ONE SYSTEM:

Reforming Education to Serve ALL Students

Report of California's Statewide Task Force on Special Education

MARCH 2015

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**Report of California's Statewide
Task Force on Special Education**

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Dr. Fred Weintraub initially co-chaired the

California Statewide Task Force on Special Education.

This report is dedicated to his memory.

August 28, 1942–May 2, 2014

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THE TASK FORCE

In 2013, a team of educational leaders proposed to a group of private foundations the formation of a task force to study why students with disabilities were realizing poor school and postsecondary outcomes, identify the barriers to better performance, and make recommendations for how to change the state's system of schooling so it would better serve all students. One underlying belief the founding members of this group shared was that all students would be better served through a system that was unified in effort and coherent in vision. A second belief was that improving part of how we educate students improves education for all.

The genesis for this Task Force began with the efforts of Michael Kirst, President of the State Board of Education, and Linda Darling Hammond, Chairwoman of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Their vision was to bring together representative California leaders who had the knowledge, experience, and foresight to grapple with current, relevant issues and determine concrete ways to change systems and improve school results for children with disabilities.

These efforts and the generous support of the Charles and Helen Schwab Foundation, the Stuart Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the Dirk and Charlene Kabcenell Foundation, led to the formation of a Statewide Task Force on Special Education. Made up of representatives from key stakeholder groups—parents, general and special education educators, higher education professors, nonpublic schools/agencies, and charter schools as well as liaisons from the State Board of Education, the California Department of Education, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, the Legislative Analyst Office, the Department of Finance, and California state legislative staff—this Task Force was charged to study exactly why special education is not more successful and what must be changed in both policy and practice to improve services for all children identified under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as having a disability.

This Task Force held six hearings around the state, heard from more than 200 witnesses, spent dozens of hours deliberating, received more than 500 communications, and met six additional times as a full group to formulate this report.

The state of California is indebted to the specific organizations and people listed on the previous pages for their countless hours of work, their tireless dedication to children, their belief in the absolute importance of education, and their commitment to helping the schools in this state realize excellent results for all students.

Table of Contents

Public education in this country is its own version of Lady Liberty, beckoning all children to enter schools and to learn. But children enter classrooms not simply as children; they are individuals who come from varying backgrounds and bring with them diversely different experiences. Some are English Language Learners. Some come from poverty. Some have histories of abuse, neglect, or trauma. Some are foster or adopted youth. Many come from language-rich environments, with countless experiences of books, print, and technology, while others come from environments where books are rare and language is infrequent. And then some students are incarcerated. These differences require schools to serve students differently, in ways that align resources, supports, and services to the learning needs of each individual who is so uniquely shaped by those many different kinds of backgrounds and experiences.

When a child who is also a child with a disability comes to school, that child often requires additional supports and services of specially designed instruction, behavioral supports, mental health supports, language supports, etc. The key word here is "additional." A student who is an English language learner and is identified as a student with a disability needs supports in English language development and special education. The child with a disability who is in foster care needs social-emotional and behavioral supports and special education services. Children who come from impoverished homes with little experience of language and books need opportunities to develop their literacy skills and early intervening services to prevent them from being referred to special education for a learning disability.

The state's new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) was designed to ensure that students actually do receive all necessary and appropriate supports and services. The LCFF accomplishes this by providing more funding for students with the greatest needs, specifically English language learners, low-income students, and foster youth. The LCFF works by aligning local budgets and resource allocations with local goals and state priorities to improve student outcomes. By requiring each school district, county office of education (COE), and charter school to adopt a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), the LCFF also links transparency and accountability directly to the local budgeting process. As they team the fiscal and instructional planning processes at the local level and require stakeholder engagement, LCFF and LCAP are intended to ensure more cooperative and comprehensive discussions about how to improve outcomes for all students.

But separate instructional services, accountability patterns, and reporting requirements still exist for special education in California. This separation contributes to a special education system that is "siloed" in much of its implementation and less effective than it could be. Far too many children and youth with disabilities in California are not acquiring the skills they will need to secure stable employment when they become adults, succeed in postsecondary education, and live independently.

The Law

The federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act, Public Law 94-142 passed in 1975, became one of the most dynamic pieces of legislation in the history of the country. The

One Coherent, Integrated System for All

Imagine enhancing throughout California the potential of more than one million citizens, whose educational accomplishments, contribution to the common welfare, and capacity as productive, thriving adults had never before been fully supported or realized. Imagine the boost to the economy and to civic engagement, not to mention the increased happiness in the lives of these many people.

Students with disabilities represent this cohort. Currently our schools are not successfully educating them. But we can change this.

Now imagine a girl named Amelia who enters kindergarten without any preschool experience. Both of her parents work multiple jobs to provide for her and her brothers, but they have few extra resources and little extra time. So at six years old Amelia knows very little of books or the alphabet. She feels lost on her first day of school, where pictures of letters abound and books are everywhere.

The first thing Amelia's kindergarten teacher does is assess all of his students to determine their academic and social-emotional strengths and needs. Through this process he discovers why Amelia feels lost and spends the first few months of school helping her develop pre- and early-literacy skills. Because he quickly identifies the source of Amelia's struggle and immediately gives her the help she needs—and because before children turn ten they readily recover ground in most learning deficits when they're given appropriate supports—by midyear Amelia has caught up to her peers. She learns to love reading and school. She ends up graduating from high school with her class and is the first person in her family to earn a college degree.

Imagine what might have happened if Amelia's teacher had not assessed her skills—and identified the true source of her deficits. Imagine how

Amelia's frustrations would have grown if her teacher assumed she knew what she didn't, or if her teacher didn't know how to help her catch up. In that situation, most of us would either withdraw or act out. So since Amelia is like the rest of us, she ends up with both a behavioral problem and a reading problem. By third grade she's labeled a failed reader, is doing poorly in school, and ends up assessed for a disability, eventually being given a "specific learning disability" label. She never likes school, never catches up, and drops out as soon as she can.

Apply that second lens to James, a boy with cerebral palsy, whose significant, multiple disabilities have left him unable to use his limbs or speak, but whose mind is sharp and ability to learn high. Under our current system, James—who is difficult to assess and often unable to express what he knows and wants—is taught by a special education teacher who is separately credentialed to teach only students with significant disabilities. James is placed in a "special day class," where instruction is provided to him and other students from many different grade levels and with many different kinds of disabilities, most affecting cognitive function. James ends up not having access to grade-level content standards and instruction. Further, because James does not have much (if any) interaction with his peers in general education classrooms, he can't benefit from the interesting questions, discussions, and challenging discourse that most students experience and that are an important part of schooling.

Our classrooms are replete with similar narratives that reflect systemic dysfunction. And while the scenarios above are somewhat simplistic, in broad strokes they suggest two things: our schools and classrooms need to be designed to support all students; and too often they do an inadequate job of educating the students who don't fit a common mold.

initial iteration of this law required states, school districts, and charter schools to provide services to students with disabilities. Five years prior, schools in the United States were educating only one in five children with disabilities, and many states had laws that excluded from school those who were deaf, blind, emotionally disturbed, or mentally challenged.[1] More than 200,000 people with mental disabilities who had not been taught how to live independently were warehoused under the grimmest of conditions in state institutions, many of which offered only "minimal food, clothing, and shelter."[2] Children with learning disabilities were usually allowed to attend school, but they typically were not assessed to identify or support their specific needs. In order to arrange even minimal services for their children, parents in many states often had to file lawsuits and assert their rights under the Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.[3] Indeed, it was parents and their advocates who created much of the political will for the 1975 law and for the continuing changes and improvements that are reflected in its subsequent reauthorizations.

Later reauthorized and re-titled the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the law promises that children and their parents are welcomed into the hallways and classrooms of every public school and that their needs will be met by expert teachers and other highly trained personnel. To the greatest extent possible, these services are to be provided to students alongside their nondisabled peers; with additional help in place, students with disabilities are expected to meet the same academic standards.

A great deal of progress has been made since the law went into effect. Students are no longer turned away from schools or warehoused;

their needs are documented in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs); specially trained teachers and other staff members address students' unique learning needs; students are regularly assessed, and their progress is monitored. Should a school district or a state fail to meet the letter of the law, parents have a right to fair hearings and adjudication.

Despite this progress, mechanisms for delivering special education supports in California are severely hampered by inadequate services prior to kindergarten, financing that often does not meet the needs of students and that is unequally provided throughout the state, short-sighted teacher preparation and licensing practices, chronically lowered expectations for many students with disabilities, and a failure within schools and classrooms to consistently use the very evidence-based practices that are being used successfully in other parts of the country. The facts reveal the results:

- Approximately 60 percent of California's students with disabilities graduate from high school, compared to a 78 percent graduation rate for students without Individualized Education Programs.

- The 2013 test results for English and language arts on the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) showed that, among third graders with disabilities, only 26 percent were proficient or advanced. The California Modified Assessment registered similar results: only 27 percent of students scored at proficient or advanced levels on this test. Among all California students in the same grade, 45 percent were proficient or advanced.[4]

- In 2011–12 only about 40 percent of students with disabilities (SWDs) passed the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) as tenth graders, compared to 87 percent of students without disabilities.

1 "History: 25 Years of Progress in Educating Children with Disabilities Through IDEA." U.S. Office of Special Education Programs. U.S. Department of Education. 2000. Accessible at http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/leg/idea/history.pdf
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.

4 See STAR results at http://star.cde.ca.gov/star2013/index.aspx

For the class of 2012, only 56 percent of SWDs had passed the CAHSEE by the end of twelfth grade, compared to 95 percent of students without disabilities.

- Data from the California Department of Education (2012) lists the dropout rate for students with disabilities as 15.5 percent, while the dropout rate for all students is 11.4 percent.[5] However, this number may underestimate the number of SWDs who fail to graduate because they often transfer to alternative schools or GED programs (and thus are not counted as dropping out), but then fail to graduate. We also know that there is a severe overrepresentation of students with disabilities among California's high school dropouts and among incarcerated youth.

- Of students who were tracked in CDE's Annual Performance Report for 2012–13, 32.8 percent of the students with disabilities were enrolled in higher education programs; the goal was for 50 percent to enroll. The report also noted that 41.3 percent of students with disabilities were enrolled in higher education or competitive employment, while the goal was for 65 percent to meet either criterion. However, even these numbers may reflect more optimism than reality. Most states lack an educational data system that tracks students once they leave high school, so it is nearly impossible to know what higher education choices most students make.

- However, we do know that the achievement levels of students with disabilities in California are among the lowest in all of the 50 states.[6] (See appendix A.)

Especially alarming is the fact that students with disabilities experience fewer employment opportunities and decreased lifetime earnings compared to their peers without disabilities. Yet the majority of students with disabilities do not have intellectual disabilities and thus should be achieving the same high standards as their general education peers—as long as they're receiving appropriate services and supports. And we're finding that those who do have intellectual disabilities can achieve at much higher rates than we had previously realized—as long as they're given appropriate services and supports.

The statistics above point to a clear need for improvement in both the schools and the organizations that guide them. However, one need look no further than the prison system to be convinced of the real human cost of the system's failures. Some researchers have found that upwards of 70 percent of juveniles who are arrested had been identified as needing special education services.[7] This would mean the vast majority of adults in the burgeoning prison system were at one time students with disabilities.

Instead of opening a door to a brighter future, special education for many students is a dead end. Once identified as needing special services, particularly for learning disabilities, students rarely catch up to their peers. Those who do not require separate settings in order to succeed end up spending most of their instructional time apart from general education settings, where the instruction is often academically richer and the social interactions more reflective of the world that students will inhabit as adults. Special education too often becomes a place students go, rather than a set of supports to help students succeed.

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5 California Department of Education (2014). Cohort outcome data for the class of 2012–2013: Statewide results. Retrieved from http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/cohortrates/CRByProgram.aspx?cds=00000000000000&TheYear=2012-13&Agg=T&Topic=Dropouts&RC=State&SubGroup=Ethnic/Racial

6 Blume, H. (June 24, 2014). California ranks poorly in services to disabled students. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-calif-rank-special-ed-20140624-story.html

7 The National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice. Special Education in correctional facilities. Retrieved from http://www.edjj.org/Publications/pub05_01_00.html

Table 1: Current Year - Graduation Rate Results

Groups	2012 Cohort Graduation Rate (class of 2010-11)	2013 Cohort Graduation Rate (class of 2011-12)	2013 Target Graduation Rate	2013 Graduation Rate Criteria Met	2014 Target Graduation Rate (Class of 2012-13)	Exclusion / Alternative Method
Statewide	77.14	78.87	78.54	Yes	80.45	
Black or African American	62.84	65.98	66.72	No	69.98	
American Indian or Alaska Native	68.49	72.36	71.56	Yes	75.30	
Asian	90.34	91.06	89.25	Yes	89.37	
Filipino	89.86	90.75	88.02	Yes	88.35	
Hispanic or Latino	71.40	73.70	73.56	Yes	76.30	
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	74.89	76.97	76.75	Yes	78.96	
White	85.65	86.60	85.14	Yes	85.95	
Two or More Races	81.85	83.96	83.01	Yes	84.96	
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	71.07	73.04	73.54	Yes	75.87	5Y
English Learners	61.46	62.04	64.79	Yes	66.70	5Y
Students with Disabilities	59.52	61.13	63.87	Yes	65.94	5Y

Graduation Rate Criteria: (1) met or exceeded the goal of 90%, or (2) met the fixed target graduation rate, or (3) met the variable target graduation rate. Fixed and variable target graduation rates are calculated for local educational agencies and schools that have not reached the 90% goal.

Source: CDE DataQuest

The Challenge

For decades, parents, educators, and policymakers have worked to identify the barriers to success for students with disabilities and to find ways to improve the system. In 1990, California developed a Strategic Plan for special education. The Special Education Division of the California Department of Education has highlighted the issues articulated in that plan and has since suggested additional solutions. So far, however, school results for students with disabilities continue to fall well below the national average.

These disappointing outcomes are not the result of any lack of desire or commitment. Professionals at every level work hard to help students with disabilities learn and prepare for adulthood. But California's system of education is its own country: huge and complicated. The challenge is not that we don't know what to do to fix it. Effective, research-based practices have been identified and promulgated for years. The most difficult challenge is always knowing where and how to begin, particularly when the complex system that needs changing contains multiple parts and players, disparate divisions that operate under no single governing force, ostensible sanctions that have no teeth, and often competing requirements and agendas.

For students who are blind or who are deaf, California's special schools provide exemplary learning environments.[8] And pockets of excellence also exist in other schools and in districts throughout the state; in fact, students with disabilities in some of these schools are realizing unprecedented success.[9] But excellence and the possibility of success should be available to all. The desire to see that excellence in every school is what fomented a creative discontent that led to this report.

The Task Force

The California Statewide Special Education Task Force was formed in 2013 to study the causes of the state's poor outcomes for students with disabilities—infants, toddlers, preschoolers,

and students in the kindergarten-through-high-school system, from birth to age 22, all served in California under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Made up of a group of representative stakeholders, the group was charged with studying exactly why special education is not more successful and what must be changed in both policy and practice to improve services for all children.

Much of what is presented here will seem familiar to most educators. Many of the issues discussed were described 25 years ago in that 1990 Strategic Plan and continue to be promoted by the Special Education Division. However, the Task Force hopes that this report will provide a thoughtful, motivational beacon and not be just one more document that people acknowledge as generally accurate but that sits on shelves and effects no lasting change.

The group has reason for optimism. This report has grown out of the work of dedicated parents and seasoned professionals who, through the generosity of the sponsors, have had the advantage and luxury of stepping temporarily out of the difficult and demanding day-to-day hard work of teaching and administering to imagine how to reform the state's approach to serving children with disabilities. The underlying charge of this task force was to shape "a comprehensive and lasting picture." Providing even more solid ground for this optimism are the new and transformational initiatives that the state is now in various stages of implementing. For all students and all schools, California has adopted the Common Core State Standards, new assessments aligned with those standards, new approaches to school discipline, a new system of financing public education, and a mechanism that allows parents and taxpayers to see how public dollars are being spent to serve the needs of all children. All of these changes are designed to improve the achievement of all students, increase high school graduation rates,

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8   Decisions about the most appropriate settings must take into account where students can be best served. "The demand for a continuation of special schools is based on the facts that appropriate services for low-incidence populations such as blind and deaf students are unavailable in many regular classrooms, and that, for deaf children, adequate language and psychological development and cultural and socialization opportunities can only be found in special schools." National Council on Disability. Report to the President and Congress of the United States. Retrieved from http://www.ncd.gov/publications/1989/September1989

9   Huberman, M. & Parrish, T. (2011). Lessons from California district showing unusually strong academic performance for students in special education. California Comprehensive Center. Retrieved from http://calstat.org/ISES/pdf/lessons_from_ca_districts_strong_spec_ed_academic_performance.pdf

and ensure that more of the state's high school graduates are prepared for the demands of college, career, and adult community life.

A Better Approach

This Task Force envisions general education and special education working together seamlessly as one system that is designed to address the needs of all students—as soon as those needs are apparent. Within that system, students with disabilities receive effective services, learn in classrooms that are guided by rigorous standards alongside their general education peers when appropriate, and are equipped to make their own way as adults. Within this coherent system, services for children with disabilities are provided from the time they are born through preschool and until they graduate with a high school diploma or reach the age of 22; they are devised and implemented by well-prepared general education and special education teachers who work in collaboration.

High-quality, integrated services may be provided in either mainstream or specialized settings, depending on what most effectively meets students' needs. For example, some very effective programs, particularly for students with low-incidence disabilities, operate in separate settings, which must also be of the highest quality in a unified system. California's Statewide Task Force on Special Education embraces the value and importance of highly specialized programs for students with low-incidence disabilities; these programs are often in separate settings and are shown to have efficacy.[10]

The purpose of this report is to examine the larger system.[11] Since the 1990 Strategic Plan, we have known that our schools are not as efficacious as they could be for the majority of students: students with disabilities whose least restrictive environment is the general education classroom and who could achieve rigorous standards if provided appropriate services and supports and all students who find themselves struggling but who never receive the help that "catches them before they fall."[12]

The intent of this report is to identify specifically what is getting in the way of the vision described above and to outline how to realize it, with recommendations for both policy and practice.

What Does This Mean?

In a coherent system of education, all children and students with disabilities are considered general education students first; and all educators, regardless of which students they are assigned to serve, have a collective responsibility to see that all children receive the education and the supports they need to maximize their development and potential, allowing them to participate meaningfully in the nation's economy and democracy.

The vision:

* From birth to age 22, all children are regularly assessed for developmental and school progress and provided early intervention supports and services at the first sign of a problem or struggle.

* All teachers and administrators, both general and special education, know how to work together in a seamless and

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10 However, a full continuum of services and placement options must be maintained for every student. "The process for determining the educational placement for children with low-incidence disabilities (including children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind) is the same process used for determining the educational placement for all children with disabilities. That is, each child's educational placement must be determined on an individual case-by-case basis depending on each child's unique educational needs and circumstances, rather than by the child's category of disability." Comments and discussion to 2006 IDEA Part B Regulations, 71 Fed. Reg. 46586 (2006). Retrieved from http://idea.ed.gov/download/finalregulations.html

11 "Pupils with low-incidence disabilities, as a group, make up less than 1 percent of the total statewide enrollment for kindergarten through grade 12." Retrieved from http://www.csus.edu/indiv/b/brocks/Courses/EDS%20247/1.%20legal_ethical%20issues/CA%20Low%20Incidence%20Rules.pdf
12 Torgeson, J. K. (Spring/Summer 1998). Catch them before they fall: Identification and assessment to prevent reading failure in young children. *American Educator*. Retrieved from http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/torgesen.pdf

coordinated instructional system to ensure that only evidence-based practices are used with all children, and that all children receive an appropriate, rigorous, standards-based curriculum.

- Families are valued and are treated as an integral part of both general and special education efforts and are considered their children's first and most important teachers.

- Special education funding from local, state, and federal sources supports integrated services and appropriate opportunities for students with disabilities to learn alongside their general education peers, when appropriate; this funding is adequate for serving students' needs, regardless of how severely affected they are by their disabilities.

- Class size and caseloads are carefully regulated and monitored so that teachers and other educators can effectively implement this coherent system with fidelity.

Were these elements in place, students who struggle to compute or read, such as those with dyscalculia or dyslexia, would receive specialized help as soon as they need it. These children's difficulties would be identified in preschool or even before. Research has shown for years that, with appropriate supports, they may well catch up with their peers by the time they enter kindergarten.[13,14]

Kindergarten and elementary school teachers would have at their fingertips numerous, research-supported approaches to targeting specific needs. The child who continues to

struggle would receive more intensive levels of support. If that didn't work, then teachers would use other, more concentrated and targeted approaches, closely monitoring the results and using data to decide what else might be done.

Special education teachers hold a critical place in this system, selecting, designing, and delivering appropriate early intervening services and, when it becomes apparent that extra, scaffolded and targeted supports are not producing the desired effect, providing the additional special education services that only a teacher trained specifically for this role can provide. Even then, most children would spend as much time as possible with their classmates in their general education classrooms.

Central to a coherent system is the development of a culture of collaboration and coordination across the numerous educational and service agencies that influence how children are educated.

Special Education and General Education: The Nexus

Many of the changes recommended and implied in this vision require general education initiatives. And this report comes from a special education task force. But from its inception, federal disabilities law envisioned special education as a set of special supports and services integral to and seamlessly coordinated with general education. The Task Force believes that this vision has been sidetracked and that the resulting division—with general education and special education viewed as separate entities—represents one of the two primary reasons special education in this state has not been more effective. The Task Force is convinced that significant barriers to school success for students with disabilities have grown out of this unfortunate evolution of two separate "educations." Expectations and services for students, teacher preparation and credentialing, and funding are compromised as a result.

