



P A C E

POLICY ANALYSIS FOR CALIFORNIA EDUCATION

**REBUILDING EDUCATION IN THE
GOLDEN STATE: A PLAN FOR
CALIFORNIA'S SCHOOLS**

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Policy Analysis for California Education

Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) is a university-based research center focusing on issues of state education policy and practice. PACE is located in the Schools of Education at the University of California, Berkeley and Stanford University and has an office in Sacramento. PACE is supported by funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nearly five years ago, in Fall 1990, Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) issued a reform plan for California schools. The state's schools faced enormous challenges and, PACE asserted then only a systematic, all-encompassing approach to reform could help meet students' diverse and growing needs. PACE acknowledged that California had taken some important steps toward education reform, but, we suggested, much remained to be accomplished.

The challenges PACE pointed to in 1990 have not abated. If anything, they have intensified. They revolve around three key issues: 1) explosive growth, 2) increasing diversity, and 3) lagging student achievement. Overcoming these challenges has been made all the more complex in an era of declining resources.

In the nearly five years since PACE issued its call for education reform, California has made modest progress on a number of fronts. But the state has not embraced a systematic, coordinated, comprehensive education change plan.

Thus, PACE is issuing an updated and revised Plan for California Schools.

In brief, PACE recommends that California:

- 1) Develop a set of measurable statewide education goals: a set of expectations for students and a set of guideposts for teachers and administrators.*
- 2) Develop a new student assessment system to replace the CLAS test by September 1996.*
- 3) Provide incentives for a new teacher salary schedule based on demonstrated professional skill and knowledge.*
- 4) Revitalize preservice and inservice teacher education to ensure that all California teachers meet a set of standards of professional competence.*

- 5) *Set as a goal that all California students achieve English proficiency and provide resources—financial and pedagogical—so that local districts can achieve the goal.*
- 6) *Reform the state school finance system by restoring local fiscal control and revising the overly complicated system of categorical funding for programs.*
- 7) *Intensify and expand the coordination of services between schools and social service agencies begun with the Healthy Start initiative in 1991.*
- 8) *Streamline the Education Code, and rigorously evaluate promising local reform efforts such as Charter Schools.*
- 9) *Encourage and support a well-designed set of experiments to test the hypothesis that enabling schools to make decisions about personnel, budget, instructional materials, hours of operation and roles of adult staff will lead to improved student achievement.*
- 10) *Formalize interagency cooperation and pass legislation to link school-to-career policy with education reform.*

REBUILDING EDUCATION IN THE GOLDEN STATE: A PLAN FOR CALIFORNIA'S SCHOOLS

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Thus, PACE is reissuing its Plan for California Schools. This is an updated and somewhat revised plan which recognizes progress that has been made and pinpoints areas still in crucial need of policy attention.

Why reissue a call for education reform now? The answer is that PACE believes there is a new window of opportunity for change occasioned by some hopeful economic and political circumstances.

California's economy has begun to emerge from the long recession. Economic indicators point to modest improvement. They also ring a note of caution that the state not squander scarce public resources. Now is the time to be particularly thoughtful about the most effective means to deploy education dollars in ways designed to enhance student achievement. Moreover, new federal education initiatives may provide a pool of available dollars to California which the state can employ in the development of a coherent set of education improvement strategies and programs.

Governor Pete Wilson was reelected with an impressive electoral margin in November 1994. The strength of the Governor's victory carries with it opportunity for new education policy initiatives, and the Governor has shown a modest interest in education reform.

California's newly elected Superintendent of Public Instruction, Delaine Eastin, spoke passionately during the campaign about her commitment to education reform. Her win at the polls gives her, and the department she now leads, a chance to translate interesting ideas into positive action.

This year, 1995, also marks an anniversary for California education. Ten years ago, the state issued "Who Will Teach Our Children?" the report of the California Commission on the Teaching Profession. This report, prescient in its recommendations, foreshadowed many of the national education reform reports that would follow. The report spoke to creating a more productive learning environment for all of California's students. But the California Commission's call for reform has largely gone unanswered. Now seems a propitious time for California to revisit that report and reassess the recommendations contained in it.

