Supporting Continuous Improvement in California's Education System

Linda Darling-Hammond
David N. Plank

January 2015

PACE

scope
Stanford Center for
Opportunity Policy in Education

Supporting Continuous Improvement in California's Education System

Linda Darling-Hammond
David N. Plank

With the assistance of
Soung Bae

Executive Summary

California's new accountability system originated in the radical decentralization of power and authority from Sacramento to local schools and their communities brought about by the Legislature's adoption of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) in 2013. Under California's previous accountability policies and the federal "No Child Left Behind" law, the state set performance targets for schools and districts based almost entirely on students' standardized test scores. Schools that fell short of their targets were subject to a variety of increasingly harsh sanctions, ranging from designation as a "failing" school to reconstitution or closure.

California's new accountability system is different from the previous system in nearly every important respect. The new system is grounded in the concept of reciprocal accountability: that is, every actor in the system—from the Capitol to the classroom—must be responsible for the aspects of educational quality and performance that it controls.

Key Elements of California's New Accountability System

The state has made three fundamental commitments:

- To pursue *meaningful learning* for students – through the adoption of new standards and curriculum frameworks more focused on higher order thinking and performance abilities;

- To give schools and districts the *resources* and flexibility they need to serve their communities effectively – through the new LCFF, which allocates funds based on student needs and allows communities to determine where the funds should be spent to achieve the best results;

- To provide *professional learning* and supports for teachers and administrators – through stronger preparation and ongoing professional development.

At the same time, the state has adopted three complementary mechanisms to hold schools and districts accountable:

- Political accountability, operationalized through Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs), created by districts with their communities, updated annually, and reviewed by county agencies. The LCAPs, intended to ensure that resources are used wisely and effectively, articulate local goals for schooling and report outcomes.

- Professional accountability, through effective licensure, professional development, and productive evaluation, to ensure that educators deliver high-quality instructional and other services to their students, and

- Performance accountability, to ensure continuous improvement in the performance of schools across the state's eight priority areas, plus other priorities identified locally. The eight priority areas include student achievement, student engagement, school climate, parent involvement, provision of basic services, curriculum access, and implementation of the state's new standards.

Creating a Continuously Improving System

With the simultaneous implementation of LCFF and LCAP, along with new standards, curriculum, and assessments, schools and school districts throughout California have a unique opportunity to reconfigure themselves as learning organizations, committed to continuous improvement and explicitly organized to support experimentation, evaluation, and organizational learning. Key features of a continuously improv-

ing education system include:

- *Learning supports* (materials and professional development) for the continuous improvement of curriculum, teaching, assessment, and student support strategies;

- *Information systems* for keeping track of what schools and districts are doing and to what effect;

- *Ongoing review* of school and district efforts and outcomes, including self-assessment and review by experts and peers;

- *Thoughtful innovation and evaluation* to support teachers, schools, and school districts as they experiment with promising policies and practices in ways that are a) informed by existing knowledge about those practices, b) designed to support serious evaluation of their implementation challenges and effects, and c) intended to support broader adoption of successful approaches and abandonment of unsuccessful ones; and

- *Knowledge dissemination strategies* (through a central repository of research and exemplars, convenings, networks, and leveraged supports) so that successful practices become widely known and supported in their wider

adoption / adaptation.

In this report we describe what it will take for California to create a continuously improving education system. We focus especially on the critical role that the new California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) will play in the new system, and offer design principles to inform the decisions that will guide its organization and operation.

Two key pillars are needed to support continuous improvement in California's education system. The first is an information and reporting system that can enable educators and state agencies to assess how things are working and how well students are learning. The second is an agency – the new CCEE – that can create supports for learning, knowledge sharing, and evaluation, as well as for direct intervention and improvement in the work of schools and districts that are struggling to provide an adequate education. These two pillars are linked, as the long-term effectiveness of the CCEE depends in substantial measure on a high-quality information system.

Organizing and Reporting Information

One key to a sustained process of continuous improvement is the

regular review of data to guide diagnosis of local strengths and weaknesses and to identify strategies and practices to support improved performance. In the state's new accountability system districts and schools must be able to access and use data on state and local priorities easily, and County Offices of Education (COEs) and Charter School Authorizers (CSAs) must \ have the capacity to evaluate local performance in a reliable, consistent manner. To meet these needs, and to guide effective assistance for struggling schools, the state must have school performance data that can be compared across schools and districts and aggregated on a statewide basis.

Rather than maintain competing reporting systems based on existing measures, California should develop a coherent approach that places the state's eight priorities at the heart of a unified accountability system, augmented with local measures that reflect additional community goals and priorities. The state should replace the Academic Performance Index (API), the State Accountability Report Card (SARC), and the current on-line reporting system with a dashboard of measures that reports progress on the state's priorities.

Instead of seeking to rank schools and districts on a single measure, the dashboard will reveal how they are doing in relation to criteria for performance and how they are improving in different areas. The use of multiple measures is much more informative than a single index for planning and improvement efforts. Like the dashboard on a car – which provides indicators of speed, distance traveled, fuel, fluids, tire pressure, and more -- the combination of measures provides information about where to look further in order to figure out how things are working and what may need attention.

An additional policy lever as the state moves toward a more aligned accountability system is the evaluation rubric that will be used in examining and assessing LCAPs to determine when a school or district needs assistance. An on-line statewide reporting tool to support LCAPs could incorporate the rubric's standards and could provide available state data for most of the LCAP indicators. The dashboard could be supplemented by a set of student, teacher, and parent surveys that include some common questions across the state in addition to locally identified questions. The surveys could provide information about many of the indicators, such as school climate and services, without creating burdensome reporting requirements for schools and districts.

Local schools and districts could draw from this tool and add their own indicators and data for priority areas where performance data are not readily compared, or for areas where local goals have been included in the LCAP. An example of what such a tool could look like, modeled on the Alberta (Canada) Results Report Card, is included in Appendix B of this report.

The primary use of the LCAP evaluation rubrics will be to provide guidelines against which schools and districts can assess their own progress, in order to guide ongoing improvements. Some, however, will need additional help to be successful. The first line of technical assistance will be County Offices of Education, while the ultimate responsibility will rest with the CCEE.

The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE)

The cornerstone of California's new accountability system is the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), not because the CCEE can or will do most of the work required to

support continuous improvement in the system but because it is the agency that is ultimately responsible for making the system work. Under the LCFF statute the CCEE's main responsibility is to help develop and implement strategies to improve local performance in schools and school districts where action by the COE or CSA has failed to launch a cycle of continuous improvement. This entails two main tasks.

First, the CCEE must provide *direct assistance* to schools, school districts, COEs and CSAs that are falling short of their goals and obligations, including both those that are identified by the SPI and those that request assistance on their own. To fulfill this responsibility the CCEE will have to conduct *skillful, diagnostic investigations* for schools that have requested or have been identified for assistance. These investigations should be based on a *School Quality Review* process that engages experts and peers in school visits and consultation with local stakeholders. The resulting diagnostic reports should identify weaknesses and problems and suggest context-sensitive strategies for remediation, with the goal of strengthening local capacity for organizational learning and continuous improvement.

Second, the CCEE must organize *assistance for improvement*. This could take several forms, including, as in some other states, the training and deployment of a cadre of Distinguished Educators—accomplished teachers, principals, and superintendents—who are intensively prepared and made available to work closely with schools and districts that are engaged in improvement or turnaround efforts. Another promising strategy is the creation of school or district pairings and networks, connecting schools that are struggling to more successful schools that face similar challenges. This approach to continuous improvement has been pioneered in Shanghai, China and in the CORE districts in California. Networking of small groups of schools, combined with knowledge dissemination strategies, has also been used successfully to support improvement in other contexts, including England and Ontario.

In addition to these two core functions, the CCEE should work with others in the state – CDE, COEs, and other providers -- to support *knowledge sharing and dissemination.* In order to support continuous improvement throughout the education system, and not just in individual schools and districts, California will need to build its capacity to *compile and evaluate information* about practices, tools, and resources that show promise, and to share this information with COEs, CSAs, districts, and schools.

In addition, in a state that has eliminated most of the infrastructure for professional learning, the CCEE will want to figure out what kind of *learning supports* it can contribute to the range of learning needs schools and districts will present. One especially urgent task is to provide guidance to schools and school districts about the quality and alignment of instructional materials and professional development programs that claim to advance the goals of new standards implementation. Other supports aimed at building local capacity could include assistance to districts in developing professional learning communities and stronger evaluation systems, including Peer Assistance and Review strategies. The CCEE should help to determine how these functions can best be managed in the state and how they can be phased in over time.

Three fundamental principles should guide decisions about organizational design of this new agency. First, the CCEE should employ a core professional staff

to review intervention strategies and oversee technical assistance activities, while contracting with multiple partners to provide direct assistance to school districts and schools. Second, the CCEE should engage in partnerships that build on existing public infrastructure to the greatest possible extent. Finally, the design should be scalable, to enable the CCEE to respond to new expectations and growing demand for assistance over time with a thoughtful phase-in process. This kind of unified long-term strategy could enable California to move successfully from a compliance-driven system to one that is capable of system learning and continuous improvement.

Supporting Continuous Improvement in California's Education System

Introduction

Californians are just beginning to recognize the scale and impact of recent policy changes in the state's education system. The simultaneous adoption and implementation of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) promise large and potentially transformational improvements in the state's schools and classrooms. Ensuring that these reforms live up to their promise will require educators and policymakers to develop and pursue an integrated, long-term strategy that supports system-wide learning about the effects of policies and practices and continuous improvement at all levels of California's education system.

The engine that will drive this transformation is California's new accountability system, which differs from the previous system in nearly every important respect. Some key parts of the new system are still under construction, but the broad outline of what it will look like is already clear.

The new system is grounded in the concept of reciprocal accountability: that is, every actor in the system must be responsible for the aspects of educational quality that it controls. On the one hand, the state has made three fundamental commitments: to pursue meaningful learning for all students, to give schools and districts the resources and flexibility they need to serve their communities effectively, and to provide professional learning and support for teachers and administrators at all levels of the system. As shown in Figure 1, these constitute three pillars of a new accountability system that is designed to support continuous improvement:

- Accountability for meaningful learning

- Accountability for adequate and intelligent resource allocation

- Accountability for professional competence and capacity[1]

At the same time, the state has adopted three complementary mechanisms to hold schools and districts accountable: political accountability to ensure that resources are used wisely and effectively, professional accountability to ensure that educators deliver high-quality instructional and other services to their students, and performance accountability to ensure continuous improvement in the performance of schools and students across multiple dimensions.

In this paper, we first review the key elements of California's new accountability system, with a focus on the reciprocal obligations of state and local agencies. We then discuss what a continuously improv-

Figure 1: Key Elements of an Accountability System
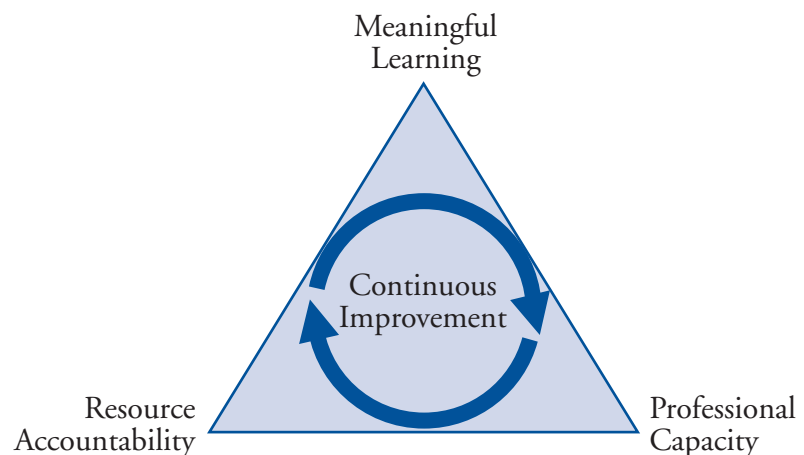
ing education system would need to include, and describe what it will take for California to create such a system. We conclude with a discussion of the critical role that the new California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) will play in the new system, and offer some design principles to inform the decisions that will guide the organization and operation of the CCEE. These design principles are based in part on a review of similar initiatives in California and in other states and countries. Several of these initiatives are described in text boxes throughout this paper and in a set of appendices.