13 *The Washington Post.* (February 3, 2015). Study: High-quality early childhood education could reduce costs. Retrieved from http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/study-high-quality-early-education-could-reduce-costs/2015/02/03/b714bcee-ab6f-11e4-abe8-e1ef60ca26de_story.html
14 Shaywitz, S. E., & Shaywitz, B. (March 2004). Reading disability and the brain. *Educational Leadership, 61*(6), pp. 6–11. Retrieved from http://educationalleader.com/subtopicintro/read/ASCD/ASCD_323_1.pdf

The second but perhaps the primary reason for the existing failure of our school system to adequately educate all students is the dearth and inadequate implementation of early intervening services. Research shows that well-timed and well-executed early intervention reduces the number of students with learning disabilities—by far the largest cohort in the special education ranks—and improves school outcomes for everyone.[15] Those students who benefit from separate and specialized settings, in particular students who are deaf, especially benefit from early intervening services.[16]

However, regardless of the challenge or disability, without a robust and coordinated system of early intervention, many students are deprived of the chance to realize their full potential. Without this system, schools are saddled with burdensome costs for services, which, once children become adults, are then handed on to society at large, contributing to state and national spending on public assistance, social service, and incarceration. Early intervention—in learning, in behavior, in physical challenges—has been proven time and again to provide exponential return on that first investment.

This Report

This task force sees the challenge of effectively educating students with disabilities as existing within seven distinct—though deeply interconnected—parts of the educational system in California:

- Early Learning
- Evidence-based School and Classroom Practices
- Educator Preparation and Professional Learning
- Assessment
- Accountability
- Family and Student Engagement
- Special Education Financing

If early intervening and coordinated services were provided in preschool and early education; if schools were designed around evidence-based practices that reflected a commitment to early intervention and that were coordinated and coherent at every level; if teacher preparation and ongoing professional learning opportunities were structured in direct alignment with that coordinated system; if accountability for all students were expected and required; if a rigorous and adaptive system of assessment were in place; if parents were included and supported in every aspect of that system and students given full and appropriate voice; and if financing were seamlessly coordinated and designed with the knowledge that strategically provided services cost a fraction of what ends up being needed when those services are not provided, then California would have more than a school system to be proud of. This golden state would possess the key that "unlock[s] the golden door of freedom."[17]

(Readers will find the full Task Force report along with more extensive subcommittee reports at http://www.smcoe.org/about-smcoe/statewide-special-education-task-force/.*)*

15   U.S. Department of Education. (1999). Start early, finish strong: How to help every child become a reader. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/pubs/startearly/index.html

16   Hearing "is critical for the development of speech, language, communication skills, and learning. The earlier hearing loss occurs in a child's life, the more serious the effect on the child's development. Similarly, the earlier the hearing loss is identified and intervention begun, the more likely it is that any delays in speech and language development will be diminished. Recent research indicates that children identified with hearing loss who begin services before 6 months old develop language (spoken or signed) on a par with their hearing peers." American Speech/Language/Hearing Association. Retrieved from http://www.asha.org/public/hearing/Early-Intervention-for-Children-with-Hearing-Loss/

17 George Washington Carver.

Context

Research has confirmed that very young children who attend high-quality care and education programs realize important gains in language and in social-emotional and cognitive development. Children who experience these programs are also more likely to graduate from high school, attend college, and be employed as adults. Researchers have calculated that the long-term economic benefit to society of high-quality preschool ranges from $4 to $10 for every $1 spent.[18]

The political climate in California is attempting to respond to these facts. In 2014 Governor Jerry Brown signed legislation declaring that "quality early learning and care for children from infancy to five years of age is a sound and strategic investment to narrow achievement gaps," which often exist even before kindergarten. This legislation expressed the "intent of the state to ensure a fair start to all low-income children by providing quality preschool opportunities" for all families who want their children to attend. The legislation also registered the state's intent to provide low-income four-year-olds from working families with "full-day, full-year early education and care."[19] Specifically, the legislation funded more slots, or spaces, for these children to attend a state preschool in the 2014–15 school year, initiating a process of gradually increasing the capacity of these programs to serve the students most in need of support and most likely to realize significant benefit, both for

themselves and for society at large. Governor Brown has continued this focus on expanding state preschool programs by recommending the addition of approximately 4,000 more places for children in full-day and full-year services for the 2015–2016 fiscal year.

These high-quality care and education programs help children learn more than the alphabet and numbers. They also learn social skills and self-control, both of which reduce the behavioral problems that can later lead to referrals to special education. In fact, many potential disabilities, previously undetected disabilities, and mental health issues can be identified, prevented, corrected, or resolved in these programs through early intervening services when those services are provided at very early ages. These early efforts end up precluding the need for more intensive—and expensive—services and lifelong interventions and supports.

Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities

Early care and education is particularly important for children with disabilities. When developmental delays are recognized and addressed at the youngest possible age, many delays can be significantly ameliorated. Because of that known benefit, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires these very services, which are simply good investments. Queens College economist Clive R. Belfield estimates that children who receive high-quality care and education before kindergarten are 40 percent to 60 percent less likely to need special education interventions when they reach school age. According to Belfield, the cost of special education for the State of Pennsylvania would decline by 12 percent if it implemented a

18 Temple, J. A., & Reynolds, A. J. (2007). Benefits and costs of investments in preschool education: Evidence from the child–parent centers and related programs. *Economics of Education Review, 26* (1): 126-144.
19 Senate Bill 858 of 2014. Education Finance Omnibus Trailer Bill. Section 1 (a), (b) and (c). Retrieved from http://leginfo.legislature. ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140SB858

universal preschool program, and by 8 percent if the program was limited to low-income children.[20] And when these children become adults, they can look forward to more lucrative employment options, increased social-emotional stability, and a significantly decreased likelihood of finding themselves caught up in the criminal justice system.

In requiring states to "identify, evaluate and meet the needs of all children" with the potential for disabilities, Congress (through IDEA) recognized "the significant brain development that occurs during a child's first 3 years of life."[21] There is strong evidence that well-timed and high-quality early intervention programs can, in fact, correct neurologically based issues by taking advantage of the neuroplasticity of developing brains. For example, a recent study of the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) for autism found improvements in IQ, language, and adaptive and social behaviors among the young children in the program. Using functional MRI imaging, the researchers found that, after these interventions, the children developed normal patterns of brain activity.[22]

The Challenges

There are different sections, or parts, in IDEA that address different aspects of the developmental and educational needs of individuals with disabilities. Part C of the law focuses on infants and toddlers. To fulfill the law's mandate for the early identification and support of children with disabilities, Part C provides states with

20 Belfield, C. R. (2005). The cost savings to special education from pre-schooling in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania Build Initiative. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED517008.pdf
21 Ibid.

22 Dawson, G., et al. (January 1, 2010). Randomized, controlled trial of an intervention for toddlers with autism: The Early Start Denver Model. *Pediatrics, 125* (1), pp. 17–23. doi:10.1542/peds.2009-0958

federal grants to help them "develop and implement a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary, interagency system that provides early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families." The law also grants infants and toddlers with vision, hearing, and severe orthopedic impairments (or a combination of these disabilities) the right to receive individually designed early intervention services, usually in their homes.

The lead agency in California for many of these services is the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). Through a program called Early Start, DDS contracts with 21 regional centers to administer and coordinate services for eligible infants and toddlers who have a developmental delay, a disability, or an established risk. Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) also receive state funding for these services, which are then provided through school districts and County Offices of Education. There is often a lack of coordination among these agencies, which frequently leaves families confused and without needed services.

But in California the system does not exist as envisioned. There are widespread disparities in the availability of these programs throughout the state because of differences in funding structures and differences in priorities among Regional Centers. The reality is that geography dictates access: if you don't live in the right place, you're out of luck.

Preschool

As with older children, most 3- to 5-year-olds with disabilities learn best when they attend preschools alongside their age-mates without disabilities to the greatest extent possible. These settings provide both language and behavioral models that assist in children's development and help all children learn to be productively engaged with diverse peers. However, relatively few children are able to attend preschool in such integrated settings. Currently, only one in five preschool-aged children with identified disabilities is enrolled in such settings.[23]

When they reach the age of 3, children with disabilities become eligible for necessary and appropriate services under Part B of IDEA. The responsibility for providing these services for 3- and 4-year-old children with disabilities is placed with local education agencies (LEAs). Some children with disabilities attend publicly funded preschools, at no charge to the family. Others attend Head Start, which sets aside 10 percent of its seats for them. The parents of these children may also seek services from state-funded preschools.

But, as with infant and toddler care, general education preschools are not available in every part of the state. And the state does not currently require these programs to set aside any of their seats for children with disabilities. The result is that, in many areas of the state, students with disabilities are only offered more restrictive, isolated, and costly program settings. By not being educated with their nondisabled peers, these children often fail to attain the skills they need to succeed in school, and the schools incur a greater expense because of the additional services these students will require.

Further compromising the picture, only 8 to 10 percent of the 3- and 4-year-olds in the state who are eligible to attend Head Start or state-funded preschools are able to do so. Lack of capacity deprives the remaining 90 percent of access.[24] Some may attend private preschools at a family's or an LEA's expense, but too many go without a preschool experience—and suffer the consequences of entering kindergarten unprepared for school and not ready to learn.

23 As reflected in Indicator 6 on California's Annual Performance Report for 2011–2012.
24 California Childcare Resource and Referral Network. (2013). Portfolio. Retrieved from http://www.rrnetwork.org/2013_portfolio

Funding

Funds for providing important intervening services for infants and toddlers are bifurcated. Some services come through DDS, some through SELPAs. The funds in both are inadequate in most regions for meeting the state's obligations. Adding to the compromised picture, monies are allocated through an antiquated formula that dates back to 1977, when SELPAs did not all offer the same level of service. Since then, population patterns have changed significantly, the inequities that existed back then continue, and new patterns of inequity have emerged. As a result, financial disparities across the state in some cases have been exacerbated, seriously hampering efforts to provide services to our most vulnerable infants and toddlers.

Transition

The transition children make from infant and toddler care under Part C of the IDEA law to preschool, which is funded through Part B of IDEA, represents another significant challenge. Currently the law is written so that, upon the child's third birthday, local education agencies (LEAs) become responsible for providing disability services, thus requiring children to move from one setting and one provider to another exactly at the age of 3—without any consideration of the natural breaks in a school year or how that transition will disrupt the family. This transition also often includes changes in providers, leading to potential confusion about agency eligibility provisions and responsibilities. Any change of schooling venue also risks developmental regression for the child as well as gaps in or loss of records and knowledge among educators and service providers.

Standards

California currently has no universally adopted set of common standards for infant/toddler services or preschools across programs in the state. Standards are important because they

hold providers accountable. Without them, any accountability efforts to ensure student growth and outcomes are ineffectual. This lack of adopted and required standards is also creating confusion in Part C of IDEA services and in aspects of the annual performance measures for services for children ages 3 and up under Part B of IDEA.

In 2008 the California Department of Education did select developmental standards for preschools and infant and toddler programs that the state could use for this purpose. The California Preschool Learning Foundations and the Infant and Toddler Learning and Development Foundations[25] outline the key developmental skills that most children can acquire when they are exposed to interactions, instruction, and environments that research has shown to promote early learning and development. These guidelines are excellent and have been used as models in other states. Yet the early child care and education entities in California do not operate under any single auspice. The licensing requirements for staff, the standards for care and for learning, and the requirements for facilities vary widely; they operate under various funding streams and different monitoring systems. As described earlier, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) serves as a lead agency for infant toddler programs through contracts with the regional center. DDS does not require its providers to use the state's preschool learning foundations.

Assessments

There are mixed reports on the currently mandated assessments required by the state (the Desired Results Developmental Profile DRDP–Access) which some indicate do not inform instruction in real time, either because they were not introduced to the field in that manner, are cumbersome in allowing teachers

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25 These foundations are at www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/psfoundations. asp

to access the essential, daily information they need, or both. Presently some teachers are not using the DRDP Access assessment in its current form to inform families of present developmental levels or to inform instruction in order to realize better student outcomes. The current use of the DRDP Access is mainly functioning as part of a compliance-only system.

Assessments serve several important purposes for young children: to inform instruction, provide insights for improving outcomes, and to provide parents with information on their children's progress. As we move into the new Results Driven Accountability framework, the lack of standards and measures designed to both inform instruction in real time and to accurately monitor student/child growth will become a more pronounced issue that must be addressed.

Early Educator Preparation

The quality of the training and preparation of early childhood educators in California varies greatly and so too the quality of services provided and child outcomes realized. In 2011, the California Department of Education, in collaboration with First 5[26], drew up the California Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Competencies to establish what teachers should be expected to know. The competencies are aligned with the Infant, Toddler, and Preschool Learning Foundations and represent a consensus in the field.

These competencies, or program standards, were approved by the state Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) on Early Intervention Overview of the Department of Developmental Services, an advisory body required by IDEA. The ICC recommended that the program standards be used by all of the providers who are approved as vendors by the Regional Center and who work under the auspices of local education

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26 First 5 California was created by voters under Proposition 10 in 1998 to recognize children's health and education as a top priority, especially in the early years of development.

agencies. Currently, however, the DDS' position is that these standards are a resource only; they are not required in hiring, licensing, or training personnel. It is worth noting that the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing issues a special education early childhood education credential as well as the child development permit, which subsidized preschool programs operating under Title 5 require. But this only further illustrates the picture of an early childhood system replete with inconsistent standards and discrepant requirements. Until there is a single set of competencies required of all new and current early childhood educators, the quality of services across the state is going to be uneven and inequitable.

Recommendations

The availability of quality services and places in high-quality preschools and care settings for toddlers should not depend on geography. And given the return of these services on the dollar, the state cannot afford **not** to provide them. Indeed, federal Medicaid law requires states to provide them; yet in many parts of California they are not available. In recognition of the importance of coordinated, early intervention to children's futures, to their families, and to the fiscal health of the state's schools, California should ensure that all students, but especially those with disabilities, have access to high-quality infant and toddler programs and preschools, including the diagnostic and intervention services described. In support of that vision, the state needs policy change to ensure the following:

- Improved access to and coordination of high-quality early care and preschool for all students, but particularly for children with disabilities, children who grow up in poverty, and children who are dual language learners, with the access not dependent upon geography or service provider

- An increase in the funding formulas to provide equitable financial support for high-quality early care and education and to support equity in access throughout the state

- Clearly articulated and family-friendly protocols for transition between Part C and Part B services

- Program standards that all providers must use and that reflect evidence-based, developmentally appropriate practice

- Common assessments that are based on common standards, inform instruction in

real time, accurately monitor student/child growth, and are educator-friendly

- Clear, specific competencies that are part of all early childhood educator preparation programs and that are part of required professional development training and technical assistance for educators already in the field

The full subcommittee report for the recommendations on early learning can be found at http://www.smcoe.org/about-smcoe/statewide-special-education-task-force/.

Untapped Resources

One example of comprehensive, high-quality early childhood programming exists in Apple Valley, California, at the Desert/Mountain Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). Here children from birth to age 5 are eligible for as many as 60 days of diagnosis and intervention from a special clinic. Their medical needs and the effect of these needs on their cognitive development, language development, behavior and sensory-motor functions are assessed. Depending on the diagnosis, these children receive early intervening services and may receive ongoing special education services. Desert/Mountain SELPA Administrator Ron Powell reports:

"Recognizing that Desert/Mountain staff were not addressing the need early enough, ten years ago we started a program [SART—Screening, Assessment, Referral, and Treatment] to serve children from birth to 5 years of age. This Screening, Assessment, Referral, and Treatment team receives referrals from schools, doctors, and the community for children who have significant mental health and behavioral problems as a result of prenatal exposure to alcohol or substances of abuse or who have been subjected to toxic levels of stress and abuse. SART is patterned after the successful clinic started by Dr. Ira Chasnoff in Chicago. By addressing the significant needs of this young population early, we have witnessed extraordinary success.

"The SART program serves more than 800 children each year. However, in spite of this success, there was still a population of children that required a higher intensity of service than we were able to provide through the SART program. Recognizing this need and convinced that early intervention would reduce the need for more intensive intervention later on, the SELPA Board granted permission to establish an intensive assessment program for children under the age of 5 who have severe behaviors, developmental delays, or who otherwise might fall on the autism spectrum. This is an intensive 10-week program that follows a medical model patterned after the partial-hospitalization program at UCLA. The program, called "CARE," provides a 10-week period of intensive services to address behavioral, social-emotional, sensory, language, and developmental deficits in a four-hour-per-day, developmentally appropriate preschool environment. As a medical model, the program is run as an

intensive assessment period, in which staff utilize research-proven interventions to determine "what works" for the child. The results have been amazing. For example, children with expressive language at the fifth percentile leave the program at age-level [ability]; children with such severe behaviors that the parents have had to remove all of the furniture in their home have left the program (after 10 weeks) ready for regular kindergarten. Today, after four years of operation, more than 160 children have graduated from the program, which is now totally funded outside of Prop 98 education dollars and outside of AB 114. About one third of these children enter regular kindergarten with no need for special education services."

The San Bernardino County Behavioral Services Department contracts with the Desert/Mountain SELPA to provide these services. This makes the clinic eligible to receive Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) funding for evaluations through Medi-Cal. It is important to recognize that with this eligibility comes the full responsibility to serve as a medical provider of services.

All Medi-Cal enrollees are entitled to this care, but providing it requires a partnership with a provider funded through county mental health. Under the State Medi-Cal Plan, county governments EPSDT funding and the responsibility for all specialized mental healthcare services, including assessments, comes from a waiver to the state's managed care plan, under the direction of the state Department of Health Care Services. This responsibility is known as a "freedom of choice" waiver, which created a single managed care entity in each county to provide specialized mental health care for Medi-Cal beneficiaries statewide.

Policymakers need to work with state (Department of Health Care Services) and county mental health authorities to ensure that all Medi-Cal students receive Early Periodic Screening and Diagnostic Treatment (EPSDT) Services, including mental health and transdisciplinary assessments, as an incentive for schools, districts, and county offices of education to intervene early and provide targeted services to children most vulnerable to school failure—those children who have been exposed to trauma and who are stressed daily by impoverishment. This intervention (EPSDT) and these services require relationships between districts and county mental health departments. Once in place, these programs would offset the costs of any eligible service that is both medically and educationally necessary for students who are dually eligible under Medicaid and IDEA entitlement programs.

An effective system of education starts with the ultimate goal in mind: that all students will realize their full potential and become productive citizens who contribute to their own well-being and that of their communities. Within this system, every education-related decision—about hiring, training, curriculum, instruction, purchasing, assessment, and budgeting—is made in the interest of achieving this goal. This system is designed with democracy and coherence as its first principles.

Context

Within this system, every student receives research-proven instruction that is delivered in environments and through curricula, instructional methods, materials, and assessments that are evidence-based and universally accessible to nearly everyone—with disabilities and without—with little or no need for additional accommodations.[27] Because in this design only a very few students need special accommodations, schools benefit from significant savings in effort, remediation requirements, and money.

Within this system, teachers are well versed in proactive, inclusive instructional planning as well as in proven instructional and intervention strategies and techniques, including assistive technology, so that no student suffers because of ineffective instruction. Data about each student, classroom, and school in this system is closely tracked. Teachers know how to use that data to shape their teaching and to make decisions about supports and strategies. When the data

show that students are struggling, the students receive the help they need as soon as they need it. The entire system is aligned so that the teacher is able to respond immediately to a learning need with appropriate interventions.

Within this system, general education and special education teachers and support staff work together toward the same goal. School districts and local education agencies (LEAs) adjust schedules and carve out time for these teachers to collaborate so that general education classrooms are designed to support the vast majority of students. When students need more help than the general education teacher can provide, the special education teacher steps forward with the expertise to design and deliver targeted intervention strategies, accommodations, and supports.

Within this system, behavior is treated as a topic for study. Every student learns clear, positive rules for how to behave appropriately. When a student forgets the rules, every adult in the system clearly, positively, and consistently reinforces them through a graduated system of supports and consequences that are directly reflective of the degree of behavioral challenge.

Families are central to this system. Teachers and administrators welcome and actively seek the insights of parents and other family members about how their children learn. Families receive frequent reports on how their children are progressing and how their needs are being addressed. Parents and other family members work with educators to construct useful strategies for home and school so that each place reinforces the other.

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27 Sopko, K. M. (2008). Universal design for learning: Implementation in six local education agencies. Project Forum: NASDSE. Retrieved from http://nasdse.org/DesktopModules/DNNspot-Store/ProductFiles/110_b8ff526e-f4b5-4b77-b081-3068c665cbee.pdf

This system is a learning system: educators are flexible and adept at continually modifying their approach. If an intervention—such as counseling, tutoring, or a curriculum modification—is not effective, a team of trained educators determines a new set of tactics. Even when they find that a strategy is effective, they know that students are constantly changing and growing, and what works today may not work tomorrow or may simply no longer be needed.

The good news is that a few school districts and charter schools in California (as well as in other states and internationally) already operate this way. The leaders in these places have recognized that they needed a new approach—a coherent approach—in order to significantly improve the effectiveness of general and special education and to best serve most students, and that they needed to implement this approach across the entire enterprise. As a result of the system they have developed, these organizations have fewer students identified as needing special education services, in great part because the students receive targeted help early in their struggle. In these organizations, the students who do have disabilities are more likely to become proficient in reading and mathematics; and they are more likely to graduate from high school.[28]

The Challenge

Separate Systems

A structural, institutional, philosophical, and habitual divide currently exists in California between general and special education, even

28 Coherence Framework. (n.d.). Harvard. Retrieved from http://pelp.fas.harvard.edu/book/coherence-framework

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Research: Academically Strong California Districts for Students in Special Education

In 2010, researchers from the American Institutes for Research analyzed the academic performance of California students with disabilities and discovered that some districts were far more successful than others. They identified eight California school districts in which the academic performance of students with disabilities was unusually strong over a period of four years and looked in depth at four of them to identify policies and practices that contributed to their relative success.[a]

Here is what they found:

- All four districts were committed to including students with disabilities in general education classrooms and ensuring access to the content in the core curriculum.

- All four stressed collaboration between general education and special education teachers.

- Three districts practiced continuous assessment and the use of Response to Intervention (RtI) strategies to address students' needs and monitor their progress.

