

STATE LEADERSHIP

INTRODUCTION

The success of the multiple pathways approach to reforming California’s secondary education will be measured in improved outcomes for thousands of students in school districts, schools, and classrooms. Educators must come together with industry and community leaders to do the hard work of implementing new, integrated curricula; organizing and supporting work-based learning; and making sure that all students receive the support they need so they leave high school well prepared for the next steps on their educational and career paths.

However, for successful multiple pathway schools and districts to be more than islands of excellence and for those establishing new pathways to be provided the support they need, coherent action is needed at the state level. For example, the expansion of multiple pathways will increase the demand for high-quality, integrated curriculum. Teams of teachers working in hundreds of school districts have neither the time nor the resources to develop new curriculum. What they do have is the time and the expertise to adapt previously developed and thoroughly reviewed curriculum locally. The extent to which the state can support the development of integrated curriculum, as recommended in this report, will make successful implementation of multiple pathways that much easier. Furthermore, the ability of school districts to offer meaningful work-based learning opportunities to students will be enhanced by policies and guidance from the state to the field.

This chapter explores the extent to which the state is able to provide leadership for this movement. In particular, this chapter also provides, as directed by Assembly Bill 2648, an “assessment of the current capacity of the department for the purpose of maximizing the development of the multiple pathway programs,” and identifies “the possible roles and responsibilities of other departments or agencies to assist in developing or expanding multiple pathway programs.” It identifies steps that might be taken to ensure that the multiple pathways approach can be successfully pursued as a statewide initiative to improve opportunities for all students in California.

WHO IS “THE STATE”?

If asked to identify the state agency responsible for education, California educators would most likely name the California Department of Education (CDE) and/or the State Board of Education (SBE). And they would not be far off the mark. For the day-to-day operations of schools, the SBE sets the policy and the CDE, under the leadership of the elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI), executes the policies.

While the development and implementation of most state education policies involve the participation of primarily the SBE and the CDE, the structure of education governance and support in our state is considerably more complex. For example, the CDE and its staff often can

play important roles in the development of new state education policies and programs. In addition, the SBE sets policy in some, but not all, areas within the K–12 education. At the state level, some education policymaking activity is led by other bodies, such as the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC).

If multiple pathways are to become a key strategy for improving secondary education, then multiple state-level participants must come together to work in a coordinated and consistent manner to support the effort. In the area of governance, the legislature, Governor, Secretary of Education, and CTC must work collaboratively with the SBE, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the CDE to create the statutory and policy framework to enhance the establishment of multiple pathways.

The state's institutions of higher education also need to do their part to make multiple pathways a statewide reality. The UC, the CSU, private colleges and universities, and the community college system all have significant roles to play in making sure structures are in place to promote rather than inhibit this new view of secondary education. Many of the recommendations in this report are directed at them.

There are also non-governmental agencies that operate at the state and regional level whose support and assistance will be crucial to this reform effort. For example, for nearly 30 years, the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Program has significantly improved the college-going rate among underachieving and underserved students who thought college was not a possibility for them. How multiple pathways programs interact with AVID programs and the schools they work in (AVID is in more than 1,460 California schools this year) will be a crucial question for both efforts. WASC is an example of another organization whose support of the multiple pathways effort needs to be enlisted, especially the way in which it structures its accreditation process in California.

The leadership and expertise of such organizations as the Career Academy Support Network (CASN) and the National Academy Foundation (NAF) have been critical in the development of pathway programs to date and will continue to be important. CASN has worked closely with the CDE in providing technical assistance to California Partnership Academies. NAF has started academies and provided technical assistance to schools in its network. In so doing, it has modeled "best practice" and promoted the expansion of integrated programs. The support of statewide business and industry groups, such as the California Workforce Investment Board, will also be crucial to the success of multiple pathways.

Finally, the support of foundations, especially the James Irvine Foundation, has been critical in promoting quality multiple pathways. For example, the Foundation supported the development of a research base for multiple pathways, and founded ConnectEd: The California Center for College and Career in 2006. ConnectEd supports practice, policy, and research around multiple pathways. ConnectEd has also recently embarked on a statewide initiative, funded by the Irvine Foundation, to provide grant funding and technical assistance to 11 local educational agencies to undertake the planning and implementation of districtwide systems of multiple pathway programs. A multi-year evaluation effort has also funded to assess student and district outcomes in participating districts and provide data and information to support program improvement.