California's New Accountability System

California's new accountability system originated in the radical decentralization of power and authority from Sacramento to local schools and their communities brought about by the Legislature's adoption of the LCFF in 2013. Here we describe the new accountability framework and the progress of implementation to date, flagging considerations and issues that will have to be addressed as the system takes shape.

Resource Accountability

California has pursued **resource accountability** by developing a weighted student funding formula that allocates funds based on pupil needs, assigning a greater weight to students living in poverty, English learners, and students in foster care. As a result, many California school districts will receive large infusions of new resources under the LCFF. The law intends to hold local districts accountable for intelligent and equitable uses of these funds by collecting evidence about what districts and schools offer their students and what the outcomes are, with data disaggregated by student race/ethnicity, poverty, language status, and disability status.

While the LCFF makes the distribution of resources in California's education system fairer and more rational, it does not increase the total resources available. Spending on education in California remains far below the national average, and the ratio of adults to students in California schools and classrooms is smaller than in almost any other state. Many instructional programs that were slashed during the state's fiscal crisis have yet to rebound. California still has far to go in providing educators with the resources they will need to achieve the goal of college and career readiness for all the state's students.

Local Control and Accountability Plans

Under the LCFF, school districts and charter schools are responsible for producing Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs), which lay out local goals and strategies in eight priority areas and link them clearly and directly to local decisions about resource use. Educators must develop their LCAPs in consultation with parents, community members, and other local stakeholders. These constituencies are in turn expected to hold their schools and school districts accountable for setting the right goals, using resources equitably and wisely, and supporting steady improvement in educational performance for all students. The LCAP is expected to link resource use to specific strategies for improving student achievement and attainment through the local budget.

County Offices of Education (COEs) and charter school authorizers (CSAs) are responsible for reviewing the LCAPs produced by districts and schools under their jurisdiction to ensure that the LCAPs comply with state regulations and that the allocation of budgetary resources is consistent with the goals that schools and districts set forth. These oversight bodies will also evaluate school and district progress toward the goals that they have set. If a local school district is falling short of the goals articulated and approved in its LCAP, the COE must provide guidance and technical assistance to the district, including the

assignment of experts to assist the district in turning itself around.[2]

The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence

In cases where COEs lack the resources or expertise that local districts need to achieve their goals, the COE may refer the district to the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), who may in turn ask the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) to provide technical assistance. Schools and school districts may also seek assistance from the CCEE on their own initiative. The CCEE thus has a potentially critical role to play in California's new accountability system as a repository of expertise and technical support for schools and districts facing challenges that they cannot surmount locally.

As of this writing, however, the CCEE does not yet exist. Although the statute that created the CCEE specified the procedure for appointing a five-member governing board and appropriated $10 million to support initial operations, the board has yet to meet, and basic decisions about what the CCEE will look like and how it will function remain to be made.

Meaningful Learning

California's primary strategy to ensure meaningful learning for all of the state's students has been to adopt and support implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in English language arts and mathematics and the associated Smarter Balanced (SBAC) assessments. The Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) have also been adopted, with new assessments promised in several years. Curriculum frameworks have been or are being developed for each of the new sets of standards, and the California Department of Education (CDE) is to bring a broader plan for assessment to the legislature by 2016. All the older tests, except for the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), are targeted for elimination.

The CCSS and NGSS propose ambitious new expectations for student learning and reflect the state's central goal of increasing the number of students who leave school equipped with deeper learning skills that include critical thinking; communication and collaboration skills; creativity; and the ability to learn to learn.

Some of California's largest school districts are part of the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) initiative, through which they are working together to build curriculum and assessment systems intended to support both deeper learning and the development of social-emotional skills, such as personal and social awareness and responsibility, collaboration skills, resilience, perseverance, and an academic growth mindset. These are part of the CORE districts' accountability approach, which adds a social-emotional domain to the LCAP requirements. (The CORE accountability system is described in Appendix A.)

Moving from a list of standards to a curriculum and classroom instruction is neither a small nor a simple task. The state can provide crucial support to local educators as they navigate this transition. This should include supporting the development and distribution of high-quality curriculum materials and assessment tools and encouraging local districts to select and develop thoughtful, curriculum-embedded assessments of students' knowledge and skills that provide ongoing diagnostic information to support learning. Assistance to teachers as they assess curriculum frameworks and develop local curricula would be especially useful, as would a more systematic review and vetting of textbooks and other instructional materials to ensure that they are high quality and are truly aligned to the CCSS. The state should also provide support for teacher learning and professional development, as discussed further below.

Professional Competence and Capacity-Building

The implementation of CCSS and NGSS dramatically raises expectations for California teachers. Under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, teachers were held strictly accountable for their performance on the California Standards Tests (CSTs), which measured primarily low-level skills.[3] One consequence was that teaching became an increasingly scripted activity, with little discretionary authority for teachers over what to teach or how to teach it. Under both CCSS and NGSS, in contrast, teachers are expected both to engage deeply in curriculum design and materials development and to engage their students in deeper learning. For many veteran teachers, this represents a return to highly valued professional norms that were steadily eroded under NCLB. For some more recent entrants, however, it represents something entirely new, for which they at best only weakly prepared.

To fully implement California's new academic standards, many teachers will need to learn pedagogical strategies that are new to them, and all teachers will need to learn how to integrate formative assessment into their teaching to support continuous improvement in their own instructional practice.

This is equally true of principals. Under NCLB, principals were subject to accountability rules imposed on their schools by both state and federal authorities, and school leadership required them to ensure that their teachers were faithfully delivering standardized material in ways that were thought to maximize student performance on standardized assessments. As they move forward with CCSS and NGSS implementation, many California principals will need intensive professional development to enable them to provide the new kinds of leadership that more ambitious goals for teaching and learning expect and require of them. This includes both leadership inside their schools and deeper engagement with parents and other interests and constituencies in the broader community.

To address these needs, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) has increased the standards for preparation institutions, requiring them to integrate training for the new standards in pre-service and induction programs. The CTC is also overhauling licensure and accreditation to create greater leverage for program improvement. In addition, the legislature allocated $1.25 billion to local districts for CCSS implementation, some of which was used to support professional development.

Although California is moving toward fulfilling its commitment to guarantee professional competence in every school and classroom, much more remains to be done. The infrastructure for professional development that once existed (for example, the Subject Matter Projects, California School Leadership Academy, supports for National Board Certification, and direct funding of some professional development programs) has been almost entirely eradicated by budget cuts over the last decade or more.

In addition, the ratio of adults to students in schools is lower in California than in almost any other state, and this has a variety of negative consequences. The lack of support staff places an inordinate burden on classroom teachers, depriving them of the time needed to work with their colleagues to develop curricula and instructional materials or to participate in professional development activities. Similarly, principals lack the administrative backup that would permit them to conduct meaningful evaluation of their teachers or to provide their teachers with the instructional support that they need. Providing teachers and principals with the time, knowledge, resources, and support that they will need to successfully implement the CCSS will be a challenge for policy makers and educators at all levels of California's education system.

Accountability Strategies Activated in the New System

The new approach will rely on three accountability strategies, described below, to ensure that goals are met.

Political Accountability

Under the LCFF, the main responsibility for ensuring that resources are used wisely and effectively is lodged with local educators and their communities as they develop and review LCAPs. If these LCAPs are not responsive to community expectations, or if local educators do not pursue the commitments articulated in the LCAP, the community's first recourse is political. In local school districts, voters can change the composition of the school board. In charter schools, parents can withdraw their children and enroll them elsewhere. For this political accountability to operate effectively, however, parents and other constituencies will need reliable data and analysis that reveal whether resources have in fact produced the results that were promised when making their decisions.

Professional Accountability

California's new accountability system relies on educators to assume professional responsibility for providing the students under their care with the best possible educational experience. This includes a commitment to master a more robust common knowledge base upon entry to the profession, to share knowledge and skills with others, to learn from colleagues, and to continuously assess what is working and what is not. In return, the state is committed to providing educators with the tools and training they need to continuously monitor their students' performance in order to identify areas of accomplishment along with areas of weakness. For this kind of professional accountability to operate effectively, pre- and in-service training programs will have to improve (and in the latter case, expand) to provide the needed knowledge and skills; time must be provided for in-school learning, assessment, and knowledge sharing; and productive teacher evaluation systems that provide useful, ongoing feedback must be developed where they do not currently exist.

In addition, teachers will need ongoing data about student performance, so that they can continually evaluate and respond to student learning needs, and seek additional expertise to respond to these needs as appropriate. This will require more than simply scores on SBAC tests: It will depend on use of formative assessments, ongoing examination and shared analysis of student work, and collaboration in planning to address these needs. Some of this additional 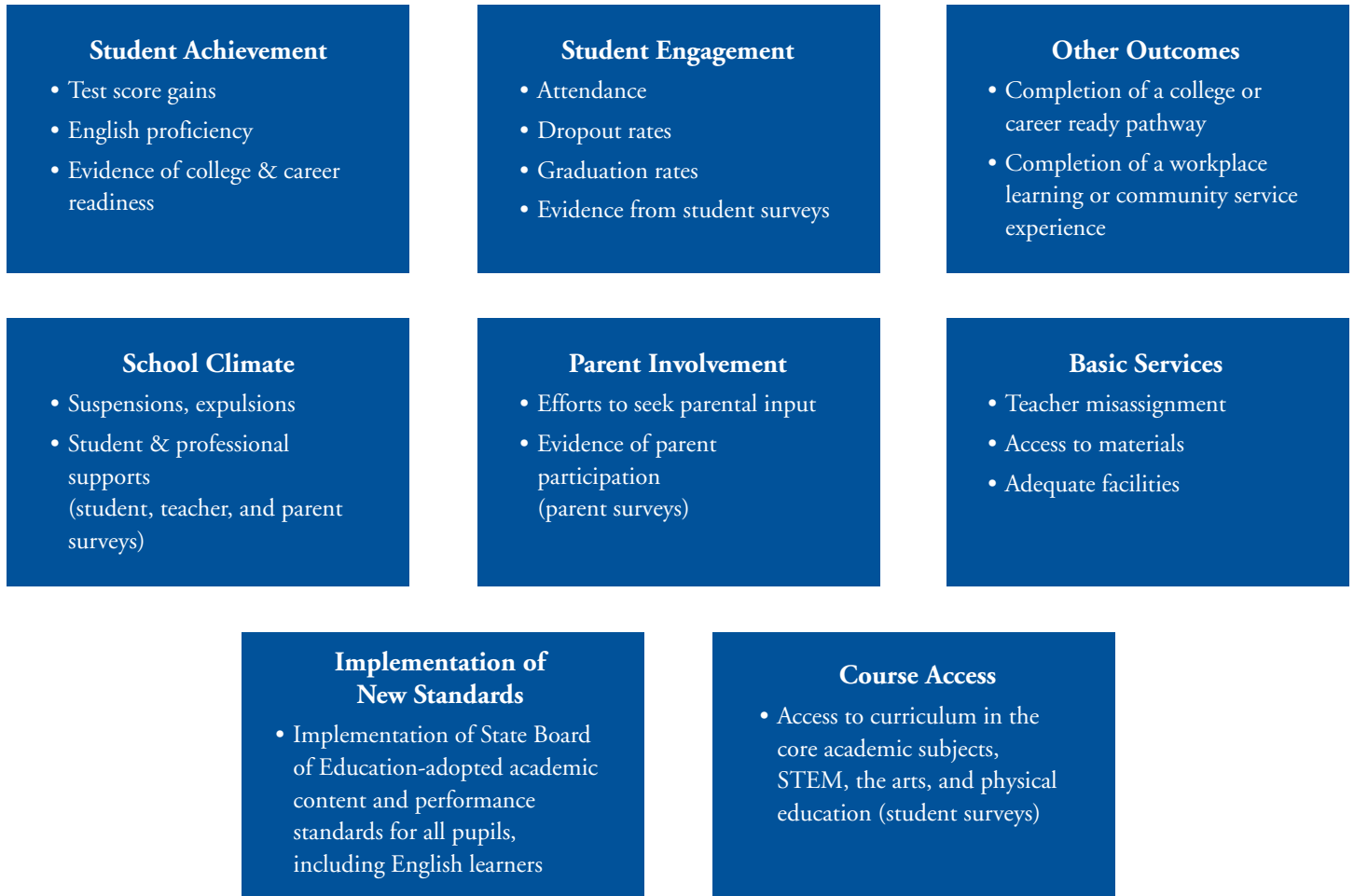information and shared planning may be acquired through teachers' participation in the scoring of new SBAC performance assessments.