- Three districts provided targeted professional learning opportunities for their teachers and administrators.

- Two districts utilized explicit direct instruction teaching methods.

Across all California districts, there was great variation in the percentage of students with disabilities meeting proficiency targets in English language arts, suggesting that inclusion works only if it is done well and only if students receive the supports they need to succeed.

[a]Huberman, M., Navo, M., & Parrish, T. (September, 2011). Academically strong districts for students in special education. California Comprehensive Center at WestEd. Retrieved from http://www.calstat.org/ISES/pdf/lessons_from_ca_districts_strong_spec_ed_academic_performance.pdf

though special education has always been defined as a part of general education. This divide obstructs the state's ability to create the effective, coordinated, coherent system of education described above.

Task Force members are in agreement that special education cannot be "fixed" on its own. Special education can only succeed when it is part of a strong general education system, so that for all students there is one educational program, one curriculum, one set of standards and expectations, and one system of accountability.

Universal design for learning (UDL) establishes both the philosophical and practical foundation for this unified approach that serves all students. UDL is a set of principles—a blueprint—for curriculum and instruction that guide and create instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that support learning and access for everyone. UDL creates a context for success for every student within a core, general education curriculum and classroom.

A multitiered system of supports (MTSS) offers the practical structure for realizing this vision. MTSS is a whole-school, data-driven, prevention-based framework for improving learning outcomes for every student through a layered continuum (typically three tiers) of evidence-based practices that increases in intensity, focus, and target to a degree that is commensurate with the needs of the student. Other states, most notably Florida and Kansas, have developed MTSS statewide and have been successful in improving the school results for all students while decreasing special education enrollments and expenditures.

Response to Intervention (RtI) is also a tiered or graduated approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. Operating at the student level, RtI is a part of MTSS and echoes the tenets of MTSS in structure. The RtI process begins with

high-quality instruction and screens all children in the general education classroom, then provides supports that specifically target the needs of those students who continue to struggle at the "universal" or "first" level of instruction.

Neither MTSS nor RtI are prescriptive. They are certainly not programs. They both are research-proved data-driven approaches to ensuring the most efficient and effective use of all school resources and teacher effort; more importantly, they ensure that no children are "left behind" because their struggles went unnoticed and their needs unmet.

But both MTSS and RtI belong fundamentally in general education, and California's two disparate "educations" have yet to come together to realize this unified system, despite its proven benefits for students, its proven track record of teacher satisfaction and instructional success as well as parental satisfaction because their children are succeeding in school, and its proven cost savings to schools, districts, and states.

There have been efforts. In California, the CDE convened a work group and developed guidelines on the state's variation of RtI: "Response to Instruction and Intervention," or RtI[2]. The State Improvement Grant (SIG) was used in an effort to provide training and technical assistance to schools that were working to implement an RtI model. In IDEA there is another federally recommended approach to identifying learning disabilities: a process that involves charting "patterns of strength and weakness" (PSW). The State Board of Education amended its Title 5 regulations in 2013 to include both RtI and PSW as options for assessing whether or not students had a specific learning disability. However, MTSS and RtI belong, by definition, in general education and can only succeed when general and special education engage in close and ongoing collaboration toward the same end. Because California has tended to operate separate

Long Beach Unified School District: Using RtI[2] Effectively in High Schools

Dr. Judy Elliott states that response to instruction and intervention (RtI[2]) is "neither a fad nor a program, but rather the practice of using data to match instruction and intervention to changing student needs."[b]

She goes on to say, "This approach is not about placing the problems within the student, but rather examining the student's response to instruction and/or intervention. In essence, RtI expands the practice of looking at students' risk of learning and behavioral failure beyond the student and takes into consideration a host of factors. Effective implementation of RtI requires leadership, collaborative planning and implementation by professionals across the education system.

"RtI as a framework or model should be applied to decisions for general, remedial and special education, creating a well-integrated system of instruction and intervention guided by student performance data that is close to the classroom."

Elliott demonstrated the efficacy of her beliefs during her tenure in Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), where she had the vision, the leadership, and the follow-through to implement RtI[2] in high schools.

LBUSD was a district with more than 93,000 students. Demographics included 49.7 percent Hispanic, 18.3 percent Black, 16.7 percent White, 9.3 percent Asian, 3.5 percent Filipino, and 2.1 percent Pacific Islander. English language learners comprised more than 25 percent of the population, and 65.9 percent of the students received free and reduced lunch. Special education represented only 7.7 percent of the overall student population as compared to more than 11 percent statewide, and of these 7,700 students with disabilities, 60 percent received special education services through resource specialist programs.

- The RtI[2] approach applied was a tiered approach to literacy instruction. More than 80 percent of students received all their literacy instruction as part of the general curriculum with specific intent and focus on improved literacy skills.

- Strategic interventions were provided to approximately 8 percent of all students and were targeted interventions focused on those students who needed core instruction plus more assistance.

- The most intense and individualized interventions are used only for the smallest group of students with the greatest needs, less than 6 percent of all students.

- Interventions included *Language*!, Lindamood-Bell, Literacy Workshop, and English Language Development Levels I–IV.

- Progress was monitored over multiple years, with students needing intervention showing a growth of more than 100 API points over 3 years.

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[b]Elliott, J. (September 2008). Response to intervention: What and why. *The School Administrator, 8* (65), 11–18. Retrieved from http://www.scred.k12.mn.us/UserFiles/Servers/Server_3022443/File/rtl%20center/breakout%20sessions/Rtl%20Final.pdf

systems, the SIG and SBE undertakings were led by special education staff, with general education missing from the discussion.

Early Intervention

Early intervention does not just mean "early childhood." As it represents the supports provided to a child of any age at the first sign of a problem—either learning or behavioral—prompt early intervention is important at every level of schooling to address everything from preliteracy deficits in kindergarten to calculus disconnects in high school. If teachers don't provide support as soon as a problem emerges, struggling students typically fall further and further behind; and the larger the learning gap becomes, the more unlikely students are to realize school success. The seminal and widely cited research of Snow, Burns, and Griffin[29, 30] posits that any child who is not reading proficiently by third grade is not likely to graduate from high school. Yet too many schools in the state lack the coordinated and integrated structures (MTSS) for gathering and using student performance data to inform instruction and intervention (RtI)—essentially the very things that students need if they are to overcome their challenges—whether they're learning or behavioral—and go on to learn, graduate, and fully enter adult life.

Built-in checks—in every curriculum, in every system of assessments, and every classroom practice—that ensure children are learning and keeping up with the requisite skills and knowledge for advancing, whether it be to the next activity, chapter, or grade—are essential to school success and are central features of an integrated educational system where every instructional skill and resource is placed at the service of learning.

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29 National Reading Council. (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Ed., C. Snow, S. Burns, & Pl Griffin. Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
30 Dykstra, S. (2013). The impact of scientifically-based reading instruction on different groups and different levesl of performance. *Educational Philosophy, 3.*

Diversity

Diversity is a good thing. It is woven deeply into the fabric of what defined this country from its inception, and it provides communities with a range of talents and perspectives. The presence of diversity in our schools helps children learn to value individuality while promoting respect for others. Yet diversity also represents challenges for schools, especially in a bifurcated system.

Data from 2012–2013 show California with a student population of more than 6 million students, 11.16 percent of whom are identified as students with disabilities. That 11.16 percent represents nearly 700,000 students, 27.8 percent of whom are also English language learners. As a result, California uniquely faces the combined challenge of differentiating instruction, implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), goal writing, and supporting the language development of a significant number of special education students. And research on the CCSS and special education points to significant inequities in the instruction and materials for students with disabilities who are also students of color, and/or English Language Learners, along with commensurate inequities in the professional learning supports for the teachers who are charged with educating these students.

Multiple needs in an individual student contribute to the challenges schools face when their systems are not integrated and coherent. Children with a disability who are also English language learners (ELLs) become caught between systems because there is not enough support for both intensive language and special education services. Ultimately, this dilemma forces an IEP team to make a "Sophie's choice": in which area will a student receive support, and in which area not? Either option promises poor outcomes for the student.

Too often in schools English Language Development and special education services are not aligned. Special educators address issues of disability; general education staff address issues of language, either within a general education setting or through pull-out services. The teachers providing ELD instruction to the child too often are not involved in the IEP conversation. As the child continues to need both language supports and services under IDEA, the IEP team is forced to determine if the language acquisition struggles are related to the disability. This decision is often made without examining the child's background, experience of learning, and language acquisition.

The Common Core State Standards add to this already complicated picture. Without the early alignment of systems for students who are learning English and who have a disability, IEP teams will find it increasingly difficult to design a program that supports the best interest of the child. There are simply too many disparate parts that don't "talk" to each other.

California's Local Control Funding Formula is a good first step in creating a culture of cross-program collaboration. While the LCFF does not direct the use of special education dollars, it is making it possible for school districts to blend funds from other categorical sources, including ELL funds. It remains to be seen how the separate special education dollars fit into this picture and, more importantly, how students who have disabilities and other needs will be served.

The Discrepancy Model and Disproportionality

Our schools most commonly determine a student's need for special education services—essentially, give students a label—through a long-standing, problematic practice: waiting for documented failure (the "severe discrepancy" model[31]) before providing services. A corollary

problem is the disproportionate number of children who are students of color or English language learners and who are identified as having learning and/or emotional disabilities because sources for the problem other than disability (the degree of cultural competence among school staff, for example, or trauma at home) are not considered and explored.

One intent of the most recent reauthorization of IDEA was to provide an alternative means of identifying students with learning disabilities. This provision was prompted by the emergence of inconsistent identification patterns of learning disabilities across states—in some less than 3 percent of students were identified with learning disabilities (LD); in others, nearly 10 percent were identified. Representatives from state education agencies concluded that "too many students are being classified as LD, including too many minority students; students are often classified as LD so that services can be provided even though they do not have a genuine disability; the use of ability-achievement discrepancy method of determining Specific Learning Disability (SLD) often causes harm because identification is delayed to later ages."[32]

In many instances, the universal provision of best instruction followed by prompt and focused intervention at the first indication that a student is struggling can prevent academic and behavioral difficulties from developing in the first place—and thus reduce the number of students who are identified as having learning disabilities. This "universal provision" is RtI.

While the RtI processes and the "patterns of strengths and weaknesses" offer important alternatives to the "discrepancy model" in identifying students for special education services and to the practice of misidentifying students (resulting in disproportional

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31 The discrepancy model assesses whether a substantial difference, or discrepancy, exists between a student's scores on an individualized test of general intelligence (i.e., an IQ test) and his or her scores obtained for one or more areas of academic achievement.

32 Coriella, C. (2010). "Discrepancy" approach results in inconsistent LD identification rates across states. *Great Schools*. Retrieved from http://www.greatschools.org/special-education/LD-ADHD/865-discrepancy-approach.gs

From the Massachusetts Disproportionality Study

Figure 3: Likelihood that Student is Found Eligible for Special Education

Legend: African American, Hispanic, White, Asian

y-axis: # of times more/less likely | ff less likely | more likely gg (1.4, 1.2, 1, 0.8, 0.6, 0.4, 0.2, 0)

x-axis: 2006, 2007, 2008
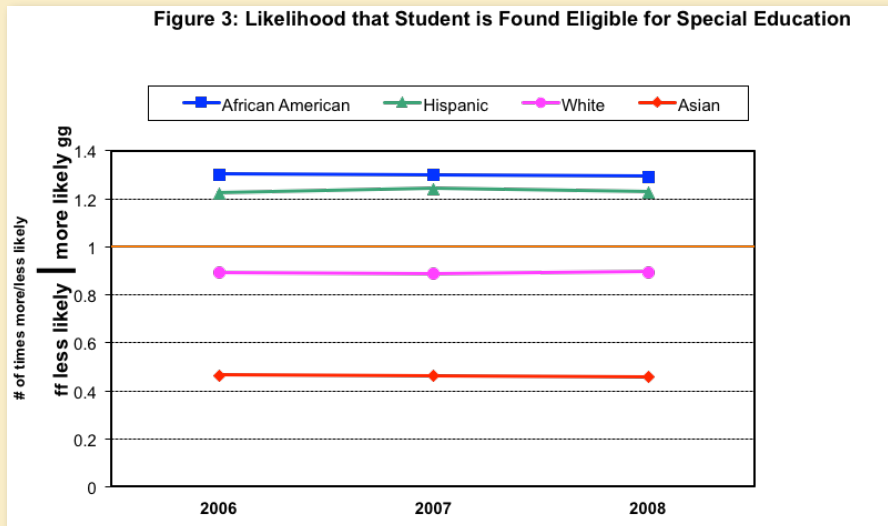
If all of these lines were around 1.0, it would mean that students from one racial or ethnic group were just as likely as those from all other groups to be found eligible for special education. The evidence taken from figures 1 through 3 indicates that African American and Hispanic students are overrepresented in special education, white students are slightly under-represented, and Asian students are substantially under-represented in special education.

Figure 5: Likelihood of Placement for Special Education Students, 2007-2008 School Year

Legend: African American, Hispanic, White, Asian

y-axis: # of times more/less likely | ff less likely | more likely gg (2.5, 2, 1.5, 1, 0.5, 0)

x-axis: Full Inclusion (>80% in classroom), Partial Inclusion (40%-80% in classroom), Substantially Separate (<40% in classroom), Fully Separate
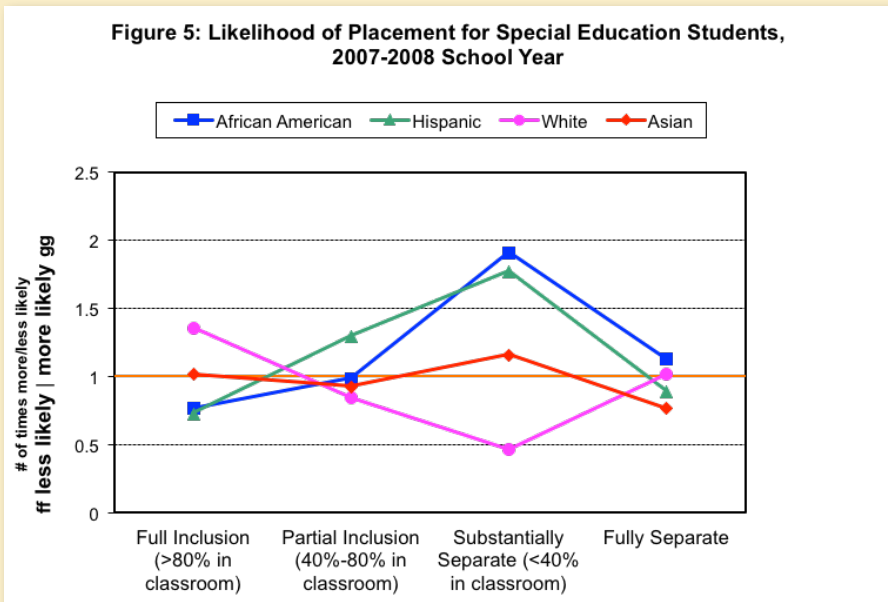
White students receiving special education are approximately 1.4 times more likely to be placed in a full inclusion setting than all other students. However, as the setting becomes more restrictive, their likelihood of being placed in those settings diminishes. A white student is half as likely as any other student to be placed in a substantially separate setting, while African American and Hispanic students are almost twice as likely as whites to be placed in substantially separate settings. The message from this graph is clear: African American and Hispanic students with disabilities more often receive special education services in settings outside of the general education classroom, away from their nondisabled peers, especially in substantially separate classrooms; and at higher rates than their white peers. If the purpose of special education is to assist a student to ameliorate the perceived negative effects of the disability so that the student can perform as well as he or she is able in the general curriculum, then we would expect that bringing special education services to the classroom would be the most beneficial method of service delivery. Yet, African American and Hispanic special education students are less present in general education classrooms than we would expect.

representation of certain student groups), RtI and PSW have not been systematically promulgated in California; and rigorous trainings and follow-up support on RtI and "patterns of strengths and weaknesses" do not exist. This has resulted in serious misunderstandings about what RtI and PSW actually mean and in the continuing failure of many schools to provide appropriate services and supports to students.

Socio-Emotional Learning and Supports

Many students come to school not knowing how to behave for any one of a number of reasons: they never had the experience of preschool, so they don't know how schools "work"; they suffer from childhood trauma, which can alter normal behavioral response patterns and even permanently change brain structures[33]; or they simply find themselves in a cultural disconnect between their own community and that of the school. Yet studies point to behavior and social skills—such as getting along "in diverse workplaces" and being able to develop "collaborative relationships"—as essential to ensuring employment.[34] MTSS again shows itself to be a proven vehicle for providing appropriate degrees of social-emotional learning, all of which are geared toward the specific needs of a child, with universal positive behavioral supports (such as PBIS, Restorative Practices, and other programs identified through the Collaboration for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, CASEL) for all students and allowing for tiered interventions for students who struggle behaviorally.[35]

Students with disabilities are often disenfranchised because many teachers are not able to provide inclusive, accessible instruction. UDL becomes a critical locus of inclusion for these students. Through UDL, which offers instruction with a variety of modes of input (e.g., written, graphic, oral, tactile), levels of text, and ways to convey learning, students are more likely to become engaged and able to respond to and make sense of the instruction that is provided, in part because they are allowed multiple ways to demonstrate their understanding. In sum, they feel more interested in and connected socially and emotionally to the educational system.

The consequences of student misbehavior are significant. Even in-school suspensions, a common consequence for persistent misbehavior, can significantly decrease instructional time for a student[36] and, as importantly, socialization time. Since students with disabilities are far more likely to be suspended than their nondisabled peers, these students are being denied important access to the very education they need to be more successful in and out of school. A tiered system of positive behavioral support remedies this unfortunate outcome because it systemically and systematically addresses student misbehavior at the first sign of problems through consistent school-wide responses, often preventing small problems from becoming large ones. In fact, one study conducted in 37 elementary schools to examine the impact of tiered positive behavioral intervention for its efficacy indicated that those schools that "implemented the model with high fidelity . . . experienced significant reductions in student suspensions and office discipline referrals."[37]

The Civil Rights Project reported additional causes for concern about patterns of suspensions

33 The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (n.d.). How is early childhood trauma unique? Retrieved from http://www.nctsn.org/content/how-early-childhood-trauma-unique
34 Partnership for 21st Century Skills. (2008). 21st Century Education and Competitiveness. Retrieved from http://www.p21.org/storage/documents/21st_century_skills_education_and_competitiveness_guide.pdf
35 Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. www.casel.org

36 The Office of Civil Rights noted that more than 400,000 students were suspended out-of-school at least one time during the 2009–2010 school year, representing a staggering loss of instructional hours.
37 Bradshaw, C., Mitchell, M. & Lead, P. (2010). Examining the effects of schoolwide positive behavioral interventions and supports on student outcomes: Results from a randomized controlled effectiveness trial in elementary schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 12*(3), 133–148.

in schools that had no clear systems of social and emotional learning and supports. The project reviewed out-of–school suspensions in 1999 and again in the 2009–2010 school year[38]; and the Council of State Government from Texas tracked every middle school student in that state for six years to study out-of-school suspensions. These reports revealed alarming inconsistencies in what led to these suspensions, especially when factors of race, gender, and disability were identified. These inconsistencies point to the power of the very unstable "judgment call" among staff, which ends up negatively influencing the future of a child. One student gets suspended for swearing; another doesn't. One student gets suspended for pushing a classmate; another doesn't.

California is currently paying increased attention to school discipline policies—"zero-tolerance" policies in particular—because of the high rates of suspension and expulsions the state has

seen during the past few years and the degree to which the patterns of disproportionality affect students of color."[39] New discipline policy guidance from the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice set forth provisions that schools are required under law to consider whether their student discipline policies are drafted and implemented fairly and consistently and whether they may have a "disparate impact" on certain student groups. "Higher rates of suspensions and expulsions among certain student groups cannot be explained away by assuming higher rates of misbehavior among those students," U. S. Attorney General Eric Holder and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said.[40]

The most alarming related statistics suggest that suspensions and expulsions meted from within a punitive school disciplinary policy create

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38 See Recent School Discipline Research at the Civil Rights Project: http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/school-discipline

39 Cohen, B. (November 26, 2014). New networks offers guidance on school discipline. *EdWeek*. Retrieved from http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/road-trips-in-education/2014/11/CA-network-school-discipline.html
40 Blad, E. (January 14, 2014). Feds call for school discipline to be more evenhanded. *EdWeek*. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/01/15/17discipline.h33.html

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Kansas Approach to Early Identification and Intervention to Address All Students' Needs

Kansas is one of several states that encourage their schools to use a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) "for ensuring that all students are challenged and achieve to high standards, both academically and behaviorally."[c] The state describes MTSS as "a coherent continuum of evidence-based, system-wide practices to support a rapid response to academic and behavioral needs, with frequent data-based monitoring for instructional decision-making to empower each Kansas student to achieve to high standards." With the MTSS approach, educators determine as early in the school year as possible which students need support and what support they need. The "tiers" in MTSS are levels of intervention based on students' needs.

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cSpecial Education within a Multi-Tier System of Supports," Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports, Oct. 2010. Accessible at http://www.kansasmtss.org/pdf/briefs/Special_Education_within_MTSS.pdf

MTSS is not a way to avoid providing special education services, nor is it a system for identifying students with disabilities. Rather, it is an approach to curriculum, instruction, and assessment that creates a culture of collaboration in which general and special education teachers share responsibility for the learning of all students. Because of that, in schools implementing MTSS, more students with disabilities spend more time learning in general education classrooms. The special education services they receive are in addition to, not instead of, instruction in the core curriculum.

The following key principles form the foundation of the Kansas MTSS:
- Every child will be provided effective and relentless teaching.
- Interventions will be provided at the earliest identification of need.
- Policy will be based on evidence-based practice.
- Every educator will continuously gain knowledge and develop expertise to build capacity and sustain effective practice.
- Resources will be intentionally designed and redesigned to match students' needs.
- Every leader will be responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating.
- Academic and behavioral data will be used to inform instructional decisions.
- Educators, families, and community members will be part of the fundamental practice of effective problem solving and instructional decision making.
- An empowering culture will be enhanced/developed that creates collective responsibility for student success.[d]

Kansas does not mandate the use of MTSS. But the state has organized the Kansas Technical Assistance System Network to support the implementation of evidence-based practices in school districts.

