



# The Status *of the* Teaching Profession 2003

**Summary Report**

Teaching and  
California's  
Future

**The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning**

California State University, Office of the Chancellor  
Policy Analysis for California Education  
University of California, Office of the President  
WestEd

*Research conducted by SRI International*

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## California's Need: Renewed Commitment to Good Teaching

The creation and maintenance of a much stronger teaching force that actually can ensure that *all* students succeed is what Californians repeatedly demand and politicians routinely vow to deliver. But without significant changes in the way teachers are prepared, nurtured and professionally sustained, California students will get far less than the education they need to succeed.

California has gone through political upheaval, and now new leadership is facing enormous fiscal problems. There is a palpable public demand for more responsive government, and a cacophony of voices clamoring to be heard in a system where the rules of governing are in flux.

While this profound change has produced great uncertainty, there is a continued consensus for better educating California's children, all of them. We would argue that the issue demands the kind of long-term investment of resources *and* leadership typically devoted to highways and water supplies. It requires a state response as intense and sustained as California offers without hesitation when there are wildfires or earthquakes or floods.

For the past several years, we have been issuing annual reports on California's teaching force. Much of what was in those reports focused on what was a growing shortage of qualified teachers and how our most prepared teachers were distributed unevenly across the state. The shortage has eased, but the maldistribution of underprepared teachers still is very bad. This year, we are deliberately blunt to make sure we are clear. We hope readers take from this report at least two points:

- The state needs but does not yet have a system of teacher development that ensures that all who enter the classroom have the knowledge and skills they need to get their students to reach the academic standards the state has set.
- The existing distribution of teachers is horribly unfair — the students who live in our poorest communities, the children most in need of our best teachers, are assigned to teachers who are the least prepared to meet their needs.

There is no shortage of complications and nuances associated with ensuring that every student is taught by a teacher who is prepared to teach, and whose working conditions are conducive to learning. But making the system fair is not a question of nuance but rather of political will and commitment.

*Sacramento Bee* columnist Peter Schrag has written powerfully about the question of fairness in his new book, *Final Test: The Battle for Adequacy in America's Schools*. He looks at several states including California, where he describes how the state's poorest children are assigned underqualified teachers or face a steady flow of unqualified substitutes. He raises the question of whether California will

provide all of its students with schools and teachers adequate for them to meet the standards the state has set for all its students. This is, he argues, the ultimate test of a society.

We agree.

In the last several years, state policymakers have attended seriously to making schools better, to strengthening the teaching force. The public schools would be far worse without their efforts, and they deserve credit. But their efforts to strengthen teaching have largely been programmatic rather than systemic, more like fingers in the dike than taming the river.

The state and the federal government have raised the stakes for students and schools, and those stakes have gone up far faster than the incremental improvements in California schools. Just as the state has put in place a connected *system* of standards and accountability for students, it needs a similarly systemic approach to enhancing the quality and capacity of its teaching force.

We believe the response needs to be much *greater* than previous efforts to improve teaching and must involve the broader public more deeply. If all of us in California are going to have

a better life economically and culturally, then we need schools that deliver a high-quality education for all California students. That will only happen if we have a teaching force up to the challenge.

This brief report is based on a much longer report of substantial new research commissioned by The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning and conducted by SRI International. That longer document — *The Status of the Teaching Profession 2003: Research Findings and Policy Recommendations* — is available on our Web site at [www.cftl.org](http://www.cftl.org).

The new research is particularly timely in light of the additional pressures being applied to schools to do considerably more with far fewer resources. The research takes a fresh look at the state’s teaching force, its size and distribution. It examines how teachers are prepared, how they are ushered into the profession and the professional training they receive while in the classroom. The research includes extensive data analysis, a survey of educators and a series of case studies that followed carefully selected individual teachers throughout the 2002–03 school year.

We issued similar comprehensive research reports in 1999 and 2001, and less extensive updates in 2000 and 2002. Our consistent goal has been to provide policymakers and opinion leaders with the best and most reliable data on critical issues regarding the state’s teaching force.

What follows is a brief summary of the new research and recommendations designed particularly for California’s opinion leaders and policymakers, including our new governor.

## The Pipeline Was Beginning To Work

The number of public school teachers in California has grown quickly in the past decade as the student population swelled and the state cut the class size in elementary schools. Last school year, there were nearly 310,000 teachers, up from 221,000 10 years earlier.

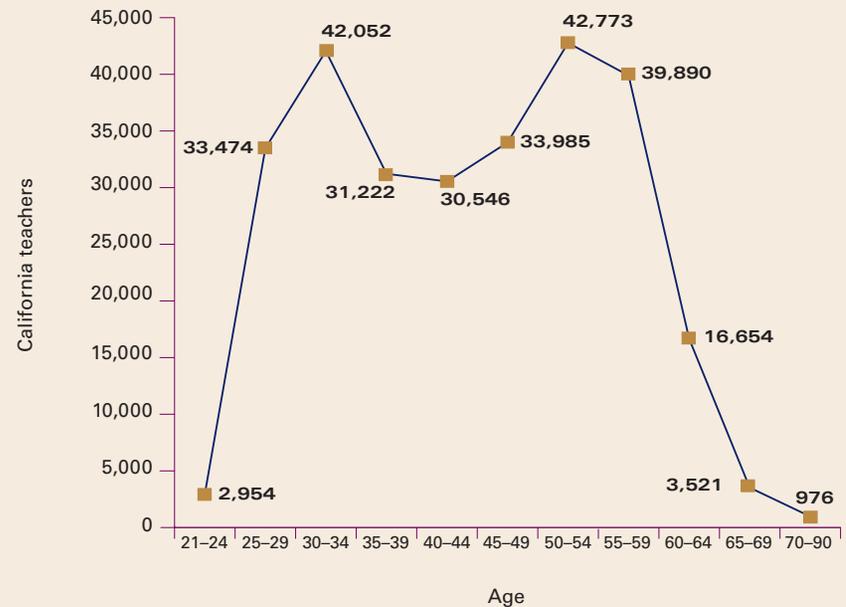
And last year, there were about 37,300 teachers who were “underprepared,” teachers who had not yet met California’s qualifications for even a preliminary teaching license. We contend that a basic credential is only a starting point for becoming an accomplished professional ready to help all of his or her students meet rigorous academic standards.

