



## Closing the achievement gaps Will California's reforms make a difference?

Student scores on the Smarter Balanced assessments, the centerpiece of the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, or CAASPP, were released on Sept. 9, 2015. They underscored the continuing achievement gaps that decades of education reforms have failed to close. EdSource has conducted a series of interviews with leading educators and scholars about the persistence of these achievement gaps and the prospects for the current set of reforms in California to help close them.



**LOUIS FREEDBERG** // EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, EdSource

Overview: Ongoing achievement gaps point to ineffectiveness of decades of reforms



**CHRISTOPHER EDLEY, JR.** // PROFESSOR AND FORMER DEAN, UC Berkeley School of Law

'There are several missing pieces' to the current batch of reforms



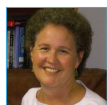
**SEAN REARDON** // PROFESSOR OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITY, Stanford Graduate School of Education

'Both schools and larger social inequalities play a big role' in the achievement gap



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Achievement gap indicates that 'the right strategies were not being used'



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California reforms 'will begin to level the playing field'



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### *Overview: Ongoing achievement gaps point to ineffectiveness of decades of reforms*

The ongoing achievement gaps revealed by the Smarter Balanced test scores released in September point to the ineffectiveness of reforms over the past 15 years or more that were intended to close those gaps. They raise the question of whether the new set of reforms being introduced in California is more likely to succeed in narrowing the gap, let alone close it.

Those reforms include the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards; the Local Control Funding Formula, which allocates additional funds for high-needs children and grants local districts more decision-making powers; and a more comprehensive accountability system that emphasizes deeper learning skills, and promotes support for schools and teachers in place of punishment or sanctions.

Only 28 percent of African Americans and 32 percent of Latinos who took the test in California met or exceeded standards on the English language arts section of the Smarter Balanced tests, which students took for the first time this spring. By comparison, 61 percent of whites and 72 percent of Asian Americans met or exceeded standards in English language arts. The differences in math are even wider. Only 16 percent of African Americans and 21 percent of Latinos met or exceeded the standard in math, compared with 59 percent of whites and 69 percent of Asian Americans.

### *Addressing racial and ethnic inequality*

These results were released against the backdrop of arguably the most sustained national conversation on the causes—and effects—of racial and ethnic inequality that has occurred at any time since the Civil Rights Movement.

The fact that the disparity in academic achievement is so wide in a state like California is even more troubling than in states where educational and political leaders may have been less committed to serving students from diverse backgrounds. During the past two decades, California has beaten back the anti-immigrant sentiments surging through other states, especially against Spanish-speaking immigrants. Latinos now wield considerable political clout in the state, and have helped drive education reforms here.

The last time there was a substantial narrowing of the gap in the United States was from the early 1970s to the late 1980s, as measured on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or



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NAEP, often referred to as “the nation’s report card.” A 2010 report by the Educational Testing Service, titled “The Black-White Achievement Gap: When Progress Stopped,” observed that since the late 1980s “there has been no clear trend in the gap, or sustained period of change in the gap, one way or another.”

The No Child Left Behind, or NCLB, law was supposed to hold school districts “accountable” for results. Teachers, principals and superintendents were prodded to reach a goal and rebuked when they failed to do so. By 2014 every child, regardless of background, was supposed to be proficient in math and English language arts. California, like every other state, did not come close to meeting that goal.

It would be easy to dismiss NCLB as a top-down, misguided federal strategy. But California promoted a similar ethos of “accountability” through the Public Schools Accountability Act, approved in 1999 by the state Legislature.

Unlike NCLB, California’s accountability plan emphasized improvements from year to year, rather than setting fixed levels of proficiency that schools had to meet. During the reform’s early years, the state provided cash rewards to teachers, principals and schools that succeeded in improving performance. But the rewards part of the reform equation soon fell victim to the series of budget crises that California has experienced in recent decades.

Given short shrift in the accountability reform era was the preponderance of research showing that the greatest predictor, by far, of how well or badly a student performed in school was his or her socioeconomic background. Reformers often dismissed any reference to a child’s background as an “excuse” to let schools off the hook.

But it was precisely during the era of reforms demanding more “accountability” from schools that income inequality in California increased more than in all but a handful of states. According



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to one report, California ranks third among states with the highest economic inequality. The extent to which these inequalities affected the most recent test results is unknown, but if the research is any guide, they must clearly contribute to them.

