

Event: Informational Hearing: California’s Teacher Workforce: Supply/Demand, Recruitment and Retention
Date: January 20, 9 a.m.
Topic: “What do teachers need to be successful in the classroom and enhance their skills over time? Discuss the role of induction, collaborations, mentors, career ladders, and master teachers.”

- I am pleased to be here to reinforce the importance of effective teaching as a way to ensure each and every one of our students gets what they need and deserve to be successful. A great deal of research tells us that the most important in-school factor influencing student achievement is the effectiveness of the teacher.
- As California’s own plan for educator equity makes clear, students of color and low income students are less likely than their peers to be taught by underqualified, inexperienced, and out of field teachers.
- However the problem is more than just a qualifications gap. Currently California children do not have equal access to effective teachers. Poor, black, and brown students are least likely to have effective teachers. Layoff, dismissal, and tenure policies only exacerbate these disparities
- Any discussion of the supply and demand of teachers in California needs to begin and end with the firm recognition of these equity gaps. The California Equity Plan was an important step forward, documenting the gaps in access to highly-qualified teachers and outlining concrete strategies for reducing those gaps. We should collectively commit to ensuring that the plan is effectively implemented, especially given that the requirements for reporting on data is part of the recent reauthorization of ESEA.
- At the same time, we still need to do a better job in California of defining what an effective educator is – not merely in terms of inputs such as their professional training and years of experience – but in terms of their instructional performance, students’ growth, and feedback from stakeholders such as students and parents. To be sure, a more robust definition of an effective educator would help administrators support teachers in becoming more effective gaps.
- For too long California has not emphasized enough the importance of engaging all students and expecting them to succeed at high levels in our in our definition of effective teaching, despite the fact that it is an explicit standard in our CSTP. Without high expectations and powerful instruction, students are not encouraged, challenged, and supported in the ways they need to become motivated, critical and creative thinkers. The opportunities for them to provide for themselves and their families gets narrowed to what is available in an increasingly small segment of employment for unskilled workers.
- I’m particularly pleased to talk about today’s topic because, at the Education Trust, we have been focused for some time on effective teacher support.
 - In 2012, Ed Trust published a report focused on building and sustaining teacher talent in high poverty schools. Among the practices profiled were Fresno Unified’s comprehensive implementation of the Skillful Leader Project to boost the instructional

capacity of school leaders (which is critical to teacher retention) and Sacramento City's Priority Schools, which have become more attractive places for teachers to work. Despite these promising districts, we remain concerned about how few districts are employing best practices.

- Recently, we have been studying the impressive work of a small number of school districts and charter management organizations that have been innovating around teacher evaluation and support systems. These are places like Lucia Mar Unified, Oakland Unified and Aspire Public Schools. While evaluation itself is only part of process for teacher improvement, the research and the conversations with teachers and leaders has provided an important window into what teachers need in order to be successful and to improve their skills.
- Consider these six ideas for helping teachers to improve and succeed (all of which are common to effective evaluation systems):
 1. **Make it clear to teachers what good teaching looks like across all dimensions of practice.** Educators benefit from having a shared definition of good teaching, usually in the form of a detailed rubric of practice. It provides a strong basis for specific, evidence-based conversations about teaching and learning, with considerable emphasis on student engagement.
 2. **Give teachers frequent, substantive feedback on their practice.** Teachers value feedback from expert practitioners and colleagues. Specific suggestions for improvement, modeled lessons, co-planning and co-teaching lessons are all supports teachers value and respond to.
 3. **Provide teachers with professional development tied to their own learning needs and to student learning needs, with a strong focus on improvement.** A hallmark of a strong professional learning community is the use of student learning data to drive decisions about ongoing professional learning. Such a community creates time for teachers to do the necessary analysis and allows for deep and meaningful collaboration. Professional development needs to expose teachers to research-based strategies and be connected closely to their day-to-day practice.
 4. **Provide teachers with opportunities for deep reflection on their practice.** Whether with a master teacher, a coach, or an administrator, teachers need a chance to assess their own performance and reflect together with an expert on areas of improvement.
 5. **Build the instructional leadership capacity of school leaders.** It's well-documented that the quality of administrators has an enormous impact on teachers' decision-making about their tenure at a school. Indeed, *"Teachers say that the number one factor in whether or not they stay at a school is their principal."*
 6. **Provide teachers with opportunities to expand their responsibilities based on teaching expertise.** Giving teachers a chance to become mentors and master teachers, based on their demonstrated expertise and compensating them for these additional responsibilities, can be a first step toward a more systematic career ladder and toward a greater professionalization of teaching.

- Again, evaluation is not the only pathway to developing such a sophisticated and professionalized approach to teacher improvement, but we believe it is an important one for the state to support.
- My colleagues here today have touched on many other strategies for helping all teachers be successful, so let me focus the rest of my comments on how to make sure that teachers are **especially** supported to be effective in serving high-poverty communities and communities of color. A few key thoughts here that range across the teacher policy spectrum:
 - Teachers, like the rest of us, have implicit biases about students from different backgrounds. We need to ensure that our teacher education programs who are training teachers for high-poverty, high-minority schools are developing professionals who are aware of their biases and turn that awareness into higher expectations for students. The same goes for districts as they hire and place teachers.
 - As a state we ought to recruit more top quality candidates from diverse backgrounds into teaching. We can do this by offering incentives to people to enter the profession, especially bilingual candidates and people of color. We can also offer teaching career pathways in our high schools so that we're training and motivating the next generation of teachers.
 - Teachers need to be compensated for their efforts and especially for undertaking more challenging assignments. Several districts have developed incentives for groups of highly effective educators to teach in high-poverty, high-minority schools. Incentive programs that encourage groups of teachers with proven track records to work in high-need schools have enormous potential to change the culture of such schools, both for students and for teachers. It can also reduce the revolving door of inexperienced teachers many low-income schools experience¹. Our state used to have a program in 2000-2002 – the Governor's Teaching Fellowships – that offered \$20,000 scholarships to ~1200 prospective teachers who would commit to teach for four years in low-performing schools.
 - Finally, we know that teachers are more successful – and they stick around – when they understand the communities they serve; when they know the challenges being faced by migrant families in the Central Valley, by African-American families in Oakland's flatlands, and, by second-generation Latino families in Los Angeles, and so on. So it behooves us to engage parent and community stakeholders on a continuous basis around the quality of teaching and learning going on in their schools; to be sure, they have keen insights about why teachers stay and why they leave, as well as why they are more or less successful in promoting student success.
- Helping teachers be successful and improve their practice is a complicated endeavor. It involves making an impact across a long supply chain and it requires fundamental shifts in how we perceive and value teachers in our culture. We have many choices of where to start or where to

¹ Besides ETW research on this topic (e.g. *Victims of the Churn*), you can also reference "Closing the Backdoor: California's SB 2042 Induction Programs and Teacher Retention in Two Districts" (2008) Dissertation by John Christian Gillam.

push next. I would simply urge that, in making those choices, we remain clearly focused on remedying the equity gaps that plague our system. It's the right thing to do and, I believe, holds the greatest potential for transforming conditions for teaching and learning in our state.