The 37,300 underprepared teachers represent about 12 percent of the state teaching force, about one in every eight teachers. This number is down from the previous school year, when the state had 41,713 underprepared teachers, and that is good news. And it also appears from preliminary data from the current (2003–04) school year that the numbers of teachers

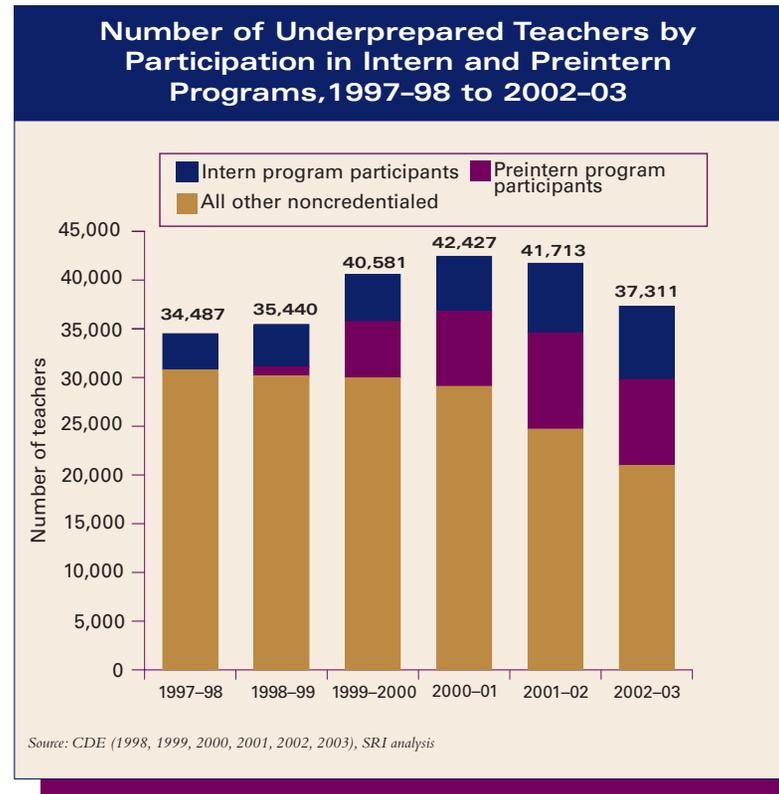
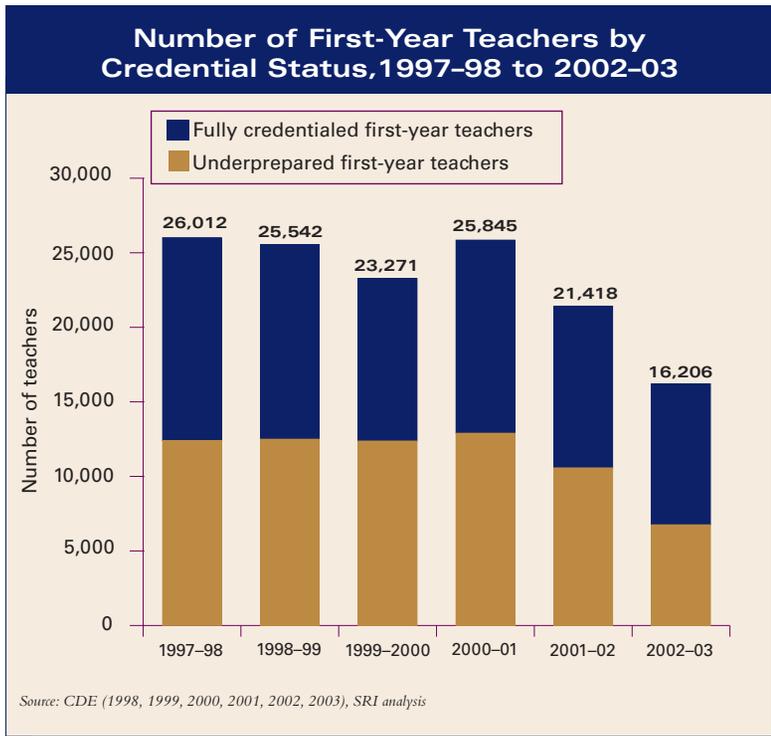
on emergency licenses is down considerably. It can be said that the flood waters are receding, but not without the caution that these waters are still well above flood stage, particularly in our poorest schools.

A mix of factors makes it difficult to predict whether this number will continue to go down and how fast. It can be argued that the state’s troubled economy may make teaching more attractive for a time. It can also be argued that new federal requirements will make it more difficult for school districts to hire underprepared teachers in the future. We also know that the growth in the number of students has peaked, although it is important to note that some districts will continue to expand.

Age Distribution of Teachers in California, 2002–03



Source: CDE (2003), SRI analysis



But, on the other hand, the demographics of the teaching force temper optimism about the supply of teachers. More than a third of California's teachers are age 50 or over and approaching or eligible for retirement. And, unfortunately, the state has no way of measuring how many relatively young teachers quit teaching for other careers, or of predicting how that attrition rate is likely to change.

A year ago, we reported that slightly more than half — 53 percent — of all first-year teachers in the state were teaching without having obtained a basic teaching credential in 2001-02. The percentage of first-year teachers who were underprepared declined to 42 percent in 2002-03. And more of those under-

prepared teachers were enrolled in intern programs designed to help them get a teaching credential.

However, just as the pipeline for producing more prepared teachers is showing signs of improvement, there are signs of trouble. Budget constraints at college campuses, for example, are restricting the number of slots for potential teachers.

The federal No Child Left Behind act generally requires new teachers to be "highly qualified"; and all teachers to be "highly qualified" by 2005. To deal with this law, California has defined as "highly qualified" all credentialed teachers and those underprepared teachers who are enrolled in an intern program.

If California is to have a fully qualified and effective teacher for every student, we see the need to distinguish between those teachers who are fully prepared and those who are underprepared. Fully prepared teachers have demonstrated knowledge of the subject matter or grade they are going to teach, have demonstrated that they possess teaching skills and have had a substantial opportunity to practice their teaching skills under the guidance of a veteran teacher. These three basic elements make up the foundation for what should become a strong California system of teacher development.

## Distribution: A Matter of Equity

But while the overall number of underprepared teachers is going down, the bigger issue is where California's underprepared teachers are teaching and which students they serve.

Underprepared teachers are a statewide phenomenon, but not one that is universal. Indeed, about half of California schools in 2002–03 employ fewer than one teacher in 20 who is underprepared.