Performance Accountability

California's new accountability system is premised on the recognition that testing, by itself, does not equal accountability, and that a single number cannot provide an adequate measure of school quality or school performance. Local educators are therefore required to set goals and measure performance on eight separate state priorities in their LCAPs (see Figure 2). For this kind of performance accountability to operate effectively, it will be important for local education agencies (LEAs) and charter schools to have the capacity to access and use the needed data and for COEs to have the capacity to evaluate it in a reliable, consistent manner. To support these activities, and to fulfill its own obligations under federal and state law to assist struggling California schools and districts, the state will need to have school performance data that can be compared across LEAs and can be aggregated on a statewide basis.

Schools and school districts will continue to need support and guidance from the state to be successful, even as they redesign themselves as learning organizations. That support should enable and encourage some innovation and risk-taking,

Figure 2: Indicators Required in Local Control and Accountability Plans

Student Achievement
- Test score gains
- English proficiency
- Evidence of college & career readiness

Student Engagement
- Attendance
- Dropout rates
- Graduation rates
- Evidence from student surveys

Other Outcomes
- Completion of a college or career ready pathway
- Completion of a workplace learning or community service experience

School Climate
- Suspensions, expulsions
- Student & professional supports (student, teacher, and parent surveys)

Parent Involvement
- Efforts to seek parental input
- Evidence of parent participation (parent surveys)

Basic Services
- Teacher misassignment
- Access to materials
- Adequate facilities

Implementation of New Standards
- Implementation of State Board of Education-adopted academic content and performance standards for all pupils, including English learners

Course Access
- Access to curriculum in the core academic subjects, STEM, the arts, and physical education (student surveys)

moving beyond old-style accountability methods that encouraged conformity and sometimes punished inventive ideas. It will also need to be conducted with recognition that a continuous feedback loop takes time to bear fruit, as knowledge about successful practices moves from classroom or school-wide innovation to evaluation and dissemination to curriculum changes and

professional development that help others learn the successful techniques and to subsequent improvements in classroom performance on a wider scale.

The agencies of state government, including the CDE and the State Board of Education (SBE), must recognize that local educators cannot build a continuously improving education system on their own.

To get to these successful strategies sooner and more purposefully, the state can identify areas of learning where improvement is needed (e.g., teaching fractions or persuasive writing) and encourage innovation and evaluation of strategies to seed improvement. To support this kind of learning-focused initiative, the state's new accountability system must therefore be designed to build

Continuous Improvement in the Education System

With the simultaneous implementation of LCFF and LCAP, along with new standards, curriculum, and assessments, schools and school districts throughout California have a unique opportunity to reconfigure themselves as learning organizations, committed to continuous improvement and explicitly organized to support experimentation, evaluation, and organizational learning. LCFF and LCAP give districts the resources and flexibility they need to experiment with new policies and practices, but experimentation by itself does not lead to organizational learning or systemic improvement. Too often, in fact, experimentation in schools leads only to random acts of innovation, which are dependent on the initiative of individual educators, limited to a single classroom or school, and rarely if ever evaluated, disseminated, or replicated. Whatever gains (or harms) result affect only those students who are directly involved, while the larger education system proceeds undisturbed.

By contrast, in a continuously improving system, innovation is a thoughtful and deliberate process, designed to produce knowledge about new programs and practices that can be validated and shared. Key features of a continuously improving education system include:

- *Learning supports* (materials and professional development) for the continuous improvement of curriculum, teaching, assessment, and student support strategies;

- *Information systems* for keeping track of what schools and districts are doing and to what effect;

- *Ongoing review* of school and district efforts and outcomes, including self-assessment and review by experts and peers;

- *Thoughtful innovation and evaluation*, so teachers, schools, and school districts experiment with promising policies and practices in ways that are a) informed by existing knowledge about those practices, b) designed to support serious evaluation of their implementation challenges and effects, and c) intended to support broader adoption of successful approaches and abandonment of unsuccessful ones;

- *Knowledge dissemination strategies* (through a central repository of research and exemplars, convenings, networks, and leveraged supports) so that successful practices become widely known and supported in their wider adoption/adaptation.

These features of a continuously improving system support and interact with one another, as suggested in Figure 3 below. For example, the results of learning supports may be partly captured by the information system, which can in turn guide the ongoing review of strategies and outcomes. This review may suggest places where interventions are needed, or where careful experimentation with purposeful evaluation can make a difference in problem solving. The results of useful experiments and innovations can then be shared through a variety of avenues, producing a further set of learning supports. The cycle of continuous improvement proceeds accordingly.

Learning Supports

A continuously improving system creates an infrastructure for supporting professional learning and building collective capacity across classrooms, schools, and districts. Coherence is important: Curriculum, assessment, standards, and professional learning opportunities should be seamlessly integrated, with supports for educator engagement and learning in each arena. In many high-achieving countries, for example, the implementation of new standards and curriculum frameworks often includes time and resources for teachers to develop,

Figure 3: Elements of a Continuously Improving System
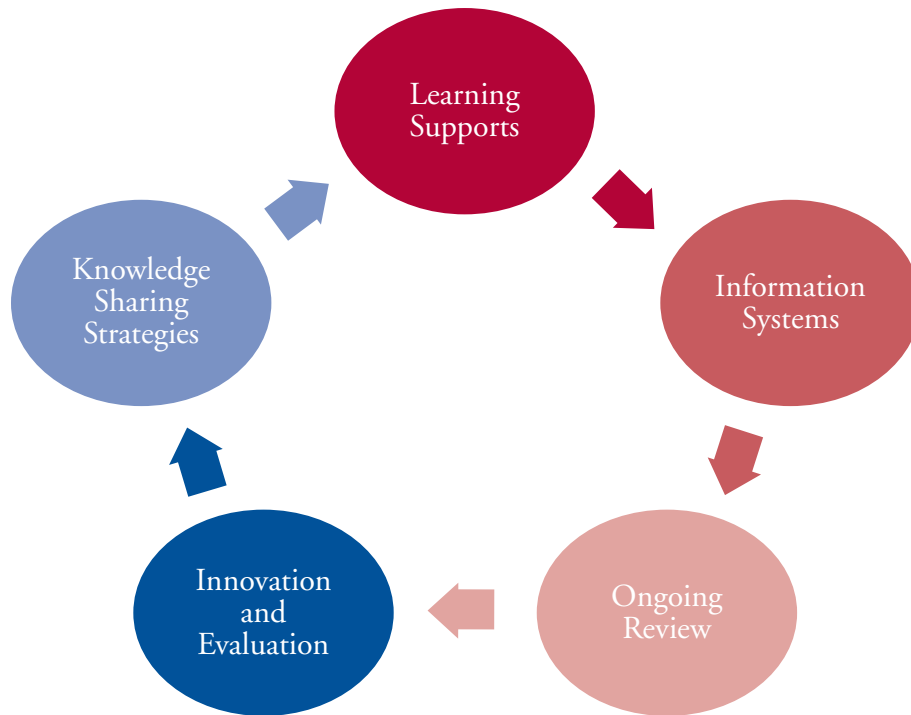
test, polish, and share curriculum materials and lessons both within and across schools. In addition, teachers are involved in developing and scoring performance assessments tied to the standards, examining and evaluating student work so that the standards come alive. Professional learning is integral to all these activities.

Effective professional development is sustained, ongoing, content-focused, and embedded in professional learning communities, giving teachers the opportunity to work over time on problems of practice with other teachers in their subject area or school.[4] Furthermore, it focuses on concrete tasks of teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection, looking at how students learn specific content in particular contexts, rather than emphasizing abstract discussions of teaching. Equally important, it focuses on

student learning, including analysis of the skills and understandings that students are expected to acquire and what they are in fact learning, drawing on collective analysis of student work and other relevant data.[5] Examples of how some countries and states have created systemic strategies for professional learning and knowledge dissemination are described in Box 1 below.

Box 1: Creating Systemic Supports for Instructional Improvement

Some countries have created very deliberate approaches to improving teaching by systemically disseminating research and practical knowledge about instructional strategies. For example, England instituted a national training program in "best-practice" teaching strategies as part of the National Literacy and National Numeracy initiative, which provided resources to support implementation of the national curriculum frameworks. These include packets of high-quality teaching materials, resource documents, and videos depicting successful practices. A "cascade" model of training—similar to a trainer of trainers model—was structured around these resources to help teachers learn and use productive practices.

The National Literacy and National Numeracy Centers provided leadership and training for teacher training institutions and consultants, who trained school heads, lead math teachers, and expert literacy teachers who, in turn, supported and trained other teachers. As more teachers became familiar with the strategies, expertise was increasingly located at the local level, with consultants and leading mathematics and literacy teachers providing support for their peers. An additional component of the strategies was designed to allow schools and local education agencies to learn best practices from each other by funding and supporting 1,500 groups of six schools each to engage in collaborative inquiry and knowledge-sharing.[6]

Similarly, the Australian government sponsored a three-pronged Quality Teacher Program that has provided funding to update and improve teachers' skills and understandings in priority areas and enhance the status of teaching. Teaching Australia facilitates the implementation of nationally agreed-upon teaching standards, conducts research and communicates research findings, and facilitates and coordinates professional development courses. The National Projects are designed to identify and promote best practice, support the development and dissemination of professional learning resources in priority areas, and develop professional networks for teachers and school leaders. The State and Territory Projects fund a wide variety of professional learning activities for teachers and school leaders, allowing professional development activities to be tailored to local needs. These projects include school-based action research and learning; conferences; workshops; on-line and digital media; and training of trainers, school project, and team leaders.[7]

Western Australia's highly successful Getting it Right (GiR) Strategy provides specialist teaching personnel, professional development, and support to select primary schools to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes of high-needs students, with a focus on Aboriginal and other at-risk students. Each school selects a highly regarded teacher with interest and expertise in numeracy or literacy to be a Specialist Teacher (ST), who is then trained through a series of seven three-day intensive workshops over the course of their initial two-year appointment. The STs work "shoulder to shoulder" with teachers in their schools for about half a day each week with each teacher. The STs also monitor and record student learning, help teachers analyze student learning, model teaching strategies, plan learning activities to meet the identified needs of students, assist with the implementation of these activities, and provide access to a range of

resources, sharing expertise and encouraging teachers to be reflective about their practice.[8] Teachers show greatly enhanced knowledge about how students learn reading, writing, and mathematics and much stronger teaching and assessment skills, including their ability to use data to identify and diagnose students' learning needs and to plan explicit teaching approaches to address these needs.[9]

In Ontario, Canada, supports are available for teachers to engage in school-focused research and development. Teachers are provided time and support for studying and evaluating their own teaching strategies and school programs, sharing their findings with their colleagues, participating in conferences, and preparing publications.[10] School-to-school networking strategies are also used to share practices; the province has leveraged them further by identifying positive exemplars that schools can visit to see what successful reforms look like in action. As Andy Hargreaves notes, "Lateral support across schools is wedded to positive peer pressure as schools push each other to higher and higher standards of performance."[11]

Similarly, an initiative in England to improve 300 struggling schools networked them with one another in small groups, provided them with technical assistance and support from mentor schools, and gave them a small discretionary budget they could spend to support their efforts. Schools were also given a practitioner-generated list of strategies that had produced short, medium, and long-range improvements. More than two-thirds of these "exceptionally energized" schools experienced gains over the next two years at rates double the national average, "without the characteristic mandates and prescriptions that had characterized English reforms before this point."[12]

Information Systems

To support continuous improvement, information systems must offer transparent, accessible data that are organized and reported in ways that enable educators, agencies of government, and other stakeholders to examine what is happening over time at various levels of detail (for example, with disaggregation by student groups, by schools, etc.). These systems should support the planning and evaluation that guide continuous improvement. Information systems ideally provide readily available data about a range of student outcomes, including atten-dance, progression through school, graduation, and measures of learning, along with data about students' experiences that may be associated with these outcomes (e.g., measures of access to qualified teachers, high-quality coursework and program opportunities, and positive school climate, among others).