Finally, PACE believes there is an untapped, and largely unspoken, public restlessness for school reform. According to a PACE poll conducted in September 1993, the vast majority of Californians (80%) want to see education change, and nearly two-thirds (60%) believe the state's school system needs a "major overhaul." But the public is also cynical about the possibilities of education reform. A burst of new ideas for improving the schools might be just the catalyst for policy makers to build public support for educational improvement.

PACE, then, presents its 1995 Plan for California Schools. It is offered in the form of "ten points," ten education reform areas on which PACE believes state policy makers need to focus.

1. Establish Educational Goals

What do we want California students to know and be able to do? The answer to that question could provide a valuable road map for California schools.

PACE believes the state should develop just such a "road map" in the form of a set of consensually arrived at, clearly articulated, measurable education goals.

Goals would be framed as a set of expectations for students and a set of guideposts for teachers and administrators. Such goals would enable the state to chart an education course and track progress. Absent these goals, the state's school system lurches from one reform idea to the next with no comprehensive focus or established pathway to follow.

California has many of the building blocks to establish measurable goals for its schools. The state's curriculum frameworks, for example, while

less than perfect, serve as the basis for useful guides to establish a coherent set of academic content goals toward which all students should strive. To those must be added a set of additional expectations for students, such as persistence in school, participation in extracurricular or service activities, college attendance rates, and ability to secure productive employment.

The state temporarily has suspended development of a new student assessment system. But a new assessment system which builds on previous California efforts can provide the crucial means by which to measure those goals that are tied to students' academic accomplishments.

State efforts in the area of teacher professional development—the Subject Matter Projects are a prime example—provide expandable opportunities for better equipping teachers to assist students to meet state-established goals.

California, then, does not need to begin from a blank slate. Rather, the task before policy makers is to establish a set of clearly and forcefully articulated performance expectations, to link existing state policies in a coherent and systematic manner, and to fill in policy and program gaps where such gaps exist.

The state would do well to view the establishment of education goals as a first step in the development of a Master Plan for the K-12 system. Such a plan ought consciously to be linked to California's Master Plan for higher education in an effort to provide the state with a concrete and seamless vision of ongoing education for its citizens from the earliest school grades through post-graduate studies.

The development and implementation of a set of well thought out education goals also is consistent with current federal policy and, importantly,

will *not* require the investment of new state dollars. Resources for the development of education goals currently are available through federal dollars that will flow to California beginning in 1995 as part of the Goals 2000 effort.

PACE proposes that the state authorize the Goals 2000 Task Force, which is to be appointed jointly by the Governor and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop a set of focused but ambitious measurable education goals that can serve as the framework for the state's education reform policies.

2. Invest in a Student Assessment System

What academic levels of achievement are students reaching? What is the best means for assuring reliable, consistent, and understandable achievement results? Perhaps most importantly, what is worth measuring?

California started boldly down the road toward a new student assessment system. But the state's performance-based program encountered some serious political and procedural "bumps" along the way. Overly ambitious test development and completion deadlines and unrealistic timelines for wide scale administration of the test nearly guaranteed trouble. The state's new assessment system was venturing into uncharted educational waters, yet insufficient time and attention were devoted to pre-testing examination questions or explaining to the public what this new form of testing was designed to accomplish. Moreover, the test, while useful on a number of dimensions, proved unable to deliver individual student scores.

Yet for all its foibles, California's student testing system was on the cutting edge of assessment—innovative, exciting, and promising. It offered

the prospect of assessing students' proficiency on many of the subject matter and skill dimensions stressed by the state's curriculum frameworks.

California has now returned to the assessment drawing board, grappling with the development of a comprehensive and responsive system of measuring and reporting student academic progress. This is a difficult task, but surely one of the most critical education issues the state faces.

PACE believes California must immediately establish a timeline and a procedure for developing and implementing a new statewide student assessment system. The state should build on efforts to date, while making appropriate adjustments so that test results provide the kind of information policy makers, educators, and parents need and want.

This will not be easy. State officials will need to be mindful, for example, of achieving the appropriate balance of conventional multiple choice-type questions and performance-based questions, should the state elect to move in this direction. Test developers should be urged to investigate a range of testing alternatives in an effort to achieve the most useful and reliable assessment mix.