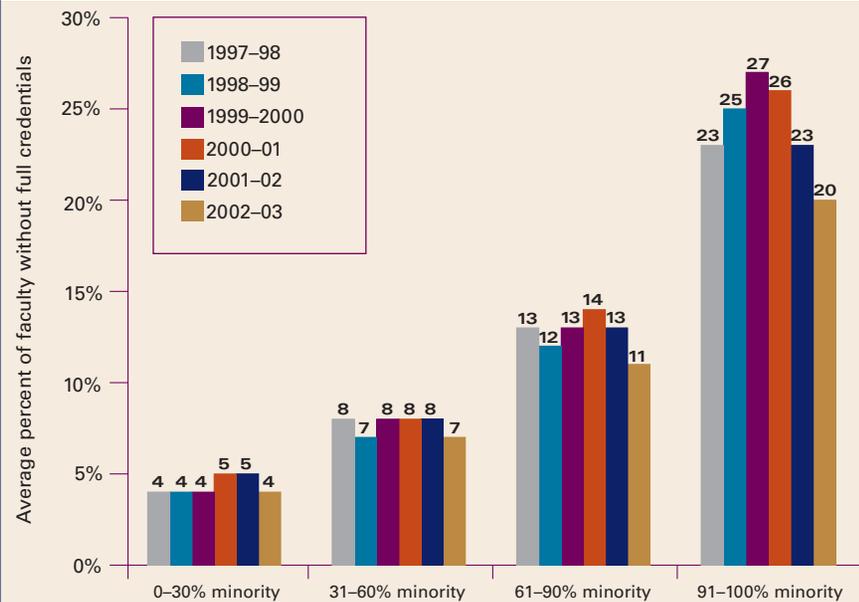
Students who are poor or minority, students who are in special education or who are not native speakers of English are still far more likely to have an underprepared teacher. If these students are to become fully educated contributors to the state's economy and culture, then we need to make sure they have teachers who are able to

## Support for the Credentialed

*Terry is a first-year fourth-grade teacher in a magnet program. He graduated from a private university with an education degree and has his initial teaching credential.*

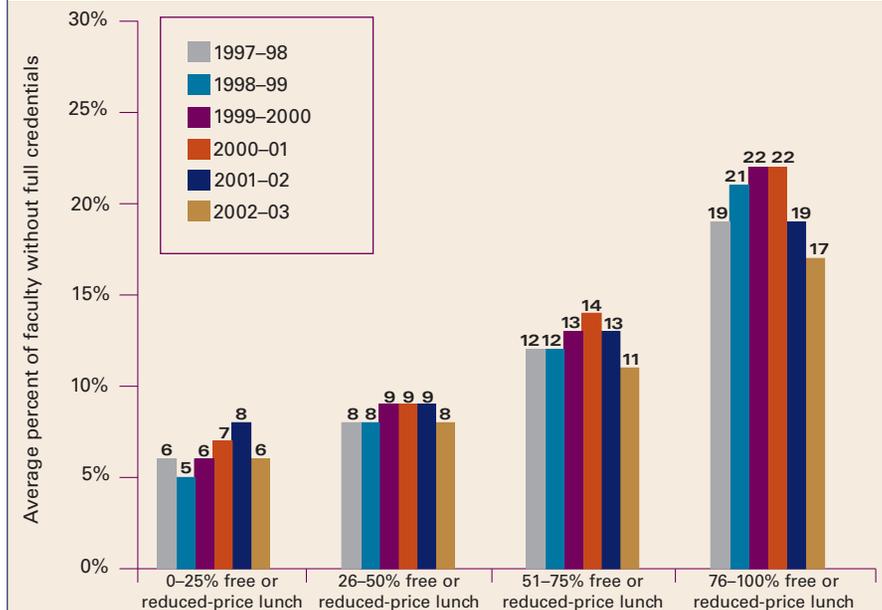
*Terry has a mentor, a seasoned teacher at his school, with whom he meets every week. "She's observed my class a couple of times and lets me know what she's noticed," Terry says. "It is nice to have someone here who appreciates you because you're in here alone every day." He also has another mentor assigned to him through the state's Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program.*

**Distribution of Underprepared Teachers by Percentage of Minority Students, 1997–98 to 2002–03**



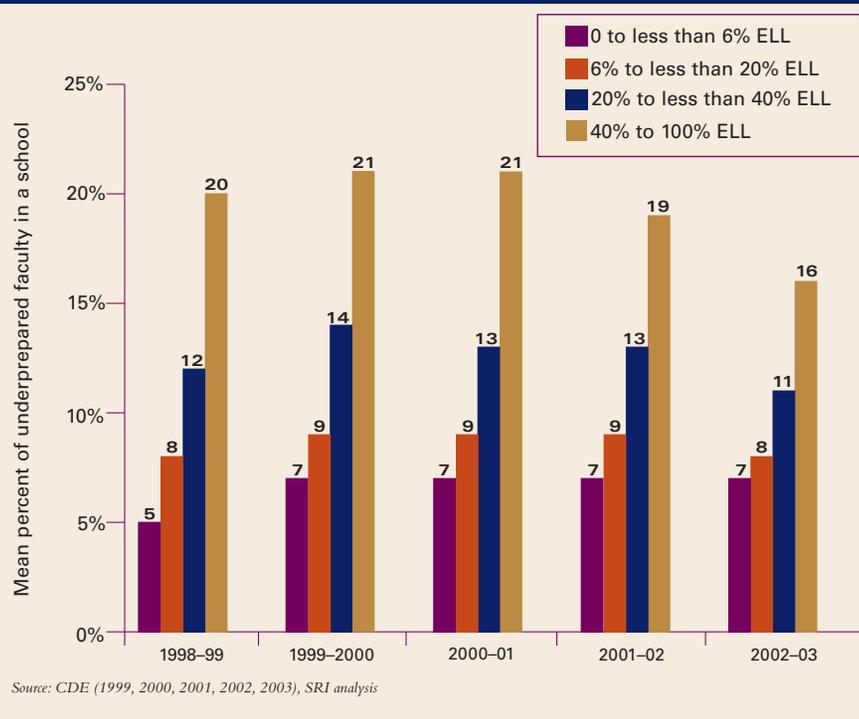
Source: CDE (1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003), SRI analysis

**Distribution of Underprepared Teachers by Student Poverty Level, 1997–98 to 2002–03**



Source: CDE (1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003), SRI analysis

**Distribution of Underprepared Teachers by Percentage of English Language Learners, 1998-99 to 2002-03**



take them there. If this were a military operation, it would be as if it were sending the rawest, least-trained recruits to face the most formidable battle while its most experienced troops were kept largely out of the fray.

Although the numbers are getting somewhat better, the distribution of teachers still is unfair and unjust. Consider:

- Students in schools with large minority populations are five times as likely to face underprepared teachers as students in schools with low percentages of minority students.

