



EACH

A VISION FOR CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE

Full Circle Fund | January 2010

PREFACE

Full Circle Fund is a non-partisan, non-profit organization whose mission is to cultivate the next generation of community leaders and drive lasting social change.

Members of Full Circle Fund are volunteers from every sector and background who leverage their time, money, skills and connections in partnerships that result in significant impact on the community.

The Education Circle is one of three core service areas of Full Circle Fund. Its members are dedicated to improving the effectiveness of public education, especially for underserved communities. For nearly a decade, the Education Circle has supported leaders across the state to advance programs and policies that support student success. The key principles of this work are summarized in Full Circle Fund's [Education Impact Guide](#).

This year, 2010, is a pivotal and challenging year for California's education system. In that light, Full Circle Fund has developed a synthesis of **policy levers for improving California's capacity to close achievement gaps and better serve students**. This platform is non-partisan. It sketches a unifying education policy approach for California, building on the best research, analysis, and community input of the past decade. It is intended to support leaders at the forefront of education improvement, in 2010 and for years to come.

For more information about Full Circle Fund and the Education Circle, please visit www.fullcirclefund.org.



INTRODUCTION

California has long been hailed a beacon of opportunity, innovation, and technological prowess.

How can our public schools help keep that beacon lit for generations to come? Our economic sustainability and quality of life in California depend on an innovative, technology-savvy next generation. But will our schools illuminate the future if they fail to prepare graduates for 21st century opportunities?

Over the past decade, our State's nearly seven million K-12 students have, as a group, made steady, modest gains in overall achievement. Yet progress remains painfully slow and pernicious achievement gaps persist¹.

There is a better roadmap toward a positive future for this Golden State. For all Californians to thrive in the globally-connected 21st century, **we must transform the way we approach the work of educating the next generation**. We need an education system in which:

- *Each student* progresses each year toward preparedness for college and career;
- *Each educator* succeeds in the professional work of advancing each student's learning;
- *Each school* is an effective launching pad for student success; and
- *Each community* is dynamically connected to its public schools.

It is no longer enough to process students in batches and aim for improvement across averages. In the human work of education, success is individual.

Building on the core unit of "each," this document provides four sections of interconnected design principles that will lead to smarter, more effective education policy solutions for our State. Most of these solutions are not new; countless researchers, policy leaders, and community activists from around the country have championed these ideas for many years.

NOW is the time to move from ideas into action.

We can no longer afford to wait, or to proceed incrementally. This document is designed as a roadmap to re-imagining and re-invigorating a more effective California education system. Taken together, the principles outlined in the following pages comprise a policy framework for equipping *each* student with the knowledge and skills to thrive in the 21st century.

Constitutional Implications.

Many of the systemic obstacles to improving education in this State will require constitutional change that will be more likely accomplished through purposeful reinvention than piecemeal amendment. This platform includes priorities for education-related constitutional change.

EACH STUDENT

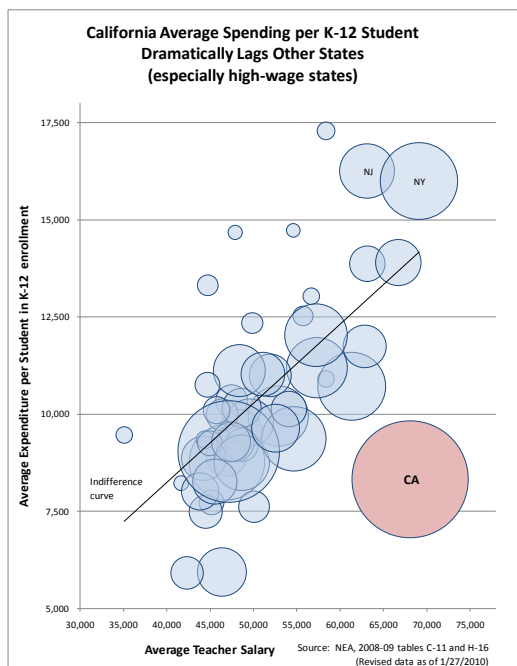
Goal: Advance each student’s learning steadily, regardless of starting place or learning needs. Measure success in terms of each student’s progress towards the end goals of college and career success.