Ongoing Review

Regular review strategies are key to continuously improving systems. Reviews—whether of individual educators, schools, or districts—should incorporate a range of data about what is happening and to what effect into more comprehensive, qualitative examinations that can drive planning for improvement. Review strategies should include regular self-assessment and reflection using rubrics or other tools that clarify important areas of work and expectations about performance, as well as review by experts and peers.

If continuous improvement is to take root in California's education system, ongoing review should become a predictable and welcome activity both within and across schools. If schools are to become more responsible and responsive,

they must, like other professional organizations, make evaluation and assessment part of their everyday lives. Just as hospitals have standing committees of staff which meet regularly to look at assessment data and discuss the effectiveness of each aspect of their work (a practice reinforced by their accreditation requirements) so schools must have regular occasions to examine their practices and effectiveness.

School-level accountability can be supported by external reviews coupled with self-assessment. In many other countries, school inspections are conducted by trained experts, usually highly respected former practitioners, who evaluate schools by spending several days visiting classrooms, examining random samples of student work, and interviewing students about their understanding and their experiences. They also look at objective data such as test scores, graduation rates, and the like.[13] An Americanized version of the inspectorate system has been designed by former members of the British inspectorate in consultation with U.S. educators. This hybrid system combines peer reviews conducted by teams of outside educators with expert reviews in a process that includes school self-assessment. It has been used in several states and cities, including New York, Rhode Island, and Chicago.[14]

Thoughtful Innovation and Evaluation

Continuous improvement relies in part on systematic experimentation with new policies and practices, to identify those that show promise. California's new accountability system gives educators the freedom and flexibility to experiment, but freedom and flexibility alone are not enough to support innovation. The state's previous accountability system was strongly guided by state and federal regulations, which produced strong incentives for local educators to focus on compliance and minimize risk. Changing this orientation will require positive action to shift the incentives in the accountability system to encourage rather than discourage experimentation, in the full knowledge that not all innovations are successful.

Continuous improvement requires that new policies and practices be introduced deliberately and thoughtfully, in ways that can support rigorous evaluation and policy learning. This is first of all a question of policy design. Rather than introducing new practices and policies simultaneously for all students, as is typically done now, schools and school districts should, when possible, plan for the staged implementation of pilot projects, policy experiments, or even randomized control trials, which can

inform efforts to learn which innovations show promise and which should be abandoned. Identifying which innovations promise benefits for students requires knowledge of existing research and professional practice, as well as nuanced evaluation to learn which ones work, for which students, and under which sets of circumstances. Developing a repository of evidence about effective policies and practices is a key role for the state in California's new accountability system.

In addition to the information that can be provided by the state's data system, continuous improvement will require that schools and school districts collect and analyze data needed to monitor and evaluate local innovations. This may require school districts and CSAs to invest in local data systems that can track students' participation in specific programs and activities over time in order to distinguish those that are moving students toward college and career readiness from those that are not. Careful evaluation of alternative policies and practices is essential if California is to move beyond "random acts of innovation" toward a system that is capable of policy learning and continuous improvement.

Knowledge Dissemination Strategies

A continuously improving system needs well developed strategies for sharing knowledge about both instructional practice and educational policies and programs. At the level of day-to-day practice, quality teaching depends not just on teachers' knowledge and skill but on the environments in which they work. Schools should be designed for knowledge sharing that enables them to offer a coherent curriculum focused on higher order thinking and performance across subject areas and grades, with high-quality instructional norms and practices that are also shared. This requires time for teachers to work intensively with students to accomplish challenging goals; opportunities for teachers to plan with and learn from one another; and regular occasions to evaluate the outcomes of their practices.

To sustain continuous improvement in California's education system, incentives and opportunities must be structured in ways that promote collaboration and knowledge-sharing across schools, school districts, COEs, and CSAs. This approach has been the primary strategy for improvement in Ontario, Canada, where ongoing evaluation and inquiry into practice are encouraged and supported within and across classrooms, across schools partnered within regions, and within the system as a whole[15] (see Box 1 above).

If California aims to build a continuously improving education system, the state will have to develop and support platforms and channels that make it easy for local educators to share information about promising practices and to learn from one another. This can happen through dissemination of research and best practice documentation, networking of schools and districts, and leveraged supports for adoption and adaptation of successful practices among educators, schools, and districts. This kind of policy learning is a necessary condition if local innovations are to spread beyond the schools and classrooms where they originate and go to scale. State agencies including the CDE and the CCEE have key roles to play in supporting the compilation, curation, and dissemination of useful and actionable information to educators throughout California. More intensive knowledge supports may be needed for schools and districts that are struggling to provide a minimally adequate education, and these will need to be part of the plan.

How California Can Create a System for Continuous Improvement

California's new accountability system seeks to ensure that schools have the appropriate resources, professional competence, and incentives to offer every child a high-quality education. The new system focuses on a broader set of outcomes than in the past, in order to reflect more clearly what students need in order to be prepared for college, career, and citizenship. It is grounded in the following principles:

- *Meaningful learning* should support acquisition of the knowledge and skills that students need to succeed in today's world: the ability to apply complex knowledge to solve problems, collaborate, communicate, inquire and learn independently, build relationships, and be resilient and resourceful.

- *Trust and responsibility* should be achieved by strengthening *professional accountability* along with *parental involvement* and accessible *data*, so that educators and parents have the best available knowledge to make decisions that serve each child well.

- *Transparency* should ensure that information about school decisions, inputs, and outcomes is readily available to support continuous improvement and accountability.

- *Multiple measures* should inform all decisions about students, teachers, and schools. These

should capture the many aspects of education valued by parents, educators, and community and should be evaluated through systems of *review, judgment, and intervention* that support *continuous improvement*.

- *Reciprocity* and *subsidiarity* should guide state-local relationships. Each level of the system should be held responsible for the contributions it must make to support learning for every child. The state is responsible for providing *adequate and equitable resources*, while local districts must *allocate resources intelligently* to meet students' needs.

- *Community engagement* should be the result of local agency that allows schools and districts, with community input, to make appropriate decisions on behalf of their students.

- *Collaboration and coherence* within schools, across schools within a more rationally designed system, and between P12 and higher education, should enable the educational system to operate more effectively in meeting the state's educational needs.

- *Creativity and flexibility* should be encouraged in order to meet the demands of the future and the full range of student needs. Multiple pathways to success, featuring relevant, engaging learning, should be available to students to enable them to access a productive future.

For these goals to be accomplished, California will need to create a system that operates differently from the system we have today in many significant respects. California's new accountability system is designed to guide the state's schools and school districts onto a path of continuous improvement. To do this, it will need:

- a more highly developed system of learning supports;

- an integrated and usable information system to guide planning and evaluation;

- processes that employ these data in ongoing reviews that incorporate qualitative information, self- and peer-assessment, and expert judgment to support continuous improvement for educators, schools, and districts;

- thoughtful innovation and evaluation processes that can produce knowledge about what works and under what circumstances; and

- knowledge-sharing vehicles within and across schools.

In what follows, we focus on two key pillars that can support these elements of a continuous improvement system. First, we describe what we believe will be needed to produce a usable information and reporting system that can enable educators and state agencies to better organize learning supports, ongoing review, and useful evaluation. Second, we describe the role the CCEE could play in creating general supports for learning, knowledge sharing, and evaluation, as well as for direct intervention and improvement in the work of those schools and districts that are struggling to provide an adequate education. These two pillars are linked, as a productive role for CCEE will depend in substantial measure on a high-quality information system.

An Information and Reporting System to Support Continuous Improvement

An important key to a sustained process of continuous improvement is the regular review of data to guide diagnosis of local strengths and weaknesses and to identify strategies and practices to support improved performance. Educators are expected to make use of this information to identify areas where their students are not meeting expectations and to adapt their professional practices to address local weaknesses. The broader school community is similarly expected to hold educators ac-

countable for the wise and effective use of resources and for targeting resources to support the achievement of local goals. Over time, these mutually reinforcing accountability mechanisms are intended to produce a virtuous cycle of continuous improvement in the performance of schools and students.

Until recently, the primary measurement tool used to rank schools and identify them for intervention has been the Academic Performance Index (API). Although it was originally intended to incorporate a wide range of measures, the technical difficulties of mixing measures with different scales and meanings have precluded the use of much more than test scores in the API. Even if the effort to incorporate additional measures were to prove technically feasible, however, the results would not provide useful information for a continuous improvement system: Tossing a mix of apples, oranges, spinach, and chocolate chips into a blender may produce an edible mixture, but once the ingredients are blended it is virtually impossible to distinguish them from one another or to know how each one influenced the final result. A single index that blends multiple measures of school performance is a poor tool for guiding planning or improvement.

In addition, as businesses and many other organizations are well aware,

boosting scores on a single measure can sometimes have a negative impact on other important outcomes. For example, businesses recognize that an exclusive focus on short-run profits can undermine investments in innovation or in building up a loyal customer base that is necessary for longer term success. Similarly, a single-minded focus on test scores can create incentives for educators to counsel struggling students out of high schools and into continuation schools or GED programs or to leave school entirely. This may boost test scores in some schools, but at the cost of lowering graduation rates in the system as a whole and failing a group of students.

Finally, the use of norm-referenced school rankings, including performance deciles, to guide policy has proven increasingly problematic, because it does not provide information about or credit schools with their success in reaching a criterion or benchmark. Reliance on norm-referenced rankings merely evaluates schools in relation to one another on a single indicator. In the case of California's API, that indicator was more highly correlated with student socioeconomic status than with any variable or factor that districts or schools could affect.

In California's new accountability system, the state's efforts to create a productive, aligned system for

improvement should aim for a unified approach focused on the eight priorities that frame the LCAP (see Figure 2). Rather than maintain competing systems and measures, the API and the current School Accountability Report Card (SARC) should be replaced with a dashboard of measures that is designed to help organize data for planning, public information, and improvement by reporting progress on the state's eight priorities. These measures should reveal how schools and districts are improving and how they are doing in relation to criteria for performance in different areas, rather than seeking to rank them on a single measure.

As we discuss below, reporting on multiple measures of school performance can help to identify schools that need assistance from COEs and the CCEE as well as signal the areas where assistance is likely to have the greatest impact. It can also help identify schools that are succeeding and provide opportunities for others to learn from their success. This will help schools focus their efforts on shared goals without subjecting them to conflicting expectations or requirements.

Unless a single, coherent system of accountability measures is adopted, California runs the risk of perpetuating a set of incompatible practices that confuse the field; waste educa-

tors' energy as they respond to multiple reporting requirements; and undermine clarity, trust, and a local capacity to mobilize scarce resources for positive change. Schools and the state as a whole would suffer if the CDE were to continue using a different measure to identify schools for intervention under its federal and existing state obligations from that used by COEs, CSAs and the CCEE to examine and support continuous improvement in schools and school districts. Instead the state should develop a coherent approach that places the state's eight priorities at the heart of a unified accountability system that is augmented with local measures reflecting additional community goals and priorities.