## Waiting Tables to Teaching English

*Jose grew up speaking Spanish at home and learning English in school. He earned a bachelor's degree in creative writing from a local public university. He moved from waiting tables to substitute teaching and then started as a full-time middle school teacher in 2002-03, teaching English language learners.*

*Jose became a classroom teacher without any formal teacher training. He has no mentor and is not eligible for the beginning teacher program because he does not have a preliminary teaching credential. Despite his lack of experience, the school made him chair of the English learners department.*

*After school, he goes to class three nights a week, taking four classes. He's not sure that the classes help much, and he finds them mostly theoretical at a time when he needs practical knowledge. It will take him 18 months to earn his teaching credential.*

*He is frustrated that he has no time and the school has no resources for instructional materials. "My biggest frustration is not having the appropriate text," Jose says. "There are new state-adopted books but they won't or can't buy them."*

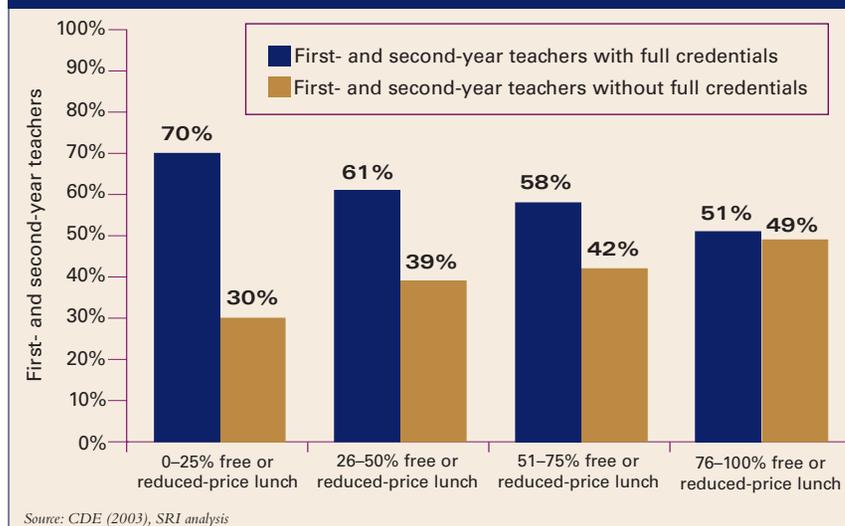
### Percentage of Teachers Who Are Underprepared, by Assignment

	2001-02	2002-03
Elementary	12%	10%
All Secondary	10%	10%
Math	14%	15%
Physical Science	11%	13%
Life Science	10%	12%
English	8%	8%
Social Science	6%	6%
Special Education	18%	18%

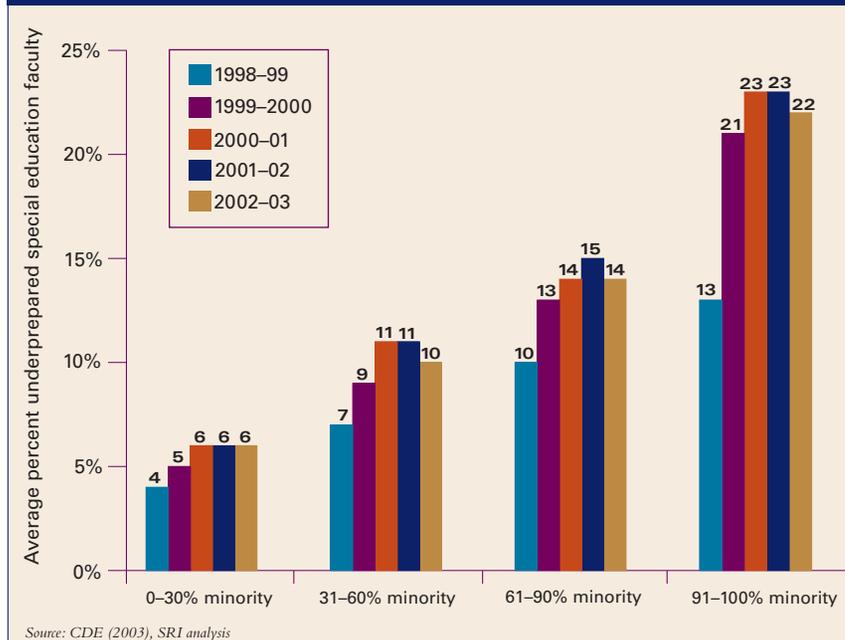
Source: CDE (1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003), SRI analysis

- Students in high-poverty schools are nearly three times as likely to face underprepared teachers as students in low-poverty schools.
- Students in the lowest-achieving schools, measured by the state's Academic Performance Index, are 4.5 times more likely to face underprepared teachers than students in the highest-achieving schools.
- Students in schools with the highest percentage of students who are learning English are more than twice as likely to face underprepared teachers as students in schools where there are few students learning English.
- Special education students in schools with substantial minority populations are nearly four times as likely to face teachers who are underprepared — let alone trained in special education — as special education students in low-minority schools.

### Distribution of Prepared and Underprepared New Teachers by School Poverty Level



### Underprepared Special Education Teachers by Percent Minority Student Population, 1998-99 to 2002-03



# Banking to Teaching Math

*Sean took a teaching job in 1998, leaving a large bank where he trained tellers. He has been teaching for five years without a teaching credential. He is still a preintern, still has not passed state subject competency tests. He teaches middle school math and science and for three years — his second, third and fourth years of teaching — was chair of the math department. He majored in social studies at a public university.*

*An African American who grew up in the suburbs, he chooses to teach in an urban setting. Most of his students are Latino. He loves children but does not hold high expectations for them, or believe he can get them to meet state academic standards.*

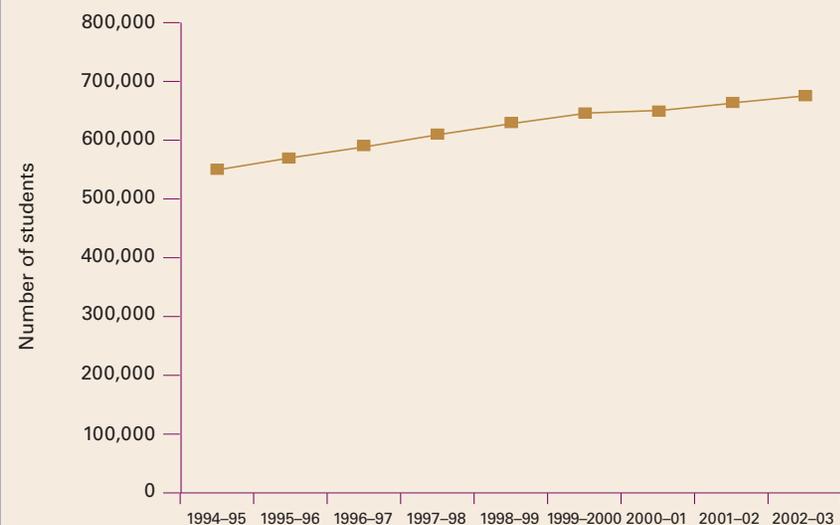
*As a new teacher, he had no mentor because he was on an emergency permit during his first two years on the job. His teaching is well thought of, he says, because his classes are orderly. "If you have a classroom that looks like they're learning, then you're considered a great teacher," Sean says. "I could be teaching them how to cook frogs, but if they're sitting there, they're not talking and they do what you tell them to do, then you're a good teacher. I don't think anyone who has visited my classroom has actually taken a look at what I'm teaching, how I'm teaching it and if the kids are getting it."*

