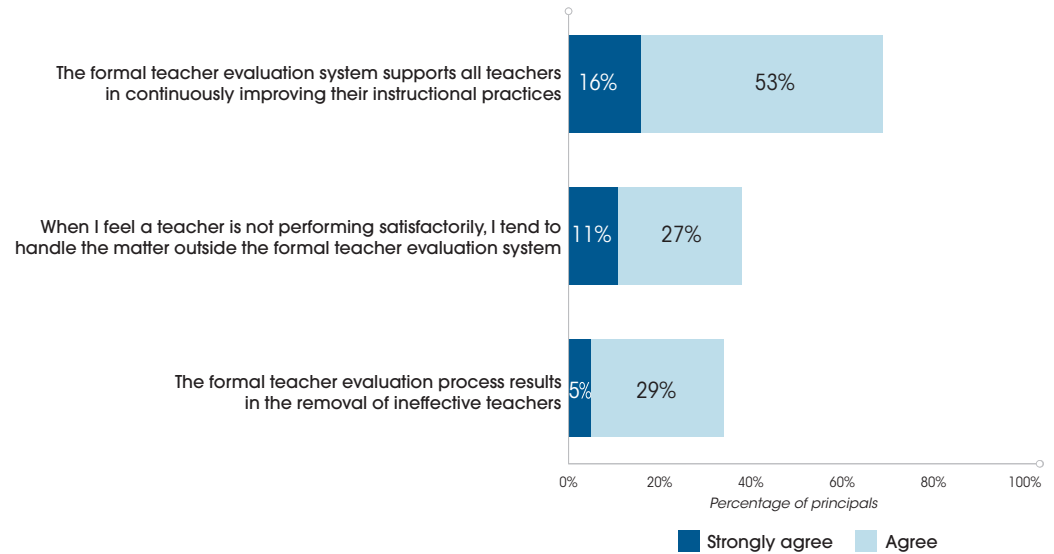


Survey results make it clear that California principals want more time to evaluate their teachers and would like additional training in order to become more effective evaluators. It's also clear that many do not find their current approach to evaluation to be useful. Only about a third of respondents reported using results of such evaluations to inform to a great extent either teachers' professional

development plans or schoolwide professional development goals. *See Figure 4.*<sup>5</sup> Just under half reported that teacher evaluation results inform to a great extent whether or not a teacher is retained. Nearly 2 in 5 principals reported that, when a teacher is not performing satisfactorily, they tend to handle the matter outside of the formal teacher evaluation system. *See Figure 5.*

Figure 5

### Principals' Perspectives on the Use of Formal Evaluations



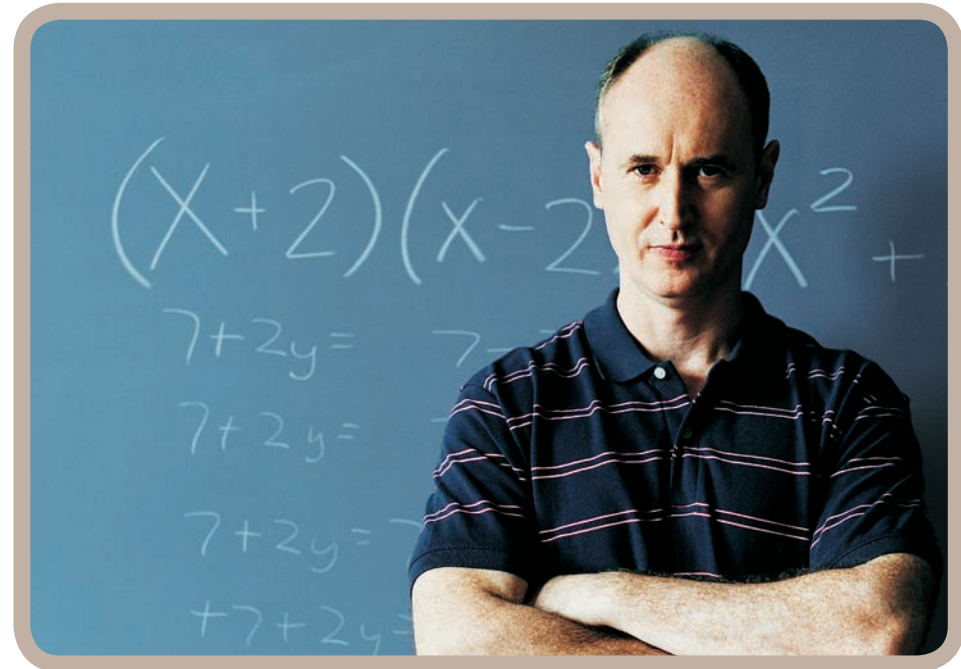
When asked about perceived barriers to improving teaching quality, nearly half the principals identified the influence of teacher seniority on staffing decisions as a "serious barrier"; nearly three quarters also identified as a serious barrier cumbersome procedures to remove a teacher who has been identified as unsatisfactory.