### Will new reforms work?

The big question is whether the new set of reforms in place in California will make more of a difference than the ones they are replacing. To explore that question, EdSource interviewed several leading educators and scholars. Their thoughts follow.



CHRISTOPHER EDLEY, JR. // PROFESSOR AND FORMER DEAN, UC Berkeley School of Law

## Q & A: 'There are several missing pieces' to the current batch of reforms

What is your response to the achievement gap on the Smarter Balanced test results?

Sadly, it confirms the premise of the Equity and Excellence Commission's report, namely that the approach to school reform starting with "A Nation at Risk" has run its course, and left us with this yawning gap that endangers America's future, let alone that of these kids. It let officials at all levels talk tough about educational improvement, but without pursuing evidenced-based strategies and making mid-course corrections as required.

California is targeting funds for kids who need it most. How much of a difference will that make?

I don't believe there is any reason the reforms championed by Governor Brown will move the needle or narrow the gap. It will only work if there is accountability for how it is spent, and if there is capacity at the local level for spending it well, as opposed to simply restoring the recession cuts. The accounting systems in our schools don't allow us to follow the money all the way to the classroom, to find out if the kids in the most need will get the resources, financial or otherwise, that will narrow the achievement disparities.

All the research shows a major correlation between test scores and poverty. The affluent districts are doing well, and those that are not are not. To what extent do we have to look at these other factors as part of the education reform equation because obviously schools can't do anything about that?

We are not going to do away with poverty, but what can we do in the education space that will mitigate the effects of poverty on student learning? There are some answers. The most important is early childhood learning. This has by far the largest effect on children's success later on. Beyond that, there are a whole range of possibilities. Some community school designs are hugely promising, as well as extended learning time, and putting successful teachers into classrooms where they are prepared to deal with problems in that classroom. So no one thinks we can eliminate the advantages given by affluent or even solidly middle class backgrounds. Poverty is only a partial excuse because there is only so much we can do.

Regarding community schools, how can we get a variety of health, mental health and social services needs addressed in ways that are designed to support student success and that are financially sustainable? The major problem now is that access that community schools provide to these services are ad hoc and voluntary, as opposed to a system of support that is baked into the structure of these programs.

The programs you mention are not dramatically new, but are you saying they have not been an integral part of the reform agenda?

Many well-intentioned reformers mistakenly think that successful examples will be imitated, but that is simply not the way the K-12 ecosystem operates. A major example of that is that we don't see a strong pattern of successful charter schools being emulated. We must have intentionality not only about achievement in the aggregate, but also in attacking these disparities and holding people accountable.



There is a feeling now in California that we are going in the right direction in moving away from a punishment model, tying curriculum to the real world and targeting funds to students who need it most. But 10 to 15 years from today, will we be where we are now in terms of the achievement gap? There are several missing pieces without which the current batch of reforms will leave disparities pretty much the same. I am a huge supporter of the Common Core. But I have not seen concerted attention to the schools and teachers serving poor kids to make sure they get the extra resources they need to implement the Common Core as effectively as it will be in affluent districts.



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But what about the supplemental and concentration grants that districts will be getting? Aren't they getting the resources they need to successfully implement the Common Core?

It is impossible to know how these funds will be spent and whether they will be spent in effective ways. In addition, these schools disproportionately have less experienced teachers and a host of other challenges that will make implementation of the Common Core a lot more difficult. Too few communities invest in a parent leadership pipeline. In this new era of local control, what should parent and community leaders know about their schools and the school system? Too many parents who step up to leadership roles have no idea what is expected of them. Indeed, less than half of California's schools even have a PTA unit. They are making it up as they go.

*Christopher Edley, professor and former dean at the UC Berkeley School of Law, was chair of the congressionally chartered Equity and Excellence Commission set up to advise the U.S. Department of Education on how to close disparities in educational opportunity that contribute to the achievement gap. He was also co-founder of The Civil Rights Project, now based at UCLA.*



SEAN REARDON // PROFESSOR OF POVERTY AND INEQUALITY, Stanford Graduate School of Education

## Q & A: 'Both schools and larger social inequalities play a big role' in the achievement gap

What does the achievement gap in the Smarter Balanced test results say about the effectiveness or otherwise of the basic approach to education reform in recent decades?