Moving to a System of Multiple Measures. The LCAP process is based on a dashboard of indicators that are intended to measure status and growth on state priorities. The use of multiple measures is much more informative than using a synthetic index for planning and improvement efforts. Like the dashboard on a car—which provides indicators of speed, distance traveled, fuel, fluids, tire pressure, and more—the combination of measures provides information about where to look further in order to figure out how things are working and what may need attention. The system is premised on multiple measures, which may ultimately

include periodic state standardized measures and assessments of student performance to augment and verify the results of more robust measures and assessments that are used at the local level.

Properly conceptualized, the dashboard of indicators produced under the LCAP could give educators and their communities much of the information that they need to identify areas of strength and areas of concern and to then target resources toward those areas where improvement is needed. In order to perform this function, and to support the work of the COEs and CSAs that are to review the work of local communities, as well as the work of the CCEE, some common approaches to reporting and recording information will be vitally important. COEs, CSAs, and the CCEE will need a way to examine individual school and district data that allows multiple comparisons (e.g., to the same school over time, to schools and districts in the same county, to schools and districts serving similar students, and so on). Support for these kinds of comparisons is not currently envisioned in the LCAP reporting system, and will need to be developed if the proposed goals are to be reached.

A statewide tool for helping to collect and report data will be needed for a number of reasons:

- To assist local schools and districts, many of which are currently having difficulty defining and producing indicators for a number of the LCAP categories;

- To produce evidence about successes that others across the system can learn from and replicate;

- To support evaluation of the outcomes of changes in practice or policy;

- To enable parents and the public to assess the performance of their schools and districts in relation to others;

- To enable COEs and CSAs, as well as the CCEE when it is activated, to fairly assess the performance of schools and districts relative to their past performance and to their peers in order to better assist them in improving;

- To allow aggregation of the data for state policymakers who will want to know about successes and challenges for the system as a whole, or for certain age ranges or student groups, in order to inform state policy development.

Currently, the burden of producing and reporting data for the LCAP rests solely with local districts and charter schools, and LCAP requirements have not been integrated with other state data systems, including CDE's on-line accountability re-

porting tool, or SARC. In the past year, the state took an important step toward a more coherent system of accountability reporting by rearranging the SARC template to display data in ways that are better aligned with the LCAP state priorities, but there are many LCAP priorities for which data are still not provided. Other data systems at the CDE are also poorly aligned with the LCAP. The CDE does not currently have a process to send data to local districts in a form that they can directly use for LCAP planning and reporting, nor does it have a process to organize locally reported data in ways that allow the data to be aggregated and reviewed at the county or state levels.

As the state moves toward a more aligned and better integrated accountability system, an additional policy lever is the evaluation rubric that will be used in examining and assessing the LCAPs. The rubric is to include standards for school district and individual school performance as well as expectations for improvement for each of the eight state priorities. The purposes of this rubric are to: (1) assist school districts, COEs, and charter schools in assessing their own performance, including their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement; (2) assist COEs in determining when school districts and charter schools need assistance; and (3) assist the

SPI, SBE, and CSAs in determining when they should provide a school district or charter school with assistance or take other appropriate action authorized by the law, such as intervention or charter revocation.

This rubric could organize the reporting of and standards for state measures that could be part of the LCAPs as well for local measures. By integrating the format of the rubric with the SARC and the on-line reporting system that currently exists for each school and district, the state could provide the public with transparent, accessible data, while saving LEAs time and resources they would otherwise need to spend to develop all their own measures.

A Statewide Reporting Tool. An on-line statewide reporting tool to support LCAPs could incorporate the requirements of the rubric to set standards or benchmarks for each of the indicators and could provide available state data in many categories. Then local schools and districts could draw from this tool and add their own indicators and data for the remaining areas that are not amenable to comparable data or where local goals have been included in the LCAP.

An example of what such a tool could look like is included in Appendix B. It is modeled on the Alberta (Canada) Results Report, which is an on-

line tool that contains data for that province's seven sets of indicators in its multiple measures accountability system. This tool is publicly available, and those who are interested can click on any of the indicators to see further detail on the underlying data that produced the measure.[16] Local districts can use these data, along with their own locally developed data, when they prepare their Alberta Education Results Reports, which, like the LCAPs, allow them to summarize their accomplishments and set goals as well as report results.[17]

There are many LCAP areas for which statewide data are already available (e.g., state test scores in English language arts (ELA), math, science, and English language proficiency; attendance; persistence rates; graduation rates; a-g completion rates; and assignment of credentialed teachers). In some cases, these would have to be assembled from various departments or agencies of state government. There are a number of other areas where the state could readily develop or collect data from local districts in common ways (e.g., completion of an approved career technical education (CTE) course sequence; student completion of college-ready standards on Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate tests, or through dual credit courses; school climate and opportunity to learn in-

dicators from surveys, as discussed below). Where local definitions and data are needed, they could be added to this foundation.

Surveys. The dashboard could be informed by a set of student, teacher, and parent surveys that include some common questions across the state in addition to locally identified questions. The surveys would provide an efficient way to collect evidence about school climate, student engagement, parent involvement, access to basic services, implementation of the CCSS, and course access, without creating burdensome reporting requirements for schools and districts.

Currently, the California School Climate, Health, and Learning Survey System, operated by the CDE, provides surveys of pupils, parents, and school staff regarding school climate and other issues that districts can access for a fee. The CORE districts also have created a teacher, parent, and student survey to provide information for their multiple measures accountability system. If a small number of items were identified for a statewide on-line survey that districts could freely access and to which they could add their own items, this would provide a service to districts that are unable to mount their own effort and would allow for more common measures in some domains. In addition to indicators

of school climate (including safety and connectedness), a set of surveys could contribute data about parent involvement, the availability of a rich curriculum, and even CCSS implementation, as illustrated in Figure 2 above.

Use of Data. Organized in this way, the LCAP dashboard of indicators could provide annual data that indicate, for each measure, how the school or district is performing overall and in relation to prior years, disaggregated for groups of students (by race/ethnicity, language background, special education status, and poverty). These state and local data can provide the grist for continuous improvement processes at the local school and district levels, as well as for the provision of analysis and support by COEs, CSAs, and as warranted, by the CCEE.

Evaluation across multiple measures can suggest how schools and districts are doing and whether they are improving. If a number of concerns are apparent, the school or district could be identified for further diagnostic review, evaluation, and an improvement process. The CDE should align any process it is required to use for federally required identification of schools for intervention with this process, so that the system is coherent. As described in Appendix A, the CORE districts, under their federal Elementary and

Secondary Education Act (ESEA) waiver, have designed a multiple measures system compatible with the LCAP, which adds additional local measures and can be used for federally required identification and support for struggling schools.

A state data tool that supports local districts should *enable* and *support* the LCAP process, but it should not *become* the process, nor should it drive budgeting and goal-setting. The local strategic planning and budgeting process that the LCAP is meant to stimulate and inform should be grounded in local contexts and priorities, not determined by a data tool. The LCAP is intended to guide how funds are allocated to achieve results. It is critically important that the LCAP not become a checklist that ticks off whether districts put money in every category defined by the state priorities. That is not the hope or expectation of the LCAP process. Local districts can be accountable for results only if they can use their best judgment about how to achieve them.

Technical Assistance

The primary use of the new LCAP evaluation rubrics will be to provide guidelines against which schools and districts can assess their own progress and performance to guide ongoing improvements. In some cases, however, local dynamics

will not be sufficiently powerful to launch this cycle, and schools and school districts will need additional help from outside to be successful. Some schools and school districts will make uninformed decisions, and others will lack the capacity to transform struggling schools. Local educators will need external support to help them build internal capacity and foster a local culture that can support continuous improvement in the performance of schools and students. Under the LCFF, the primary responsibility for providing technical assistance and support to local schools and districts resides with COEs and CSAs, while the ultimate responsibility rests with the CCEE.

Intervention by a COE or CSA is not intended to be punitive; rather, the goal is to help diagnose local obstacles to success and to provide technical assistance aimed at building local capacity to overcome those obstacles. Schools and school districts that recognize their own lack of progress may decide to request technical assistance or support from the COE or CSA. In cases where the school or school district is making less than satisfactory progress toward accomplishing its stated goals over an extended period of time, however, the COE or CSA will be required to intervene.

Many of California's COEs have experience in providing this kind of technical assistance to local schools and school districts, and many districts look to the COE as their primary source of help when they run into difficulties.[18] Many COEs now provide professional development for teachers and other educators on a fee-for-service basis, and COEs have played a lead role in the constitution and deployment of technical assistance teams, as in School Assistance and Intervention Teams (SAIT) and District Assistance and Intervention Teams (DAITs).

However, not all COEs or CSAs now have the expertise or capacity to provide the support that the schools and school districts under their jurisdiction may need. As the LCAP process matures, COEs will need to build their capacity to assist local educators, which may require substantial organizational redesign in some counties. One strategy for enhancing local capacity would be to work on a regional basis to share resources and responsibilities. There may be opportunities for COEs to specialize in particular areas (e.g., English language development, technology), or to coordinate services in a regional consortium. Regional consortia can significantly expand the variety and quality of services that COEs can provide to local educators, but fostering the level of cooperation and coordination across schools, districts, and counties necessary will pose a significant challenge to local leaders. Developing and orchestrating productive technical assistance models across the state could be one of the roles of the new CCEE.

The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence

The cornerstone of California's new accountability system is the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, not because it can or will do most of the work required to support continuous improvement in the system, but because it is the agency that is ultimately responsible for making the system work. Under the LCFF statute, the CCEE's main responsibility is to help develop and implement strategies to improve local performance in schools and school districts where local or regional action by the COE or CSA has failed to launch a cycle of continuous improvement. This entails two main tasks, as outlined below.

First, the CCEE must provide *direct assistance* to schools, school districts, COEs, and CSAs that are falling short of their goals and obligations, including both those that are identified by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) and those that request assistance on their own. To fulfill this responsibility, the CCEE will have to conduct *skillful, diagnostic investigations* into the reasons why schools are not meeting

performance expectations. These investigations should include extended visits to schools and consultation with local stakeholders, and not just a review of test scores. Site visit teams will produce diagnostic reports that identify weaknesses and problems and suggest context-sensitive strategies for remediation, with the goal of strengthening local capacity for organizational learning and continuous improvement.

Second, to do its work effectively in schools that operate across the full spectrum of California's very diverse educational system, the CCEE must build its own capacity to **compile and evaluate information** about practices, tools, and resources that show promise, and to share this information with COEs, CSAs, school districts, and schools. Hiring expert practitioners to staff site visit and school intervention teams is essential, but those experts and the local teachers and administrators they work with must have access to a reliably curated and easily accessible source of information about promising innovations in order to keep their knowledge up to date in what is a diverse and constantly changing educational landscape. Useful information may come from other practitioners (e.g., via the CDE's "Brokers of Expertise"[19] and/or similar on-line repositories) or from more formal evaluation research.

The closest analog to the work of the CCEE is the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistant Team (FCMAT), which is administered by the Kern County Office of Education (see Box 2 below). The responsibilities of the CCEE are similar to those faced by FCMAT in some respects, but the challenges involved in diagnosing school and district performance on multiple indicators and providing useful and actionable advice on strategies for improvement are vastly more complex (though perhaps no easier) than the challenge of balancing district budgets.

BOX 2: Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team

In 1991, the California legislature enacted Assembly Bill 1200, which provided COEs with increased oversight responsibilities for the fiscal and management health of their local school districts and authorized the creation of the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT). The mission of FCMAT is to provide proactive and preventative fiscal and management assistance to LEAs, COEs, charter schools, and community colleges. Over the years, FCMAT's responsibilities have grown to include preparing comprehensive assessments and recovery plans, providing fiscal training to school business officials, and developing and maintaining two statewide information systems.[20] It is estimated that in 2012-2013, 88% of FCMAT's work entailed providing management assistance and only 12% of its studies involved fiscal crisis intervention work.[21] FCMAT may be asked to provide fiscal crisis or management assistance by an LEA, COE, charter school, community college, or assigned by the SPI or the Legislature.