An evaluation of MTSS in Kansas found that more than 90 percent of a sample of 600 districts are in the process of implementing the approach, with 44 percent of the schools having received some level of training.[e]

The evaluation identified several key factors affecting successful implementation of MTSS:
- Strong leadership at the building and district levels
- A strong curriculum and high-quality instruction, informed by assessment data
- Widespread acceptance among the staff of the MTSS principles and practices
- Protected time for collaboration around instruction and assessment
- Ongoing professional learning opportunities and coaching, which are critical to sustainability
- Support for implementation and alignment of MTSS practices with other school needs and initiatives

However, the evaluation cautions, "even with support and buy-in MTSS can be considered complex and time-consuming to implement." But, it said, with "strong leadership and broad-based staff support," these challenges can be addressed.

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[d]Kansas MTSS Overview. Accessible at http://www.kansasmtss.org/overview.html
[e]Kansas MTSS Annual Evaluation Report-2013. Executive Summary. WestEd. October, 2013. Accessible at http://www.kansasmtss.org/pdf/ex_eval/2014.04_KS_MTSS_Evaluation_Summary_2013.pdf

a gateway to the juvenile justice system and subsequently to adult prison.[41,42]

A clearly defined system of social-emotional education and positive behavioral supports, delivered with fidelity and in tiers of intensity appropriate to a child's need has been shown to reduce the number of inconsistent and punitive punishments in schools along with the number of lost hours of instructional time, and leaving students more commitment to learning and teachers happier in their school environments.[43]

In addition to issues of discipline, social-emotional learning can address the problem of bullying in our schools. Children with disabilities are two to three times more likely to be bullied than their nondisabled peers. One study shows that 60 percent of students with disabilities report being bullied regularly, compared with 25 percent of all students. This too can be addressed through a multitiered system of social-emotional education that includes the many iterations of positive behavioral supports, including restorative practice.

Mental Health

Finding the true source of any problem and addressing the issue early is always the most effective and financially sound strategy. But often children suffer mental health challenges that go unmet and, as a result, their academic, personal, and interpersonal growth are compromised. Children with unmet mental health needs may

also negatively affect the learning experiences of their peers as well; and untreated mental health needs are associated with behavioral problems, bullying, decreases in academic performance, and poor school attendance.

Currently, educators who are concerned that a student might need mental health services have limited referral options. They can refer a student to special education services for evaluation. In many cases, however, such students are not designated as needing special education services and are left without appropriate assistance. Neglected mental health needs rarely disappear and more frequently get worse over time, making it critical to provide early intervening services as soon as a child demonstrates the need for them and to make these services more readily available in all schools. Again, within a well-designed MTSS and within well-integrated systems at the state level, students with mental health needs would not fall through the cracks, and educators would have options for finding appropriate help and support.

Technology

While California is larger and wealthier than many countries, the state is one of only four in the United States that does not have state-adopted technology standards—this at a time when technology is becoming increasingly more central to instruction, assessment, and accommodations. Also problematic is that fact that the embedded, daily use of technology is new for many general and special educators, especially those who work in smaller, more rural, or less economically advantaged schools and districts with limited availability to or acceptance of integrating technology within instructional practices.

Ironically, for nearly two decades California's educators have benefited from a statewide initiative to support the integration of technology in schools through the California

41 McKevitt, B., & Braaksma, A. "Developing a positive behavioral support system at the school level." *Best Practices in School Psychology*, V. Retrieved from http://www.nasponline.org/publications/booksproducts/bp5samples/735_bpv89_44.pdf

42 See The American Civil Liberties Union, Locating the School to Prison Pipeline (New York: Author, 2008); The Advancement Project, Test, Punish, and Push Out: How Zero Tolerance and High-Stakes Testing Funnel Youth Into the School to Prison Pipeline (Washington, DC: Author, 2010); Daniel J. Losen and Russell J. Skiba, Suspended Education: Urban Middle Schools in Crisis (Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2010); Matt Cregor and Damon Hewitt, "Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline: A Survey from the Field," *Poverty & Race* ,20 (2011): 223–237.

43 See "Positive Behavior Supports: A Discussion," at Safe and Civil Schools: http://www.safeandcivilschools.com/research/papers/pbs.php

Sanger Unified: All Educators Take Responsibility for Meeting the Needs of All Students

In 2004, student performance in the Sanger Unified School District in California's Central Valley put it in the bottom 2 percent in the state. Seven of its 20 schools faced the possibility of losing much of their autonomy because they had repeatedly failed to hit academic improvement targets.

Within a few years, however, a rapid rise in academic achievement had eliminated that threat, and four of those threatened seven schools were recognized as State Distinguished Schools. Achievement across the entire district, which serves a population that is largely poor and not fluent in English, has risen steadily over the past decade and now exceeds state averages. The district's remarkable turnaround has given it a national reputation, and hundreds of educators flock each year to Sanger to find out what it took to realize this success.[f]

Central to Sanger's current success has been a change in how teachers work: from isolation to collaboration and a shared responsibility for the learning of all students. Instead of just following the textbook, teachers and learning specialists diagnose individual students' needs, employ evidence-based interventions, and hold one another accountable for results. These practices now define how the district serves the needs of all of its students, including those with disabilities. Sanger's motto is "Every Child, Every Day, Whatever it Takes."

To make this more than a slogan, the district uses a technique called "response to instruction and intervention" or RtI[2] to provide students with the help they need. RtI[2] requires teachers to keep careful track of students' progress. Faster-paced students are given more difficult challenges. Those who need more time are given extra help, first by their classroom teacher. If they fail to catch up, the amount of help they get increases and may involve learning specialists. A first-grade teacher might work with a small group of students who are weak in phonemic awareness—which is the ability to distinguish among the letter sounds in words. If that doesn't help, a child might be tutored one-on-one. A computer app might be recommended. Then, the teacher might consult an educational psychologist for other ideas. If the child is still struggling after these approaches, he or she might be screened for a learning disability. Sanger teachers also use a tiered approach to deal with behavior issues in their classrooms, with more intensive help for the children having the most difficulties.[g]

Sanger is just one of a growing number of districts in the state to take this approach to education. Superintendent Matt Navo says the state could play a role in increasing that number by providing incentives for districts to collaborate with others to put in place policies that support RtI and more efficient supports and interventions for students at every level. He also cautions against the state mandating that districts follow any highly prescribed model. Each one has a unique mixture of students, teachers, and parents, so their collaborations are going to look different.

In Sanger, "the academic return on investment is high compared to what we spent, but that doesn't necessarily equate to a dollar amount," Navo said. "You can see the improvement in student achievement and can say that the investment has produced greater learning and supports for all students."[h]

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[f]David, J. L., & Talbert, J. E. (2013). Turning Around a High-poverty District: Learning from Sanger. S. H. Cowell Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.shcowell.org/docs/LearningFromSanger.pdf
[g]Ibid.
[h]Interview with Matt Navo, Superintendent, Sanger Unified School District, September 2014.

Technology Assistance Project (CTAP). The CTAP provided assistance to schools and districts by helping them learn how to use technology in teaching and learning and by offering staff development, technical assistance, and information and learning resources, among other things. The funding for this initiative expired on December 31, 2013—just as California schools began in earnest to move toward a full implementation of the CCSS and its aligned assessments from the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, which together feature many helpful—but new and potentially challenging—technological requirements.

Research shows technology to assist students in many ways: maximizing independence in academic and employment tasks; participating in classroom discussions; and gaining access to peers, mentors, and role models as well as to a full range of educational options.[44] Technology also facilitates self-advocacy and allows students to participate in experiences not otherwise possible; it increases a student's chances of success in work-based learning experiences, of securing high levels of independent learning, and of successfully transitioning to college and careers.

Students with disabilities may require extensive use of technology devices because of their disability; for this reason special education staff require extensive preparation and training to effectively use—and instruct the use of—such devices. All teachers, in fact, need to be proficient in the use of educational technology tools in order to teach and assist students in mastering the CCSS. Technology tools, web sites, and computer applications can enable students to create, think critically, collaborate, and communicate with one another. These devices and applications can also help to engage and motivate students, while making

it easier for teachers to individualize instruction and gauge progress.

The lapse in what students and teachers could know and need to know technologically and what they actually do know provides some context for what California educators now face. Whether they are general educators or educators of children with disabilities, they are faced with the challenge of adopting a new set of learning standards—while not being prepared for the challenge of integrating the technology inherent within those standards.

Recommendations

The application of Universal Design for Learning in all of its inclusive implications sets the foundation for a coherent system of education that provides instruction, services, and supports to students as they are needed—through a multi-tiered system of supports that incorporates response to intervention (including early intervention in its broadest sense) and social and emotional learning. Access to this system, however, now requires knowledge of technology and computers—which are now ubiquitous in schools, curriculum, and assessments and which have become essential for success in adult life as well as in school. Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, arguably our most vulnerable students, deserve equal access to this system, as well as the best supports and assessments possible to ensure they too benefit from school and have every chance of realizing a productive adult life.

In support of these changes, California should ensure the following:

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is understood, is established as a key area of professional learning for educator training, and is implemented in all schools.

- A multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) is developed throughout the state, incorporating robust and aligned systems

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44 Burgstahler, S. (Fall 2003). The role of technology in preparing youth with disabilities for postsecondary education and employment. *Journal of Special Education Technology, 18*(4).

at all organizational levels that support response to instruction and intervention (RtI[2]) approaches and systematic programs of behavioral, social, and emotional learning.

- Social-emotional learning supports, which are provided through a system that is comprehensive and blended, are available in all schools and districts; these supports include lessons of self-management, social interaction, and social responsibility that are infused in daily curriculum; these supports increase collaboration with community mental health resources in a structured, data-driven, and evidence-based way.

- General education resources are used to intervene as early as possible (infant/toddler/preschool/elementary) with evidence-based and multi-tiered social-emotional supports prior to referral to special education services.

- Technology support is provided at the state, regional, district, school, and classroom levels to ensure the successful implementation of the CCSS and use of its assessments, and to ensure that students with disabilities have and can use the assistive devices they need in order to learn.

- All students with disabilities have access to comprehensive and effective transition services and programs; model programs are identified, implemented, and aligned around college/career/independent living standards and expectations; collaboration among Local Education Agencies (LEAs), Charter Management Organizations (CMOs) and Regional Occupation Programs (ROPs) is expanded so that students with disabilities are included in Regional Occupation and Career Technical Education programs, including Pathway grants, as well as in other local options.

The full subcommittee report for the recommendations on evidence-based practices can be found at http://www.smcoe.org/about-smcoe/statewide-special-education-task-force/.

Context

To create a coherent, results-oriented system of education that provides for the learning needs of students both with and without disabilities, California must break down the long-standing divisions that exist between teachers within general education and special education. The state's implementation of the Common Core State Standards for all students creates some urgency in this effort. If the new standards are to be successful, all educators must be prepared in both educational content and instructional strategies; and they must all be able to collaborate and learn from each other if they are to serve students well. In addition their administrators and school leaders must believe in the underlying importance of a unified system, be committed to collaborative efforts, and know how to organize schools to support them. Throughout this report, when the term "educator" is used, it is referencing teachers, administrators, school psychologists, language, speech and hearing specialists, paraeducators, instructional assistants, and all staff who support the educational process.

This push towards a coherent and unified system is far from new and hardly a California-only idea. The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education in 2002 recommended that "teachers in general education learn about special education." In that same year the National Association of State Directors of Special Education stressed the importance of a single system of education, because "the success of all children is dependent on the quality of both special education and general education… and [the understanding] that special education is not a place apart, but an integral part of education."

Another layer of this united system takes into account the realities of individual human beings. The workings of the brain, the emotions, and the body are not discrete aspects but rather parts of an integrated whole that work in concert. To be most effective, schools must educate the whole child within a structure that supports academic, social-emotional, physical, and behavioral growth and development.

The Challenges

Teacher preparation reflects the lack of unity that exists across California's system of education. A 2013–2014 survey of teachers who had just earned their credential within the California State University system, which prepares many of the state's teachers, reports that general education teachers emerge from many preparation programs knowing little about disabilities, instructional interventions, or ways of presenting the same content in different ways to different students. On the other hand, special education teacher preparation programs too often provide minimal instruction in pedagogy, standards, data analysis, and the general education curriculum and do not authorize special educators to teach students who do not have disabilities. School leaders suffer similar deficits in their formal training and often assume administrative positions knowing little or nothing about special education, even though they need a deep knowledge of both general and special education practices if they are to serve effectively as advocates for good instruction and strong support for all students.

The academic performance of students receiving special education services in California is poor

compared to that of other states.[45] Furthermore, there is a lack of coordination and integration between California's special education and general education teacher preparation requirements. As a result, students in California across all "categories of disability" spend less time learning in general education classrooms than their peers in all but three other states[46]; this statistic has not improved significantly over the past decade. Too often, neither general education nor special education teachers are well prepared to meet the needs of students with disabilities in a general education classroom—a major barrier to increasing the amount of time that students with disabilities spend within the general setting. This is a function of licensing requirements that do not encourage or insist upon robust, well-coordinated preparation programs.

Need for Collaboration

The most successful educational models call for an integrated system that makes the most of fully prepared special educators working side-by-side with highly knowledgeable general educators, together meeting the needs of all students, regardless of their formal designations as having disabilities or not. Sometimes these models involve "push-in" collaborative efforts, where generalists and specialists work together in the same classroom, planning for special or targeted accommodations and instruction and meeting the needs of all students as they arise. Other times, specialists may work with small groups of students who need extra help (regardless of whether they have an IEP or not) in or outside of the general education classroom to ensure that every student is getting appropriate support. These collaborative general and special education practices support the creation of

one coherent system; they include a thorough understanding of and ability to apply instruction and intervention that adhere to universal design for learning (UDL) strategies; and they align with a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) that addresses both academics and behavior in the use of response to intervention (RtI) strategies.

In some states (currently 13 states require this and at one time in California), teachers secure a general education credential and then go on to add a special education credential on top of that. A growing number of states have encouraged blended or dual-credentialing programs that purposefully ensure that teachers acquire both general and special education expertise within a program that is integrated. California currently does neither of these, although a few forward-looking blended or dual programs have emerged under the leadership of pioneering teacher educators and are preparing specialists who also have a general education background.

Until 1996, those seeking a credential as a special educator in California had to first obtain a general education credential. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) eliminated that requirement in an attempt to make it easier to become a special educator and, it was hoped, reduce the shortage of licensed special education teachers. Unfortunately, that decision has had little, if any, effect on teacher shortages, which continue unabated. However, the credentialing change did mean that Education Specialists no longer had to learn about general pedagogy, standards, or content in depth and thus were no longer deemed by the CTC to be authorized to teach students who do not have disabilities. As a result, many of the most productive service models, as outlined in the previous section, cannot be easily implemented in many California districts because the very professionals who can help make these models work—special educators— are not authorized to work with general

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45 See appendix A on California student data.
46 Parrish, T. (2012). *Special education expenditures, revenues, and provision in California.* American Institutes for Research/California Comprehensive Center/WestEd. Retrieved from http://cacompcenter. org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/CA_CC_Special_Education_2012. pdf

education students, unless they have separately acquired a general education credential.

This restriction creates a significant barrier to developing coherent systems of instruction. Those very teachers—special educators, who are trained to provide supports to struggling students and to differentiate instruction—cannot work with general education students who, with a little special and targeted help, may never need to be referred to the special education system. The current credentialing and funding system does not champion or invest in these collaborative, tiered approaches, despite the extensive and proven research base of their efficacy. The current divide within general education and special education teacher credentialing undermines any type of coherent system. Many students remain inadequately served as a result.

The preparation of Education Specialists is further fragmented because preparation programs are currently designed around specific categories of disabilities. An Education Specialist may earn an authorization to work with students who have a specific disability, but this educator cannot serve a wider range of student learners—even though there is no research to support the assumption that a label or disability category always predetermines a student's instructional need or a teacher's effectiveness.

It stands to reason that there will always be a need for certain specialties. We cannot expect every teacher to be able to successfully instruct a child who has a low-incidence disability, such as deafness or blindness. But the most interesting part of education, and the challenge here, is that teachers work with actual children who typically have multiple areas of overlapping needs that do not fall neatly under specific disability labels. Furthermore, narrow authorizations tend to reduce the amount of time students with disabilities spend in general education classrooms, again because most Education

Specialists are not prepared to support students in the general education settings. These rules present significant roadblocks to collaboration between general education and special education teachers and to the creation of collaborative systems. Even worse: because there is a short supply of special educators, students with disabilities are sometimes taught by substitute teachers or paraprofessionals who may not be adequately prepared to give students the services and the supports they need.

Teacher Shortages

California needs highly qualified special educators to strengthen instructional efforts for all students. But demographic and fiscal trends threaten the very availability of special educators.

Douglas E. Mitchell, the interim dean and a professor at the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Riverside, described the significant challenges the state faces with looming teacher shortages. He writes about the harsh school budget cuts between 2007 and 2011, which have forced the elimination of more than 30,000 teaching positions—approximately 11 percent of the workforce—resulting in massive layoffs of young teachers. He further writes that college students, recognizing the loss of teaching jobs, have dramatically reduced their enrollment in California's university-based teacher training programs.[47]

Data from the Annual Report Card on California Teacher Preparation Programs for the Academic Year 2012–2013, prepared by the Professional Services Division of the Commission on Teacher Credentials, reported the decline from 2008-2009 to 2012–2013 of teacher preparation program enrollments to be about 53 percent; this means that 23,000 fewer candidates are being enrolled

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47 Mitchell, D. (July 12, 2013). California facing a severe teacher shortage. *San Jose Mercury News*. Retrieved from http://www. mercurynews.com/ci_23644828/douglas-e-mitchell-california-facing-severe-teacher-shortage

in both traditional and alternative teacher preparation programs. The trend line for the decline was even steeper in the most recent year of data, dropping nearly 24 percent from 2011–2012 to 2012–2013. This decline represents a loss of approximately 6,300 teacher preparation candidates in one year. (See table 2 below).

Table 2: Statewide Enrollment in Teacher Education

Year	Statewide Enrollment
2008-09	42,245
2009-10	36,577
2010-11	34,838
2011-12	26,231
2012-13	19,934
5- yr Change #	*-22,311*
5-yr Change %	*-53%*

As universities responded by offsetting the enrollment declines with advanced and specialized programs, the data partially mask the declines in teacher candidate enrollments. By 2010–11 only 21 percent (slightly more than 3,000) of the 15,459 credentials issued that year went to teachers earning their first credentials: The great majority of new credentials went to teachers who were adding second or third credential authorizations to help in securing and advancing jobs.

Although teacher education enrollments are beginning to increase slightly this year, there is a long way to go to reach the levels of teacher production that would comfortably fill all positions. The districts that will feel this pinch the

most are low-income districts that offer lower salaries and poorer working conditions.

The demographics of the post World War II "baby boom" exacerbate the problem. Aging baby boomers are retiring and contributing to the dramatic rise in the number of teacher retirements. In 2009–10, the California State Teacher Retirement System reported 15,493 new retirees, a 42 percent increase from 2005–06. In effect, more teachers retired in 2010–2011 than had been trained in all of California's colleges and universities.

Small Schools, Districts, and LEAs

Shortages of special education teachers, combined with the restrictions placed on current narrow authorizations, pose particular problems for small schools and districts. California's school districts echo the diversity of its population. The state is replete with districts and LEAs large and small that have widely varying educational needs and personnel. Some very small high schools, alternative education settings, small non-public schools, and many smaller charter schools have great difficulty procuring highly qualified staff who can serve the range of students with disabilities whom the entities are charged with serving.

In addition, the federal No Child Left Behind Act's requirement for "highly qualified teachers" added content-area requirements equivalent to those of a content specialist for each area in which a special education teacher works with students. Given these requirements, plus the narrow authorizations in California's credentialing system, very small schools, districts, and LEAs also have a difficult time finding Education Specialists in each authorization area who also possess the content-area mastery needed to educate all students in English language arts, math, science, social science, and other areas, particularly at the high school level. Because of their small size, these entities usually don't have

the luxury of hiring rigidly defined specialists. Yet the state lacks any approach to teacher authorizations that would make it manageable for special education teachers who are teaching multiple subjects to demonstrate content knowledge in a way that is more aligned with the multiple subjects framework, as well as to support specially designed instructional needs of students with disabilities.

Furthermore, many districts and charter schools lack the school structures—resource rooms, tutors, collaborative teaching models, and other instructional supports—that would make inclusive classrooms possible and effective. And research continues to show that most students with disabilities learn less when they spend most of their instructional time apart from their general education peers.[48,49]

Teacher Preparation Programs and the Least Restrictive Environment

This Task Force does not believe that the least restrictive environment (LRE) is the same for everyone. Most students with disabilities benefit from being with their general education peers, as long as they are receiving the supports they need in order to be equal and participating members of the classroom and to succeed academically. However, the needs of students who are deaf, blind, or hard of hearing are often unique, as will be their least restrictive environment; and these students are sometimes best and most appropriately educated in separate classrooms, schools, or other evironments. As well, these students require specialized academic instruction from teachers whose professional preparation and credential authorization are specific to the low-incidence disability.

48 Artiles, A., Dozleski, E., Dorn, S., & Christenson, C. Learning in inclusive Education research: Re-mediating theory and methods with a transformative agenda. *Review of Research in Education, 30*, pp. 65–108. Retrieved from http://ea.niusileadscape.org/docs/10266-04_CH03-Artiles.pdf
49 Waldron, N., & McLeskey, J. (April 1998). The effects of an inclusive school program on students with mild and severe learning disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 64*(3), pp. 395-405.

