

PRESS RELEASE

Governor Gavin Newsom Endorses Findings from PACE Report on California Education Governance

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Governor Newsom has proposed changes to statute that would place the California Department of Education (CDE) and responsibility for state oversight and support of local education agencies under the authority of the State Board of Education (SBE), unifying the state’s policymaking body with the department responsible for implementing those policies. Aligning with recent recommendations from researchers at [Policy Analysis for California Education](#) (PACE), this proposal aims to strengthen statewide coherence in education policy, implementation, and capacity development. Announced in a January 8, 2026 [press release](#) from the Governor’s Office as part of the 2026–27 budget proposal, the proposed governance changes would require legislative approval and the Governor’s signature to take effect.

The Governor’s proposal is consistent with core findings from the December 2025 PACE report [TK-12 Education Governance in California: Past, Present, and Future](#), by [Jeannie Myung](#), [Heather J. Hough](#), and [Julie A. Marsh](#)—that clearer roles, stronger alignment, and coherent leadership are critical to improving outcomes for California students. PACE, led by Executive Director [Lupita Cortez Alcalá](#), is a research collaborative of five partner universities: Stanford University; the University of California, Berkeley; the University of California, Davis; the University of California, Los Angeles; and the University of Southern California.

“Strengthening how California’s education system is governed is an important part of advancing student success,” said Professor [Pedro Noguera](#), Emery Stoops and Joyce King Stoops Dean, USC Rossier School of Education—where report coauthor [Julie A. Marsh](#) is Professor of Education Policy. “The Governor’s proposal to align the California Department of Education more closely with the State Board of Education and to redefine the role of the State Superintendent (SPI) reflects the evidence-based recommendations advanced by PACE.”

“Governance is not abstract,” said Professor [Michelle D. Young](#), Dean of the Berkeley School of Education. “It shapes the real opportunities, resources, and learning experiences available to children, and plays a decisive role in advancing equity across the system.” The PACE report documents how, since the state’s founding, California’s “double-headed” education governance structure—dividing authority between the elected SPI and the governor-appointed SBE—has contributed to overlapping responsibilities and unclear lines of accountability. “California’s education governance system was created in the 19th century,” said Stanford Professor Emeritus [Michael W. Kirst](#), longest serving president of the SBE and architect of the Local Control Funding Formula. “The lack of fundamental change since then has hindered education progress. Governor Newsom’s proposal contains a new vision and a dramatic overhaul that needs to be enacted by the Legislature.”

“California can no longer postpone reforms that have been recommended regularly for a century,” Newsom said in his press release. The consequences of fragmented state governance have become more pronounced over time, and the federal retreat from public education has heightened urgency for governance reform at the state level. “With the federal government taking a diminished role in education, California must act decisively to untangle the confusion over who is responsible for what in our schools and build the coherent, equity-centered governance structure our students deserve,” said Professor [Cecilia Rios-Aguilar](#), Department of Education Chair, UCLA School of Education and Information Studies.

Based on interviews with policymakers, researchers, and education leaders, the report identifies how diffuse accountability and fragmented authority undermine policymaking and implementation. “Our research underscores that governance structures shape how effectively policies are translated into practice in schools,” said the report’s lead author, PACE Director of Policy Research [Jeannie Myung](#). “The Governor’s proposal acknowledges the need, as highlighted in our report, to strengthen statewide capacity for policy implementation and improve the effectiveness and consistency of guidance and support for schools and districts.”

Under existing structures, the Governor with the SBE—in collaboration with the Legislature—leads the development of education policies and budgets, while the publicly-elected SPI is responsible for the implementation of education policies passed. Governor Newsom proposes to “modernize the governance system by unifying the policymaking State Board with the Department of Education that implements those policies.” He further proposes to redefine the role of the SPI to focus on aligning education policies across the continuum from early childhood through college.

Chancellor's Leadership Professor of Education Policy [Michal Kurlaender](#), UC Davis School of Education, said: “California’s education governance structures must evolve to better align policy, implementation, and accountability. This proposal creates the conditions essential for improving system effectiveness and student outcomes.”

Media inquiries: press@edpolicyinca.org



Stanford Graduate School of Education

507 Lasuen Mall | Suite 205

Stanford, CA 94305

Phone: 650.576.8484

edpolicyinca.org

