

Strengthening California's Teacher Workforce

Toward a Statewide Strategic Framework

Executive Summary | July 2025

California schools continue to face chronic educator shortages, forcing many districts to meet staffing needs with substitute teachers and educators who have not earned a full teaching credential.¹ While the state has invested in teacher preparation and retention programs, research on teacher shortages and distribution conducted over decades points to the need for clear governance and cross-sector coordination at state, regional, and local levels to address the complexity of shortages across the state.²

Structures to support sustained policy coherence and problem-solving can improve communication and resource allocations. At the state level, agencies and institutions can collaborate to deliver consistent and clear expectations, support, and resources to the field, informed by robust data collections. At the regional and local levels, districts and institutions of higher education can partner effectively regionally or locally to align teacher supply and demand and to deliver high-quality teacher preparation and support. Although these collaborations and partnerships are possible in California, existing systems challenges keep them from being fully realized.

In August 2022, recognizing this need and the unique opportunity for PK–12 and higher education systems to leverage teacher grants and residency programs to build lasting solutions, the work of the State Educator Workforce Collaborative began, with facilitation and implementation support from WestEd. The Collaborative has brought together leadership from state agencies and institutions that oversee the state's educator workforce initiatives, including the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), State Board of Education (SBE), Department of Education (CDE), Student Aid Commission (CSAC), Department of Finance (DOF), Governor's Office, University of California (UC) system, California State University (CSU) system, California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), and Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU).

This effort represents the first time this group of institutions has come together to collaboratively problem-solve around the most pressing issues facing the teacher workforce. Using a continuous improvement approach that draws upon an extensive review of teacher workforce data and meaningful engagement of practitioners and subject matter experts,³ the Collaborative's focus has been to improve implementation of investments in the educator workforce and to establish sustainable cross-institutional collaboration to address challenging policy and implementation issues.

In its first phase, the Collaborative partnered with CTC to develop streamlined teacher preparation financial support resources for candidates and programs. The Collaborative's recent focus has been on establishing a long-term, sustainable infrastructure for statewide educator workforce planning to support the preparation, recruitment, hiring, and retention of teachers, including those teachers in shortage areas such as special education, PK–3, STEM, and bilingual education. This report provides the rationale for a strategic framework to guide California's approach to teacher workforce planning and action.

Current State Structures to Support Teacher Workforce Planning

There is a history of teacher workforce development efforts aimed at supporting coordination across institutions in California. The challenge is that they have been supported with limited-term funding, and in some cases the funding has been philanthropic. Findings from an extensive review of documents consistently point to fragmentation in the infrastructure that supports the teacher workforce in the state:

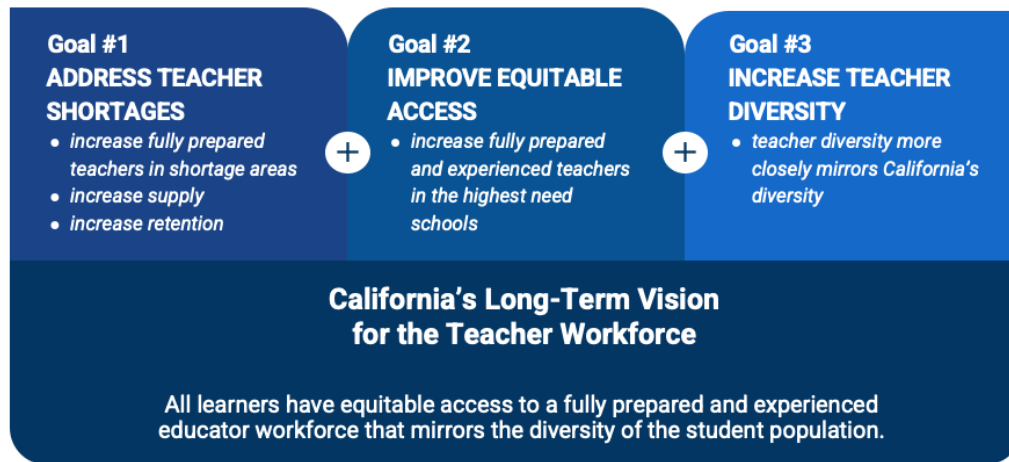
1. By statute and in practice, while many agencies and higher education segments play a critical role in workforce development, none holds singular (or even shared) responsibility for teacher workforce planning.
2. Statute encourages—but does not usually mandate—interagency collaboration to support teacher workforce planning, preparation, recruitment, and retention.
3. California does not currently have specific shared outcome goals for strengthening the teacher workforce.
4. California's TK–12 accountability system and Statewide System of Support focuses on student opportunities and outcomes as the primary success metrics.
5. Current teacher workforce data systems are not sufficient to prompt shared goals and drive cross-institutional collaboration and planning.

Considerations for a Teacher Workforce Strategic Framework

Effective long-term teacher workforce planning requires setting measurable goals, aligning policies and funding incentives, fostering cross-institutional collaboration and system coherence, using data to measure progress toward outcomes, and implementing effective district-level human capital management systems.⁴

The launch of the Collaborative marked a collective recognition that it was time to collectively address pressing workforce issues. In this context, the Collaborative set the goal that the state would establish a statewide teacher workforce strategic framework, including measurable statewide teacher workforce goals (see Figure 1), potential roles and responsibilities to support statewide and regional planning to achieve the goals, and the infrastructure needed to support its implementation.