### English Language Learners in California K-12 Public Schools



Source: CDE (2003)

### Special Education Enrollment in California K-12 Public Schools



Source: CDE (2003)

No matter how you cut it, California students most in need of good teaching are still the least likely to see it.

And throughout California, students are more likely to face underprepared teachers in particular subjects. Although the numbers are improving slightly, high school students are more likely to face underprepared teachers in math and science than they are in English or social studies, despite more demand in today's economy for deeper understanding of math and science.

One place where the numbers are not getting better is special education. In 2002–03, 18 percent of special education teachers did not have even a basic credential, let alone training in teaching special needs students. That is up from 14 percent in 1999–2000.

For the past several years, we have reported on the large number of California schools with per-

centages of underprepared teachers so high — above 20 percent — and concluded that the schools have little or no capacity to improve their academic performance. These schools must spend a disproportionate amount of time recruiting and hiring new teachers. They also must train new teachers while they are teaching, and find it difficult to provide professional development when at least one in five teachers in the school lacks even basic training. The number of these schools with little hope has dropped from about 1,900 in 2000–01 to about 1,400 two years later. But these schools served 1.4 million students.

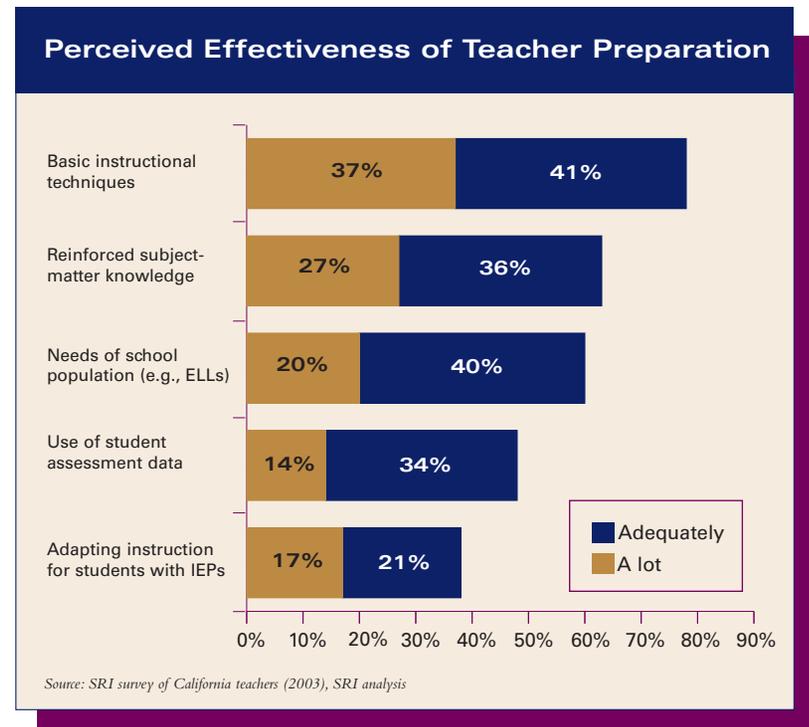
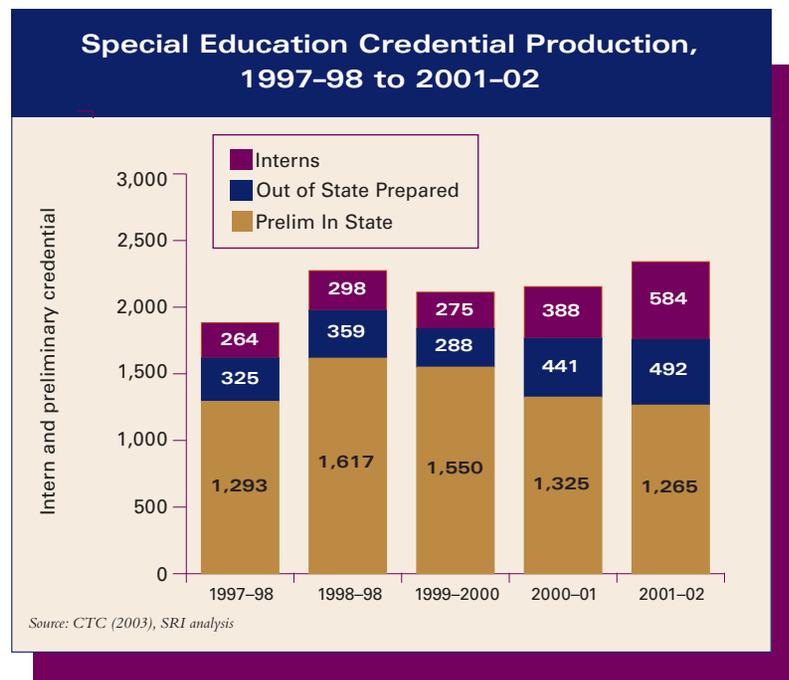
### Preparing New Teachers

The requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind act and the easing of California's teaching shortage are applying additional incentives for prospective and underprepared teachers to obtain a

credential. We have found a number of school districts, for example, are telling uncredentialed teachers they risk losing their jobs if they do not get a basic teaching credential.

Over the past decade, higher education institutions have significantly increased the numbers of prospective teachers they prepare to meet the increased California demand. But many, often a substantial majority, of the prospective teachers they are preparing are indeed already teaching.

The reality is that these teachers, particularly in our poorest communities, are teaching full time during the day and taking courses at night and on weekends to prepare them to teach. By the time they qualify to do traditional student teaching under the supervision of a veteran teacher, these novices have already been running their own classrooms, often for several years.



California's intern program, where underprepared teachers who have passed initial subject matter tests and are taking teaching courses, is particularly challenging. Too often, these interns are forced to choose between preparing to teach their students and preparing for their own university classes.