Having said that, PACE also believes that the state must act expeditiously. California must have a new student assessment system in place by September 1996.

3. Provide Incentives for a New Teacher Salary Schedule

Teachers' salaries in California, and indeed in most school districts throughout the nation, are constructed on a standard single salary schedule that provides pay for years of experience and education units. That schedule

is an artifact of the post-World War II teacher shortage. It is time to reexamine it.

The salary schedule is built with a series of rows and columns. Rows correspond to years of experience, columns represent accumulated college credits. Teachers advance on the schedule (e.g., increase their earnings) by virtue of time on the job and completion of additional college courses.

This type of compensation system is outmoded. It requires that the salaries of all teachers in a given district be set in precisely the same manner, regardless of individual teachers' professional accomplishments or demonstrated abilities.

PACE believes the state should develop an incentive program which would encourage district administrators and teachers to design new salary schedule structures. Districts might still maintain a basic schedule which would establish a minimum level of compensation and insure that all teachers—elementary and secondary, male and female, minority and non-minority—would begin the development of their compensation packages from a level playing field. But new schedules would take advantage of emerging research in industry and education on the utility of pay schedules which are based on demonstrated indicators of professional skill and knowledge.

Using this new rubric, a teacher would receive increased compensation on the basis of increased subject matter knowledge, or mastery of a set of professionally recognized pedagogical skills, or professional competencies, which enhance the teacher's capacity to contribute to the overall performance and success of his or her school. Districts might elect, for example, to offer

financial rewards to teachers who achieve certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

As experimentation with the development of this new teacher salary schedule is in its earliest formative stages, California has no models on which to draw. But the prospect of offering teachers financial remuneration for increased professional skill is an enticing one. PACE believes the state would be well-served to develop a set of policies which offer incentives to districts and their teacher representatives to begin to develop and implement new teacher compensation schedules based on payment for knowledge and skill.

4. Revitalize Preservice and Inservice Teacher Education

California employs more than 200,000 teachers in its classrooms. Insuring that new teachers are well prepared for the classroom challenges they will face, and providing opportunities to “refresh” experienced teachers whose initial preparation may long ago have concluded, is an essential component of education reform.

Some California teachers are prepared in innovative, state-of-the-art programs. But not all have this advantage. Many of the state’s teacher education programs continue to reinforce *what is* rather than influence *what ought to be*. Until recently, there has been little incentive for them to change. A few important dynamics may begin to alter that course.

The state’s Commission on Teacher Credentialing has taken a bold step forward with the California New Teacher Project. That Project has provided useful, policy relevant information about the kinds of supports new teachers need, including a structured internship and ongoing assistance from more

experienced colleagues. The Project also has contributed to the development of a set of standards of professional competence for beginning teachers.

The process of improving many of the state's teacher preparation programs is about to receive an additional boost. Former State Senator, and former chair of the Senate Education Committee, Gary Hart is assuming the helm of a new education reform center, based at California State University Sacramento. Among that Center's missions will be to assist CSU campuses to improve their teacher preparation programs.

But areas for policy intervention and program improvement remain untouched. California, for example, continues to employ the "accredited program" method of credentialing. This means that students who graduate from a state accredited teacher preparation program automatically are awarded teaching credentials. The individual teacher candidate is not required to undergo any additional assessment of professional competence either in subject matter knowledge or pedagogical skills.

PACE believes that the state must examine the premise on which the teacher certification system is based. California policy makers should give careful consideration to phasing-in a system of individual candidate assessment which would measure candidates' subject matter knowledge, their understanding of issues such as how children learn, and their demonstrated ability to teach. To be sure, the development and implementation of such a system is likely to require the investment of additional resources. But it is an important investment the state would be well advised to consider.

Continuing education should be an expected component of the teaching career. Thus, inservice professional development for experienced teachers is another area that warrants state policy attention.

Research tells us what effective staff development looks like. It is, in the main, school-based, teacher-driven and teacher-directed. It is also subject matter focused, ongoing, and closely related to classroom work and experiences. Regrettably, much of the staff development that occurs in California schools and districts does not meet these criteria.

One visible and important exception is the California Subject Matter Projects. A recent independent evaluation of the Projects concluded that they offer important opportunities for teachers to gain both disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical skills, that they involve teachers effectively in improving their practice and that they assist teachers to develop and exercise leadership abilities.