1.1) ESTABLISH INDIVIDUAL GOALS: DESIGN AN ACTION PLAN FOR EACH STUDENT TO SUCCEED.

a. Make readiness for college and career success the unambiguous goal of public education.

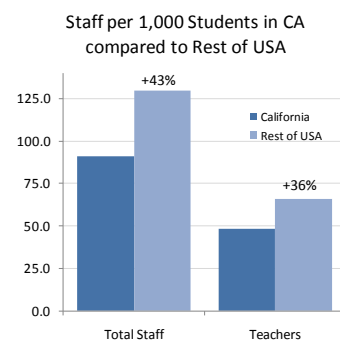
Let’s start with the big picture: It is California's moral, economic, and social imperative to ensure that each student from every racial and economic background be educated to succeed in college, career, and modern life. In our 21st century economy, education beyond high school is a necessary foundation for nearly every job, in every industry and walk of life. Beginning in preschool, each student must be supported with resources, opportunities, and expectations for college and career success. There will be multiple pathways toward that end, and measures such as test scores must be treated as signposts to guide progress, rather than as end goals.

1.2) FUND TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL: CREATE A RATIONAL SCHOOL FINANCE SYSTEM BASED ON EACH STUDENT’S NEEDS.



a. Increase California's education funding to national norms.

Money, per se, doesn’t magically cause schools to work better or children to learn better. But too little of it is certainly part of the problem in this state. (See graphs.) California's schools operate with dramatically fewer real resources than schools in other states and nations. Schools in California have far too few adults in them, and adding trained staff will take money. Our State consistently ranks near the bottom of the pile in the number of teachers and principals per student and 51st in the number of counselors, administrators and librarians per student. As the economy recovers, we must re-invest in our schools—and do so with a vision².



b. Invest in students to drive innovation and change.

If there is a silver lining to California's chronic underinvestment in education, it is this: we have an opportunity to catch up in a way that supports thoughtful change, rather than merely adding more of the same. Our school finance system is based more on history than principle, and has led to persistent inequities and inefficiencies. The last several expert panels that took up the task of reviewing California school finance recommended moving to a "weighted student formula," and many other states have reached the same conclusion. California must fund districts (LEAs), and districts in turn must fund schools, based on the needs of each student they educate, with additional dollars for each student in poverty and each student catching up in Learning English.

1.3) MEASURE THE GOAL: SUPPORT EACH STUDENT'S STEADY PROGRESS.

a. Invest in the data infrastructure needed to guide improvement.

California's public education system has a notoriously weak information infrastructure. Investment and leadership is needed to bring California up to standards set by Florida and others. In order to support each student's progress, California needs to build and implement a robust longitudinal information system grounded in clearly defined data elements that map to the state's core student learning goals.⁴ This will inform decision-making to ensure effective teaching, sound educational policies, and a coherent, useful educational infrastructure. To move towards a culture of continuous improvement, the State needs to fully develop and integrate its two new systems, CALPADS and CALTIDES, and resolve issues in governance and data management.

b. Invest in user-friendly dashboards to make data helpful.

Students, parents, and educators should be able to see the results of assessments in a clear, timely and actionable form. Building upon the foundation of a core State-level information infrastructure, it should not be necessary for each district and school to invent solutions for presenting this information. It is an appropriate role for the state to facilitate or sponsor development of individualized, student-level data dashboards for students, parents, and educators. This will help these stakeholders to better assess and support each student's learning needs. School site data dashboards will provide parents and educators real-time, actionable information about what students know and where they need help in order to succeed.

c. Spur development of adaptive assessments.

End-of-cycle tests need to be enhanced with formative, individualized assessments of each student's progress toward long-term goals. These test results, made available in a timely fashion, can provide teachers, students, and parents with the information they need to make mid-course corrections. Such assessments should be tailored to each student's developmental trajectory. To accelerate the development, implementation, and interpretation of these assessments, the State should create opportunities and funding for pilot programs.