There is no real evidence that the whole school system has been able to effect a reduction in achievement gaps over the last decade or two. I don't think there is any evidence that accountability systems have been effective in reducing achievement gaps. We did a paper looking at whether No Child Left Behind had reduced the achievement gap and found very little evidence that it had. Achievement gaps are a little bit smaller than they were nationally 15 to 20 years ago, but that is not due to NCLB because that happened well before NCLB came into place, and when you look at the black-white achievement gap, when kids come to school at kindergarten entry that has been declining over time.

That seems to explain why the achievement gap in elementary and middle school has been narrowing very slowly, because kids are getting to school a little less unequally prepared. Whatever narrowing there is seems to be a result of what happens to kids before they get to school. So it suggests we have not done a very good job.

Also worth acknowledging is that a big piece of the achievement gap is due to inequality of kids' lives out of school. It may be unrealistic to expect schools to undo all the other inequalities in kids' lives. They could certainly do a better job at reducing some of it, but I doubt schools alone will ever entirely reduce the achievement gaps without some equally concerted efforts to reduce racial and ethnic inequality in income and neighborhood conditions and things like that outside school.

### But what can schools do about the income inequality?

There are two sides to that argument. You can say schools can sort of do it on their own, and let's not call attention to poverty. Or you could say schools can't do anything because there is so much inequality outside school, and we are fooling ourselves if we think we can fix this without fixing the bigger issue of structural inequality.

Well, schools can do something, so it is not accurate to say schools can't do anything. The right answer is that both schools and larger social inequalities play a big role and we are not going to make real progress without working on both fronts at once.

California is targeting funds at low-income and high-needs kids more than any other state. Is this going in the right direction and will it tackle the achievement gap more effectively than other reform efforts in recent years?

I think it is certainly a step in the right direction, and it will likely have benefits down the road. But probably it alone will not be enough.

New evidence from Rucker Johnson at UC Berkeley and others show that states that have done more to equalize funding among poor and rich districts have seen improvements in educational outcomes of kids in lower-income districts, and some narrowing of gaps in the graduation rate.

If Johnson's evidence is any indication, we should see some payoffs down the line. Will that resolve the problem entirely? No. It is much bigger than a funding disparity, but it is certainly a step in the right direction.

### How much of a difference will the Common Core make?

I don't think we know the answer to that question. Will the Common Core make things better or worse or make no difference in terms of equity? I hear competing arguments. Both have merits. One argument is that it raises expectations and advantaged districts will have resources to meet those better than disadvantaged districts and that will widen inequality.

The other argument is that it will help narrow it because it will put pressure on schools to move away from drill and kill, the test prep stuff that NCLB fostered and that maybe helped get your test scores up but didn't promote the real learning that we want. So by pushing toward higher standards of instruction and learning, the kids in disadvantaged schools will start getting what kids in advantaged schools are getting.

Both are very plausible arguments. We don't know yet how it will play out. I wouldn't venture to predict at this point.

### Some media reports have argued that the achievement gap as measured by test results is actually wider on the Smarter Balanced assessments than on previous tests. What was your reaction to those reports?

I don't think the people reporting the results understand how to interpret test results. They are comparing things that are not comparable to each other. You can't just look at differences in proficiency rates.

Imagine trying to measure the height differential between boys and girls, and you say "I am going to call anyone over 5' 8" tall, and anyone under 5' 8" short. And you conclude that there is a big gap between boys and girls, because most boys are over 5' 8" and most girls are under 5' 8". The height gap would be huge.

But if you set the height at 5' 2", most girls are over 5' 2" and so are the vast majority of boys. So the difference would be much smaller. What the Common Core has done is to move the bar higher so it is more in the 5' 8" range than in the 5' 2" range. So the differences look bigger.

You are missing the big story that there is a wide distribution of heights or test scores in both groups, and you want to describe the whole distribution, not some movable standard. So I don't know if the gap is any bigger under the Common Core standards than under the old ones because you can't compare them the way they are doing it in the media.

*Sean Reardon is a professor of poverty and inequality in education at the Stanford Graduate School of Education. Among Reardon's many publications, a landmark paper on the "income achievement gap" showed that the gap between students from affluent families and those from low-income backgrounds has widened in recent years, and is 40 percent larger than the black-white achievement gap.*



**MICHAEL FULLAN** // PROFESSOR EMERITUS, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

## Q & A: Achievement gap indicates that 'the right strategies were not being used'

What do the Smarter Balanced test results say about the effectiveness of reforms in recent decades?