While underprepared teachers scramble to meet basic credentialing requirements, state budget cuts are making it more difficult for them to find and pay for the courses they need. And the state has eliminated nearly all of the programs that provided fellowships or relieved teachers of paying back student loans if they teach in low-performing schools.

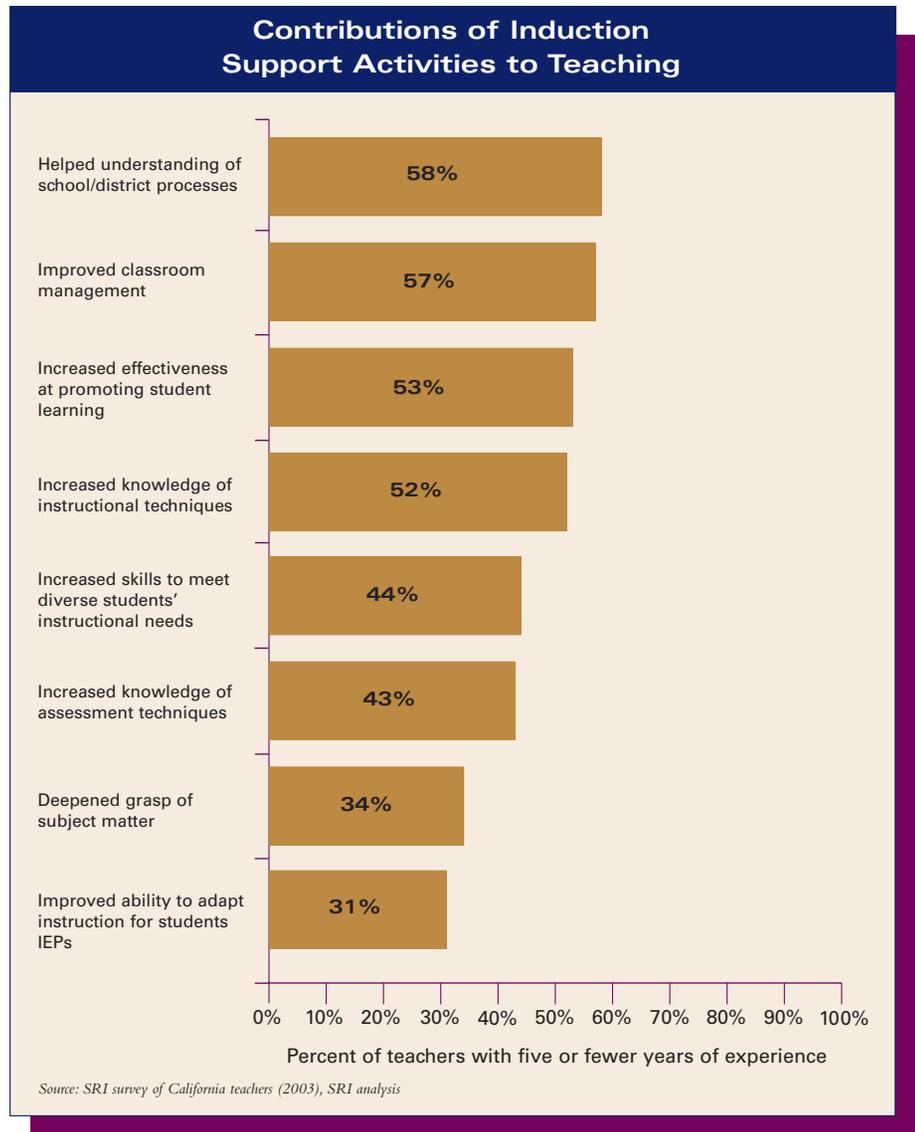
Although universities in California have increased the production of teachers, there has been little growth in the preparation of teachers of special education, a field where there is a significant shortage. It is likely that the state will continue to offer emergency teaching permits to underprepared teachers of special education for some time to come.

Five years ago, the California legislature passed a law to set higher standards for new teachers, to require them to pass a comprehensive performance assessment in addition to going through a formal induction program. But the state's budget situation has forced the deferral of this more rigorous assessment system. Although the state has set high standards for both students and teachers, the system of helping new and veteran teachers reach these expectations is on life support.

## Induction

Teaching, like many professions, is difficult to enter without guidance. California developed one of the most robust induction programs in the nation to usher new teachers into the classroom, providing them with mentors and support. But the \$86-million-a-year Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment program was designed for a time when almost all new teachers completed their preparations and had a credential before they started teaching, not for today's reality.