FCMAT is authorized by the Legislature to charge education agencies a daily rate for its on-site assistance activities when the assistance is requested by the education agency. FCMAT's governing board sets the billable rate, which was $500 per consultant per day plus expenses in 2014.[22] Other activities not conducted at an education site, such as report writing, are paid for from FCMAT's annual appropriation for fiscal and management assistance services. When FCMAT services are needed due to a fiscal emergency or the education agency receiving a state emergency loan, the state rather than the education agency pays the cost of services. The thinking is that if education agencies are not overburdened by the cost of receiving services to improve practices and system functioning, they are more likely to take proactive steps toward implementing difficult changes.

One of the strengths of the FCMAT service delivery model stems from the fact that it is an independent and external entity, so it can provide an unbiased and objective assessment of professional and legal performance standards with a high level of credibility.

This is often useful in getting necessary changes made by local school boards.[23] FCMAT's collaborative stance in working with educational institutions is another strength. When responding to a request for assistance or an assigned review, FCMAT works closely with the education agency to define the scope of work, conduct on-site fieldwork, and develop a written report with findings and recommendations to resolve the threats to the agency's fiscal and management health.[24]

While some think FCMAT could benefit from greater authority, either to mandate its recommendations or to report on agencies' implementation of the recommendations, others note that FCMAT's narrow scope of authority may bolster the education community's perception of it as a helping entity rather a compliance monitor. Therefore, education agencies may be more willing to seek assistance from FCMAT prior to finding themselves in fiscal and management crises, and the education staff may be more willing to share sensitive information and practices that help FCMAT investigate the issues and ultimately develop more effective and applicable recommendations.[25]

A governing board and the Kern County superintendent's office manage the oversight of FCMAT. FCMAT's governing board of directors provides policy direction and operational guidance to the FCMAT and also monitors its progress. The governing board consists of one county superintendent and one district superintendent from each of the state's 11 service regions, the Chancellor of the Community College system (or his designee), a representative from the community college district governing board appointed by the chancellor, and a representative from the CDE. A significant oversight responsibility performed by the governing board is developing criteria and prioritizing requests for assistance that get submitted to FCMAT. This ensures that "FCMAT is kept free from real and perceived interference or conflicts of interest that might impair its independence and objectivity."[26] Similar measures may help to ensure the independence and objectivity of the CCEE.

Organizing the state's education system to support continuous improvement will ultimately require California to build (or rebuild) its capacity to generate, validate, and share information about promising policies and practices. Specifically, the state will need to make a commitment to sponsoring evaluation research and generating new knowledge about what works, and under what circumstances, in order to improve performance in California schools and school districts. In addition, in a state that has eliminated most of the infrastructure for professional learning, the state will have to figure out what kind of learning supports it can contribute to the range of learning needs schools and districts will present. One especially urgent task is to provide guidance to schools and school districts about the quality and alignment of instructional materials and professional development programs that claim to advance the goals of CCSS implementation.[27]

Below we discuss how the CCEE, in concert with COEs, CSAs, and other organizations, might work to establish the conditions for continuous improvement in California's education system in the following areas:

- Diagnosis of school/district functioning through a School Quality Review (SQR) process

- Assistance for improvement

- Knowledge organization and sharing

- Support for evaluation

- Support for learning

Over time, some of these additional responsibilities might come to be provided under the auspices or with the support of the CCEE. Initially, it is essential that the CCEE be given the time and resources it will need to accomplish its core goals of providing diagnostic reviews and technical assistance for the schools and school districts that are most in need of help. Other potential roles should be considered for phase-in over time.

Diagnostic Review

In order to support continuous improvement in the performance of the state's schools and students, the CCEE will need a process of skillful evaluation, diagnosis, and planned support for individual schools or districts it is working with. In addition, the state as a whole could benefit from a process that allows schools to self-evaluate and receive feedback about their practices and progress toward their goals.

These objectives could be accomplished through the establishment of a SQR system operated by the CCEE, which is used for all schools that are the focus of CCEE's attention, and which could be made available to a wider range of interested schools or, as in some states, for all schools on a periodic basis (see Box 3).

BOX 3: The School Quality Review

School Quality Reviews derive from the English school inspection system that spread to many other Anglophone countries. The British inspectorate, founded in the 1840s, conducts systematic, routine inspections of all English schools, which gather observational and interview data on 27 dimensions of school effectiveness. The multi-day school inspections are conducted by paid education professionals recruited for their expertise and experience. Many were former educators with a proven track record of successful leadership who possess content knowledge expertise such as specialization in mathematics or data analysis. Inspectors go through a rigorous hiring process that includes reference checks, interviews, presentations, and performance tasks. There are 250 of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs), who can also access assistance from a team of additional inspectors with similar successful track records in education. The HMI reports directly to Parliament on its evaluations of schools.[28]

The SQR approach was developed in the United States in concert with members of Her Majesty's Inspectorate by educators who wanted to create strategies for helping schools examine their practice in order to improve. The approach has been used for many years for all schools in Rhode Island and New York City as well as periodically in other states or districts— often focused primarily on schools that are struggling.[29]

The SQR includes many of the same components included in English school inspections, such as gathering first-hand evidence of teaching practice through classroom observations and conducting interviews with students and school staff in order to make professional judgments about the school's quality and effectiveness. However, U.S. versions of the review have brought together several elements that have not been joined before in most education policy systems: robust data, educational expertise, and peer review.

Like the Inspectorate model used in England and many other countries, it is guided by experts (often highly accomplished teachers and administrators) who are deeply knowledgeable about practice and well trained in how to conduct a diagnostic inquiry into school practices and their relationship to the nature and quality of student learning. Like U.S. accreditation systems, the engagement of peer reviewers from other schools in the state brings multiple perspectives to the task while stimulating a learning process for participants that expands their knowledge and sharpens their analytical skills. Like research endeavors, the skillful use of robust quantitative data, much of which is comparable across schools, with qualitative insights developed from looking purposefully at teaching and student work and talking to stakeholders, allows reviewers to get a better understanding of how the school is working and what may help it improve.

As an example, the New York City Quality Review joins external review to a process of self-assessment.[30] The Quality Review focuses on instructional and organizational coherence as keys to improving student learning. The review looks at quality indicators related to rigorous, engaging, and coherent curricula; effective instruction that yields high-quality student work; assessment practices that inform instruction; positive, inclusive learning environments; a supportive culture of learning; use of resources to support students' needs; shared goals; teacher support and feedback; collaborative inquiry; and regular evaluation of processes and outcomes.[31] School self-evaluations precede multi-day site reviews by highly trained, experienced educators which draw

on school-related data; previous progress reports; visits to classrooms; observations of teacher team meetings; meetings with administrators, students, parents, and teachers; and examinations of curricular artifacts and other school-related documents.

The review results in verbal feedback to the school team and a written report detailing the findings—including the school's strengths and areas needing improvement—that can guide school improvement efforts.

Massachusetts uses a similar process for reviewing charter schools for renewal. Each school prepares an accountability plan establishing its objectives and measures. The Department of Education reviews the school's performance against the Charter School Performance Criteria using this plan and the results of a multi-day site visit in which reviewers gather and document evidence of the school's performance. While onsite, team members conduct focus groups and interviews, observe classrooms, and conduct a document review guided by an evaluation rubric. They prepare a report that is publicly posted and used to guide decision making and ongoing improvement.[32]

The SQR process has proven an extremely effective strategy for helping schools get an objective look at their practices. The process creates an evidence base that honors the broader goals of education and complements test information, while providing diagnostics and recommendations that are essential for any serious improvement ultimately to occur.[33] When practicing educators are among the members of the teams, they also learn directly about colleagues' practices and how to evaluate education in ways that travel back with them to their own schools, creating a learning system across the state.

The goal of SQR should be a *system of review* by expert educators and peers using robust data and qualitative inquiry to examine learning in individual schools and help them determine how to move forward.

In addition, a capacity to learn from these reviews in a more aggregated fashion could help build a learning system within the state that stimulates the transfer of knowledge and best practices and encourages innovation, experimentation, evaluation, and adaptation.

The SQR process would be used by the CCEE for schools that are identified as needing assistance or that volunteer for this support. The review process would be joined with an intensive support process in which the district and state identify and activate the human and other resources that are needed to enable the school to turn around its practices and its students' performance.

Figure 4: The School Quality Review
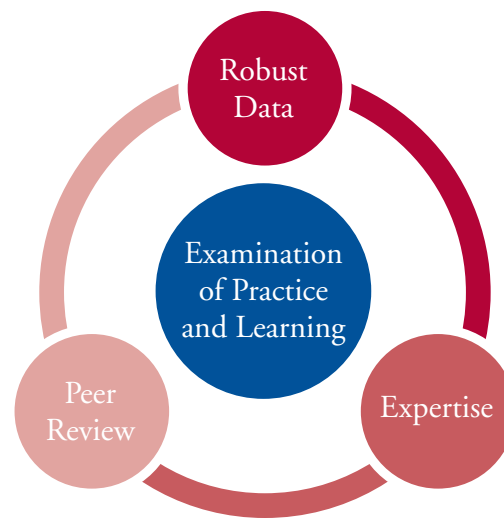
The SQR could ultimately become available to all schools on a cyclical basis (typically every fifth year) and to schools that volunteer to participate more frequently because they want the additional help it can provide. To facilitate broader use, it might be useful to consider whether current school accreditation could be re-conceptualized to focus more directly on teaching and learning, with leadership from full-time trained experts who guide the work of the volunteer participants on teams that can be more consistent and effective as a result.

Assistance to Schools and Districts

The CCEE will need to develop a support capacity to work with schools or districts that request or are identified for improvement assistance. As this work gets underway, there is much to learn from California's previous experiences in trying to assist low-performing schools. These include the creation of SAITs under the state's own Public School Accountability Act and the later creation of DAITs in response to the federal NCLB Law.

Both programs used external consultants or vendors to oversee interventions, and both had uneven results. Studies of these programs demonstrated that frequent barriers included insufficient engage-ment of the vendor with the school or district, lack of relational trust and stakeholder buy-in, inadequate communication, and turnover and/or lack of engagement of district leadership.[34] The SAIT process was criticized for focusing on a pre-determined list of interventions that providers were expected to monitor three times a year. Often, schools reported little attention to coaching or implementation support.[35]

The DAIT process sought to attend to these concerns with a greater emphasis on implementation, which did prove helpful in some circumstances. Still, there were often concerns raised about inadequate expertise on the part of the external teams. Districts needed many kinds of expertise, ranging from knowledge about instruction to English language learners to fiscal administration and business services to support local reform efforts. A better fit between the knowledge and skills of the DAIT provider and the high-priority needs of the district resulted in better outcomes in DAIT work. Staff in DAIT districts reported wanting the state to engage in better screening of the DAIT providers and better matching of the service provider's knowledge and abilities to the needs of the districts.[36]

One successful support structure used in North Carolina and Kentucky is the training and deploy-ment of a cadre of Distinguished Educators—accomplished teachers, principals, and superintendents—who are intensively prepared and made available to work with schools and districts that are engaged in improvement or turnaround efforts. These Distinguished Educator teams work closely with the districts and schools they serve rather than appearing periodically to give advice or to oversee a list of interventions.

Another promising strategy is the creation of school or district pairings and networks, connecting schools that are struggling to more successful schools that face similar challenges. This approach to continuous improvement has been pioneered in Shanghai, China, and in the CORE districts in California (see Box 4). As described earlier, networking among small groups of schools, combined with knowledge dissemination strategies, has been used successfully to support improvement in other contexts, including England and Ontario, Canada. School pairings or networks within and across districts could be facilitated by COEs and CSAs, or by the CCEE.