In tandem with these targeted efforts, the Irvine Foundation funded the establishment and operation of a statewide Coalition for Multiple Pathways, a statewide alliance of more than 140 representatives of education, industry, and community organizations and other individuals seeking to improve California's high schools and prepare students for postsecondary education and careers. It is expected that the Coalition will continue to bring a collective voice and coordinated effort in expanding access to multiple pathways in California.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES DRIVE THE NEED FOR A STATE-LEVEL ADVISORY GROUP

One of the key factors in holding together an effective coalition of legislators, educators, industry leaders, and philanthropists is state-level leadership. It was repeatedly pointed out during interviews conducted in the process of preparing this report that the multiple pathways movement has benefited from the convergence of state support from many quarters. The Governor is an acknowledged advocate of CTE and has supported legislation for expansion of both CTE in general and multiple pathway programs in particular. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction has publicly and strongly supported the multiple pathways approach, as has the philanthropic community led by the Irvine Foundation. The business community has also supported the movement as evidenced by significant business and industry representation in the Coalition for Multiple Pathways, including CalChamber, California Engineering Education Council, Contra Costa Council, Contra Costa Economic Partnership, East County Business Education Alliance, Greater Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce, Hospital Association of Southern California, Inland Empire Economic Partnership, Linking Education and Economic Development, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, MWH Global, Orange County Business Council, San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, and San Francisco Chamber of Commerce.

Unfortunately, given the state's past history with educational reform movements, it is not likely that this convergence of support for the multiple pathways approach will last forever. Given that both the Governor and State Superintendent of Public Instruction are entering their final year of office, and with term limits resulting in relatively frequent changes in legislative leadership, the state will face a significant challenge in continuing to lead the efforts to expand multiple pathway programs in California's public schools.

One potential way to help maintain the momentum currently supporting the development of the multiple pathways approach and to support and guide further efforts would be the creation of a state-level advisory group to be appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. This advisory group would build upon the work of both the AB 2648 stakeholders group and the Coalition for Multiple Pathways. The role of this proposed advisory group would include the following:

- Engaging, convening, and supporting critical constituencies
- Promoting quality standards and accountability
- Promoting effective policies
- Brokering and leveraging resources (Blank, et al., 2003)

THE STATE'S ROLE IN FOSTERING SYSTEMIC EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Timar and Kirp (1988) argue that successful education reform strategies need to integrate the three dimensions of reform: the “authorized movement,” which includes the enactment of statewide policy goals; the “local movement,” which includes the initiative and innovation of educators employed by local educational agencies; and “the conversation,” which includes a variety of communication elements such as changes in the rhetoric around schooling to ongoing interactions between educational and political institutions and professional associations and other stakeholder organizations. Timar and Kirp also argue that these three dimensions are “the requisite elements for creating an organizational culture that promotes educational excellence” and fosters “schools that are purposive and have the flexibility and competence to allocate and use resources to the best advantage” (pp. 134–135).

Fullan (2007) asserts that the “key to large-scale reform is whether the strategy can get a large number of leaders (change agents) with and across the three levels—school, district, and state—to jointly own the enterprise (p. 247). Fullan adds that “the main measure of an overall strategy is whether it is motivational — mobilizing a large number of people to spend their energy and otherwise invest in what will be required to reap and sustain major improvements (p. 247). Fullan’s recommended overall strategy includes eight specific components, the first of which is establishing a guiding coalition to ensure constant communication among all stakeholders. The establishment of a state-level advisory group as described above would be consistent with the intent of this first component. Four of the other seven components of Fullan’s recommended overall strategy for large-scale reform include “negotiating aspirational targets,” “building capacity in relation to the targets,” “growing the financial investment,” and “evolving positive pressure” (p. 248). In concert with these four strategic components, the state needs to ensure that the policy structure governing the operation of secondary schools provides clear goals and powerful incentives that stimulate local efforts to use innovative approaches such as multiple pathways to meet statewide educational objectives. As a result, it would be appropriate for the CDE to continue to be expected to communicate the state’s school-improvement goals to local educational agencies and to provide the agencies with the necessary technical assistance and other support services.