1.4) ENABLE THE GOAL: REMOVE BARRIERS TO STUDENT LEARNING AND ENCOURAGE INNOVATION.

a. Change the rules so students can learn beyond the traditional classroom setting.

The system should be steadfast about the goals of student learning, but flexible about how goals are achieved. For example, the next few years are likely to offer steady innovation in the area of individualized online and computer-based learning options, paired with learning coaches, mentoring, and internships. Such innovative uses of technology can be easily thwarted by well-intentioned policies such as mandated teacher ratios or rules about when or where learning takes place. The State must ensure that schools and programs can provide students access to these new ways of learning, and find a way to ensure high quality educational programs without resorting to rules that constrain progress.

b. Fund pilot programs in online learning.

It will take time to develop the most effective uses of new technologies to support learning. The State should invest now in pilot programs for new technologies in classrooms, especially so that they are accessible to communities that need them the most⁵.

EACH TEACHER

Goal: Prepare, recruit, support and retain highly effective educators.

2.1) TRANSFORM THE PIPELINE: REINVENT THE SYSTEM FOR RECRUITING AND TRAINING NEW TEACHERS.

a. Recruit great people in greater numbers.

The quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers. California will need about 103,000 new teachers in the next ten years, or 1/3 of the State's entire teaching workforce. The state should invest in an aggressive outreach program to recruit great people into teaching. The current teacher recruitment and training funnel in California is too limited, chasing away qualified potential teachers and failing to actively attract people into the profession. California should invest in a teacher recruitment campaign and expand its partnerships with organizations that recruit the best and brightest into the profession.

b. Train them well, and prove it.

California must improve its teacher preparation programs and support development of alternate pathways and career ladders to train teachers. Beginning in 2011-12, the new longitudinal data system should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of each pathway and as a decisive factor to certify or decertify credential issuers. Accreditation of teacher preparation programs should be rigorous and results-based, not perfunctory, automatic, or self-reported.⁶

2.2) ELEVATE THE PROFESSION: ENSURE TEACHER SUPPORT, DEVELOPMENT, AND SUCCESS.

a. Support each teacher's ability to do his or her best work over the long term.

The time is right for change in the teaching profession. Teaching must be highly-valued, rewarding work with meaningful opportunities for professional growth and advancement. Each effective teacher should be valued, challenged, and provided with opportunities to deepen his or her practice, and provided with career ladders that encourage progress as a professional. To catalyze change in this area, the State should create an innovation fund to provide long-term, competitive grants that support the reinvention of teaching as a dynamic, highly-valued 21st century profession. Financial incentives should be provided to districts willing to re-negotiate their practices in recruiting, placing, supporting, and evaluating teachers⁷.

b. Professionalize teacher compensation.

Pay is not the only thing that matters to teachers – but it does matter. Now is the time for California to join the national megatrend toward reinvention of teacher pay. Pay systems should provide incentives to attract and retain the teachers that each district needs in the schools and subjects where they can help the most. Compensation should support and reinforce district-based, locally-negotiated systems of professional support and evaluation. To make room for such strategic rethinking about the purpose of pay, the state should encourage each district to eliminate incentives for things that make no difference to student learning, such as exact number of years in the profession and numbers of school credits earned. Differentiation of teacher compensation should be linked to things that matter, such as effectiveness with students and willingness to take on difficult assignments or additional responsibilities.

EACH SCHOOL

Goal: Make each school an effective launching pad for each student's future.

3.1) CUT THE RED TAPE: GIVE EACH SCHOOL DRAMATICALLY MORE AUTONOMY AND FLEXIBILITY IN EXCHANGE FOR GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY.

a. Eliminate unnecessary program mandates and consolidate categorical.

It's time to focus more on student learning outcomes at school and less on prescribing and mandating the inputs in the system. In the past decade, California has developed a set of outcomes-focused frameworks, funding, and accountability requirements for charter schools that has accelerated student learning and innovation at the school site level. We now need to extend charter-like flexibility to each successful school by eliminating program mandates and expanding autonomies in exchange for a clear, outcomes-focused framework that holds schools accountable to the end goal of college and career success.

b. Set a date and process to sunset and replace the Ed Code.

