



Week of Aug. 8-12, 2011

## A Very Good Blueprint. Now, What Will We Build?

By UCLA IDEA

Amidst the worrisome news about California's public schools, it's encouraging to find sensible leadership and a promising plan for the future. This week, Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson unveiled a broad blueprint to reverse the state's education decline and improve opportunities for all students. Torlakson and his advisory committee steered clear of silver bullets and patchwork fixes, emphasizing a more systemic and realistic approach.

Leadership and a strong teacher workforce are the foundation of Torlakson's plan. "There's no substitute for investing in our children's education," Torlakson said at a press conference. "But we owe our students much more than just money. We also owe them our leadership, our best thinking—and above all—our very best people."

*A Blueprint for Great Schools* is a 31-page report—the product of months of discussion and collaboration by a diverse group of educators, administrators, parents, and business and community leaders. The report touches on familiar schooling issues including accountability, curriculum, early childhood, community resources, poverty, and others. But central to addressing these multiple challenges is developing and retaining the best teachers. To further that end the report recommends creating a Commission on Educator Quality.

Here are some goals pertaining to teaching found in the report and expected to guide the deliberations of a Commission on Educator Quality should one be formed:

*...a future in which California has a **stable, uniformly high-quality teaching and leadership workforce** from preschool through high school environments. Schools, districts and higher education institutions **collaborate** to provide high-quality, comprehensive teacher and leader preparation programs. Teachers and leaders are **evaluated based on meaningful professional standards** integrated with evidence of student learning. Teacher and leader evaluations are used to inform **professional development**. High-quality, widely available professional development infrastructure **to support educators across their careers**.*

Overall, the report reaches beyond current reform strategies that emphasize efficiency (doing more with less) and competition (winning and racing). Instead, the report addresses the relationship between a quality education system and a workforce of well-prepared and high-quality educators. California education was once an example to the nation of how education policy should be guided by a commitment to giving every child a great teacher. Now it needs to rebuild that commitment.

Torlakson is aware of the wide gap between California's educational goals and the state's capacity and willingness to implement the recommendations in the report. "My top priority continues to be

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restoring California's investment in education, and the *Blueprint* makes it clear that while some ideas will cost little, or even save money, much of what we want to do will take resources. We also have to consider the cost of not providing a vision for education in this state, and that would place the future of California and its children at risk.”

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