In 1992-93, California invested a total of \$12.6 million in sustaining the eight Subject Matter Projects (mathematics, science, writing, literature, history, international studies, the arts, and foreign language) at 90 sites across the state. PACE believes the state would be wise to increase the investment in, and thereby expand the reach of, the Subject Matter Projects. In addition, California should take steps to expand other professional development networks, such as the California Science Implementation Network (C-SIN), which have demonstrated records of success.

The state should set as a goal enabling all California teachers to participate in ongoing, productive staff development. That goal could be additionally furthered if a portion—perhaps two percent—of the education budget were given directly to schools for the purpose of “purchasing” needed professional development.

There is an additional specific area in which the state can play an immediate and crucial teacher professional development role. To date,

California has made only a modest investment in the intense professional development needed to acquaint teachers with the state curriculum frameworks. State efforts aimed at improving teachers' knowledge and use of the frameworks could go a long way toward advancing student learning. PACE recommends that California take immediate steps to incorporate incentives for professional development into its state-supported staff development programs and policies.

5. Enhance Programs for Language Minority Students

How best to educate limited- and non-English-speaking children has been a subject of debate among educators and policy makers in California for some years. While argument over purpose and strategy continue, some facts are indisputable.

One of every five students in California classrooms—a total of 1.2 million children—is not proficient in English. Some number of these students graduate from California schools still not able to function effectively in English.

PACE believes the state must develop policies and programs which assure that every student who matriculates from a California high school is proficient in English.

We hasten to add here that PACE does not support a different set of academic expectations for limited- and non-English speaking students than for native English speakers. On the contrary, we believe *all* California students must be held to the same high standards. However, students are hindered in their ability to meet these standards if they cannot function successfully in English.

Achieving proficiency in English is linked to the first recommendation in this document. Namely, one of the education goals California should establish is that all students achieve proficiency in English.

Beyond establishing this goal, the state must examine and rectify the current mismatch, where second language students are concerned, between state policy and implementation. California sends out conflicting and confusing messages to schools about what they are expected to accomplish for limited- and non-English proficient students. State efforts tend to focus on policies geared to particular instructional strategies (e.g., offering English-as-a second-language “pull out” programs vs. providing “sheltered English”) rather than to the overall purpose of educational programs. The state should establish the goal, namely to teach students English. And the state should provide the requisite resources so that districts have the financial capacity to achieve this goal. The determination of the most appropriate instructional strategy to accomplish this goal, however, should be left to the professional judgment of school site teachers and administrators.

The key to achieving English proficiency for all students lies in increasing the skill and capacity of the state’s classroom teachers effectively to instruct students whose primary language is not English. Here is another area where state incentives for teacher preservice and inservice professional development are crucial.

State-supported teacher preparation programs should offer specific instruction in pedagogical strategies for limited- and non-English speaking students. State policy should also encourage local school districts to offer incentives for experienced teachers to increase their skills in instructing language minority students. For example, as districts begin to revamp their

teacher salary schedules, consideration should be given to offering extra compensation to teachers who have demonstrated knowledge and skill in teaching non-native English speakers, or who possess the ability to teach in more than one language.

Finally, there must be new assessments which specifically measure students' ability to function in English in an academic setting. PACE recommends that the state take the lead in developing prototype assessments which school districts can then adapt to local needs and purposes.

6. Reform the School Finance System

California's school finance system needs a major overhaul. This state currently ranks 41st in the nation in terms of per pupil expenditures, down from a ranking of fifth in the nation in 1968. California's shrinking school expenditures are a direct outgrowth of the system that now governs education financing in this state.

In California, a combination of the *Serrano* district equalization court decision, Proposition 13, and the Gann spending limit (Proposition 4) have created a cumbersome state-dominated system of school finance. Proposition 98 and the state's more than 60 separate categorical programs have made a complicated situation even more inflexible and complex.

One consequence of California's system of school finance is that we have all but stripped from communities the ability to generate—and spend—local revenues for education purposes. Local communities feel they have lost control of their schools because they have lost control of the dollars.

The state's entire school financing mechanism is in need of major surgery. PACE believes that a number of immediate actions are in order.