It is in the nature of the legislative process to add more than remove. The Ed Code has become a vast rule book that too often smothers innovation and drives massive compliance-oriented work without educational benefit. Efforts under the California Master Plan for Education to prune the EdCode to size were expensive, but not successful. The way to get it to happen is to zero-base the effort: set a reasonable "sunset" date for the entire Ed Code to compel a complete review, and initiate a process with a clear deadline to replace it with a more purposeful, streamlined system. This new framework would outline the state's role in accountability, including the role of standards and assessments, and would replace the bulk of categorical programs with a weighted student formula (as described in section 1.2.b.)

3.2) INVEST IN LEADERSHIP: REINVENT THE SYSTEM FOR RECRUITING AND TRAINING NEW SCHOOL LEADERS.

a. Rethink school leadership.

Ensure that every school is led by a highly effective principal focused relentlessly on student learning.⁸ Districts must be asked to base their leadership compensation, evaluation, and support systems on student learning growth outcomes. The State needs to deepen its investment in programs that maintain and foster rigorous standards in recruiting, selecting, training, and supporting administrators.

EACH COMMUNITY

Goal: Rebuild and extend the connection between each school and the community it serves.

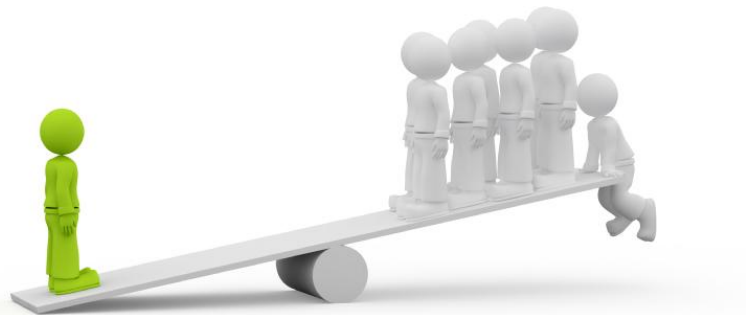
4.1) EMPOWER LOCAL FUNDING: ALLOW COMMUNITIES TO SUPPORT LOCAL SCHOOLS.

a. Expand the authority of each community to levy local taxes for its local schools.

The political will to invest in education is strongest at the local level. Accountability for effective use of tax resources is also strongest at the local level. Yet today there is an almost total disconnect between communities and the funding of schools. The best way to address California's education funding gap and spur innovation is to re-enlist communities in some of the responsibility for funding and overseeing schools. A plan for a limited property surtax that could accomplish this goal was prepared as part of the work of the Governor's Committee on Education Excellence. This plan or one like it should be implemented.

b. Establish a state matching fund to ensure local funding equity.

Empowering local funding would not be helpful if it worsened existing inequities. To mitigate this possibility, local funding empowerment must be paired with the creation of a state matching fund that augments local taxes raised for education in lower-wealth communities. A plan for such a matching fund was prepared as part of the work of the Governor's Committee on Education Excellence.¹¹



4.2) EMPOWER MOMENTUM:
REWARD EDUCATIONAL GROWTH AND PROGRESS.

a. Create a statewide award fund that catalyzes progress.

Too often, California education policy only directs money toward crisis interventions. Districts that have demonstrated their capacity to turn resources into educational success are, perversely, expected to get by without such help. California should create a statewide “educational momentum” fund that directs multi-year, unrestricted, incremental resources to high-need districts and schools that distinguish themselves over time by improving the educational results of their students¹².

4.3) EMPOWER COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION:
ENCOURAGE INPUT AND DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS.

a. Develop tools for districts to communicate with parents and communities.