The gaps were there and they are still there. It is an indicator that the right strategies were not being used.

But haven't there always been achievement gaps?

In my view, the reforms that have been used have been too driven by accountability and individual development, and not by the right strategies that we know work. The second thing is that the Smarter Balanced assessments represent higher standards than the previous assessments so they're more demanding, and it is the first time students are taking tests online. So they will show lower performance because the standards are higher.

The way to look at this now is what kinds of strategies are going to show progress and movement forward in reducing the gap more. We need to focus on language development, encourage very specific collaboration and leadership that goes with it, zero in on improving instruction and getting teachers to work together. It is too soon to tell if it will work. I'm not saying wait for five years. I'm saying let's start looking very closely at how we are doing from year to year.



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Do you think that the reforms in place in California are the right reforms? Are they going to make a difference in narrowing the achievement gap?

The short answer is yes. I personally don't think the Common Core in itself is the longstanding answer. The standards themselves for math and language development within it are important. The fundamental solution is changing the quality of teaching, individually and teachers working together. Those are the strategies I am working on with a lot of districts. The shift is not only replacing the curriculum. It is the new work of teachers and principals working together on very specific demands to do things differently, to measure the results openly and transparently, and to be able to compare how students are doing this year with next year.

Is targeting more funds at high-needs children, as we are doing in California, the right strategy?

Yes. We've done this in Ontario where we target the whole system. We especially look at those groups that are underperforming and then do things that really address that need. If you are talking about the whole system—for example, in districts where they did a great job with special



education students, getting students to learn in ways they never did before, it spilled over to the overall performance of the district. As long as you take a whole-system perspective, you can expect everyone to improve. I think some of the strategies we have (in California) are powerful enough to address the difference and begin to reduce the gap.

### Are you concerned about whether there is enough accountability in California?

The Local Control and Accountability Plan has gone off the rails, and it is becoming a huge compliance and bureaucratic operation. So implementation of the LCAP is not good, and that needs to be corrected. That said, I don't think there was much accountability in the past because there weren't big consequences for districts in the previous system. So it is not as if we are now throwing away the keys and telling people to do what they want. In fact, there are new pressures on districts to do things better. We also know heavy-handed accountability, as logical as it sounds, only makes matters worse. We need a new version of accountability that is compatible with LCAP and the Common Core.

### How would a new version of accountability be different from accountability under NCLB?

We have found that “in your face” accountability was not working, especially with the old measures. What makes it better is to have better standards that encourage people to want to do something; better teacher development, especially working in groups; transparency of results, and intervention to do things. The new accountability comes from having better specificity and better transparency, and then to act on results.

### Do we have that now in California?

We don't have it now because tests are new, so they haven't kicked in yet in terms of their presence. You have to have the ideas to act on the results. That is what the Task Force on Accountability and Continuous Improvement, co-chaired by Eric Heins from the California Teachers Association (CTA) and Wes Smith from Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), will be working on. So this is just the beginning—not in an open-ended sense so that we have to wait for four years to do anything, but in the sense that things need to be done quickly. Ten months from now we will have another set of test results to look at. All this requires specific action. Whether it will happen, I can't predict; but I am working with other people here in California to make it happen.

### Will we need to end poverty in order to really make a difference in closing the achievement gap?

Poverty makes a huge negative difference, and there are a whole bunch of things that need to be done in terms of policy and action. But if you say we can't do anything in schools so we should give up, then you are stuck with nothing. If we do the right things as we have seen in some districts, we know the impact of poverty, which is quite strong, can be cut in half by better teaching—not eliminated, but reduced. The new strategies in education are competing with poverty and can make more of a difference than we think we can make. If you really end up saying there is nothing we can do because of poverty, then you are really dead in the water.

*Michael Fullan is professor emeritus at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Fullan is working closely with several California school districts and the California Department of Education to implement what he calls the “right drivers for whole system reform.” He has written elsewhere that California “needs to go slow to go fast” and has “three years to get it right.”*



LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND // PROFESSOR, Stanford University // PRESIDENT AND CEO, Learning Policy Institute

## Q & A: California reforms 'will begin to level the playing field'

Were you encouraged or discouraged by the results on the Smarter Balanced tests, or is this what you expected?