BOX 4: Pairing Schools for Improvement

The education system in Shanghai has received much attention since it emerged at the top of the Program in International Student Assessment (PISA) rankings in 2009. Shanghai's educational reforms since the late 1980s have focused on building instructional capacity and improving the quality of schools in the basic education system. In 2005, the Shanghai government paired urban districts with rural districts, so that authorities could collaborate on ways to build teachers' instructional capacity and improve school quality.[37] The Teachers' Professional Development Institutes affiliated with the districts also participated by sharing curricula, teaching materials, and best practices. The first round of school pairings ended successfully in 2008, and a second round of pairings has since been implemented.

Since then, Shanghai has created an empowered-management program, in which district officials match high-performing and low-performing schools in order to support improvement. The high-performing school is contracted to assist the low-performing school. Over a period of two years, teachers and school leaders from both schools move between the two schools sharing and developing practices. The support school creates a detailed plan for improving teaching after having evaluated the teaching in the supported school and described what needs to be changed. They work together on individual and collective professional development for teachers and leaders, research and lesson study, and developing stronger curriculum resources. A key goal is to develop a strong leadership team among a management team of administrators and teachers who can help develop other teachers and practices within the school. The program has been found to be highly successful and is being expanded: Many schools report improved student performance and attainment, as well as improvements in other areas.[38]

In 2013, the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) incorporated a school pairing strategy into its ESEA waiver application as a strategy for transforming low-performing schools. CORE's approach to school improvement pairs staffs of demographically similar high-performing schools with focus and priority schools.[39] The schools are matched based on specific areas of strengths and weaknesses. The school pairings may occur within or between districts, and the purpose of the pairings is to allow for teachers and administrators to share ideas and intervention practices and to collaboratively design a school improvement plan. Both the higher- and lower-performing schools receive training and opportunities to learn together and engage in the peer review process. The focus and priority schools first engage in a needs assessment, similar to a SQR, and use the assessment findings to develop a school improvement plan. Then the paired schools, called collaborative partners, work together to support the implementation of the school improvement plan.

Building the Infrastructure for Continuous Improvement

As we noted above, building and sustaining an education system that is organized to support continuous improvement will ultimately require additional action by the state to facilitate **knowledge organization and sharing** within the education system, to provide **support for careful evaluation** of promising policies and practices, and to rebuild a **system of learning supports** that will ensure that educators have the knowledge and skill they need to prepare all of California's students for college and careers. Over time, the CCEE could expand and evolve to take on these tasks, which are essential supports if its core work is to be effective.

Knowledge Organization and Sharing

The CCEE could support efforts to transform struggling schools and build professional capacity by helping to create a statewide learning system that explicitly develops and disseminates knowledge about best practices and successful strategies. The new agency can organize and share research and best practices through its website and dissemination activities (e.g., newsletters, conferences, and school quality review activities). It should also document and disseminate what is working in schools in the state in multiple ways, including case studies of and site visits to schools that are succeeding in particular ways (e.g., working with new immigrant students; improving early literacy; or developing multi-tiered systems of support for students with learning difficulties). The CCEE can also develop or locate and disseminate tools to support local policy and practice, such as curriculum resources, educator evaluation tools, or student diagnostic assessments. Finally, it can set up and support learning networks that allow districts, schools, and educators to learn from one another.

Evaluation Support

In order to produce and share knowledge, the CCEE should be aware of and able to disseminate evaluation research about key policies and practices. It might eventually sponsor evaluations that are designed to add strategically to knowledge about how to solve critical problems of practice. On the one hand, this could include systematic evaluation of the CCEE's own work, which could produce an invaluable flow of information about what works and what doesn't for different groups of students in differently situated schools across the state. On the other hand, the CCEE might commission evaluation research on specific topics (e.g., classroom use of digital technologies, or alternative approaches to English language development) where the current state of knowledge is relatively weak, to be carried out in partnership with organizations that specialize in this kind of work, including universities and research organizations.

This kind of basic research is essential to the long-term effectiveness of a continuously improving system, which is predicated on the steady availability of new and reliable information, to take account of the new challenges and opportunities with which schools and school districts are constantly faced.

Learning Supports

Finally, the CCEE could help to rebuild some of the now-missing infrastructure for professional learning in California. Over the last decade, the state has lost or greatly reduced most of its programs supporting professional learning for teachers and administrators, including the California School Leadership Academy, which trained leaders as well as teams for school turnaround, the California Subject Matter Projects, and the many professional development programs previously attached to categorical funding streams that are now included in the LCFF.

While the CCEE cannot replace all this lost capacity, it will be critically important that the state develop leadership capacity that is needed

to support continuously improving schools and to transform those that are struggling. It would be appropriate and strategic for the CCEE to help orchestrate the expertise needed to help train mentors, master teachers, coaches, principals, and district leaders individually and as part of school and district teams for the range of challenges they face, including new curriculum standards, use of assessments to inform improvement, school improvement initiatives, and turning around schools.

In order to build local capacity, it would also be useful for the CCEE to:

- Orchestrate access to high-quality curriculum resources (including instructional materials and videotapes of practice) around which professional development can be organized and on which teacher teams can build, try, and refine locally adapted lessons and instructional strategies;

- Provide ongoing training for schools to develop effective professional learning communities that can analyze student learning and school progress in relation to practice and engage in ongoing improvement;

- Help districts build stronger evaluation systems that include effective strategies like Peer Assistance

and Review systems.[40]

Design Principles for CCEE

The CCEE is an entirely new piece of California's accountability system, and fundamental questions about its staffing and operations—as well as whether it will have an adequate level of funding for the tasks it takes on—remain to be answered. As an unclaimed and potentially powerful resource in California's policy landscape, the CCEE is already the object of a host of competing views on what its core purposes and organizing principles should be.

An appointed board comprising five members (a teacher, a local superintendent, a county superintendent, and representatives of the SPI and the SBE President) will make decisions about the design and operation of the CCEE in the coming year, with a report to the State Board of Education due in October 2015. Getting these decisions right is critical to the CCEE's success.

In our view, the central goal of the CCEE is to support continuous improvement in the performance of California schools and students over time, and three fundamental principles should guide decisions about organizational design. First, the CCEE should employ a core professional staff to review intervention strategies and oversee technical assistance activities, while contracting

with multiple partners to provide direct assistance to school districts and schools. Second, the CCEE should build on existing public infrastructure to the greatest possible extent. Finally, the design should be scalable, to enable the CCEE to respond to new expectations and growing demand for assistance over time with a thoughtful phase-in process.

Professionalism

Even as many services are delegated or contracted out to other agencies, a core staff (analogous to Her Majesty's Inspectors in the English inspectorate system – see Box 3) is essential to the effective operation of the CCEE. Managing a newly created organization that is growing rapidly in both the quantity and the variety of services that it provides will not be easy. Core staff should therefore include exemplary practitioners to recruit and oversee technical assistance providers, along with some research support to monitor CCEE performance and evaluate new resources and practices in the state's education system. In an education system that is continuously improving, the challenges and opportunities that schools and districts face will change over time, and the CCEE must be staffed in ways that enable it to respond effectively to new circumstances.

Partnership

To the greatest extent possible, the CCEE should build on existing infrastructure, supporting and coordinating the efforts of the many agencies that are already engaged in the work of improving the performance of schools and students in California. This would clearly include work to inform and support the technical assistance work of COEs and CSAs, and might also include collaboration with researchers in California universities to help expand the knowledge base for effective intervention in school districts and schools. Along with a revitalized California State Leadership Academy, the University of California's Education Evaluation Center (now based at UCLA) might have an important role to play. The CCEE might also be able to bring some coherence and consistency to the now weakly coordinated efforts of the many foundations, non-profits, universities, and entrepreneurs who are working to support continuous improvement in educational performance in California.

Scalability

The CCEE should be organized to make it readily scalable, along two different dimensions. While it must be phased in with care, the CCEE must also be prepared to expand the number of clients that it is able to serve. The agency's first responsibility will be to provide diagnostic support and technical assistance to schools that volunteer or are referred for its services. That means that designing an effective School Quality Review and developing an effective set of assistance strategies will be early orders of business.

In light of the multiple challenges facing California's education system, it is virtually certain that the demand for technical assistance and support from schools and school districts will quickly exceed the initial capacity of the CCEE to respond. To keep up with the demands placed upon it, the CCEE must be flexible enough to add capacity in a timely way as demand for its services increases. This could be accomplished in a variety of ways: through coordination with COEs, CSAs, universities, and other public agencies that provide assistance to schools and school districts; by recruiting a pool of distinguished educators to provide technical assistance on a consulting basis on behalf of the CCEE; or through contracting with multiple technical assistance providers including public, non-profit, and for-profit agencies.

Soon thereafter, however, the agency should consider how to support continuous improvement in more systemic ways, rather than one school or district at a time. To do that, it will need to develop knowledge production and sharing strategies like those identified above. As we have noted, California's new accountability system is itself a work in progress, with many important functions and responsibilities currently unassigned or weakly pursued. For example, many local educators find themselves ill equipped to make informed choices about instructional materials or professional development to support the implementation of the CCSS. State action will be required to fill many of these gaps, but at present, no state agency has that responsibility. There will be pressure on the CCEE to assume additional responsibilities, and the organization should be structured in ways that would enable it address some of the key systemic needs that will enable districts to build internal capacity for continuous improvement.

Conclusion

The implementation of the changes that have been launched in California will be a lengthy process, unfolding over the next several years. The short-term priorities are successful implementation of California's new academic standards and the LCFF, but the goal of a continuously improving education system nevertheless remains the central objective. Schools and school districts are faced with a host of unfamiliar

and often difficult implementation challenges with little or no guidance from the state, and with few obvious sources of support or technical assistance. The state needs to hold up its end of this endeavor, and the CCEE is a key agency in providing support and technical assistance to schools and districts that need additional help. Moving successfully from a system driven by compliance to one that is oriented to system learning and continuous improvement will require that policymakers develop and pursue a unified long-term strategy, grounded in California's new accountability system.

Appendix A: CORE Accountability System

Perhaps the most comprehensive approach to accountability for continuous improvement has been developed by the California Office to Reform Education (CORE) districts in California, which have built on California's multiple measures system under the LCAP and developed a multi-dimensional system for informing school accountability and improvement. These districts (Fresno, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Oakland, San Francisco, Santa Ana, and Sanger) joined together and were granted a federal flexibility waiver under NCLB, which includes the accountability measures shown below.

Many of these measures are required by the state LCAP, but others, such as the non-cognitive skills associated with social-emotional learning, are locally determined and measured.

All of these measures are considered individually in informing schools about their progress and supporting ongoing improvement efforts.