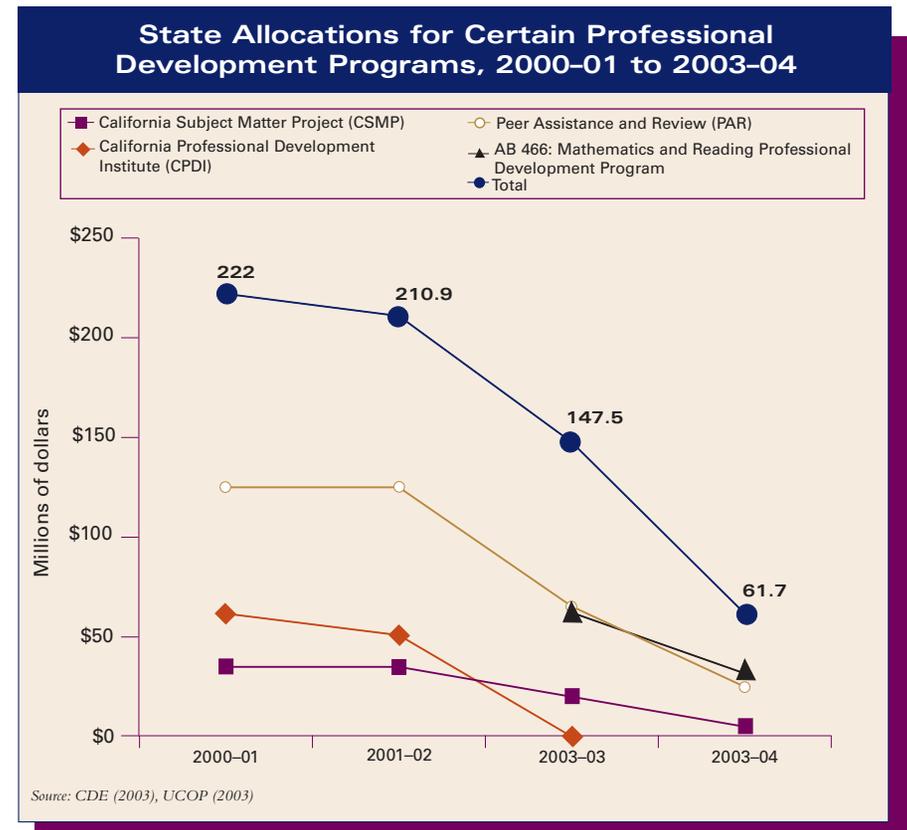
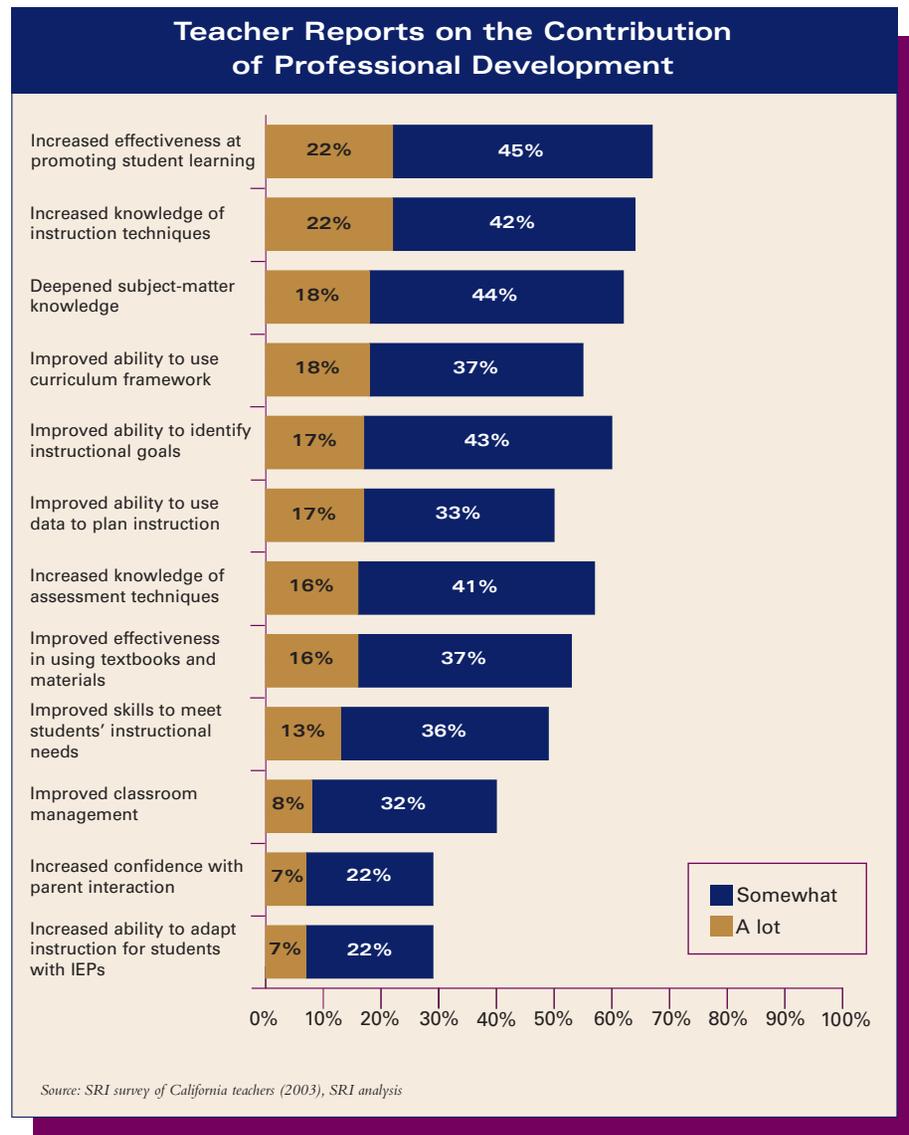
For those new teachers who start with a credential, this program provides assistance that many new teachers see as valuable. However, the many who are underprepared — the majority of whom serve California's neediest students — are not eligible. Some *may* work in a school where a mentor is provided, but at many of the schools where these underprepared teachers work, there is a decided shortage of accomplished teachers to serve as mentors, reducing the likelihood that new teachers will get the help they need. And, consistent with the rest of the research, we found that the least prepared teachers were getting the least support.



Our new research found that most new teachers do not meet often or regularly with their mentor and most of the conversations between new teacher and mentor are about meeting the paperwork needs of the schools rather than the instructional needs of

students. For example, only about a third of new teachers reported monthly talks with mentors about the needs of students, and only about one in five were invited into their mentor's classrooms to observe veteran teaching.

From our case studies, we found confirmation of what we have seen previously — the rookie teachers were routinely thrown into the most challenging classrooms, including those with high concentrations of learners of English and special education students. Again, the students who need the best teachers get those who are the least prepared.



## Professional Development

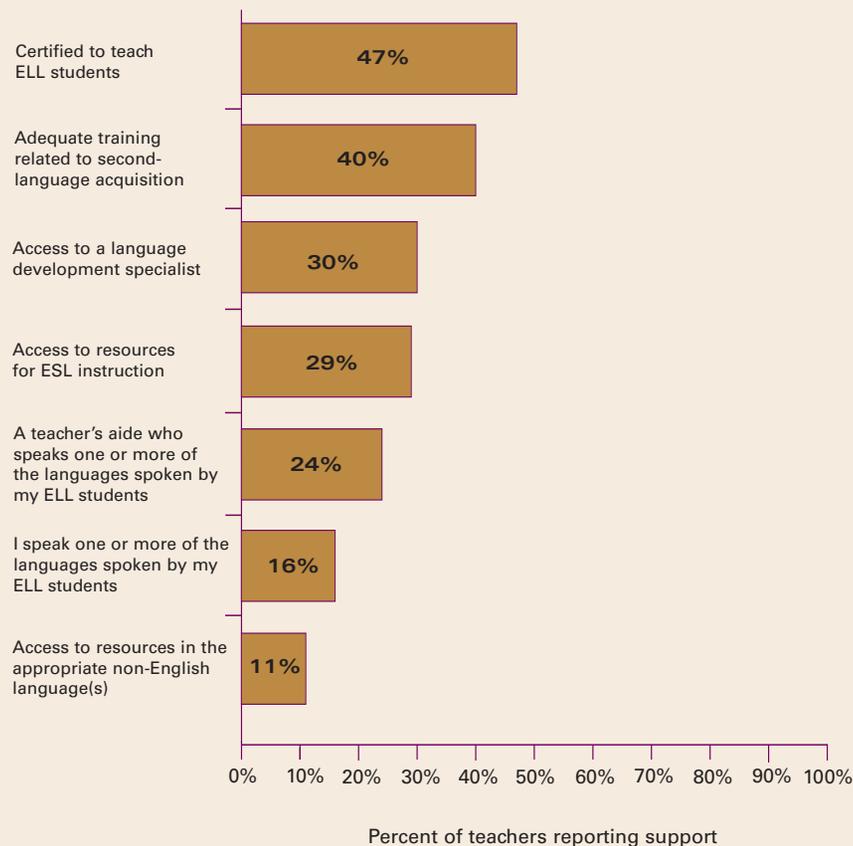
Two years ago, our report noted that too much of the professional development — training — for teachers seemed insufficiently focused and teachers did not place a great deal of value on it. We also noted the increased attention policymakers

were giving professional development and suggested the future may be more promising.