<sup>5</sup> Percentages in Figures 4 and 5 do not add up to 100% because not all response choices are shown.

## THE CALIFORNIA TEACHER IN 2011

The state's teacher workforce is shrinking. Given the amount of press about budget-driven reductions in teaching positions, it shouldn't be surprising to learn that there has also been a large drop in the number of prospective teachers being trained in the state's colleges and universities. Enrollment in both private and public teacher preparation programs declined by over 50 percent between 2001-02 and 2009-10, dropping from 77,700 to 36,600. In addition, the state has been issuing far fewer credentials to new teachers. In the 6 years from 2003-04 to 2009-10, the number of new credentials issued declined by over 40 percent, dropping from 27,150 to 16,150. At the same time, the number of California's educators who are retiring each year has been steadily climbing, from 8,700 in 2000-01 to 15,500 in 2009-10.

If California principals are relatively new to their respective role, the teachers with whom they work are not. The number of novice teachers — that is, first or second year teachers — was very high a decade ago and has shrunk significantly since, dropping from nearly 46,000 to just over 18,000 in 2009-10. This is largely related to budget constraints since, in almost all California school districts, teachers with the least experience are the first to be laid off. Our research reveals that 80 percent of



teachers now working have more than 5 years of experience in the profession, and more than 50 percent have more than a decade of experience.

# THE DATA GAP

While other large states, such as Florida, Texas and Illinois, are establishing sophisticated state-level data systems that give policymakers clarity about the status of their pool of prospective and existing teachers, California has recently reversed course on its commitment to the California Longitudinal Teacher Integrated Data Education System (CALTIDES). Under development since 2006, CALTIDES was intended to add information about teacher credentialing to the state's existing teacher-related information in order to better understand and, thus, to strengthen the teaching force. For state policymakers, eliminating CALTIDES is a bit like turning off the instruments on an airplane while flying through fog. Without a comprehensive data system that includes the data that would have been housed in CALTIDES, we are left with a fragmented system that does not facilitate easy access to information crucial for making informed decisions and evaluating the impact of

many state-sponsored reform efforts. CALTIDES, coupled with the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS), was intended to be a robust system of teacher and student data designed to provide a clearer picture of teaching and learning in California.

It shouldn't simply be a game of chance as to whether students get a good teacher, particularly a game in which the odds increase only with family income. Schooling in California happens locally but the state is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all students, regardless of their zip code, get an excellent education. Yet, for years our reports have examined the data showing that California's poorest children — the ones arguably in need of the best teachers — routinely get those teachers who are least prepared.

Now, in the absence of CALTIDES, there is a lack of solid teacher workforce data at the state level, making it hard to know whether or not California is making progress in more equitably distributing teachers. Although local districts may be able to examine their own data with a lens on equity, the state appears to have lost the capacity to look closely at this important issue.

Schooling in California happens locally but the state is ultimately responsible for ensuring that all students, regardless of their zip code, get an excellent education.

## CONCLUSION

Today's teachers make up the most experienced teacher workforce California has seen in at least a decade. In their work, many are encountering increased class sizes, reduced instructional days, and fewer resources to pay for materials and equipment. In addition, they and their students receive less general support outside the classroom than in the past, with fewer counselors, instructional aides, librarians, secretaries, and custodians at their schools. Finally, with less teacher development funding available from the state, and with districts able to be more flexible in how they deploy what teacher development funds they *do* have, many teachers are not receiving the professional development that could help them improve or refine their practice.

While teaching conditions have become more challenging, the expectations for what this workforce will achieve are higher than ever. They must prepare their students for a rapidly changing and

increasingly knowledge-based economy. These teachers must also become prepared themselves to teach to the new Common Core State Standards and aligned assessments. Principals have a key role to play in providing — or ensuring that these veteran educators receive — targeted professional development and strategic support that builds on their extensive classroom experience.