Districts and schools need better tools for communication and to engage parents, teachers, school site councils, and community members to help develop their budgets and long-term plans. The expense of creating these tools is too large for districts to bear alone, and districts generally lack the expertise to oversee development of such assets. To encourage rational decisions based on student learning outcomes, the State should develop or ensure development of a visible, flexible toolset built on the foundation of the longitudinal data system. As an early step, districts should have access to tools that will provide transparent funding information to all of their stakeholders. These tools need to map dollars invested to long-term plans that address student learning needs and district priorities.

b. Coordinate services and identify efficiencies at the local level.

Ask communities to identify ways to integrate multiple strands of child services to support educational outcomes for the neediest students in the community. Building on models like the Harlem Children's Zone, the State should encourage collaboration between P-16 and other youth, health, and social service agencies to leverage assets and provide a seamless pipeline to the most vulnerable populations of students, including access to counselors, health and wellness centers, and family support agencies to ensure the socio-emotional well being of each student.

4.4) EMPOWER IMPROVEMENT: FOSTER TRANSPARENCY AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

a. Do more of what works and less of what does not.

Using the longitudinal data system, the state needs to model a culture of continuous improvement. To start, existing programs must justify their continuation by demonstrating impact on student learning. It would help to create a framework for new policies that incorporates review and evaluation as a matter of course.

EACH

A POLICY SUMMARY

EACH STUDENT

- 1.1) Establish individual goals: design an action plan for each student.
- 1.2) Fund to achieve the goal: create a rational school finance system based on each student's needs.
- 1.3) Measure the goal: support each student's progress.
- 1.4) Enable the goal: remove barriers to student learning, and encourage innovation.

EACH TEACHER

- 2.1) Transform the pipeline: reinvent the system for recruiting and training new teachers.
- 2.2) Elevate the profession: ensure teacher support, development and success. Reform teacher pay.

EACH SCHOOL

- 3.1) Cut the red tape: give schools dramatically more autonomy and flexibility in exchange for greater autonomy.
- 3.2) Invest in leadership: reinvent the system for recruiting, training, and retaining effective school leaders.

EACH COMMUNITY

- 4.1) Empower local funding: allow communities to support local schools.
- 4.2) Empower momentum: reward educational growth and progress.
- 4.3) Empower community participation: encourage input and develop partnerships.
- 4.4) Empower improvement: foster transparency and strategic planning.

NOTES

- 1 Full Circle Fund Impact Guide, "Background" chapter, www.fullcirclefund.org .
- 2 "Resource Cards on California Schools," (EdSource, 2008, www.edsource.org); Governor's Committee for Education Excellence (GCEE) technical report, section 5, pgs 6-7 (www.everychildprepared.org)
- 3 GCEE 2.1
- 4 Springboard Schools, Bringing the State and Locals Together: What's Needed to Encourage Effective Use of Data in California School Districts, Getting Down to Facts, (Institute for Research on Education Policy and Practice, Stanford University, 2007)
- 5 Clayton Christensen, Disrupting Class (McGraw-Hill, 2008)
- 6 California's Teaching Force, 2008: Key Issues and Trends, Center for the Future of Teaching; Teaching Quality in California, A New Perspective to Guide Policy (Center for the Future of Teaching, 2008)
- 7 http://www.edsource.org/assets/files/convening/FullCircleFund_brief.pdf
- 8 Robert J. Marzano, Timothy Waters, and Brian A. McNulty, School Leadership that Works: From Research to Results (ASCD, 2005)
- 9 GCEE 3.2.2
- 10 "Local Revenues for Schools: Limits and Options for California," Ed Source, September 2009
- 11 GCEE Appendix E
- 12 GCEE 2.2
- 13 Paul T Hill, It Takes a City; Managing School Districts for High Performance: Cases in Public Education Leadership, Stacey Childress, Richard F. Elmore, Allen Grossmand, and Susan Moore Johnson, 2007; Springboard Schools, Minding the Gap, Springboard Schools, 2007; High Performing School Districts, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 2005; Redesigning the "Central Office": Voices in Urban Education 22, Annenberg Institute for School Reform; Louise Bay Waters and Merrill Vargo, Comprehensive Aligned Instructional Systems; Stupski Foundation.