I did not have particular expectations. I am not surprised at the trends we are seeing. I take it as a baseline, and that is how the state should approach it. The more important data will come next year and the year after as people get used to these kinds of assessments, work to make the investments in teacher professional development, and students use the opportunities they have to make up the gap, as well as move ahead. That will be when the real important results will begin to occur.

Why after decades of reforms do we still see such large achievement gaps?

The “old” reforms focused on test-based accountability, which emphasized tests of low-level skills that drove curriculum, especially in the most high-need schools that were threatened with sanctions if students did not show higher test scores each year. While affluent schools did not feel as much of a need to teach to the test, lower-income schools did. As a result, the curriculum divide grew wider between those who were teaching for higher-order skills and those drilling on lower-order skills.

In addition, the old reforms featured testing without investing, so the spread in access to dollars, qualified teachers, technology resources and other materials for learning grew wider and wider between rich and poor schools. Schools serving poor children spent much less than schools serving wealthy ones. (The spending ratio was 3 to 1 between high- and low-spending schools in California before they received extra funds under the Local Control Funding Formula.)



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Why is the gap on the Smarter Balanced assessments wider in some instances than on the California Standards Tests students took until 2013?

The Smarter Balanced assessments are focused on higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills including research, investigation and communication, which were not emphasized in the old standards or assessed in the old California Standards Tests. Schools that were teaching to the old standards and tests have a lot of work to do to transform curriculum and teaching to these new goals. There is likely more work to do in some schools than in others.

In addition, the new tests required students to feel comfortable with the use of technology, as the tests are computer-based and often require keyboarding skills and use of different kinds of computer-based tools. So students in lower-wealth schools that did not have extensive technology access and who do not have technology at home had another challenge in taking these tests. Their scores are likely to be artificially lower on this first round of testing than their actual skill levels.

#### Will the reforms that California has put in a place help narrow the achievement gap?

The fact that the state has put a couple of billion dollars into technology and professional development for the new standards, and has put in place the new LCFF formula that is beginning to give more resources to schools serving students with greater needs, will begin to level the playing field over the next few years. I would expect to see a reduction in the achievement gap because of all of these factors. But we have a lot of work to do, and these data show just how much.

#### Given the strong relationship between socioeconomic background and education outcomes, are there limits on what schools can do?

I think we all know it is a multi-faceted job, and schools are not the only important component. It is also true that schools can do a lot if they are given the resources to create community schools, and if students have access to health and social services, and before- and after-school care.

There are districts that have been making the right kinds of investments that did unusually well on the Smarter Balanced tests, like Sanger Unified (in the Central Valley). So we can do a lot. We should also be thinking about reducing poverty, increasing employment, improving health care, ensuring that food security is a given in our state. But investing strongly in education is a big part of the story.

#### Should policies that reduce inequalities at the front end be part of an overall education reform strategy, instead of trying to mitigate their impact once a child gets to school?

As a nation and a state, we need to take the investment in our citizens seriously in terms of employment, in terms of health services and housing. There was a time in the 1960s and 70s when we had a grand national strategy that was replicated in California that was about bringing prosperity to all families. That translates into improved educational outcomes. As much as investments in education try to compensate for the growth of poverty, it would be much better to address the welfare of families directly, and then to invest in education as well.

*Linda Darling-Hammond is a Stanford University professor and president and CEO of the newly established Learning Policy Institute. She also serves as chair of the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and is the senior research adviser to the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, which designed the assessments.*



**MARSHALL 'MIKE' SMITH** // FORMER UNDERSECRETARY OF EDUCATION, [Clinton administration](#)

## Q & A: California is now in the 'hard work stage' of making ed reforms work

In light of the continuing achievement gap, did the accountability approach to education reform work? The accountability approach didn't work at all, particularly since 2005, during the period when No Child Left Behind was being fully implemented. This is Newton's third law: Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. By pushing the notion of accountability so hard, we have created all sorts of problems, which are reflected in the narrowing of the curriculum and the misbehavior of teachers who felt they had to get these scores right. As a result of this, the rate of gain has slowed down over the last decade.

There are many determinatives of this. So it is hard to be definitive about whether something has worked or not. But the notion that there is a magic bullet, that one thing can change the entire system, is probably wrong.

California prides itself on its diversity and is a progressive state. Latinos are in positions of power. But this has not translated into policies that have led to a significant change in the achievement gap.