Yet principals and teachers alike report a wide range of impediments to improving teaching quality, including substantial deficiencies in the current system of teacher development, support, and evaluation. Among these is the amount of

time — or lack thereof — available for principals to conduct formative classroom observations so as to understand how a teacher is doing and what he or she might need in order to become more effective and to develop improvement strategies. If California is serious about implementing a meaningful evaluation system that supports teachers in improving their practice throughout the year,



policymakers must acknowledge that principals need additional time to attend to that responsibility. With the typical principal already working a 60-hour week, it would be difficult for principals to work even more hours to fulfill this expectation. This means that additional administrative supports are needed for our schools — just the opposite of what’s currently happening with support positions being eliminated due to the budget crisis.

A focus on principals is critical, because studies show that the influence of the principal on student learning and achievement is second only to that of the classroom teacher.<sup>6</sup> And, like their classroom counterparts, today’s principals are expected to simultaneously manage a tremendous number and range of responsibilities. California’s principals, most of them relatively new to their role, have only limited experience in many of the management and budgeting responsibilities that consume much of their time — time that is also needed to more directly support teaching and learning. Student achievement and school quality

are influenced by the principal’s ability to promote and participate in teacher learning and development, as well as to plan, coordinate, and evaluate teaching and the school’s instructional program. Today’s principals have more to do, fewer people to help, and higher stakes with which to contend.

At the same time, the systems in place to prepare, support, develop and evaluate school principals themselves are sorely lacking.

Finally, as the state examines its policy priorities for addressing programs and supports to ensure that California has a highly effective and well supported principal and teacher workforce, it must make data collection and analysis a priority. While CALPADS is a critical statewide data system, important data gaps remain that, if closed, would allow state and local policymakers to address education equity, would enable more consistent program evaluation, and would ensure greater transparency about how the state’s education system is performing. Among the important

Today’s principals have more to do, fewer people to help, and higher stakes with which to contend.

information gaps, for example, are data necessary to fully understand, and thus be able to address, the issues of preparation, development, and turnover in the principal workforce.

<sup>6</sup> The research addresses “in-school” influences on student achievement.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered as strategies to support teachers, principals, and policymakers to improve education outcomes for all students, particularly as the state and local districts prepare for delivery of the Common Core State Standards:

- *Reinvent evaluation and support for **teachers** to focus on student learning, with the goal of improving both teaching and learning.* Evaluation should be conducted by well trained principals or designees, and it should be formative in nature with the aim of assisting teachers to refine their instructional practice throughout the year. The process should be a means of identifying teachers' strengths and challenges, and developing strategies for continuously strengthening teaching practice. To ensure that evaluation systems meet these objectives, principals and teachers must be provided with adequate time. A reinvented evaluation system must also include streamlined procedures for removing the small percentage of teachers

who continue to be identified as ineffective despite ongoing feedback and support.

- *Reinvent evaluation and support for **principals** to focus on improved teaching and learning, as well as improvement of their own practice.* Such evaluation systems, which should not be "one size fits all," would include multiple measures of quality leadership to reflect the complexity of their role and would be based on research findings about effective leadership, organizations, and personnel evaluation. Evaluation tools should be reliable and valid, and evaluation systems should be based on established standards of administrative practice as well as on objective and measurable performance goals for principals. Among the types of support that could help principals become more effective, for example, is formal mentoring from more experienced and highly effective school leaders.



- *Support both **principals and teachers** in transitioning to the newly adopted Common Core State Standards.* This can be done by making available locally or regionally designed and delivered professional development based on the Common Core State Standards. As the state introduces assessments aligned to these new standards, instructional materials aligned to the Common Core State Standards must also



be made available to districts. Local school districts and boards should begin working toward the transition now by offering teachers time to receive the guidance, support, and development necessary to adapt their practice to the new standards and to make adjustments to instruction as necessary. Districts should periodically review data on the impact of changes in practice that would enable them to make mid-course corrections to the implementation plan as appropriate.

- *Ensure that California has a trustworthy and easily accessible data system for teacher and principal information.* State policymakers must take the necessary steps, amending statutes governing CALPADS as necessary, to facilitate sharing of existing teacher workforce data between the California Department of Education and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing and to expand data collection to include information on principals as well. These actions should be designed, at a minimum, to ensure that both local and state decision-makers have the information they need to anticipate and address principal and teacher turnover, out-of-field teaching, and potential shortages in the teacher and principal workforce.

# ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This summary report and its companion materials are available for download on our website, [www.cftl.org](http://www.cftl.org). For information on purchasing print copies from the Center, please email [info@cftl.org](mailto:info@cftl.org). Discounts are available for bulk orders of single publications. The Center is pleased to have other organizations and individuals share its materials with their constituents. To request permission to excerpt part of this publication, either in print or electronically, please contact us.





[www.cftl.org](http://www.cftl.org)