

# Moving California's Schools from Worst to First: What will it *really* take to Leave No Child Behind?

Notes on the presentation given by Linda Darling-Hammond at the  
Bay Area Council's Education Committee Meeting

July 8, 2009

- When compared to the rest of the country, California ranks between 45<sup>th</sup> and 49<sup>th</sup> in its Reading, Math, and Science scores.
- California is 1<sup>st</sup> in the nation in its number of students, but 50<sup>th</sup> in its teacher-to-student ratio. Additionally, despite our consistently low educational aptitude scores, we are 48<sup>th</sup> in the nation when it comes to our spending and decision to fund our educational system.
- According to the international 8<sup>th</sup> grade PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) results, the United States ranks 21<sup>st</sup> out of 30 developed nations in Science, and 25<sup>th</sup> out of 30 in Math.
- Academically high achieving countries are graduating 95% or more of their students and sending at least 80% of those graduated to college. The United States is no longer an educational powerhouse in the international arena, and within this underachieving country, California sits at the bottom of the pack, getting about 28% of its students through college.
- Despite the fact that California has the highest rate of children living in poverty (22%), little is being done to support this struggling population in the educational arena. Other countries that have substantial poverty rates supply healthcare, housing, and preschool (so students are placed in early learning contexts and come to school prepared to learn). In Singapore, for example, 85% of families live in housing provided by the government. Students come to schools that are outfitted to prepare their children well; every desk is equipped with a laptop and teachers are chosen from the top of their college classes.
- The United States does not value the teaching profession with the same zeal as that of academically high achieving countries. In Singapore, Finland, and South Korea, teachers are provided housing and earn a salary while they train for their credential, and a beginning teacher earns a higher salary than a beginning doctor. To be considered eligible for a teaching credential program in Finland and South Korea, it is required to have graduated in the top 1/3 of one's college class.
- In California, only 43% of education employees are classroom teachers. In high achieving countries, more than 80% of education employees are classroom teachers.

- There are distinct curriculum disparities between the United States and other countries. In Japan's mathematics curriculum, 4-10 topics are learned in a school year. Instead of a curriculum that is a mile wide (the 30-35 chapters traditionally taught at a superficial level in American schools), the international curriculum that values depth and the mastery of the curriculum by *all* students has a higher rate of return.
- In California, the achievement gap will drive a growing state budget gap. By 2025, Californians will be less well educated than they are today and will risk higher rates of unemployment.
- Students in California are essentially attending apartheid schools. California is the 5<sup>th</sup> most segregated state for black students and the 3<sup>rd</sup> most segregated state for Latino students. In the schools that serve racial minorities, there is limited course access and other obstacles put in the way of achievement for these students. Black and Latino students in New Jersey outperform their white counterparts in California. The racial background of students does not predetermine their academic success, but their schooling system can.
- Funding in high achieving countries such as Finland is centralized. All Finnish schools receive the same amount of funding. Conversely, in the United States, underachieving schools are under-funded which perpetuates a cycle of inadequacy. Equitable funding should be centralized in the United States.
- Many large countries, such as Canada, Australia, and China, have state standards and a thoughtful assessment system to guide their educational system. Students are assessed every third year and rich assessment systems exist *within* the school. There are also, as stated earlier, highly centralized investments in the teaching profession.
- The United States and California have done the opposite. Instead of one centralized system, we have many well intentioned but underdeveloped and under-funded programs on top of our already under-funded school systems. Instead of a central system, we innovate in one isolated area; but the innovation cannot transfer to districts or schools if the resources and knowledge base isn't there to receive it.

### **What can California do to close the Achievement Gap with Federal Funding?**

- California, in order to achieve instructional quality and equity, needs:
  - Well trained teachers in every school who focus on learning how to teach challenging content to diverse learners. This can be supported by increased emphasis on the California Teacher Performance Assessment systems (and a reallocation of Professional Development funds) to improve both teacher training and performance in the classroom.

- A coherent curriculum focused on core concepts and more clearly focused on college and career-ready skills.
- Inquiry within and across disciplines with improved data systems.
- The Race to the Top Fund (\$4.35 billion state incentive funding) will help states drive substantial gains in student achievement by supporting states that have begun to make significant progress on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Acts four reform goals: establishing and raising standards, implementing data systems and using data to drive instruction, improving teacher and principal quality and equity, and turning around historically low performing schools; and that are effectively using other ARRA funds to make progress on these goals.
- The Race to the Top Fund, however, will be apportioned on a competitive basis and only a small number of states will be eligible for this money. California runs a significant risk of being ineligible (because of an inability to link student performance to teacher quality with our current data systems among other criteria that we do not match) and should, consequently look to other, less publicized sources of funding.
- Other funding opportunities include:
  - Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is a set of programs set up by the United States Department of Education to distribute funding to schools and school districts with a high percentage of students from low-income families. To qualify as a Title I school, a school typically has around 40% or more of its students that come from families that qualify under the United States Census's definitions as low-income. Schools receiving Title I funding are regulated by federal legislation, including the No Child Left Behind Act. Title I funds may be used for children from preschool through high school, but most of the students served (65 percent) are in grades 1 through 6; another 12 percent are in preschool and kindergarten programs.
  - When No Child Left Behind is rewritten, there will be an additional \$6 billion to fund the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The rewrite of No Child Left Behind will add 10% to Title I budget money.
  - IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, for special education funding). IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities. California has the least well developed special education system in the nation.

- Innovation Funding (approximately \$1 billion) that encourages states to develop new technology reports and efforts to move away from textbook learning towards online material.
- There is also a bid to create a sort of inter-state consortium to which California could apply to work collaboratively with other states in an effort to refocus our curriculum and create new assessment systems that include state and local performance components.
- The moral obligation of young people interested in the teach profession can only take them so far. With many teachers being unable to afford the rent on an apartment in the city in which they teach, the problem needs to be remedied. By drawing on TEACH grants and teacher quality partnerships, California would be able to reinstate subsidies for teacher training tied to retention in high-need communities. The Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program provides grants of up to \$4,000 per year to students who intend to teach in a public or private elementary or secondary school that serves students from low-income families.

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