AB 2648 specifically asks for an “assessment of the current capacity of the department for the purpose of maximizing the development of these programs.” The key to building “capacity of the department for the purpose of maximizing the development of these (multiple pathways) programs” is to assign an appropriate role to the CDE along with adequate funding to carry out these responsibilities. In cooperation with other entities, the CDE can play an indispensable role in coordinating and guiding the overall effort. This role would include supporting the development of integrated curriculum, designing and monitoring contracts and agreements with those providing technical assistance to schools and districts, collection of data and evaluation of multiple pathway programs, following up on the advice and guidance of the state-level advisory committee, and proposing legislation and regulatory changes needed to smooth the way for districts moving forward with multiple pathways.

CDE'S CURRENT CAPACITY TO MAXIMIZE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTIPLE PATHWAYS PROGRAMS

In addition to the challenges inherent in the transition process for elective state offices, the CDE is currently addressing the personnel and other operating impacts of multiple state budget reductions. The CDE has also recently re-organized its organizational structure to reduce the number of branches and divisions in light of the new fiscal restrictions. One particularly noteworthy aspect of the re-organization is a new P-16 Division that includes the Intersegmental Relations Office whose staff continue to work across branches with the Secondary, Career, and Adult Learning Division staff in the implementation of AB 2648.

Under the leadership of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the CDE has recently demonstrated its capacity to redirect existing resources to launch new statewide initiatives. Two examples of this capacity are the California Brokers of Expertise (BOE) Project and the effort to implement the Response to Instruction and Intervention (RtI²) approach. The BOE is a groundbreaking knowledge management system that was launched as part of the State Superintendent's commitment to implementing the 14 recommendations for closing the achievement gap that he received from his California P-16 Council. This new system is being designed to gather all available educational research on instructional practices that meet high standards, expertly cull the data for meaningful trends, and develop workable strategies specific to implementing the research of research into the classrooms of California's extraordinarily diverse schools. As a Web-based system that will facilitate networking and the exchange of information, the BOE will provide for thousands of outstanding educators from San Diego to Siskiyou with the opportunity to share their expertise and learn of the latest innovations from their colleagues throughout the state as well as from experts from within California's research community.

The CDE has also assisted the State Superintendent of Public Instruction in the recent launch of the RtI² approach. The overall purpose of this statewide initiative is to establish a general education approach of high-quality instruction and early intervention, prevention, and behavioral strategies. RtI² offers a way to eliminate the achievement gap through a schoolwide process that provides assistance to every student, both high-achieving and struggling learners. It utilizes all resources in a school and school district in a collaborative manner to create a single, well-integrated system of instruction and interventions informed by student outcome data. RtI² is fully aligned with the research on the effectiveness of early intervention and the recommendations of the California P-16 Council. It integrates resources from general education, categorical programs, and special education through a comprehensive system of core instruction and interventions to benefit every student.

For multiple pathways to be successful as a statewide reform strategy for secondary education in California, the CDE must be empowered to serve in its coordination and guidance role. In marshaling its resources, the CDE will need to involve many of its units in this effort, and all of these units must become fully versed in the purpose and characteristics of multiple pathway programs. One possible model for this kind of unprecedented, ongoing collaboration within the CDE could be the cross-branch effort to implement AB 2648 that is described above.

CONCLUSION

If the multiple pathways approach is to become a centerpiece of secondary education reform in California, state-level leadership is crucial. While the establishment of an effective state-level leadership structure to support multiple pathways implementation may be particularly challenging in the context of pending leadership changes and the state's ongoing fiscal crisis, it is nevertheless critical that the state position itself to lead this initiative effectively. The CDE has and should continue to have a significant role in guiding the statewide expansion of the multiple pathways approach in California. To ensure that the CDE can serve as an effective lead agency, it needs adequate funding to be able to launch and sustain its efforts to create favorable conditions for the expansion of multiple pathway programs. A state-level advisory group appointed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction would be a valuable part of an overall strategy to transform California's high schools to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

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