The state must take the necessary steps to restore local fiscal control of education resources. We must return to communities decision-making discretion over school dollars, and we must do so *without* jeopardizing inter-district fiscal equity. The only way to accomplish this task is to amend California's constitution.

PACE urges the State Constitutional Revision Commission to place on the 1996 ballot a set of initiatives which would make it possible for local communities to approve capital outlay bonds and raise general education revenue, via wealth equalized property or parcel taxes or a special income tax surcharge, with a simple majority vote.

In the near term, California must revise its overly complicated and restricted system of categorical funding for programs. The Legislative Analyst has proposed a sensible and workable reform of the state's categorical programs which would reduce the number of categories and combine existing programs into targeted block grants.

Under the Legislative Analyst's plan, one block grant would be established for School Site programs (e.g. School Improvement Program, Instructional Materials, Class Size Reduction, etc.) another for Staff Development (e.g. Mentor Teacher Funds, School-Based Staff Development, Bilingual Teacher Training, etc.), another for Dropout Prevention and Alternative Schools (e.g. AB65 Dropout Prevention, Continuation School, Gang Rise Intervention Programs, etc.). A final category, Other Categorical Programs, would house the other programs which do not fit neatly into one of the other three groupings (e.g. adult education, child development, desegregation, vocational education, home-to-school transportation, etc.). The Analyst further suggests that school districts be given increased flexibility

to transfer funds within these categories. There are other thoughtful proposals to be considered by the legislature which accomplish the same purpose, keeping some programmatic focus, while simultaneously allowing greater district flexibility.

PACE believes that over the long run, the state would be well served by a comprehensive review and analysis of California's system of financing its schools. Consideration should be given, for example, to ways in which education funding and dollars devoted to social services for children can be "blended" into coherent program streams and dollars can be more directly distributed to schools.

In the short run, returning to communities local control of education dollars and reducing the "strings" attached to categorical funds is a good start at finance reform and should be undertaken without delay.

7. Intensify and Expand Integrated Children's Services

Many children come to California's classrooms hungry, physically or emotionally abused, or lacking appropriate medical attention. For these children, academic learning cannot take first priority. They are simply unprepared to do school work.

Research has shown that a system of school-linked or school-based services, where the school serves as the "hub" of a range of services (health, social services, etc.) needed by children and their families can improve children's prospects for a successful education experience.

California is off to a good start designing and implementing a coordinated system for delivering non-educational services to students, with

the school as one of the centers of that service delivery. The Governor's Healthy Start initiative, begun in 1991 and expanded each year thereafter, provides an important policy impetus. Preliminary results of the SRI evaluation of Healthy Start point to this coordinated services strategy as a promising approach to improving outcomes for children. California must now continue to build on the Healthy Start efforts and expand them.

California must also now expand the integrated services concept beyond the school site and local service agencies. In particular, the state needs to encourage and support college and university programs of inter-professional training for the many adults who will work with children. State policy needs to be reformed so as to make possible "blended" funding streams which pool fiscal resources and enable programs to be tailored to individual children and their families.

And California must provide incentives which encourage the development and *institutionalization* of cross-agency coordination programs. Integrated services, in other words, must become the way in which schools and social service agencies do business in California.

Finally, the state must make a conscious effort to connect integrated services approaches to education reform. State policy currently envisions institutional change as moving down two parallel tracks, integrated services and school reform. Yet these policies actually need to be seen as different branches of a single improvement network for children. Unless providing needed social services is directly connected to assisting children to succeed in school, and until a component of education reform encompasses insuring that children's health and other social service needs are met—then the prospects for lasting improvement are greatly diminished.

PACE recommends that the state move immediately to insure that state policy which contemplates integrated children's services and policy which is designed to further education improvement be combined to form component parts of a single, continuous reform and improvement strategy for children.

8. Realign the Balance of State and Local Authority

California currently maintains an 11-volume, 6,000-page-plus Education Code. The code is, in many respects, prescriptive and restrictive. It represents, to a large a degree, a crazy quilt collection of special interests and particularistic concerns that have made their policy way into state law.

The code is also a reflection of ever widening state control over local education policy and operation. Local school boards have been marginalized, and citizens' voices diminished in the process, as the state Education Code has expanded.