Figure 1. Considerations for Statewide Teacher Workforce Goals and Metrics



Recommendations for Implementing the Strategic Framework

While the initial, philanthropically supported work of the Collaborative has ended, Collaborative members are seeking ways to institutionalize the proposed strategic framework to meet these goals. To enact these recommendations and institutionalize the Collaborative and its strategic planning process, roles, and goals, the Collaborative members recommend the following **near-term actions**:

1. Secure commitments from agencies and institutions to participate in the Collaborative and support coordinated action.
2. Launch the state-level Collaborative under the leadership of a lead agency and enact the ongoing process of strategic planning anchored to the teacher workforce goals and grounded in continuous improvement principles.
3. Coordinate with data providers and research agencies to provide annual updates on progress toward goals.

The following **longer term actions** would allow full alignment with the vision of a governance structure to support workforce planning at a regional level:

1. Engage regional leaders to codesign and pilot a coordinated regional planning process that aligns with state infrastructure (e.g., CTC, CDE, higher education systems) and is embedded into existing regional governance, funding, and collaboration frameworks to ensure coherence and sustainability.
2. Learn from the regional pilot and then test the approach in other contexts.
3. Continue to work with data providers to align with the goal structures and ensure data are timely and accessible to the state and regional bodies.

California's educator workforce challenges are as complex as the state is large, requiring a strategic, proactive, and coordinated approach that is supported by data and resources for local school systems to leverage with ease. The Collaborative recommends continuation and expansion of this effort to leverage state investments and systematically address persistent teacher shortages.

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¹ D. Carver-Thomas et al., *California Teachers and COVID-19: How the Pandemic Is Impacting the Teacher Workforce* (Learning Policy Institute, 2021), <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/california-covid-19-teacher-workforce-report>; D. Carver-Thomas et al., *Tackling Teacher Shortages: What We Know About California's Teacher Workforce Investments* (Learning Policy Institute, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.54300/137.196>; L. Darling-Hammond et al., *Teacher Shortages in California: Status, Sources, and Potential Solutions* (Learning Policy Institute, 2018), <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/teacher-shortages-ca-solutions-brief>; M. Franco and S. K. Patrick, *State Teacher Shortages: Teaching Positions Left Vacant or Filled by Teachers Without Full Certification* (Learning Policy Institute, 2023), <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/state-teacher-shortages-vacancy>; K. Mathews et al., *California's Teacher Education Deserts: An Overlooked & Growing Equity Challenge* (Center for the Transformation of Schools, School of Education & Information Studies, UCLA, 2024).

² D. Burns et al., *Closing the Opportunity Gap: How Positive Outlier Districts in California Are Pursuing Equitable Access to Deeper Learning* (Learning Policy Institute, 2019); Darling-Hammond et al., *Teacher Shortages in California*, 2018; D. Goldhaber et al., "Teacher Staffing Challenges in California: Examining the Uniqueness of Rural School Districts," *Aera Open* 6, no. 3 (2020), <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1268709>; T. D. Nguyen et al., "The Correlates of Teacher Turnover: An Updated and Expanded Meta-Analysis of the Literature," *Educational Research Review* 31 (2020): e100355; EdTrust, *Educator Diversity State Profile: California* (2022), <https://edtrust.org/rti/educator-diversity-state-profile-california/>. Nationwide, about 90 percent of the annual demand for teachers is created when teachers leave the profession, with two thirds of teachers leaving for reasons other than retirement; see D. Carver-Thomas and L. Darling-Hammond, *Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It* (Learning Policy Institute, 2017). Poor working conditions, relatively low compensation, and underpreparedness drive attrition and turnover; see Nguyen et al., "The Correlates of Teacher Turnover," e100355 and EdTrust, *Educator Diversity State Profile: California*. Teachers who enter the profession through substandard routes leave at up to 3 times the rate of those who enter through traditional or residency pathways; see R. Ingersoll et al., "Retaining Teachers: How Preparation Matters," *Educational Leadership* 69, no. 8 (2012): 30–34 and Darling-Hammond et al., *Teacher Shortages in California*.

³ A. Grunow et al., *Getting Down to Facts II: Towards a Common Vision of Continuous Improvement for California* (Policy Analysis for California Education, 2018), <https://edpolicyinca.org/publications/towards-common-vision-continuous-improvement-california>.

⁴ Consortium for Policy Research in Education, *Taking Human Capital Seriously: Talented Teachers in Every Classroom, Talented Principals in Every School. Principles and Recommendations for the Strategic Management of Human Capital in Public Education* (Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 2009), <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED507025>; Task Force on Educator Effectiveness, *Greatness by Design*; S. Kraemer et al., *Designing and Implementing Human Capital Management Systems in Educator Evaluation* (Teacher Incentive Fund; U.S. Department of Education, 2015), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED566526.pdf>; Center on Great Teachers and Leaders, *Talent Development Framework*; T. J. Bristol et al., *How to Increase California's Educator Workforce* (U.C. Berkeley School of Education, 2021), <https://bse.berkeley.edu/publications/how-increase-california%E2%80%99s-educator-workforce>; The New Teacher Project, *Addressing Teacher Shortages: Practical Ideas for the Pandemic and Beyond* (The New Teacher Project, 2022), <https://tntp.org/tool/addressing-teacher-shortages-practical-ideas-for-the-pandemic-and-beyond/>; The New Teacher Project, *TNTP's Workforce Design Framework: Designing the Workforce of Tomorrow to Support All Students' Learning* (The New Teacher Project, 2023), <https://tntp.org/wp-content/uploads/Tools/TNTP-Workforce-Design-Framework.pdf>.