Indeed, our new survey of teachers finds them reporting receiving more of the kinds of professional development that educational research finds most effective. Within the curriculum areas

where training is offered, they now are more likely to say professional development has become more focused on subject matter, that it builds on their experience and promotes collaboration, and that it is more likely to be followed up.

### Support for Teaching English Language Learner Students



Source: SRI survey of California teachers (2003), SRI analysis

## Wrestling with Special Education

*Bethany is in her second year teaching seventh and eighth graders with mild to moderate learning disabilities — special education. She is an intern teacher, teaching without a credential while taking the courses required to earn the certificate she needs.*

*She earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from a public university and began substitute teaching in her last year of college. She believes she was not prepared to be a teacher when she started teaching. "I wish I knew what to do," she says. "I don't know everything. I didn't know what the kids were capable of learning. I didn't know what type of work I should be giving to the kids. I wish I would have had more structure. I didn't even know where to start asking questions so it was pretty mind boggling at first, for a few months actually."*

## Goals

For a number of years, we have asked policymakers to focus on five clear goals that we believe are ambitious but absolutely necessary for our children:

- Every student will have a fully prepared and effective teacher.
- Every district will be able to attract and retain fully qualified, effective teachers.
- Every teacher will work in a safe, clean facility conducive to learning; have adequate materials with which to teach; and have the guidance and support of a capable leader.
- Every pathway into teaching will provide high-quality preparation and be based upon California's standards for what students and teachers should know and be able to do.
- Every teacher will receive high-quality support as he or she begins teaching, as well as the continuing professional development to ensure that he or she stays current in his or her field.

But, just as these improvements are noted and the stakes increased on schools and teachers, the state has had to dramatically scale back its investment in professional development. And, as the state makes cuts, local school districts also have had to cut professional development dollars. Particularly in combination, these budget reductions threaten the progress of the past two years.

There are many venues for professional development beyond those provided by the state, including training provided by districts, schools and private companies. The state has been increasingly focused on teacher proficiency in two core subjects — literacy and mathematics. This focus has been particularly useful for the newest teachers but seen as less useful for more experienced teachers and for those who teach other subjects required for high school graduation and admission to the state's colleges and universities.

Special education teachers, for example, have been particularly left out. They have been given very little guidance on how to get students with

special needs to meet the state's academic standards, even though special education students are expected to meet those standards.

And regular classroom teachers have been given very little training in how to help the special education students or English learners in their classes, even though nearly nine in 10 teachers report having special education students or English learners in their classes.

## Recommendations

There is a simple truth for California: If we are going to get all of our students to achieve much more, we need to invest in a teaching force that has the knowledge, skills and support to meet their needs.

Our full research report includes detailed recommendations that are designed to meet the goals we have been pursuing for several years (see box above). We urge our education leadership and policy communities to continue to strengthen the teacher workforce as a first step in restoring excellence to California's public education system.

Educational excellence and opportunity should not be beyond reach of any child. With this in mind, we offer a summary of our major recommendations to strengthen teaching here, and provide greater detail in the full report. With these recommendations we keep in mind the fact that a new governor has just taken office and the state faces a continuing budget crisis. But these recommendations also reflect pressing and immediate needs in our schools, including the development of teachers who deal with key areas — those who teach special education, who teach learners of English, and who teach mathematics and science.

## Preparing and Licensing Teachers

- The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing should eliminate emergency permits for special education teachers by September 1, 2005.
- The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing should use remaining preintern funding to accelerate the progress of current special education emergency permit holders.
- The governor and the Legislature should give high priority to the formal review of the quality and effectiveness of the teacher intern program.
- The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the State Board of Education should collaborate to align standards for teacher development programs, performance assessments and accountability measures to ensure that programs for novice teachers reflect the components of the state's student academic achievement system.

## Ensuring an Adequate Supply of Teachers

- The governor should include in his budget funds for the chancellor of the California State University and the president of the University of California to implement regional campus programs for preparing an adequate supply of teacher candidates for high-need geographic areas and teaching fields, including special education, English language learning, mathematics and science.
- The Legislative Budget Committees should evaluate existing statutory incentives for teacher recruitment and restore funding to efforts found to be the most effective.

## Building Teachers' Skill and Knowledge

- The governor and the state superintendent of public instruction should target a portion of the Mathematics and Reading Professional Development Program on training for special education teachers to assist them in integrating student academic standards and adopted materials into their curricula.
- The state superintendent of public instruction should make high-quality, focused professional development to help classroom teachers adapt curriculum and instruction to accommodate students with special needs in the areas of reading and mathematics a priority for the Reading Implementation Centers in 2004.

## Including All Curriculum Areas Required for Graduation in Teacher Development

- The state superintendent of public instruction should develop and implement a teacher professional development cycle that addresses all subject matter content required for high school graduation and college and university admission.
- The governor should restore funding for the California Subject Matter Projects to reflect the state's professional development priority areas.

## Working toward Better Management of the State's Resources

- The state superintendent of public instruction should conduct a thorough review of the education code provisions related to teacher professional development to eliminate those requirements that are redundant or ineffective, and consolidate the remaining programs into a professional development block grant.
- The governor and the Legislature should establish a state-level, independent organizational structure to oversee and strengthen the state's teacher data collection and reporting system.

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In addition, we urge the governor and the Legislature to give priority over the next two years to the development of a more comprehensive and coherent *system* of teacher development for the state:

- Convene a working group to develop and recommend to the governor and the Legislature specific steps needed to build on the existing framework of teacher prepara-

tion, induction and professional development to establish a cohesive, accountability-based *system* of teacher development.

- The working group should give highest priority to ensuring that the state's programs for teacher preparation, induction and professional development focus on a coordinated, consistent approach to providing the curriculum content knowledge and pedagogical skills needed to help all students, including special education and English language learning students, meet the state's academic standards.

## About This Document

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