PACE believes the state and its citizens must strike a new, and more appropriate, balance between the authority and responsibility of the state and that of local school districts. We must take steps to restore local flexibility and autonomy, and to return to local school districts the ability to make policy designed to meet the educational needs of the communities they serve.

PACE does not advocate quick wholesale abolition of the existing state Education Code. Rather, PACE proposes that the state undertake a thoughtful and deliberate analysis of those programs and policies designed to free schools and districts from state imposed strictures with an eye to determining which sections of the code might be eliminated, and the circumstances under which local entities might be freed from adherence to state regulation.

Charter schools, for example, offer an interesting, perhaps even promising, mechanism for reducing state (and local) regulation of schools and freeing schools to make greater strides in student achievement. But charter schools are still new and are still feeling their educational way. Most significantly, perhaps, the state has no benchmarks to denote relative success of charter schools and has made no provision for evaluating the educational effectiveness of these experiments.

PACE recommends that the state take immediate steps to establish a procedure by which to evaluate charter schools. This evaluation should not only assess the educational effectiveness of the charter school strategy, but should also serve as a device to “test” the relationship between educational improvement and exempting schools from the state Education Code.

An essential first step in designing a charter school evaluation includes the development of a systematic plan to *increase* the number of charters by designated type, category, and perhaps region. The goal would be to create a “matrix” of charter possibilities which could be compared with a “control group” of non-charter schools.

Should the evaluation confirm charters as a promising education reform strategy, the state should then, over time and in a carefully sequenced fashion, expand the number of charters allowed under state law and, by so doing, establish procedures by which schools are exempted from the total Education Code or from relevant portions of it.

9. Reassess the Locus of Education Decision-Making

Many, perhaps most, key educational decisions are made far away from schools and classrooms. Decisions, for example, about hiring and resource

allocation generally are made at district central headquarters. A growing body of literature suggests that educational effectiveness and achievement may be enhanced by relocating many of the essential decisions to the school site.

PACE does not believe every school should be allowed to “do its own thing.” Public schools ought to be bound by the state education goals, state curriculum standards, as well as by any additional student achievement targets established by the local school board.

PACE also acknowledges that, to date, “school-based management” programs have a rather checkered history. They have tended, on balance, to pay too much attention to matters of governance, too little heed to improving outcomes for students, and have been implemented without having sufficient evaluation or accountability mechanisms in place. We believe this result is in large measure a consequence of the fact that the state has not been clear about what schools are responsible for accomplishing, that neither the state, nor local school districts, have promulgated education goals and held schools to them.

PACE recommends that the state encourage and support a well-designed set of experiments to test the hypothesis that enabling schools to make decisions about essential matters such as personnel, budget, instructional materials, hours of operation, and roles of adult staff will lead to improved student achievement. Should that hypothesis prove valid, in other words, should it be demonstrated that devolving key educational decisions to school sites results in better outcomes for students, then the state should develop policies which offer inducements and rewards for moving educational decisions as close to the classroom as possible.

This recommendation, of course, has a direct tie-in to the previous recommendation about the appropriate balance of state and local oversight of schools. School-based management is another way, along with charter schools, of freeing education professionals at the school site to develop and implement instructional programs designed to meet the needs of individual students, and, by so doing, to respond to the increasing public demand for added school “choice.” The state, however, should encourage the widespread adoption of these strategies only after a careful period of trial and analysis.

10. Link School-to-Career Policy with Education Reform

PACE supports the policies at the federal and state level that develop school-to-career transitions for students. In addition, PACE believes that state supported school-to-work policies must link so-called vocational education to the broader goals of education reform. California has in place a number of pilot programs that move precisely in these directions.

These programs combine school-based and work-based education, integrate academic and vocational curriculum, and smooth the transition between secondary and post-secondary institutions. They provide students with rich secondary school experiences and a clear pathway to a wide array of opportunities for further education. And they accomplish their purposes without “watering down” academic standards.

These new programs should lead to a California economy featuring a skilled workforce that emphasizes both global competitiveness and individual potential. Firms will be able to use more skilled and productive workers and provide the appropriate incentives for education and training.