The adults in the classroom are key to securing the benefit of instructing all students; this applies to students in specialized settings, students with disabilities whose LRE is the general education classroom, and students who will realize optimal benefit from a combination of settings. Suiting the educational plan to fit the need of the student, not the label, should be the goal of every instructional decision and effort.

The LRE for most students can be created when both the classroom teacher and the special education teacher have the requisite knowledge and skills to effectively instruct both students with and without disabilities as well as the strategies to collaborate effectively with one another and with the students' family members. Because generalist teachers typically do not have enough training in special education, and specialist teachers often do not have enough training in general education, most prospective educators in California are left without a clear, common credentialing pathway to learn these kinds of skills.

Professional Learning Opportunities

Even if preparation for aspiring teachers were more collaborative in nature and comprehensive in scope, it would not be enough to effect the profound changes in educational systems and cultures that the state needs to effectively serve its students. Current teachers need to develop the knowledge and skills that they did not obtain when they earned their credentials: such things as Universal Design for Learning, multi-tiered system of supports, including positive behavioral interventions and supports, response to instruction and intervention, instructional technology including assistive technology, and principles of coherent instructional systems; assessment and differentiation between second language acquisition and disabilities, as well as the provision of linguistically and culturally responsive pedagogy in order to reduce the

disproportionality of English learners and students of color who are inappropriately designated to receive special education services. The list is long, but most teachers are committed to their students and eager to learn whatever it takes to be successful in the classroom.

Research into adult learning theory has contributed significantly in recent years to the understanding of what constitutes effective professional learning. The common "spray and pray" types of workshops and trainings—a day or two of providing information—have shown dismal results for implementing new practices and sustaining long-term change, even when those new practices are stellar. Research substantiating the poor results of this kind of professional learning has been in evidence since 1987[50] and more recently in 2002. We now know that only job-embedded coaching, mentoring, and ongoing support creates conditions for lasting change and improvement in educational practice.[51] In fact, Joyce and Showers report that 90 percent of learners will succeed in transferring a new skill into their practice if a combination of theory, demonstration, practice, and corrective feedback is provided in a training—but only when it is also followed up with job-embedded coaching. California currently lacks any effective mechanism and support for teachers and administrators to learn about quality instruction and how to deliver it. The demands on our teachers are great. Concerted and carefully planned and coordinated professional learning efforts are lacking.

Recommendations

California needs, and its students deserve, a coherent approach to educator preparation and learning, a common foundation for all

instruction—a "common trunk"—and multiple pathways for teachers to earn a credential. California's system of teacher credentialing needs to ensure that all teachers—both general education and special education—enter the profession able to effectively use needs-based interventions and collaborate with other educators in a unified system. The system also needs to allow appropriate flexibility in teacher assignments to serve the staffing needs of all schools and districts, large and small. Finally, California and all of its students would be well served by an ongoing, research-informed system of professional learning that supports established teachers in implementing new initiatives and proven practices and that encourages and models purposeful integration of professional learning opportunities for special education and general education. Changes to this system of educator preparation carry with them a particular urgency, given the data cited in this report about the recent dramatic reduction in candidates entering education preparation programs in the state and the number of teachers on track to retire in the next five years.

This task force recommends a teacher preparation program and learning system that would ensure the following:

- General and special education preparation programs require all aspiring teachers to master content standards, evidence-based strategies, pedagogy, intervention strategies, and collaboration among teachers and across assignments—essentially in a "common trunk." All teachers are thoroughly prepared in the following:

  » Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

  » Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) that include social-emotional learning and positive behavioral strategies and supports, and Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI^2)

50 Showers, B., Joyce, B., and Bennett, B. (1987). Synthesis of research on staff development: A framework for future study and a state-of-the-art analysis. *Educational Leadership, 45*(3), 77–87.

51 Joyce, B. R., & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development*, third edition. ASCD. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/102003.aspxASCD

» The use of data to monitor progress, inform instruction, and guide interventions

» Evidence-based reading instruction for struggling readers, including those with dyslexia; knowledge of and strategies for distinguishing between the typical struggles of an English language learner and the problems that reflect a potential disability

» Digital Literacy and instructional technology

» Cultural and linguistic responsiveness

• Most special education credentials are designed and funded to prepare teachers to address the instructional needs of all students, not specific disability types. At the same time specific authorizations for educating students with low-incidence disabilities—students who have lost hearing or vision, for example—remain a critically valuable component of special education.

• All special education credentials prepare and authorize special education teachers to instruct and to provide any needed support to general education students.

• Preparation for a special education credential provides in-depth understanding of and strategies for supporting students who struggle with learning, students who struggle with behavioral disorders, students who struggle because of physical disabilities and health care needs.

• Special educators are trained specifically in the following:

» Assistive technology and augmentative and alternative communication systems

» The importance of critical transitions in the life of a student with disabilities and strategies for planning transitions, providing supports for student success, and supporting students and families through those transitions

• Paraeducators/Instructional Assistants receive professional learning opportunities and appropriate supervision as well as career pathway opportunities to become credentialed teachers.

• Professional learning opportunities for educators in both special and general education are purposefully integrated.

• The professional learning for all educators is extensive, coordinated across grades and disciplines, and aligned with the implementation of new standards and the site and district LCAP goals.

• Incentive grants are available to colleges and universities, local education agencies and county offices of education to develop innovative programs that combine preparation to become general and special education teachers.

• Service scholarships are available along with forgivable loans to candidates who will complete these programs and commit to at least three years of teaching in California schools.

The full subcommittee report for the recommendations on educator preparation and professional learning can be found at http:// www.smcoe.org/about-smcoe/statewide-special-education-task-force/.

Public education in the United States is philosophically grounded in principles of equity. Every child has value, and every child matters. Excluding any group of children from a system of assessment, or using tests that are not accurate or effective in registering what those children know and are able to do, tacitly implies that those children are "less than"; they do not matter as much as those who are counted and rigorously assessed. Yet we know that the success of any society is best determined by how it treats its most disadvantaged.

Context

In announcing the Office of Special Education Program's shift to "Results Driven Accountability" (see following section), U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said, "Every child, regardless of income, race, background or disability, can succeed if provided the opportunity to learn. . . . We know that when students with disabilities are held to high expectations and have access to the general curriculum in their classrooms, they excel. We must be honest about student performance, so that we can give all students the supports and services they need to succeed."[52]

Effective assessments are a vital part of any effort to educate. They provide a clear benchmark against which to measure student progress and accomplishment, and they can provide a clear picture of what services, supports, and instructional approaches are working—and which are not.

All students with disabilities deserve to be assessed. In fact, "The vast majority [of students with disabilities]—about 80–85% based on the latest distribution of disability categories—are students without cognitive impairments. Rather, they are students who with specially designed instruction, appropriate access, supports, and accommodations, as required by IDEA, can meet the same achievement standards as other students. We must ensure that these students progress through school successfully to be ready for college or career. In addition, we have learned that students with cognitive impairments can do more than we previously believed possible. In many cases, students have surprised their teachers and parents—and themselves—by mastering content that, before standards-based reform, was never taught to them."[53]

Challenges

Standards-Based Individualized Education Programs

The education of a student with a disability is guided by an Individualized Education Program (IEP), which establishes the student's school goals and the means by which the student will receive special supports to reach those goals, all guided by the student's abilities and disability. The CCSS establishes a new level of academic rigor for these goals.

Many parents and teachers are concerned that the standards may be too rigorous and students may flounder under the increased demands. Yet the new standards also provide a potent

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52 U. S. Department of Education. (June 24, 2014). New accountability framework raises the bar for state special education programs. Retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/new-accountability-framework-raises-bar-state-special-education-programs-0

53 Thurlow, M. (April 28, 2010). Written testimony of Martha L. Thurlow, Ph.D. director, National Center on Educational Outcomes before the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee (HELP) United States Senate, pp. 2–3. Retrieved from http://www.help.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Thurlow.pdf

opportunity for educators to change the way they approach assessments—how they develop "present levels of performance," set goals, and monitor progress—and improve the climate for the IEP to better serve the teachers involved and the student so that this specialized program realizes its original purpose.

However, standards and assessments don't exist in a vacuum. Standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment must reflect a coherent whole, with each part echoing, supporting, and informing the other. As the standards identify what children need to know and be able to do from grade to grade (the goals), curriculum and instruction identify how the learning takes place and progresses from one lesson to another, from one grade to the next (a kind of roadmap, with the activities that advance the students toward the goal); then assessments provide a compass for knowing how close students are to those goals. IEPs can serve as an integral part of this picture—as long as they accurately reflect all parts: standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

As the expectations and increased demands of the new standards require a focus on comprehensive knowledge, skills, and abilities that include preparation for college, career, independent living, and financial self-sufficiency, the IEP can specify and align standards with goals, services, and supports to ensure student success. To date, a clear and certain mandate that IEP goals are aligned with standards, along with a robust commitment to training teachers statewide to fulfill this mandate, does not exist in California.

When schools and school districts consciously involve parents in all aspects of the educational discussion, parents become equal partners in supporting the school success of their children. Knowledge about the rationale behind change—currently in California, the increased rigor in

schools as a result of the new standards and the corollary changes in the goals and progress expectations for their children—can only serve to strengthen the system. Only by involving parents early and often will an evolution to rigorous, yet appropriate, standards-aligned IEPs be successful.

New Standards, New Tests

To date, California has yet to realize a clear, seamless alignment among standards, curriculum, and assessments for all students. The implementation of the CCSS is giving the state an opportunity to create this unprecedented alignment and to ensure that every student is tested in a way that reflects what he or she has learned.

In spring 2015, California students will have an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities related to the CCSS by taking the aligned Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium tests. These new assessments focus on evaluating in-depth knowledge, critical-thinking skills, and capacity for real-world problem solving. Most students with disabilities who historically participated in the statewide assessment system through the California Modified Assessment (CMA) will now be able to participate—with appropriate universal tools, designated supports and accommodations—in the SBAC assessments.

However, for some students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, the SBAC will not be appropriate. Since 2003, these students have participated in the assessment system by taking the California Alternate Performance Assessment (CAPA), which was designed to assess student learning in California's 1997 standards for English language arts, mathematics, and science. CDE is in the process of developing for these students a new alternate assessment that is aligned with the CCSS, with

plans to pilot that test in spring 2015 "to allow all eligible students and their teachers the opportunity to have exposure to a test aligned to the CCSS..."[54] The state will not include the results of this pilot test in accountability measures, and for good reason: policymakers want students, teacher, and parents to learn about and become familiar with the new test "without the concern that assessment results will be reported or used..."[55]

The goal of creating this alternate assessment is to ensure that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities are fully included in the state's educational system, providing them with the best possible way to demonstrate what they know and are able to do. Certainly if the new standards are worth adopting, then they are worth teaching to all students; appropriate core content "connectors"[56] can make this possible for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities.

New studies continue to emerge about the learning potential of students with cognitive disabilities. Findings about the "neuroplasticity" of the brain, as well as research into changes in intelligence over time, make it clear that human learning is unpredictable and its potential

unfathomable.[57] In fact, "we no longer need to accept that learning disabilities, developmental delays or disorders, or even low cognitive ability, cannot be changed or at least improved to some degree."[58] As well, new programs that admit students with cognitive disabilities to colleges and universities are showing "steep gains" for these students in life satisfaction, employment options, and earning potential.[59] Ensuring that all students are challenged, taught, and tested on the skills and knowledge they will need as adults will help them become as independent and productive as possible when they leave school.

New Testing Conditions

The Smarter Balanced assessments, which are computer based, feature new built-in "universal supports," "designated supports," and "accommodations" that any student could potentially make use of, with the latter two types of features designed especially for

54 Countdown to CAPA 2015. Update on the 2014–15 Alternate Assessment (letter from CDE to California Special Education Departments, 2014). See http://www.sanjuan.edu/Page/23369
55 Ibid.
56 Core Content Connectors (CCCs). See https://wiki.ncscpartners.org/index.php/Core_Content_Connectors support aspects of a learning standard. These connectors break standards into manageable parts and create content targets that are linked to the CCSS and are typically used to plan instruction and assessment for students who will take an alternate assessment. The CCCs are less complex than the CCSS and focus on the main academic content in each subject and grade.

57 In U.S. Senate hearings on No Child Left Behind, Rachel Quenemoen wrote: "We have a colleague at NCEO, Dr. Kevin McGrew, who is one of the authors of the Woodcock-Johnson III tests of achievement. He has tested the assumption that 'any fool knows those kids [with significant cognitive disabilities] can't learn' by looking at the academic achievement of students of varying measured IQs, a common measurement used for eligibility for the special education category of mental retardation. He has found, 'It is not possible to predict which children will be in the upper half of the achievement distribution based on any given level of general intelligence. For most children with cognitive disabilities (those with below average IQ scores), it is NOT possible to predict individual levels of expected achievement with the degree of accuracy that would be required to deny a child the right to high standards/expectations.'"The bottom line is that 80% of students with disabilities, that is, 98% of all students, do not have cognitive disabilities (called mental retardation in official disability categories) as their primary disability. My 31-year-old daughter does have mental retardation, and she is a curious, engaged, life-long learner, so I struggle to understand how educators could systematically make assumptions about her ability to learn. I struggle to understand how educators could make those assumptions about the ability of all students with other disabilities as well, those who may have learning disabilities, speech language disabilities, vision, hearing, or any disabilities that may affect HOW a student learns, but like my daughter, need not dramatically affect WHAT the student learns. We have research and practice-tested methods to teach all children well, but in some schools the collective will to do so has not yet been mustered." (July 12, 2006). Retrieved from http://archives.republicans.edlabor.house.gov/archive/hearings/109th/fc/nclb071206/quenemoen.htm
58 Vancouver Learning Center. (n.d.). Neuroplasticity. Retrieved from http://www.vancouverlearningcentre.com/Neuroplasticity.html
59 Heasely, S. (January 20, 2015). Study finds postsecondary programs boost outcomes. DisabilityScoop. Retrieved from http://www.disabilityscoop.com/2015/01/20/study-postsecondary-outcomes/19972/

students receiving special education services. There is great promise in these features to offer remarkable improvements over paper-and-pencil tests. But these tests are new to nearly everyone: students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Given the importance of the built-in features in "leveling the playing field" for students with disabilities, there also exists an understandable concern about how students and teachers can learn to use them and what will happen if they don't.

Recommendations

As California schools continue to expand their implementation of the Common Core State Standards, it is imperative that the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process evolves and adapts to the changing expectations for all students. The IEP should be as coherent as the system it reflects. IEP team discussions about student expectations, performance, and progress should be guided by the new standards; and ultimately all IEPs should become aligned with the new standards. Assessments, which reflect the success of the IEP, must be selected with great care, their effectiveness monitored, and their alignment with curriculum and instruction secured for all students.

In support of this vision, the state and LEAs need changes in policy and practice to ensure the following:

- IEPs consist of goals that are aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

- Parents are kept informed of changes in standards, the rationale for those changes, the implications for IEPs and courses of study, and strategies for supporting their children at home.

- An assessment for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities is selected to replace the CAPA and is directly and rigorously aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

- Teachers and schools are accountable for the progress that students with the most significant cognitive disabilities make in meeting the standards.

- Samples of standards-aligned IEPs are created and disseminated, along with comprehensive training on adapting those examples or models for use in IEP meetings.

- The Smarter Balanced assessments, especially the use of the "Designated Supports" and "Accommodations" for students receiving special education services, are carefully and thoroughly reviewed for effectiveness and accessibility.

- A common data-gathering system is created to record and report on student IEP goals, monitor progress toward goals, and evaluate implementation of standards-based IEPs statewide.

Historically, the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has placed a high priority on state agencies complying with federal programs and policies. Over the past seven years, OSEP has seen substantial improvements in states' compliance with IDEA requirements. Compliance, however, does not guarantee improved educational outcomes for students. That is why, in June 2014, OSEP began using a process it calls Results Driven Accountability (RDA) to monitor the performance of states' special education programs. RDA focuses on equal opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency.

Shortly after the introduction of its Results Driven Accountability initiative, OSEP notified California that it was one of only three states and jurisdictions with "needs intervention" status and indicated that it would be providing the state with differentiated monitoring and support to help guide improvement efforts. This determined status is not the only reason to believe that substantial work needs to be done to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Data from several places in this report indicate poor school results for students with disabilities, and not just in comparison to students in the state without disabilities. In fact, a 2014 federal ranking listed California "in the bottom rung of states in the academic achievement of disabled students,"[60] even though only a small percentage of these students have cognitive disabilities.

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60 Blume, H. (June 24, 2014). California ranks poorly in services to disabled students. *LA Times*. Retrieved from http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-calif-rank-special-ed-20140624-story.html

Context

OSEP's switch to Results Driven Accountability gives a clear signal of the direction for future federal policy that affects students with disabilities. With compliance no longer singularly at the forefront, monitoring for program effectiveness and student outcomes takes center stage and invites California to create an outcomes-based accountability system for students with disabilities, a system that will monitor the degree to which students with disabilities are attaining the knowledge and skills they need for success in college and careers, in independent living and adult life.

Results Driven Accountability creates an opportunity to review state-level organizational structures, policies and procedures, and goals to ensure that they maximize student achievement and are aligned with the federal expectations for both compliance and performance. This system of accountability provides an impetus for ensuring that our school system provides the broad course of study that students will need—including Career Technical Education, Linked Learning, and Advanced Placement courses—for success in postsecondary education, career, and life.

These efforts, in their best iterations, would respond to and, as appropriate, incorporate the new requirements of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and its evaluation rubric, which is currently under development. Ideally, these efforts would continue to provide a focus on, and specify outcomes for, students with disabilities along with the other students currently specified in LCFF law.

Challenges

Data Systems

California currently stores its information about students receiving special education services in multiple databases and/or management information systems at both local and state levels. Since the late 1980s, the Special Education Division at the CDE has supported the use of a database called the California Special Education Management Information System (CASEMIS). All schools and school districts are required to use CASEMIS, which collects and aggregates student-level information about individuals receiving special education services. It also serves as a comprehensive management information system to monitor special education programs, meet statutory requirements, identify and research program issues, and evaluate the effectiveness of special education programs with respect to individual student progress.

Another database that gathers education-related information is the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS), which includes both general and special education data. CALPADS collects comprehensive, longitudinal information about student discipline, course-taking patterns, and achievement. Other educational data systems include the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS), the Professional Assignment Information Form (PAIF), the Special Education Non-Public School and Agency Database, and the Special Education Personnel Database, along with other databases used for financial reports.

The fact that information about students receiving special education services is being stored in multiple databases results in duplicated data and inconsistent definitions and time periods for data collection. As a result, reports from the various databases are often dramatically different, undermining the confidence of policymakers and the public in

California's ability to accurately and consistently identify and monitor students receiving special education services and comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of those services. Until such a system is in place, concerns will continue to exist about the validity and reliability of current data, and its utility in informing policy decisions will be limited at best.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) bases its annual review on the data it receives from the CDE and from other publicly available data sources. This data is typically lacking in alignment and colloquially referred to as "dirty data." Compromised data compromises the review.

Coordination Among Systems

Aligning organizational structures and systems (including data), policies and procedures, and goals for maximizing student achievement is essential to ensuring alignment with the federal expectations for compliance and performance as set forth in OSEP's Results Driven Accountability initiative. In service to these unified systems, educational efforts must respond to and, as appropriate, incorporate the new requirements of the Local Control and Accountability Plan and the evaluation rubric currently under development. In particular, this work requires a focus on, and specific outcomes for, students with disabilities along with the other students currently specified in LCFF law. Only through integrated and coordinated efforts at every level will schools be able to successfully prepare students for success in postsecondary education, career, and life—and thus realize not only the design of the CCSS but the first goal of public education.

Recommendations

Systems of accountability serve the critical function of strengthening all aspects of educational programming for students as they inform, direct, and support teacher preparation,

classroom instruction, individual-goal setting, and meaningful assessment. Before California can implement a rigorous and seamless outcomes-based accountability system for students with disabilities, it must redress disjointed patterns and systems by collaborating to establish the most effective accountability system possible.

In support of this vision, the state needs policy change to ensure the following:

- A consolidated and integrated special education data system that identifies and eliminates duplicate reporting, especially in the areas of suspensions, expulsions, and postsecondary outcomes.