There has been some movement. If you look at scores on the NAEP in 4th-grade reading between 1998 and 2013, white kids (in California) gained 15 points, from 217 to 232. That is almost a grade and a half gain, which is considerable. Hispanics gained 23 points, going from 178 to 201. They are still 30 points behind, but they gained 8 points (on white students). So they closed the gap by a considerable amount. That is almost a grade-level gain. Black kids went from 188 to 202. That was only a 14-point gain, which is almost the same gain that white students made, so you don't have any closing of the black-white gap.

But most of the gains came between 1998 and 2005, and then slowed between 2006 and 2013, when the accountability reforms were being fully implemented.



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To what extent do you think the accountability reforms of the past 15 years have been piecemeal, and did not deal with underlying issues?

Many of them have been piecemeal. The people who talk about reforms often don't think in a coherent way about the overall picture. Take a reform like teacher evaluation. Those promoting it think that it is going to solve all the problems. There is no way it is going to do that. You need a system that produces better-trained teachers than we had before. That is going to happen with better pre-service training and after they are in the classroom. Being a teacher is a complicated job.



When you are dealing with a complex phenomenon and you introduce one change, you need to think about a set of changes that influences the overall effort. The notion that “let’s do one thing” like teacher evaluation or reducing class size by five students—these are marginal things that may or may not help at all. If they are pushed like the teacher evaluation idea, they may even have negative effects.

You have said there isn’t a magic bullet, and in your writing you have also pointed to the multiple strategies that are needed, including more systemic reforms. Is it feasible for schools and districts to do all of these things?

There is no question that it is not easy. It takes time—sustained, focused time. But there are examples of places doing all of these things. Places like Long Beach and Garden Grove, and to some extent Ontario (Canada) and Massachusetts, make it very clear that you need sustained attention to improve. Without that kind of attention you are not going to implement these interventions in a thoughtful way, whether it is someone coming in to do reading recovery, or getting kids motivated more, or social-emotional learning.

You have to get the organization working well in order to make the interventions work well, and that is a real trick. Without that, you can’t introduce these interventions and expect anything positive. You will be disappointed.



*You have to get the organization working well in order to make the interventions work well, and that is a real trick.*

Is California moving in the right direction?

I think so, but it is going to take some time and effort.

Governor Brown is moving very fast. There are a lot of things happening, but there is a lot to implement, and a lot for teachers to learn. You can’t expect any real change in any of this for four years at least. You have to give him time.

The governor is not creating a lot of new requirements. We have begun to create an atmosphere in the state to give support to districts rather than telling them what to do in minute detail. That is going well. There is good planning going on for the teacher reforms that need to happen. There is the sense in the state of a commitment to continuous improvement, which is something that was never heard five years ago. A lot of people are confused about what exactly that is, but it is being talked about in Sacramento, and county offices are working hard to make this work.

## What does continuous improvement mean?

It says that whatever the important things you are doing, you can do better, and you need ways of assessing how well you are doing. One of the things we have going for us across the country is that we have a better set of data systems than we ever had before.

What is happening in Fresno is a classic example of a continuous improvement effort. It is all based around data. They wanted to get more kids graduating, and more kids through the a-to-g (college prep) course sequence. They found out that it wasn't just one thing that stopped those things from happening; it was a lot of things. You have to get out there ahead of the problem and address them systematically and as soon as they arise. With a whole system of supports and course assignments, Garden Grove did continuous improvement with their teachers. People see it working in one part of the system and then it spreads to other parts of the system. It is not rocket science. It is changing people's behavior.

We are now in the hard work stage. Now we have to do the real hard work of implementation. If it is done in a sustained way, it will have a big payoff in California.

*Marshall "Mike" Smith, former undersecretary of education in the Clinton administration and senior counselor to U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan in the Obama administration, is also a former dean of the Stanford Graduate School of Education. He initiated the landmark Getting Down to Facts project, which examined school finance and governance in California, while he was director of education at the Hewlett Foundation. Among numerous books and articles, he co-authored with Christopher Jencks and others the landmark 1972 text, Inequality: A Reassessment of the Impact of Family and Schooling in America.*

## About EdSource

EdSource is an independent, impartial, nonprofit organization established in 1977. EdSource's mission is to engage Californians on key education challenges and to highlight strategies that promote student success.