California missed an important opportunity to receive federal funds for school-to-work program planning in 1994. But in 1995, California will be applying to the federal government for a school-to-career implementation grant that will provide for state and local support for program initiatives. PACE has been impressed with the interagency cooperation in the development of the grant application and believes that this cooperation is imperative if work force preparation programs are to succeed.

However, in order to bring about dramatic changes called for by a number of reports, including that of the Governor's School-to-Career Advisory Committee, *"Second to None,"* by the High School Task Force, and *"Mobilizing for Competitiveness,"* by the Business Roundtable, a new level of leadership commitment and sustained effort will be required. The Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Director of the Employment Development Department, and the Chancellor of the Community Colleges must ratchet up their early efforts to place school-to-career higher on the public agenda and establish it as a priority in schools and communities throughout the state.

Coherent school-to-career preparation programs are a logical option in our public education system where the community college system provides such a wide variety of technically-based degree and certificate programs. It is imperative that high schools, community colleges, the university systems, and California businesses cooperate to expand these career preparation programs for all of the students who can benefit from them. State policy must reflect this commitment to inter-institutional cooperation.

The partnerships between secondary schools, post-secondary institutions, and employers are the cornerstone of the school-to-career effort.

Ten years of experience in designing and maintaining these partnerships have indicated that they require a sustained commitment by all parties in order to respond with some flexibility to student needs and changes within institutions. Partnerships are strengthened when fundamental changes in curriculum and teaching work to the benefit of all of the partners.

To this end, policymakers need to understand that these partnerships develop quite slowly and are customized in each case. We should proceed cautiously with any policy recommendations that seek to expedite the careful and methodical steps that must be taken to develop lasting and strong partnership arrangements.

PACE has three primary recommendations that relate to school-to-career programs. First, PACE suggests that the state move immediately to formalize the current informal interagency cooperative agreement between the three agencies principally responsible for school-to-career preparation, the Employment Development Department, California Department of Education, and the California Community Colleges, and that resources be made available to provide the necessary technical assistance to schools, community colleges, and communities as they begin to implement the provisions of this new initiative.

Second, PACE recommends that the legislature carefully craft comprehensive legislation that reinforces California's intention to develop a comprehensive school-to-career system, guarantee that it is fully integrated with the overall goals of the education system, and insure that school-to-career is an integral part of the Master Plan for Higher Education. This legislation should set broad parameters for school-to-career and promote, not

limit, the kinds of local initiatives necessary to implement such a significant change in schooling.

Third, PACE recommends that the state immediately begin to develop appropriate performance-based certification and assessment mechanisms which will accurately portray what students participating in these new programs know and can do.

A Final Word

PACE believes that the component 10 points of the Plan for California Schools are *interdependent*. Goals must establish the framework for policies that follow. Teacher preparation and incentives for improved performance (e.g., additional financial compensation, added decision-making discretion) must be linked to assisting teachers to enable children to meet state-established goals. Students with special needs (e.g., those with limited English proficiency, or those who need intense social service intervention) must be provided these services *because* they will help them to meet state education goals.

The guiding principle of all of the state's education policies and programs must be the improvement of outcomes for students. We will only know how effectively we are meeting this goal if we have in place a multifaceted student performance assessment system.

In other words, creating a comprehensive education reform plan for California is not a matter of selecting a few of the plan's elements and bypassing the others. All must be embraced and become part of state policy.

PACE recognizes that it may not be possible to implement all features of the plan simultaneously. But the state *can* commit to a plan for comprehensive reform and develop a timeline for its implementation.

The state must also commit to “selling” the plan to the public. Recent opinion polling results indicate that the public is not clear about the purpose of education reform. The waters of school change have been muddied by unclear or conflicting statements of purpose, haphazard use of jargony language, and a rather apathetic disregard for the importance of citizen commitment to and involvement in reform. Thus, California policy makers must pay special attention to insuring that the state's various publics understand the intentions behind the policies.

PACE is mindful that implementing a sweeping program to revitalize California's schools is an awesome undertaking, one that will require the investment of time and attention on the part of key state policy makers and an unbending will to see results. With so many important issues staking a claim to the state's policy agenda, it may be tempting to leave education alone, or at least to leave it to later. We believe, however, that the cost of doing so will result in a price California will be unwilling to pay.