- An outcomes-based accountability framework that mirrors federal policy (i.e., the Results Driven Accountability framework) and state policy (i.e., LCFF and LCAP) to evaluate the compliance and

performance of public schools throughout the state in educating students with disabilities. Accountability efforts are congruent: efficient, non-duplicative, and integrated (e.g., using the LCAP to meet the Results Driven Accountability framework)

- Closely integrated and coordinated state and federal monitoring, data collection, and technical assistance and support efforts from all state agencies and divisions: the Governor's Office, the State Board of Education, the Department of Finance, the Department of Education (both General Education and Special Education divisions), the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, the Department of Rehabilitation, the Department of Developmental Services, Division of Juvenile Justice/Department of Corrections, Juvenile Court Schools, and the Department of Managed Health Care

Context

Research confirms the positive effects of family involvement in the school life of all children. When schools and families work together in coordinated, thoughtful, and consistent ways to support and encourage children's learning and development, children simply do better.[62] In fact, "the most accurate predictor of a student's achievement in school is not income or social status but the extent to which a student's family is able to:

- create a home environment that encourages learning,

- express high expectations for their children's achievement and future careers, and

- become involved in the children's education at school and in the community."[63]

Families

These predictors work in exactly the same way for children with disabilities. However, there is one difference. In a 2012 report, the Harvard Family Research Project adds that "while family engagement confers benefits on all students, those with disabilities often require a greater degree of parental involvement and advocacy than their peers without disabilities" if these children are to realize school success.[64]

Research provides the evidence: teacher-parent/family collaboration is critically important

to student success.[65] But it also makes good sense. No one knows a child better than his or her parent or family member.[66] The fact that outcomes for students improve when families are involved and empowered in the special education process[67] underscores the importance of thoughtful and intentional collaboration between key family members and educators.[68]

Students

In an effective system, students themselves are also included in decisions about their education. As one recent summary[69] noted:

> When students with disabilities have practice making decisions, considering (and accepting) consequences, thinking ahead, and advocating for themselves, they are on the path to becoming collaborative partners in their own education—participants rather than bystanders. These students "feel better about themselves, take more risks, ask for the help and clarification they need, and consequently do better in school and in life."[70] They are more likely to assume that they have the right and the ability to interact with teachers and other adults, express their own opinions and preferences, ask questions, and generally engage in the world around them. As "self-determined" individuals,

62 Eccles, J. S., & Harold, R. D. (1993). Parent-school involvement during the early adolescent years. *Teachers College Record, 94*(3), 568–587.
63 Henderson, A.T., & Berla, N. (Eds.) (1994). *A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement*. Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education, p.160.
64 Ferrel, J. (2012). *Family engagement and children with disabilities*. Harvard Family Research Project. Retrieved from www.hfrp.org

65 California Department of Education. (2011). *Family engagement framework*. Retrieved from http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/cpei/family-engagement-framework.pdf
66 Goodall, P., & Bruder, M. B. (1986). Parents and the transition process. *Exceptional Parent, 16*(2), 22–28.
67 Stoner, J. B., Bock, S. J., Thompson, J. R., Angell, M. E., Heyl, B. S., & Crowley, E. P. (2005). Welcome to our world: Parent perceptions of interactions between parents of young children with ASD and educational professionals. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 20, 39–51.
68 Fish, W. W. (2006). Perceptions of parents of students with autism towards the IEP meeting: A case study of one family support group chapter. *Education, 127*(1), 56–68.
69 CDE. (2014). Students as collaborators: Self-Advocacy. *The Special EDge*, p. 14. Retrieved from http://www.calstat.org/specialEdge.html
70 Can Learn Society. (2013). Self Advocacy. http://canlearnsociety.ca/wp-content/ uploads/2013/03/LC_Self-Advocacy_N2.pdf

they are ultimately happier than people who operate without a sense of their own agency.[71]

The schools that best serve students are the ones that provide experiences and allowances for children and youth to grow into an understanding of their own learning strengths, needs, and strategies, so that they can ultimately guide their own learning. This growth in metacognition is a critical element of effective education for all students, but especially for students with disabilities.

The Challenges

More than one out of every eight students in America is identified as having a disability,[72] and nearly every metric used to measure success after high school—employment, independent living, post-high-school education/training—show that far too many of these students do not realize their full potential, fail to find full employment, and end up with less-than-satisfying adult lives.[73]

Because we know that the chief safeguard for all students is their family—through family members' direct support, strategic knowledge, and confident engagement in the school and their commitment to the ultimate life success of their children—IDEA has explicitly written family involvement into nearly every aspect of the special education process. Unfortunately, parents often do not possess the confidence and the legal and procedural knowledge they need to confidently occupy and fulfill their role in the special education process, certainly not as much as they would like.

Family Engagement

Family-friendly IEP meetings at the school level and integrated family engagement processes at the district level would go far toward creating and supporting inclusive community cultures and values. But while the importance of family involvement in the life and education of children is firmly established, clear and reinforced tenets for authentic family engagement are missing from many of our schools.

State and federal resources are designed to provide the help, guidance, and training that parents and family members need in order to become active and constructive educational partners. Federal funding supports Family Resource Centers (FRCs) and Parent Training and Information Centers; and state funding has supported a few Family Empowerment Centers (FECs) to do the same. The FRCs and FECs provide parents support from other parents, help them navigate the special education system, offer training on the Individual Family Services Plan/Individualized Education Program (IFSP/IEP) process and parent rights, and feature many other parent-friendly services and community collaborative resources. These centers also provide technical and general information, assistance, support, and training to parents and families on a full range of other important issues, such as what to expect in an IEP, how to understand parents' rights, and how to plan for transition to adult life. The centers are designed to operate as partners with the special education system to help parents gain the skills they need to become actively involved in the system in an informed and instructive way, supporting their child and appropriately assisting educators.

Unfortunately, these centers and their resources are not available in all areas of the state. Currently, only 14 FECs are funded, while there are 32 FEC regions statewide, even though there is legislation (SB 511) that calls for one center in

71 Wehmeyer, M. (2007). *What works for special needs learners: Promoting self-determination in people with developmental disabilities.* Guildford Press, p. 61.
72 National Center for Education Statistics, (2014). Children and youth with disabilities. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cgg.asp
73 National Center for Education Statistics, (2009). Post high school outcomes of youth with disabilities. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=NCSER20093017

each region. Also problematic is the paucity of funding for FRCs. These centers have not seen any increase in financial support since their inception in 1997, even though they have seen a significant increase in the number of Early Start families needing their services and supports.

All of these centers need to be able to respond to their diverse populations, specifically the number of families who are English language learners, whom they are charged with serving. These centers need the resources to provide information, training, and supports in the native language of the parents; and, in order to be effective, they need staff who have training in cultural and linguistic competence. To equip parents to be active educational partners, these centers also need resources to help parents be knowledgeable about evidence-based practices (e.g., social-emotional learning and positive behavioral supports, reading/academic interventions, self-advocacy). Adult learning theory also tells us that any training must be followed by coaching and ongoing support. All of these services are needed; all are generally inadequate in too many centers.

In this age of data and accountability, it's particularly surprising that none of these centers have coordinated data-collection systems to monitor their work: to track the number of people served, trainings provided, satisfaction registered, etc. Data gathering was not required in the original legislation, but with the recent shift in the focus of state and federal monitoring, from compliance to result-driven accountability (outcomes), it seems prudent and responsible for these centers to be accountable to the larger system for the work they do and the impact they have.

Families need coordinated and consistent information. Parents often seek help with academic skills/homework support, adaptive skills, behavior, communication, and other challenges; and they often receive supports

from schools and regional centers in isolation. Too often the strategies are not coordinated or even in agreement. Cross-agency, community-based training models do not exist in the form of shared trainings and collaboration to provide unified services and bolster local capacity.

Student Engagement

Students are also, naturally, critical to this conversation, and their voice needs to be included. The Statewide Special Education Task Force invited the student representatives on the California Advisory Commission on Special Education to address these issues. And these young adults have done so with passion. Speaking from her own experience, one ACSE student representative said, "Our parents have ideas for us and for our futures. These are not necessarily our ideas. We need to be the ones to step up, to know what we want, to say what we want, and to be heard. This is our life!"[74]

The purpose of public education is to help children gain the skills they need to make choices about how they live their lives and prepare them to become adults who are contributing members of their communities. Given how much students have at stake in their own education, and given how important it is for them to learn how to be responsible, contributing, and functioning adults, it only makes sense for parents and schools to use every opportunity to help them grow into those mature roles, starting as early as possible. Student engagement is a central part of this effort and includes such practices as student-led IEPs, person-centered planning, and opportunities for students to learn skills in self-determination and self-advocacy, each of which has a strong research base documenting its effectiveness. In addition, schools need to adopt a welcoming environment that includes conducting family

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74 California Department of Education. (2014). Students as collaborators: Self-Advocacy. *The Special EDge*, p. 14. Retrieved from http://www.calstat.org/specialEdge.html

friendly IEP meetings and integrating family engagement into the processes for special education. Too often educators assume that children with disabilities can't know what they want; too often adults don't even think to consider asking students about what they want from their schooling or from a particular course of study. And while best practices for IEP meetings and transition plans reflect the saying "nothing about me without me," IEP meetings that include students are rare in this state. Even rarer are those IEPs where students lead.

Recommendations

Parents and family members are critical to the school and life success of their children with disabilities. In successful schools, they are asked to contribute their insights about how their children learn, and they work with educators to construct useful strategies for home and school. They receive frequent reports on their children and how their needs are being addressed. Given the importance of family involvement—in terms of later learning and employment options for students, in terms of their improved life satisfaction and capacity for community and social involvement, and in terms of the savings to public benefits when people become employed to their fullest capacity and live as independently as possible—all efforts to inform and effectively support parents who have children with disabilities and to enhance their

involvement in the special education process should be expanded. As well, students must be heard and included in decisions about their education in every way that is appropriate for their age and their ability. In school they must be given every opportunity to learn how to become independent adults.

In support of improved family and student engagement, the state needs policy change to ensure the following:

- Fully funded Family Empowerment Centers (FEC) statewide, as already legislated in SB 511, so that each of the 32 FEC regions has a center

- Increased funding to Family Resource Centers (FRC)

- Established data-collection systems to monitor the work done by the FRCs/FECs

- Clear and specific guidelines and reinforcements for teacher-parent-school collaboration and interaction

- Clear and specific guidelines and reinforcement for student involvement in their own IEP meetings and student-led IEPs

- Coordinated systems of cross-agency and community-based trainings that focus on collaborative, efficient, and effective services in a seamless delivery system that supports parents and students

Context

Public financing should be fair, adequate, equitable, rational, and coherent. Public officials are elected or hired to ensure these things. Yet special education financing in California often seems to be none of the above.

In part, this current imbalance is understandable. Among all of the state's obligations related to education, special education financing may be one of the most complicated; it's saddled with multiple mandates, grandfathered funding patterns, and seemingly countless competing interests and agendas. However, with sufficient public will and a commitment to what the money and the educational system were originally and ultimately designed to do— educate those of our children who need and deserve special supports in order to become productive citizens—special education financing can be redesigned to actually be fair, adequate, equitable, rational, and coherent.

Challenges

The federal Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) mandates that states and school districts provide "specially designed instruction, and related services . . . to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability."[75] During the 2012–2013 school year, school districts and charter schools spent a total of $10.7 billion on those services, which works out to an average cost of $22,300 per student, far more than the $9,600 spent, on average, to educate students without disabilities.[76] While students with disabilities

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75 IDEA
76 Legislative Analyst's Office. (January, 2013). Overview of special education in California. Retrieved from http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2013/edu/special-ed-primer/special-ed-primer-010313.aspx

represent approximately 11.31 percent of the student population in California, special education consumes more than 20 percent of the state's education budget—and more than 40 percent of all education-targeted dollars during the last decade.

Underfunded Federal Mandate

IDEA legislation promised the federal government to fund "up to" 40 percent of the "excess costs" of these services, with state and local funds making up the rest. Congress regularly insists that it is moving toward that goal but has never allocated anything close to the promised 40 percent. Currently California's IDEA grant covers approximately 11.5 percent of the costs, and the state contributes approximately 46 percent. Over the past seven years, the money that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) have had to spend on special education, over and above state and federal contributions, has increased from 35 percent to 43 percent.

Special Education Local Plan Areas

California distributes the federal special education funds it receives, as well as the state's contribution, through 130 Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs). Most of the SELPAs are made up of multiple districts and charter schools; but in large districts, the SELPA is one single large school district, typically located in an urban setting (Los Angeles, for example). The formulas that drive the distribution of money among the SELPAs are, in great part, the source of the funding challenges for special education: they are decades out of date, do not reflect the rising costs of special services, and are starkly inequitable from one SELPA to the next.

Average Daily Attendance

Average Daily Attendance (ADA) refers to the number of students who attend school in any given school district or Local Education Agency (LEA). The number is used to ensure that schools are adequately funded according to student population. However, some SELPAs receive twice the state special education money per average daily attendance unit (i.e., per student) as others. For example, Plumas County receives $470 per student annually while Modoc County receives $917.[77] This variance is not due to differences in the cost of special education services from one SELPA to the next but rather to how much each SELPA received in 1997. Prior to that, what was spent on special education services in 1979 in each separate SELPA was used as the baseline for determining the money each of those SELPAs received. The historical funding pattern in each SELPA trumped actual need. Over time, the state has tried to even out these disparities; but, for many reasons having to do with antiquated funding formulas, the disparities remain.[78]

The state annually calculates the amount each SELPA is to receive under the current funding formula and includes it in the state budget. If actual enrollment is higher, SELPAs do not receive additional money unless the legislature takes action to augment the original budget. This creates a significant hardship for schools, as it shifts costs to local education agencies based on the state's underestimation of ADA and thus the actual funds needed. The problems don't just stop here. If the state underestimates the amounts needed for any one of a number of other specific "pots of money"—base amount, cost of living allowances (COLA), equalization, growth, low incidence disabilities, out-of-home

care, infant funding, and others—SELPAs find themselves with a shortfall of funds unless the state specifically takes action.

General education, thanks in part to the Local Control Funding Formula, works differently. It provides a "continuous appropriation" that automatically increases funding when enrollment increases, even after the state budget has been finalized. Special education, unfortunately, does not have this kind of sensible system.[79]

First, it's important to establish that using ADA as a basis for determining special education funding makes good sense. The other option would be to base the funding on the identified needs of students; but that has been shown to create an incentive, conscious or not, of over-identifying students in order to secure extra funds.

But how the growth of "average daily attendance" is calculated represents a challenge in California. Currently, ADA is calculated across entire SELPAs rather than in each local education agency that the SELPA serves. For example, if enrollment increases in one district in the SELPA by 100 students and falls by 100 students in another, the amount the entire SELPA receives does not change. The growing school district's costs go up, but it does not receive additional funding, in part because the SELPA does not have the power to move resources, such as a needed teacher, from one district to the other. But neither do the costs of the district with declining enrollment necessarily go down, because the decline at any particular school may

77 This money is distributed according to a legislatively established formula (in Assembly Bill 602), which went into effect for the 1998–99 school year. AB 602 provides additional funding to SELPAs with above-average incidence of high-cost students with disabilities. Another major component of AB 602 is the Out-of-Home Care (OHC) Program.
78 Legislative Analyst's Office. (February 2013). The 2013–2014 budget: Proposition 98 education analysis. Retrieved from http://www.lao.ca.gov/analysis/2013/education/prop-98/prop-98-022113.pdf

79 Proposed legislative language for this provision: "Continuous Appropriation: Amount, specific or estimated, available each year under a permanent constitutional or statutory expenditure authorization which exists from year to year without further legislative action. The amount available may be a specific, recurring sum each year; all or a specified portion of the proceeds of specified revenues which have been dedicated permanently to a certain purpose; or whatever amount is required for the purpose as determined by formula—such as school apportionments. This will also ensure that cash flow will continue to special education under the continuous appropriations funding elements, in the same manner as the LCFF works, even if there is no state budget that has been approved."

be too small to justify a reduction in workforce, and also because ADA is calculated too late in the year to alter employment contracts. These discrepancies create particular problems for charter schools and small school districts.

Calculating the amount of funds that SELPAs receive and accounting for all of the various aspects of the special education funding formulas are complex tasks and currently require a significant number of CDE staff, often talented individuals whose time could be better spent on other activities. As well, the existing data systems are overly cumbersome and complex, restricted in their design, reflective of little thoughtful coordination, and preclude any nimble response to the often-adjusted state and federal requirements, all of which often lead to the unintended consequence of delaying payments to SELPAs.

Distributing among SELPAs the funds they need to provide mandated services to students with disabilities would do a great deal more than simply ensure services. Sufficient money to SELPAs would release the general education dollars that are currently being used for special education, and that money then could support the very things that ensure quality education for all students: early intervening services, targeted and ongoing professional learning opportunities, the implementation of a multi-tiered system of supports, and general education-special education collaboration.

The Local Control Funding Formula has become an educational financing model that's envied nationally for "bringing educators closer to their communities and providing insight into what the state's neediest students require."[80] Parts of the current special education funding model also have realized some success in supporting local control—while acknowledging the various needs

that SELPAs experience. Some of these needs include the continuance of the funding for small SELPAs, which allows SELPAs with an ADA that is less than 15,000 to still generate an allowance of $225,000 to pay for their operations; funding for educationally related mental health services, which is currently $71 per ADA; and the funding for out-of home care services, which is based on the number of beds in a SELPA and the level of intensity of need for each facility.

Early Intervening Services

School districts and regional centers are responsible for identifying infants, toddlers, and preschool children who have disabilities and who are showing signs of developmental delay and then arrange for these children to receive early intervening services. The research in support of the effectiveness of early intervening is conclusive, confirming the cost-effectiveness of these services. In one study, early intervening services for potential behavioral disorders showed the benefit to exceed the costs by a ratio of 7:1.[81]

For some students, these services are delivered through LEAs, and for others through a network of providers under contract with Department of Developmental Services Regional Centers. Yet access to these critical services—and the very existence of the services themselves—varies widely across the state. In some parts of the state there are virtually no services available to families; in others, the needs of young children are addressed comprehensively. As noted in the Early Learning section of this report, the need for these services to be delivered at an early age is critical. Equity is again lacking.

Low-Incidence Disabilities

In addition to funding per ADA, SELPAs receive money to support students who have what

80 Diepenbrock, W. Districts frustrated by a short timeline, unavailable testing data, and shifting state regulations. The Hechinger Report. Retrieved from http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/08/08/01thr_californiafunding.h34.html

81 National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study. (2007). *Early intervention for infants and toddlers: Participants, services, and outcomes*. Retrieved from http://www.sri.com/sites/default/files/publications/neils_finalreport_200702.pdf

are called "low-incidence" disabilities,[82] such as blindness, deafness, or "severe orthopedic impairments."[83] It is estimated that less than 1 percent of California students have these disabilities. These students have an equal right to an education that will help them realize their full potential. The services these students need may include one-on-one support, interpreters, medical supports while in school, or assistive technology—and these are all costly. SELPAs receive only $457 to provide each of these students with specialized materials and services. This amount is woefully inadequate to support many of the costs associated with serving these students' needs; this amount should be increased.[84]

The federal definition of "low-incidence disabilities" includes students with a "significant cognitive impairment" or any other "impairment for which a small number of personnel with highly specialized skills and knowledge" are needed to provide early intervention services.[85] For the purposes of funding, California's definition is narrower; as a result, many schools do not receive the funding they need to adequately support these children in their learning.

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82 A low-incidence disability has an expected incidence rate of (e.g., it occurs in) less than one percent of the total statewide enrollment in kindergarten through grade 12. CA Definition: EC 56026.5 "Definition of Low Incidence Disability 'Low incidence disability' means a severe disabling condition with an expected incidence rate of less than one percent of the total statewide enrollment in kindergarten through grade 12. For purposes of this definition, severe disabling conditions are hearing impairments, vision impairments, and severe orthopedic impairments, or any combination thereof. For purposes of this definition, vision impairments do not include disabilities within the function of vision specified in Section 56338."
83 In accordance with Education Code 56026.5. See http://www.oclaw.org/research/code/ca/EDC/56026.5./content.html#.VNynxUuDT0s
84 For example, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (www.bls.gov), translators and interpreters, including those specializing in American Sign Language, earned an average annual income of $47,920. Or consider the $1 per page cost of translating textbooks into Braille.
85 Federal Definition: Title I, Part D 662 c (3) Definition—In this section, the term "low incidence disability" means: (A) a visual or hearing impairment, or simultaneous visual and hearing impairments; (B) a significant cognitive impairment; or (C) any impairment for which a small number of personnel with highly specialized skills and knowledge are needed in order for children with that impairment to receive early intervention services or a free appropriate public education."

Transition to Adulthood

According to IDEA, all students with disabilities between the ages of 16 and 22 years old (up to high school graduation) have a right to such transition services as counseling and coaching to help them gain the skills they need to succeed in postsecondary education or employment. The U.S. Department of Education has notified California that the schooling and services the state provides are inadequate in this area.[86]

There is some irony here. In 1982 California created a program called WorkAbility to provide these services to students with moderate to more significant disabilities, helping them become aware of their career possibilities and potential, complete their high school education, learn important employment skills, and accrue direct work experience (both paid and unpaid) and ultimate job placement, all the while giving employers the opportunity to recognize and value the contributions that individuals with disabilities can make to their communities. In addition to providing occupational classes in the specific skills needed for employment, WorkAbility teaches students the "softer" employment skills—how to look for jobs and how to keep jobs. These kinds of programs pay for themselves in that they help students grow and become independent, self-supporting, tax-paying adults to the degree they are most capable. WorkAbility became a national model almost overnight. But some SELPAs receive funds for WorkAbility; others do not. There is no rational basis for this inequity.

Transportation for Students with Disabilities

Another challenge involves how the transportation of students with disabilities is funded through local education agencies (LEAs).

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86 Legislative Analyst's Office. (February 2013). The 2013–2014 budget: Proposition 98 education analysis. Retrieved from http://www.lao.ca.gov/analysis/2013/education/prop-98/prop-98-022113.pdf

Current funding levels once again bear no relationship to the cost of providing the services, nor—again—are the services available equally across the state. Historically, the amount each LEA received for special education transportation was based on how much that agency spent on these services in the early 1980s. In 2013–14, this funding was rolled into the base funding of each LEA under the Local Control Funding Formula. However, special education funding was not included in the LCFF because of the aforementioned wide funding disparities among LEAs in the state; thus no reasonable means could be developed that would ensure equity and fairness.

In fact, special education transportation should not be included within the LCFF because it varies significantly among LEAs and therefore distorts the LCFF. In general, transportation for students with disabilities is a mandated service that has historically been underfunded, and the amount of the shortfall has only increased as LEAs' costs have risen. According to the Legislative Analyst's Office,[87] the transportation cost for each student with a disability can be as much as six times that of a general education student.

IDEA requires districts to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) to students with disabilities. When an IEP team determines that transportation is necessary for a student to access his or her education, that transportation becomes a mandated related service, regardless of the cost. This mandate and its cost present a particular challenge for many rural school districts and LEAs. And while the number of students with disabilities has remained relatively stable over the past few years, the number of students with more significant disabilities has increased dramatically, with these students often requiring extra assistance, specialized

equipment, and longer bus routes. These students typically have transportation listed as a related service on their IEP, leaving districts with the requirement to fund the additional transportation costs.

Again, giving SELPAs sufficient money to provide these mandated services would serve to release general education dollars, which could then support the development of a robust and unified general education system, one that is replete with early intervening services, targeted and ongoing professional learning opportunities, a multi-tiered system of supports, and general education-special education collaboration.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

Special education procedures and bureaucracies can be cumbersome and frustrating for parents, students, and educators. In an ideal world, everyone involved collaborates and, in the face of misunderstandings or disagreements, works together to find common ground and reasonable solutions. But sometimes people simply disagree about the best way to resolve complaints or about what exactly is due under the law. Sometimes collaborative efforts are then undermined and adversarial relationships result; hard-and-fast positions are staked and formal complaints are filed; due process proceedings take place; people go to court.

Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) has shown itself to be one successful way to resolve disagreements and avoid expensive, formal legal action. The results of ADR processes have often been positive and lead to facilitated collaborative problem solving among those working with children, including parents and school and district personnel. Yet only 20 SELPAs currently receive grants to help pay for costs related to ADR. The dozens of remaining SELPAs are without the very supports that can effectively and constructively secure construction partnerships with parents, avoid costly litigation,

87   Legislative Analyst's Office. (February 2014). Review of school transportation in California. Retrieved from http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2014/education/school-transportation/school-transportation-022514.pdf

and most importantly ensure the provision of appropriate services and supports for children.

Facilities

The provisions of least restrictive environment (LRE) in federal law extend beyond ensuring evidence-based practices to ensure that students with disabilities are educated to the greatest extent appropriate with their nondisabled peers. School facilities also bear on the availability of these options. Several barriers related to physical school facilities exist which hamper the ability of students with disabilities to learn alongside their general education classmates or at least in specialized settings on general education sites.

The sources of these barriers are oftentimes understandable. It can be difficult to project what building needs will be over the long term because of the fluctuating needs of students and the length of time that a facility will serve to meet those needs, particularly with respect to low-incidence populations. Often small districts in particular don't have enough students with low-incidence disabilities to fill a class, so they get together with other area districts and create a program that a county office of education may operate and house, but is provided on a general education campus; this makes the students essentially "guests" on that campus. Given this guest status, the schools and districts have little leverage to ensure that the facilities are appropriate to serve their students. And finally, there exists no policy with the necessary clout to require school districts to consult with COEs or SELPAs when they are designing schools or modernizing existing facilities.

The challenge extends to facilities for very young children, as well. There are no state funds to support infant and pre-school facilities to serve infants and toddlers with disabilities. As well, there are no standards that detail provisions for the construction of facilities to serve our youngest children with disabilities. As a result, many infants, toddlers, and school-age children and youth have a difficult time accessing the very places that are legally mandated to welcome and accommodate them.

Medi-Cal Funds for LEA Billing Option Program

The May 2012 Local Educational Agency Medi-Cal Billing Option Program Report to the Legislature from the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) explained how many jurisdictions use federal Medicaid reimbursements as a crucial source of revenues for providing necessary health services to students. That program reimburses California's school districts and county offices of education (COEs) for health services provided to Medi-Cal eligible students.

Yet a report published by the United States General Accounting Office (GAO) in April 2000 estimated that California ranked in the bottom quartile of states with school-based Medicaid programs based on the average claim per Medicaid-eligible child. Senate Bill (SB) 231 (Ortiz, Chapter 655, Statutes of 2001), added Section 14115.8 to the Welfare and Institutions (W&I) Code in an effort to reduce the gap in per-child recovery for Medicaid school-based reimbursements for California and the three states that recover the most per child from the federal government. SB 231 was reauthorized in Assembly Bill (AB) 1540 (Committee on Health, Chapter 298, Statutes of 2009.) The LEA Billing Option (LBO) program that provides reimbursement for direct services to children with an IEP has been going through an overhaul and is expected to have some additional changes to integrate with new documentation requirements by the beginning of the 2015–2016 school year. A workgroup is currently being formed to work on many of the issues identified. In the meantime, significant challenges to secure reimbursements persist.

Since 2009–2010 the LBO program has generated between $130 million and $147 million (on average) annually to approximately 531 LEAs.

This number is expected to substantially decrease for 2014–2015 because of an increase in the requirements for supporting documentation that were put in place by DHCS. These requirements have forced districts to stop billing for certain services because they add an administrative burden that makes claiming for services a process that is so difficult and cumbersome that it essentially eliminates any appropriate return on investment. While the DHCS has made attempts to address some of the concerns related to the LBO program, the agency has not yet tackled the specific areas that promise a direct benefit to schools: revising program requirements to not exceed those determined by the federal government and expanding the list of eligible services to be in line with the rest of the nation.

Medi-Cal Funds for Administrative Activities Program

Another area of concern related to Medi-Cal services is the Medi-Cal Administrative Activities Program (MAA), which has operated in California for nearly 17 years. The program was created to help Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) provide Medi-Cal outreach and referral to their students. It is administered by DHCS, with intermediaries known as Local Educational Consortiums (LEC) and Local Governmental Agencies (LGA) working as the direct supervisors over LEAs. The purpose of this structure was to provide regional support to DHCS, which did not have the capacity to deal with the nearly 1,000 individual agencies that are eligible to take advantage of the available services.

Over the years the emphasis has been on compliance, without a parallel focus on the effectiveness of operations and benefits for parents and students. In addition, there has been an avalanche of added administrative burdens, which has contributed to LEAs becoming more and more frustrated with the MAA, to the point where between 30 and

40 percent of them have pulled out with a subsequent loss in funding resources.

At the same time, the LEA revenue history for the MAA Program has been dramatically reduced. Below is a small but representative list of the type of revenue changes that have happened over the past five to seven years:

- District A:
  » 2012–2013 (53 percent reduction from 2009–2010)
  » 2013–2014 (40 percent further reduction from 2012–2013)
- District B:
  » 2010–2011 (14 percent reduction from 2009–2010)
  » 2011–2012 (17 percent reduction from 2010–2011)
  » 2012–2013 (48 percent reduction from 2011–2012)
  » 2013–2014 (quit the program)
- District C:
  » 2012–2013 (52 percent reduction from 2009–2010)
  » 2013–2014 (quit the program)
- District D:
  » 2013–2014 (38 percent reduction from 2012–2013)

Annual changes in the program are directly contributing to this decline. These changes include the elimination of both administrative support and participant support in preparing time surveys. Certain types of staff were reclassified and thus no longer considered eligible to participate in the program. The eligibility status of certain activities were also changed and thus no longer qualified for the program, and certain higher costing activities were reclassified to codes that were less revenue-generating, and on and on. In general, the program made it more difficult, more complicated, and more costly for schools and other student-serving entities to participate.

A new time-keeping system, Random Moment Sampling, was introduced for the 2014–2015 school year. There is no current data available on how this new method has affected LEAs' revenues. However, many of the LEAs and providers of billing services assert that they will be fortunate to maintain even the lower revenue levels allocated for the 2013-2014 school year.

Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment Program

An additional area of Medi-Cal billing involves the Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment program, which was described in detail in a program example in the "Untapped Resources" example in the Early Learning section of this report. Currently the option for using these services exists for LEAs on a very limited basis.

Innovation and Flexibility

Certain aspects of the current system of financing for special education discourage innovation or efforts to increase efficiency. Under federal law, the state and LEAs are expected to spend at least as much on special education services as they did the year before. This is known as "maintenance of effort." The intent of the federal government was to avoid having states and local agencies increase their dependence on federal funds and simultaneously cut back on their own spending.

Maintenance of effort requirements are consistent with the original federal legislation that described a proportional sense of responsibility for paying for these services. The federal government has provided some flexibility in the definition of special education costs, such as allowing for special education funds to be used to support Response to Intervention (RtI) activities. Creating coherence between the way California accounts for special education costs and the federal definitions would assist in the goal of creating a seamless system between general education and special education and

working to reduce the number of students assigned to the special education system.[88] Unfortunately, California has not allowed for the same level of flexibility, thus unintentionally discouraging many districts from serving students more efficiently, particularly through early and targeted intervention efforts.

Eligibility for Scholarships for Students with Disabilities

Another federal funding inequity related to special education is a recent change in eligibility for college scholarships, which disallows any student who has not received a general or "regular" high school diploma to receive a college scholarship. This means that any student who has received a certificate of completion because of special education status, but who is attending college and is in good academic standing, is not eligible to be considered for a scholarship or grant. As a result of this restriction, many deserving and hard-working college students are deprived of the financial supports that could lead them to a college certificate or degree and ultimately self-supporting employment.

Recommendations

California needs a system of financing that provides the resources necessary to meet the needs of all students with disabilities, encourages greater coherence between general education and special education, is sensitive to changes in enrollment, and invests in the systems and provides incentives for practices that will lead to greater success for students. Those recommended changes that will cost money—essentially anything that effectively supports the learning and development of children with disabilities—have been shown to be solid investments that provide a solid return in the form of productive, tax-paying citizens

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88   One exception is when students with an IEP that calls for a very expensive treatment plan graduates from high school or ages out of eligibility for special education services.

and in the avoidance of more intensive—and expensive—services and supports that would be needed later.

In support of an effective and efficient special education funding system, this Task Force recommends the following:

Recommendations for State-Level Change

- Equalize the state's support for special education across California by overhauling the system of special education financing to give schools and districts more control over how they spend their money and to hold them accountable for adequately meeting the needs of students with disabilities (a model distinct from but coordinated with and similar to the LCFF).

- Ensure the availability of early intervention programs and services for all eligible students with disabilities and address the disparity of early intervention programs and services among early childhood care and education entities.

- Fund SELPAs based on ADA, but increase the amount allocated per ADA so that SELPAs are more equitably funded.

- Revise the special education funding formula so that the growth or decline in the enrollment of multi-district SELPAs is based on the growth or decline of ADA for each individual district, charter school, or county office of education instead of on these changes in the SELPA as a whole.

- Secure the integrity of specific special education dollars, especially the money that small SELPAs need in order to operate, as well as funds for educationally related mental health care services and for out-of-home care services.

- Update the electronic data systems that account for special education income and expenditures, thus allowing current CDE fiscal staff to devote more time to analyses,

while also allowing SELPA fiscal staff to be more efficient.

- Use the broader federal definition of "low-incidence" disabilities and increase allocations of low-incidence funding to SELPAs.

- Increase the funding for WorkAbility programs so that all SELPAs are receiving adequate WorkAbility funds.

- Provide to LEAs sufficient funds to meet their mandated special education transportation costs.

- Expand alternative dispute resolution resources, supports, and services throughout the state.

- Mandate collaborative efforts among school districts, charter schools, county offices of education, and SELPAs whenever a new school is being planned or a modernization project is being developed to ensure that facilities are available to students with moderate to severe disabilities.

- Require and support availability of facilities that serve infants and toddlers with disabilities in preschool settings.

Funding Recommendations for Federal-Level Change

- Work statewide and nationally to increase the federal share of the excess costs of serving students with disabilities to 40 percent.

- Determine how to break down the barriers that are preventing education entities from accessing and increasing Medi-Cal and Medicaid (LEA, MAA, and EPSDT) services and reimbursements.

- Clarify eligibility for college scholarships, under federal guidelines, to include students with disabilities who have received a certificate of completion.

The full subcommittee report for the recommendations on special education financing can be found at http://www.smcoe.org/about-smcoe/statewide-special-education-task-force/.

One theme recurs throughout this report: California needs an aligned system of education that establishes a coordinated framework for delivering early intervening services and for educating and serving all students well. The benefits of such a system for students, for their families, and for the state and national economies are proven and certain.

Tennessee: RtI as a Tool for Determination of SLD[i]

Tennessee began a focus on preparing *all* students for success after high school through the use of Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI) beginning in the spring of 2012. Their framework focuses on integrating not only Common Core State Standards but also their assessments, early intervention, and accountability systems for students at risk of school failure. The state focused on the belief that *all* students are learners.

An initial impetus to action was the state's adoption of the federal language in IDEA 2004 that suggests that states could adopt the use of RtI in the determination of a specific learning disability (SLD). While the language was adopted by the state, local education agencies could opt in or choose not to use a determination model based on RtI. Since that time the state has taken the following actions:

- In the spring of 2012, the Common Core Leadership Council acknowledged the need for a statewide RtI model for educational consistency and improved instruction.

- In the fall of 2012, the state released to all school districts a K–2 guideline for best instructional practices in reading and math.

- In January 2013, an RtI taskforce agreed to the development of a statewide RtI plan.

- In February 2013, a Reading/RtI Leadership Team was formed to research and write the response to instruction and intervention framework (RtI), a school psychologist RtI taskforce was also formed to review and determine interventions and eligibility standards for students suspected of having a specific learning disability.

- At the same time, the state advisory council for students with disabilities and the state board of education approved the use of an RtI problem-solving model for determination of a specific learning disability.

- As of July 1, 2014, RtI was the sole criteria by which a student would be identified as having a specific learning disability in Tennessee.

Subsequently, the state has developed resources for parents, teachers, and administrators that support the use of RtI[2], not only for determination of SLD but also for supporting any student in Tennessee schools struggling or at risk of school failure.

[i]Tennessee Department of Education. (August 2013). *RTI² Framework 2013: Response to Instruction and Intervention Framework Implementation Guide*. Retrieved from http://tn.gov/education/instruction/docs/RTI2_Manual.pdf

Context

Other states—Maryland, Kansas, and Tennessee specifically—have created coordinated policy, accountability, and instructional systems that address the entire range of learning needs and that support teachers and administrators in coherent efforts to successfully educate all students. So we know the vision described in this report is possible. We also know that engagement at all levels and coordinated leadership and action are essential to success and include these entities:

- Office of the Governor
- California Legislature
- State Board of Education
- California Department of Education
- Department of Finance
- California Commission on Teacher Credentialing
- Department of Developmental Services
- Department of Managed Health Care
- Department of Social Services and Foster Youth
- Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAS)
- Colleges and universities in the state
- Boards of education
- School and district superintendents
- Teachers and other staff members
- Parents and parent centers

Each of these must embrace the vision of a unified system if the education that is both necessary and required is to be coordinated and, to the fullest extent possible, integrated to efficiently and effectively serve children and their families.

For decades now we have known what all successful organizations have in common;

a shared vision is their first principle.[89] Implementation research and adult learning theory have also identified proven features of effective—and manageable—change and list the process for making it happen. The strategies and methods for improving administrator and staff competency include training, coaching, performance assessments, and fidelity measures. Changing the larger organizations and systems requires higher-level implementation strategies, infrastructure development, and the creation of data systems that support decision making and effective and facilitative leadership. Research also tells us that implementation initiatives are most successful when they happen in well-coordinated stages.[90]

Challenges

State-Level Change

Currently, state-level departments and divisions do not always model what they want others—districts and schools, administrators and teachers, services providers and parents—to do. To create a united system, they will need to leave behind "siloed" attitudes, ways of thinking, and patterns of work in nearly every aspect of what they do. Together they will need to coordinate policies and procedures, promote collectively advantageous legislation, develop aligned messages that are communicating clearly and efficiently to the field, and design coordinated initiatives that serve to strengthen every entity affected and involved.

Field-Level Change

California currently does not have a robust and wide-reaching regional structure to deliver professional learning and ongoing technical assistance to all teachers and

89 Senge, P. (Fall 1990). The leader's new work: Building learning organizations. *Sloan Management Review*, pp. 7–23. Retrieved from http://leeds-faculty.colorado.edu/larsenk/learnorg/senge2.html

90 Fixsen, D., Naoom, S., Blasé, K., Friedan, R., & Wallace, F. (2012). *Implementation research*. Retrieved from http://ctndisseminationlibrary.org/PDF/nirnmonograph.pdf

State-level Structure for Change: One Idea

The California Department of Education creates a high-level position, an intra- and interagency liaison, appointing someone to that position who then has the authority to work across the agency's divisions and with other agencies of the government to implement this vision. That liaison assembles a cross-agency policy team that is charged with mapping out the specific steps needed to shape the vision for a system of education that meets the needs of all students.

This Implementation and Accountability Team includes representatives from the Governor's office, the State Board of Education, the California Department of Education, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, the Legislature, the statewide Departments of Developmental Services, Health, Social Services, Health and Managed Care, and Department of Finance. The State Board of Education assigns a facilitator for this team who then convenes working groups, each of which takes a set of recommendations from this report and maps out a specific implementation plan, from specific short-term steps to long-term goals.

This group reports regularly on its progress to the Governor, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Board of Education, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, the Legislature, and any additional relevant agencies.

District- and School-level Structure for Change: One Idea

In too many instances, classroom teachers or site principals often find themselves alone after a professional learning event, trying to figure out how to incorporate an important but complicated new practice. This approach is most often ineffective and inefficient, especially when evidence-based practices or innovation is needed system wide. Coaching teams alter this forecast. These teams use implementation practice and science to support administrators and teachings in their efforts to incorporate a new strategy or approach into their practice. These teams provide the support and create a context for accountability. Research indicates that, without coaching teams, programs can expect only 14 percent implementation.[j] With coaching teams in place, programs can achieve 80 percent implementation. Additional research[k] further substantiates the value of these coaching teams. "Students [including adult learners] cannot benefit from instructional practices that they do not experience."[l]

[j]Balas, E. A., & Boren, S. A. (2000). Managing clinical knowledge for health care improvement. In J. Bemmel & A. T. McCray (Eds.), *Yearbook of Medical Informatics 2000: Patient-Centered Systems* (pp. 65–70). Stuttgart, Germany: Schattauer Verlagsgesellschaft.
[k]Coffey, J. H., & Horner, R. H. (2012). The sustainability of schoolwide positive behavior interventions and supports. *Exceptional Children, 78*(4), 407–422.
[l]National Implementation Research Network. (2013). *Module 1: An overview of active implementation Frameworks*. Retrieved from http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/book/export/html/66

administrators and to ensure that systems are implemented, frameworks applied, and evidence-based practices deployed everywhere with consistency and fidelity. Making the vision outlined in this report a reality will require this very kind of structure.

The proposed effort will also require a persistent and consistent method for sharing plans and visions, communicating information about methods and trainings, and generally ensuring that the initiatives outlined here have behind them a united and committed force of fully engaged general educators, special educators, parents, and school leaders. A robust communication plan must be in place to clearly inform all stakeholders of this vision and to provide the information they need to understand its good sense, its value for children, and its ultimate cost savings to the state, to the country, and to society at large.

All communications about this change must also include a call for patience on the part of everyone, especially those currently being

served by the separate special education system. We know that effective and lasting change happens slowly, over time, and with much patience. But we also know that a "down-to-earth, pragmatic, committed-to-excellence process—a framework—" will keep each county, each district, each school, each educator, and each parent "on track for the long haul."[91]

91 Collins, J. (October 2001). *Good to great*. Retrieved from http://www.jimcollins.com/article_topics/articles/good-to-great.html

Successfully Implementing Statewide Change

Successful and replicable models exist for creating educational change statewide. The SISEP (State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based practices) center at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute supports education systems in creating implementation capacity for evidence-based practices that benefit all students, especially students with disabilities.[m] The SISEP Center provides states and districts with:

- Intensive technical assistance for establishing an effective and affordable infrastructure for implementation of education innovations.

- Coordinated and shared professional learning via webinars and communities of practice bridging States and Districts.

- Online and off line coaching, teaching and learning about implementation, scaling, and reinvention.

- Tools and resources for conducting work, including formative and summative evaluations tools for action planning, monitoring, and outcome assessment.

[m] State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Retrieved from http://sisep.fpg.unc.edu

The Task Force is certain, however, that its recommendations lay out a blueprint for an effective, evidence-based system of schooling that will serve the needs of all students, but especially those with disabilities. Any movement toward the visions promises benefits in the short term. In the long term, given the strength, creativity, and energy that collectively exist in the people in this state, the proposed system, when fully implemented, could change the world.

Recommendations

At the highest level, state departments and divisions will need to coordinate their efforts to model the kind of collaboration that is needed at every other level for students to be best served. Such state-level efforts will help to create a lasting culture in which early childhood care and education efforts can be coordinated, along with clear articulation with the K–12 system. Districts and schools can then create similarly coordinated systems of evidence-based practices to prepare children for college, career, and adult life. Teacher and administrator preparation programs can promote evidence-based practices and structures and provide continued professional learning that aligns with what preparation programs are teaching and what schools are doing. This culture will demand data sources that are integrated and robust; as a result, accountability will have weight and meaning. Within this culture,

assessments are accurate and inclusive. Funding processes are prudent and efficient, and they provide in the most cost-effective way possible the money needed to support all exemplary educational efforts.

In service to implementing this vision, the Task Force recommends the following:

- State-level commitment to aligning policies, practices, and systems of support across initiatives.

- Clearly and thoroughly articulated and disseminated statewide standards of practice based on the following:

  » Universal design for learning

  » A tiered school and classroom system designed to coordinate and provide support to all students and that is primarily located in general education. This system incorporates a response to intervention approach and addresses both

  – academics and

  – social-emotional learning and positive behavioral supports and practices.

- A system for training current teachers and school administrators on evidence-based practices, including transition strategies, culturally responsive teaching, technology, and youth and family involvement

Many children in this state are at risk for school failure. This report and these recommendations represent a call to action for California to eliminate that risk and give all children a secure pathway to school success.

The way forward will not be easy, nor will the implementation be quick. The state's system of education is large and complicated.

But California has seen recent movement toward collaborative systems, thanks to the Local Control Funding Formula and its plans. California has established high standards for every student, thanks to the Common Core State Standards. And California has a chance to ensure that every student counts, thanks to the system of assessments that is being developed.

We know what to do: We know that early intervention at every stage of human development improves lives. We know that collaborative systems are efficient and cost effective. We know that when we use evidence-based practices, children learn more—and we even know what those practices are. We know that when teachers and staff are well trained and when educators work together in a united effort to deliver effective programs and services, all children benefit. We know that when data informs what happens in the classroom, children succeed. And we know that, if we follow through with a strong commitment to each of these things and if we have adequate resources at all levels, we have the opportunity to create our own brand of educational excellence in California.

To believe that the recommendations in this document would ultimately improve and make happier the lives of millions of children and their families and save billions of dollars is not just an act of faith. Research and experience have established the certain benefit of what this Task Force is asking of California's policymakers, educators, and parents.

This document presents an important vision. The next phase involves concrete steps: an implementation and accountability team from across agencies that has the experience, the will, and the ability to begin the work of turning this vision into reality.