Other indicators used in California's LCAP are also reported in CORE districts, including measures of students' opportunities to learn and parents' opportunities to be involved in their children's education. These include:
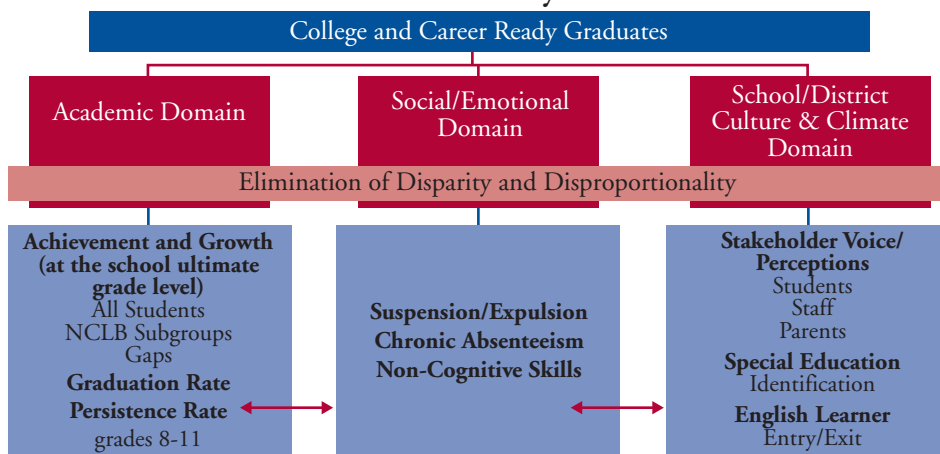
- The availability of qualified teachers, adequate facilities, and necessary materials
- Student access to a broad curriculum, including the core subjects (including science and technology), the arts, and physical education
- Student access to college coursework and career pathways
- Evidence of parent participation and opportunities for input
- To meet federal requirements

for identifying low-performing schools, CORE developed a School Quality Improvement Index comprising weighted measures within three domains:

- Academic (achievement and growth, graduation rate, and persistence rate in Grades 8-10, together 60% of the index);
- Social/Emotional (suspension/expulsion, chronic absenteeism, and noncognitive skills, together 20% of the index); and
- School/District Culture & Climate (stakeholder voice/perceptions of students, staff, and parents; special education identification; and English learner entry/exit, together 20% of the index).[17]

To couple resource allocations with identification of school needs, CORE directs improvement resources (formative tasks, student remediation courses, professional development for teachers) toward any school that falls below certain thresholds (e.g., a specific pass rate on the tenth-grade California High School Exit Exam), regardless of the school's overall rankings. CORE has also outlined a resource-enriched School Quality Improvement process that builds professional capacity in schools that are identified as priority schools, as well as sharing expertise among all schools in the consortium.[18]

CORE Accountability Structure

College and Career Ready Graduates

Academic Domain | Social/Emotional Domain | School/District Culture & Climate Domain

Elimination of Disparity and Disproportionality

Achievement and Growth (at the school ultimate grade level) All Students, NCLB Subgroups, Gaps. **Graduation Rate**, **Persistence Rate** grades 8-11

Suspension/Expulsion Chronic Absenteeism Non-Cognitive Skills

Stakeholder Voice/Perceptions Students, Staff, Parents. **Special Education** Identification. **English Learner** Entry/Exit

Appendix B: Education Priorities Report

	State Priority Areas	Measured By	Current Year Result	Previous Year Result	3 Year Average	Analysis of Progress		
						Achievement	Improvement	Overall
A. Learning Opportunities	Basic Services	Credentialed Teacher Assignment						
		Instructional Materials						
		School Facilities						
	Implementation of State Standards	CCSS Implementation						
	School Climate	Pupil Suspension rate						
		Pupil Expulsion rate						
		School Safety & Connectedness*						
	Course Access	Full, rich curriculum						
B. Learning Outcomes	Pupil Achievement	SBAC assessments						
		College and Career Readiness**						
		English Learner reclassification rate						
		ELL Proficiency rate						
	Pupil Engagement	School Attendance rate						
		Chronic Absenteeism rate						
		Middle School Dropout rate						
		High School Dropout rate						
		HS Graduation rate						
	Other Student Outcomes	Completion of work-based learning experience						
C. School/ District Responsiveness	Parental Involvement	Parent Involvement						
		Community Involvement						
D. Other Locally Determined Goals	Locally Determined Indicators	Locally Determined Measures						

* Educator, student, and parent perceptions of school climate

** Completion of a-g course sequence; completion of approved CTE course sequence; passage of AP, IB, or dual credit course standards; passage of industry credential or other performance standard for career / college readiness; met EAP college readiness standard

Endnotes

1 This conception of accountability is further described in Darling-Hammond, L., Wilhoit, G., & Pittenger. L. (2014). Accountability for college and career readiness: Developing a new paradigm. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 22 (86), 2014. http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v22n86.2014.

2 If a charter school is falling short of its LCAP goals, the authorizer also has the option of revoking its charter and closing the school.

3 A recent study found that across 17 states, including California, reported to have the most rigorous standards, 98% of items on state math tests and 80% of items on state ELA tests measured lower-level skills. See Yuan, K. & Le, V. (2012). *Estimating the percentage of students who were tested on cognitively demanding items through the state achievement tests*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

4 Darling-Hammond, L., Wei, R. C., Richardson, N., Andree, A., & Orphanos, S. (2009). *Professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on teacher development in the U.S. and abroad*. Washington, DC: National Staff Development Council.

5 Ibid.

6 Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change* (4th ed.) New York, NY: Teachers College Press; Earl, L., Watson, N., & Torrance, N. (2002). Front row seats: What we've learned from the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in England. Journal of Educational Change, 3(1), 35-53.

7 Skilbeck, M., & Connell, H. (2003). *Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers: Australian country background report*. Canberra, AU: Commonwealth of Australia; Atelier Learning Solutions Pty Ltd. (2005). *An evaluation of the Australian Government Quality Teacher Programme 1999 to 2004*. Canberra, AU: Department of Education, Science and Training.

8 Meiers, M., Ingvarson, L, Beavis, A., Hogan, J., & Kleinhenz, E. (2006). *An Evaluation of the Getting it Right: Literacy and Numeracy Strategy in Western Australian Schools*. Victoria, AU: Australian Council for Educational Research.

9 Ibid.

10 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2005). *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators*, 2005. Paris, FR: Author.

11 Hargreaves, A. (2008). The coming of post-standardization: Three weddings and a funeral. In C. Sugrue (Ed.), *The future of educational change: International perspectives* (15-33). New York, NY: Routledge.

12 Ibid.

13 Rothstein, R., Jacobsen, R., & Wilder, T. (2008). *Grading education: Getting accountability right*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

14 Ancess, J. (1996). *Outside/inside, inside/outside: Developing and implementing the school quality review*. New York, NY: National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching, Teachers College, Columbia University; Wilson, T. (1996). *Reaching for a better standard: English school inspection and the dilemma of accountability for American schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

15 See Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press; Darling-Hammond, L., & Rothman, R. (in press). Teaching in the flat world: Learning from high-performing systems. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

16 See http://education.alberta.ca/admin/funding/accountability/results/provsum.aspx.

17 For more information, see *Alberta School Authority Planning and Reporting Reference Guide*. Available at http://education.alberta.ca/media/1216771/reference%20guide%20-%20school%20authority%20planning.pdf

18 McLaughlin, M.W., Glaab, L., Carrasco, I.H. (2014)**.***Implementing Common Core State Standards in California: A Report from the Field*. Stanford, CA: Policy Analysis for California Education.

19 This was recently renamed "Digital Chalkboard." See: https://www.mydigitalchalkboard.org

20 FCMAT's Function. (2014). Retrieved on July 30, 2014, from http://fcmat.org/fcmats-function/.

21 Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team. (2013). Annual Report 2012-13. Bakersfield, CA: Author. Retrieved on July 30, 2014, from http://fcmat.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2014/02/FCMATAnnualReport201213.pdf.

22 FCMAT's Function, 2014.

23 Ortiz, F. I. (2004). Essential learning conditions for California youth: Educational facilities. Teachers College Record, 106(10), 2015-2031; California State Auditor. (2004). *The Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team: Its recommendations, if implemented, should help financially troubled school districts (Report 2003-129)*. Sacramento, CA: Author. Retrieved on July 31, 2014, from https://www.bsa.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2003-129.pdf

24 Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team. (2012). *California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office City College of San Francisco Fiscal Review*. Retrieved on 8/28/14, from https://www.ccsf.edu/dam/Organizational_Assets/Department/budget/20120914_FCMAT.pdf

25 Ortiz, 2004; CA State Auditor, 2004.

26 California State Auditor. (2004). *The Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team: Its recommendations, if implemented, should help financially troubled school districts (Report 2003-129)*. Sacramento, CA: Author. Retrieved on July 31, 2014, from https://www.bsa.ca.gov/pdfs/reports/2003-129.pdf

27 Ibid.

28 Jerald, C. D. (2012). *On her majesty's school inspection service*. Washington, DC: Educator Sector. Retrieved on August 8, 2014, from http://www.educationsector.org/sites/default/files/publications/UKInspections-RELEASED.pdf

29 Center for American Progress and the Council of Chief State School Officers. (2014). *Next generation accountability systems: An overview of current state policies and practices*. Washington, DC: Author.

30 New York City Department of Education. (n.d.). *Reviewer handbook for the quality review 2013-2014*. Retrieved on August 12, 2014, from http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/5CC3B3DF-49BF-4BA6-AFD0-0FE6BFBDC3E1/0/ReviewerHandbook201314CFarina.pdf.

31 New York City Department of Education. (n.d.). *Quality review 2013-14: Big ideas by indicator and sub-indicator*. Retrieved on August 12, 2014, from http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/B94E5CCB-1FEB-4CED-992B-7239A7C70577/0/QualityReviewBigIdeas201314.pdf.

32 http://www.doe.mass.edu/charter/guides/SiteVisit.pdf

33 Ancess, 1996; Wilson, 1996.

34 Padilla, C., Tiffany-Morales, J., Bland, J., & Anderson, L. (2009). *Evaluation of California's district intervention and capacity building initiative: Findings and lessons learned*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International; Westover, T., Strunk, K., McEachin, A., Smith, A., Keller, S., & Stump, M. (2012). AB 519 (California Ed Code 52055.59) evaluation: Final report. Davis, CA: UC, Davis, Center for Education and Evaluation Services. Retrieved on August 7, 2014, from http://education.ucdavis.edu/select-publications-and-reports.

35 Bitter, C., Perez, M., Parrish, T., Gonzalez, R., Socias, M., et al. (2005). *Evaluation study of the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program of the Public Schools Accountability Act of 1999*. Menlo Park, CA: American Institutes of Research. Retrieved on August 1, 2014, from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED491621.pdf; Finnigan, K. S., Bitter, C., & O'Day, J. (2009). Improving low-performing schools through external assistance: Lessons from Chicago and California. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 17(7)*. Retrieved on August 4, 2014, from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ844020.pdf.

36 Padilla, C., Tiffany-Morales, J., Bland, J., & Anderson, L. (2009). *Evaluation of California's district intervention and capacity building initiative: Findings and lessons learned*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International; Westover, T., Strunk, K., McEachin, A., Smith, A., Keller, S., & Stump, M. (2012). AB 519 (California Ed Code 52055.59) evaluation: Final report. Davis, CA: UC, Davis, Center for Education and Evaluation Services. Retrieved on August 7, 2014, from http://education.ucdavis.edu/select-publications-and-reports.

37 OECD. (2011). Lessons from PISA for the United States: Strong performers and successful reformers in education. Retrieved on August 4, 2014, from http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264096660-en.

38 Jensen, B,. & and Farmer J. (2013). *School turnaround in Shanghai: The empowered-management program approach to improving school performance*, May 2013. Washington, DC: Center for American Progress. http://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/ShanghaiReport-2.pdf

39 California Office to Reform Education. (2013). California Office to Reform Education: Local educational agencies' request for waivers under Section 9401 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Retrieved on August 18, 2014, from http://coredistricts.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/2.-CORE-waiver-application-May-1-2014-Amendments-redline-vfinal.pdf.

40 Humphrey, D. C., Koppich, J. E., Bland, J. A., & Bosetti, K. R. (2011). *Peer review: Getting serious about teachers' support and evaluation*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

About the Authors

Linda Darling-Hammond is Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at Stanford University where she is Faculty Director of the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.

David N. Plank is the Executive Director of PACE, and a Professor (Research) at the Graduate School of Education, Stanford University.

Soung Bae is a research and policy analyst at the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.

Acknowledgments

About Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE)

Policy Analysis for California Education is an independent, non-partisan research center based at Stanford University, the University of California-Davis, and the University of Southern California. PACE seeks to define and sustain a long-term strategy for comprehensive policy reform and continuous improvement in performance at all levels of California's education system, from early childhood to post-secondary education and training. PACE bridges the gap between research and policy, working with scholars from California's leading universities and with state and local policymakers to increase the impact of academic research on educational policy in California.

http://www.edpolicyinca.org

About the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE)

The Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE) fosters research, policy, and practice to advance high-quality, equitable education systems in the United States and internationally. Learn more about SCOPE at edpolicy. stanford.edu or @scope_stanford

https://www.edpolicy.stanford.edu

PACE

http://www.edpolicyinca.org

scope

Stanford Center for
Opportunity Policy in Education

https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/