Now is the time for everyone involved to embrace these recommendations and move forward with this reform agenda to help ensure that all of California's children receive the education they need to become involved and contributing members of society. This Task Force asks every general and special education stakeholder to brave this difficult task and to take that first step—and the many following steps— to ensure that schools in this state serve every child well.

Percent Proficient - Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs)

Groups	English-Language Arts Target 89.0% Met all percent proficient rate criteria? No					Mathematics Target 89.1% Met all percent proficient rate criteria? No				
	Valid Scores	Number At or Above Proficient	Percent At or Above Proficient	Met 2013 AYP Criteria	Alternative Method	Valid Scores	Number At or Above Proficient	Percent At or Above Proficient	Met 2013 AYP Criteria	Alternative Method
Statewide	3,702,894	2,095,425	56.6	No		3,704,895	2,203,907	59.5	No	
Black or African American	234,518	101,768	43.4	No		234,681	97,729	41.6	No	
American Indian or Alaska Native	23,494	11,256	47.9	No		23,516	11,348	48.3	No	
Asian	324,878	257,795	79.4	No		324,919	276,100	85.0	No	
Filipino	94,039	69,429	73.8	No		94,047	70,517	75.0	No	
Hispanic or Latino	1,957,577	889,622	45.4	No		1,958,931	991,613	50.6	No	
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	20,076	10,499	52.3	No		20,076	11,277	56.2	No	
White	948,026	685,407	72.3	No		948,467	675,961	71.3	No	
Two or More Races	91,137	63,851	70.1	No		91,068	63,424	69.6	No	
Socio-economically Disadvantaged	2,296,063	1,035,824	45.1	No		2,297,706	1,155,877	50.3	No	
English Learners	1,227,599	477,342	38.9	No		1,228,540	604,280	49.2	No	
Students with Disabilities	450,493	157,021	34.9	No		453,857	168,530	37.1	No	

Source: CDE 2013 AYP Overview

Identification of Children with Disabilities

STUDENT ENROLLMENT, AGES 6 THROUGH 21

Student Category	State Students (#)	State Students (%)	Nation Students (#)	Nation Students (%)
All students	5,726,134		44,960,222	
Children with disabilities (IDEA)	613,061	10.7	5,823,844	13.0

Explanatory Note: The number of total students enrolled in public schools in the state and nation as of October 1, 2011 (or the closest day to October 1) for all grade levels from grade 1 through grade 12, as well as ungraded. The number and percentage of children with disabilities (IDEA) in the state and nation as of the state-designated child count date (between October 1 and December 1, 2012). Children with disabilities (IDEA) are served by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Data reported for IDEA 2012 Child Count and the SY 2011-12 Common Core of Data (CCD). National IDEA Child Count data represent the US, Outlying Areas, and Freely Associated States and the national CCD data represent the US and Outlying Areas.

PERCENT OF POPULATION WHO ARE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (IDEA), AGES 3 THROUGH 21

Age	State (%) SY 2010-11	State (%) SY 2011-12	State (%) SY 2012-13	Nation (%) SY 2012-13
3 through 5	4.7	4.8	4.9	6.1
6 through 21	7.0	7.1	7.3	8.6

Explanatory Note: The percentage of the population who are children with disabilities (IDEA) in the state and nation as of the state designated special education child count date, for the age ranges of 3 through 5 and 6 through 21. Data reported for IDEA 2012 Child Count and Census. National IDEA Child Count data represent the US, Outlying Areas, and Freely Associated States and national Census data represent the 50 states and DC (including BIE).

1

PERCENT OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (IDEA) BY DISABILITY CATEGORY, AGES 6 THROUGH 21

Disability Category	Percent of Overall Student Enrollment State (%)	Percent of Overall Student Enrollment Nation (%)
Autism	1.12	0.99
Deaf-blindness	0.00	0.00
Emotional disturbance	0.44	0.80
Hearing impairment	0.19	0.15
Intellectual disability	0.67	0.94
Multiple disabilities	0.09	0.28
Orthopedic impairment	0.19	0.12
Other health impairment	1.09	1.71
Specific learning disabilities	4.87	5.20
Speech or language impairment	1.97	2.36
Traumatic brain injury	0.03	0.06
Visual impairment	0.06	0.06

Explanatory Note: The percentage of enrollees who are children with disabilities (IDEA), by disability category, in the state and nation for the age range of 6 through 21 (excluding children with developmental delays). For this calculation, the numerator is the number of children with disabilities (IDEA) in a specific disability category as of the state-designated special education child count date (between October 1 and December 1, 2012) for ages 6 through 21 (excluding children with developmental delays) and the denominator is the total number of students enrolled in public schools as of October 1, 2011 (or the closest school day to October 1) for all grade levels from grade 1 through grade 12, as well as ungraded. Data reported for IDEA 2012 Child Count and 2011-12 CCD. National IDEA Child Count data represent the US, Outlying Areas, and Freely Associated States and national CCD data represent US and Outlying Areas.

2

PERCENT OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (IDEA) BY DISABILITY CATEGORY, AGES 3 THROUGH 21

Disability Category	CWDs (IDEA), Ages 3-5 State (%)	CWDs (IDEA), Ages 3-5 Nation (%)	CWDs (IDEA), Ages 6-21 State (%)	CWDs (IDEA), Ages 6-21 Nation (%)
All disabilities	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Autism	19.3	7.8	10.4	7.8
Deaf-blindness	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Developmental delay*	-	37.2		
Emotional disturbance	0.2	0.4	4.1	6.3
Hearing impairment	2.1	1.3	1.7	1.2
Intellectual disability	5.7	2.0	6.3	7.4
Multiple disabilities	1.2	1.1	0.8	2.2
Orthopedic impairment	2.3	0.9	1.8	0.9
Other health impairment	3.6	2.9	10.2	13.5
Specific learning disabilities	0.9	1.2	45.5	41.0
Speech or language impairment	64.1	44.7	18.4	18.6
Traumatic brain injury	0.1	0.1	0.3	0.4
Visual impairment	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.5

*Developmental delay is only allowable through age 9, so a 6-21 percentage cannot be calculated.

Explanatory Note: The percentage represents a distribution of children with disabilities (IDEA) by disability category for age ranges 3 through 5 and 6 through 21 (excluding children with developmental delays). For this calculation, the denominator is all children with disabilities (IDEA) for the specified age range, excluding developmental delays for ages 6 through 21. Data reported for IDEA 2012 Child Count. National data represent the US, Outlying Areas, and Freely Associated States.

Graduation Rates

FOUR-YEAR REGULATORY ADJUSTED COHORT GRADUATION RATE

	SY 2011-12 CWDs (IDEA) (%)	SY 2011-12 All Students (%)
Graduation Rate	61%	78%

Explanatory Note: The percentage of students from the original cohort who graduated in four years with a regular high school diploma. Data reported for CSPR purposes.

3

Educational Environment

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS, AGES 3 THROUGH 5

Disability Category	CWDs Attending and Receiving the Majority of Special Education and Related Services in a Regular Early Childhood Program State (%)	CWDs Attending and Receiving the Majority of Special Education and Related Services in a Regular Early Childhood Program Nation (%)	CWDs Attending a Separate Special Education Class, Separate School, or Residential Facility State (%)	CWDs Attending a Separate Special Education Class, Separate School, or Residential Facility Nation (%)
All disabilities	38.8	42.4	36.0	26.4
Autism	28.1	32.1	61.5	48.7
Deaf-blindness	35.0	31.3	50.0	50.9
Developmental delay	-	42.8	-	35.7
Emotional disturbance	41.9	47.7	45.3	22.8
Hearing impairment	37.5	35.6	46.5	42.5
Intellectual disability	29.1	31.2	61.4	45.6
Multiple disabilities	25.5	23.8	62.2	50.7
Orthopedic impairment	31.9	42.7	56.8	35.3
Other health impairment	37.3	44.8	47.0	29.0
Specific learning disabilities	61.1	51.5	26.0	11.8
Speech or language impairment	43.2	44.7	23.9	12.8
Traumatic brain injury	41.8	38.3	39.8	35.5
Visual impairment	46.6	44.7	40.0	32.6

Explanatory Note: The percentage of children with disabilities (IDEA) in the state and nation by disability category attending a regular early childhood program, or a separate special education class, separate school, or residential facility. Note that this table does not include all reported preschool educational environment categories. The denominator is all children with disabilities (IDEA), ages 3 through 5, in the specified disability category. Data reported for IDEA 2012 Educational Environment. National data represent the US, Outlying Areas, and Freely Associated States.

4

EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENTS, AGES 6 THROUGH 21

Percent of Time Spent Inside the Regular Classroom

Disability Category	≥ 80% of Day State (%)	≥ 80% of Day Nation (%)	40 to 79% of Day State (%)	40 to 79% of Day Nation (%)	< 40% of Day State (%)	< 40% of Day Nation (%)	Separate School or Residential Facility State (%)	Separate School or Residential Facility Nation (%)
All disabilities	52.6	61.5	20.3	19.5	22.2	13.7	3.8	3.3
Autism	33.3	39.5	16.0	18.1	42.0	33.2	7.8	8.1
Deaf-blindness	9.0	21.5	7.2	11.5	60.4	34.0	17.1	27.8
Emotional disturbance	25.4	44.1	16.0	17.8	30.1	20.3	25.5	14.7
Hearing impairment	52.4	57.8	14.4	16.4	22.0	12.6	10.4	11.6
Intellectual disability	6.2	17.1	14.5	26.6	68.9	48.7	9.7	6.6
Multiple disabilities	4.6	13.1	5.3	16.2	67.5	46.2	16.4	20.7
Orthopedic impairment	27.3	54.8	12.7	16.2	43.5	21.6	13.4	4.7
Other health impairment	56.7	64.0	22.3	22.2	16.8	9.7	2.7	1.9
Specific learning disabilities	55.1	67.2	28.2	24.6	15.1	6.3	0.8	0.6
Speech or language impairment	81.9	86.6	7.4	5.5	9.4	4.3	0.4	0.3
Traumatic brain injury	32.5	49.0	20.7	22.3	36.4	20.1	6.6	5.8
Visual impairment	51.4	64.7	14.9	13.0	23.8	11.0	8.2	9.3

Explanatory Note: The percentage of children with disabilities (IDEA) in the state and nation by disability category (excluding children with developmental delays) attending regular classrooms, or separate schools and residential facilities. Note that this table does not include all reported educational environment categories. The denominator is all children with disabilities (IDEA), ages 6 through 21 (excluding children with developmental delays), in a specified disability category. Data reported for IDEA 2012 Educational Environment. National data represent the US, Outlying Areas, and Freely Associated States.

5

Participation and Performance on Assessments

PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (IDEA) IN STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS

Grade and Subject Assessed	General Assessment (%)	Alternate Assessment (%)	Non-participant (%)
4th grade reading/language arts	41	58	1
8th grade reading/language arts	39	59	2
High school reading/language arts	86	8	7
4th grade mathematics	49	50	1
8th grade mathematics	79	19	2
High school mathematics	87	8	5

Explanatory Note: The percentage of children with disabilities (IDEA) who participated in statewide assessments for reading and mathematics for 4th grade, 8th grade, and high school. The denominator is the sum of children with disabilities (IDEA) who participated and children with disabilities (IDEA) who did not participate in statewide assessments (excluding those with a significant medical emergency who did not take the assessment). Due to differences in the calculations used for the "children with disabilities (IDEA)" subgroup, these percentages may differ from those reported for the CSPR. Data reported for 2012-13 Assessment, accessed from EDFacts on April 16, 2014. Participation data submitted by the following states/ entities were flagged due to questionable data quality in one or more subject area, grade, and assessment type: BIE, CA, DC, ID, IL, MA, NM, OK, RI, WV, and WY.

PERFORMANCE ON STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS

Grade and Subject Assessed	Proficient (%) General Assessment (CWD)	Proficient (%) Alternate Assessment (CWD)	Proficient (%) General Assessment (All Students)
4th grade reading/language arts	46	39	64
8th grade reading/language arts	29	38	57
High school reading/language arts	14	83	59
4th grade mathematics	55	42	72
8th grade mathematics	15	38	47
High school mathematics	17	75	61

Explanatory Note: The percentage of students in the state who scored at or above proficient (as determined by each state) on the general assessment for all students and children with disabilities (IDEA) in 4th grade, 8th grade, and high school, and the percentage of children with disabilities (IDEA) in the state who scored at or above proficient (as determined by each state) on the alternate assessment. Due to differences in the calculations used for the "all students" and "children with disabilities (IDEA)" subgroup, these percentages may differ from those reported for the CSPR. Data reported for 2012-13 Assessment, accessed from EDFacts on April 16, 2014.
Achievement data submitted by the following states/ entities were flagged due to questionable data quality in one or more subject area, grade, and assessment type: BIE, CA, IL, MA, OK, and WY.

6

PERFORMANCE ON 2013 NAEP ASSESSMENTS

Grade and Subject Assessed	At or Above (%) Basic (CWD)	At or Above (%) Basic (Non-CWD)	At or Above (%) Proficient (CWD)	At or Above (%) Proficient (Non-CWD)
4th grade reading/language arts	23	61	10	28
8th grade reading/language arts	27	76	5	31
High school reading/language arts				
4th grade mathematics	34	77	11	34
8th grade mathematics	19	69	5	30
High school mathematics				
Explanatory Note: The percentage of students in the state who scored at or above the Basic level and at or above the Proficient level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), for children with disabilities (IDEA) and children without disabilities. Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires states that receive Title I funding to participate in the state NAEP in reading and mathematics at grades 4 and 8 every two years. State NAEP does not provide individual scores for the students or schools assessed. Instead, NAEP provides results about subject-matter achievement, instructional experiences, and school environment, and reports these results for populations of students (e.g., fourth-graders) and subgroups of those populations (e.g., children with disabilities (IDEA)). Most states' proficiency standards are at or below NAEP's definition of the Basic performance level. See "Mapping State Proficiency Standards onto the NAEP Scales: Variation and Change in State Standards for Reading and Mathematics, 2005-2009" for more information.				

EXCLUSION RATES FOR 2013 NAEP ASSESSMENTS

Grade and Subject Assessed	Exclusion Rate State (%)	Exclusion Rate Nation (%)
4th grade reading/language arts	23	16
8th grade reading/language arts	22	15
High school reading/language arts		
4th grade mathematics	16	9
8th grade mathematics	12	10
High school mathematics		
Explanatory Note: The percentage of students identified as having a disability who were excluded from the NAEP assessment. National exclusion rates were based on figures available under "National (public)."		

7

Race/Ethnicity

PERCENT OF STATE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (IDEA) BY RACE/ETHNICITY, AGES 6 THROUGH 21

Disability Category	Hispanic/ Latino (%)	Black or African American (%)	White (%)	Asian (%)	American Indian or Alaska Native (%)	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (%)	Two or more races (%)	All Race/ Ethnicities (%)
All students	51.8	6.6	26.2	11.3	0.7	0.6	2.8	100.0
All disabilities	53.3	10.0	27.3	5.8	0.8	0.4	2.4	100.0
Autism	38.1	7.7	36.5	13.9	0.5	0.4	3.0	100.0
Deaf-blindness	44.1	4.5	35.1	10.8	0.0	0.0	5.4	100.0
Emotional disturbance	32.4	18.8	41.0	2.7	1.2	0.4	3.5	100.0
Hearing impairment	56.6	5.9	24.3	10.0	0.4	0.6	2.1	100.0
Intellectual disability	57.2	10.5	21.4	8.0	0.6	0.5	1.8	100.0
Multiple disabilities	48.6	9.6	28.6	9.6	0.4	0.7	2.4	100.0
Orthopedic impairment	50.2	7.1	31.8	7.8	0.5	0.7	1.9	100.0
Other health impairment	39.8	12.8	39.7	3.6	0.9	0.4	2.7	100.0
Specific learning disabilities	61.5	10.9	21.3	3.1	0.9	0.4	1.9	100.0
Speech or language impairment	52.8	5.9	28.6	8.3	0.7	0.5	3.1	100.0
Traumatic brain injury	50.4	10.5	29.0	6.0	1.2	0.6	2.3	100.0
Visual impairment	46.7	8.3	31.8	9.3	0.8	0.8	2.4	100.0

Explanatory Note: The percentage of children with disabilities (IDEA), ages 6 through 21, in a particular disability category and particular race/ethnicity category in the state. The numerator is the number of children with disabilities (IDEA), ages 6 through 21, in a particular disability category and race/ethnicity category as of the state designated child count date (between October 1 and December 1, 2012) and the denominator is the total number of children with disabilities (IDEA), ages 6 through 21, in a particular disability category. The "All Student" row is calculated using the total number of students enrolled in public schools in grade 1 through grade 12, as well as ungraded, in the state as of October 1, 2011 (or the closest day to October 1). Data reported for IDEA 2012 Child Count and 2011-12 CCD.

8

PERCENT OF STATE CWDS (IDEA) BY EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND RACE/ETHNICITY, AGES 6 THROUGH 21

Educational Environment	Hispanic/ Latino (%)	Black or African American (%)	White (%)	Asian (%)	American Indian or Alaska Native (%)	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (%)	Two or more races (%)	All Race/ Ethnicities (%)
≥ 80% of day spent inside regular classroom	51.7	46.5	56.3	52.4	53.5	51.0	56.2	100.0
40 to 79% of day spent inside regular classroom	21.9	20.2	18.8	14.3	23.4	19.6	16.9	100.0
< 40% of day spent inside regular classroom	22.8	25.3	18.7	28.1	18.4	24.6	22.0	100.0
Separate school; Residential facility	2.9	6.6	4.5	4.2	3.7	3.6	3.4	100.0

Explanatory Note: The percentage of children with disabilities (IDEA), ages 6 through 21, in a particular race/ethnicity category and particular educational environment in the state. The numerator is the number of children with disabilities (IDEA), ages 6 through 21, in a particular race/ethnicity category and particular educational environment as of the state-designated child count date (between October 1 and December 1, 2012) and the denominator is the total number of children with disabilities (IDEA), ages 6 through 21, in a particular race/ethnicity category. Data reported for IDEA 2012 Child Count.

TOTAL DISCIPLINARY REMOVALS OF CWD (IDEA) IN STATE BY RACE/ETHNICITY, AGES 3 THROUGH 21

Student Group	Hispanic/ Latino	Black or African American	White	Asian	American Indian or Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Two or more races	All Race/ Ethnicities
Number of Disciplinary Removals per Child with a Disability	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2

Explanatory Note: The number of disciplinary removals per child with a disability (IDEA), ages 3 through 21, by race/ethnicity category. The numerator is the total number of disciplinary removals in a particular race/ethnicity category and the denominator is the total number of children with disabilities (IDEA), ages 3 through 21, in a particular race/ethnicity category as of the state-designated child count date (between October 1 and December 1, 2011). Data reported for IDEA 2011-12 Discipline and 2011 Child Count.

9

Parental Involvement

INDICATOR 8: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT (FFY 2012 APR, 2014)

	State (%)
Percent of parent with a child receiving special education services who report that schools facilitated parent involvement as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities.	98.9
Explanatory Note: State-selected data source. Sampling of parents from whom a response is requested is allowed. Sample must yield valid and reliable data and must be representative of the population sampled. N/A means the percentage is not applicable to the state.	

Preschool Outcomes

INDICATOR 7: PRESCHOOL OUTCOMES (FFY 2012 APR, 2014)

Summary Statement 1: Of those children who entered the program below age expectations in each of the following outcome, the percent who substantially increased their rate of growth by the time they turned six years of age or exited the program in the outcome of:	State (%)
Positive social-emotional skills	61.3
Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills	61.1
Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs	67.1

Summary Statement 2: The percent of children who were functioning within age expectations in each of the following outcomes by the time they turned six years of age or exited the program	State (%)
Positive social-emotional skills	62.1
Acquisition and use of knowledge and skills	60.5
Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs	66.3
Explanatory Note: State-selected data source. Sampling of children for assessment is allowed. Sample must yield valid and reliable data and must be representative of the population sampled. N/A means the percentage is not applicable to the state.	

Post School Outcomes

INDICATOR 14: POST SCHOOL OUTCOMES (FFY 2012 APR, 2014)

Percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had IEPs in effect at the time they left school and were:	State (%)
Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school	32.8
Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school	41.3
Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school	80.5
Explanatory Note: State-selected data source. Sampling of youth who had IEPs and are no longer in secondary school is allowed. Sample must yield valid and reliable data and must be representative of the population sampled. N/A means the percentage is not applicable to the state.	

10

x   Data have been suppressed to protect small cell counts.

<=3 Data in the cell are less than or equal to three.

- Data not available.

* Data flagged due to questionable data quality. These data violated data quality edit checks. Additional information explaining the discrepancies in the data may be available in the accompanying data notes document.

Note: Sum of percentages may not equal 100 percent because of rounding.

References: Additional state-level data on children with disabilities (IDEA) can be found at:http://www.ideadata.org, http://www.data.gov, http://www.eddataexpress.ed.gov, https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/elsi/, http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/, and http://factfinder2.census.gov. Information on U.S. Department of Education Special Education funding can be found at: http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/osep/2012apps.html.

11

Percentage of Students with Disabilities from 2006 through 2014

| Year | General Education K–12 Population | | | Total # of students birth through age 22 receiving special education services | Percent of all students (0–22) |
| | All Students | Students Receiving special education services K–12 | | | |
	Enrollment	Number	Percent of all K–12		
2013-14	**6,236,672**	**635,467**	**10.19%**	**705,308**	**11.31%**
2012-13	6,226,989	626,036	10.05%	695,173	11.16%
2011-12	6,220,993	618,239	9.94%	686,352	11.03%
2010-11	6,217,002	612,443	9.85%	678,929	10.92%
2009-10	6,190,425	614,031	9.92%	680,164	10.99%
2008-09	6,252,031	613,833	9.82%	678,105	10.85%
2007-08	6,275,469	616,364	9.82%	677,875	10.80%
2006-07	6,286,943	619,982	9.86%	679,648	10.81%