

Worthy Goals, Limited Success: Intervention Programs in California



WHEN CALIFORNIA POLICYMAKERS

officially embraced school accountability in the spring of 1999, the central goal was an across-the-board increase in academic achievement in the state's K–12 public schools. The Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA) created a system of summarizing performance on state standardized tests and ranking schools accordingly, with monetary awards granted for meeting improvement targets. Policymakers also included an intervention program to help schools that were not meeting state goals.

California's test scores have improved substantially over the last several years, but state-led interventions' overall contribution to this improvement has been slight, according to official evaluations. On the one hand, they have provided about \$1.3 billion in extra state revenues to low-performing schools, at the least giving them a chance to examine their own performance. On the other hand, the evaluations to date have shown more problems than progress. Despite this, the intervention concept remains a linchpin in the state's standards-

based reform efforts, with intervention programs affecting more than a quarter of California's 9,000 public schools and nearly the same proportion of school districts.

In attempting to get it right, California has continually modified policies and processes for interventions since the PSAA was passed. In addition, the federal government has had its own accountability requirements and intervention strategies, particularly since the enactment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002. Although the state and federal programs emphasize similar academic skills, they require a different approach to measuring performance and thus determining which schools need help. The result has been a tangle of programs, each with its own acronym, eligibility criteria, funding, and timeline.

In addition, the varied requirements of the programs create confusion, particularly because hundreds of schools are in multiple programs at the same time. Further, the rate of improvement in California simply does not match the pace at

which federal performance targets rise under NCLB. These targets escalate until 2013–14, when *all* students are expected to be proficient on state academic content standards in English and math. At that point, many observers expect that without some change in policy, almost all California schools and districts that receive funding under NCLB will be in Program Improvement, the federal intervention program.

This report looks at the history of the state's intervention programs and reviews the evaluations that have been completed. It contrasts those programs with federal requirements, including newly created interventions for school districts. And it looks to the future, providing data regarding the potential impact of NCLB throughout California and highlighting the state's newest school improvement program.

California policymakers create a series of intervention programs

The intent of the PSAA was to create greater incentives for schools to increase student learning, as measured by results of the state's standardized tests.

Williams lawsuit also aimed to close the achievement gap

In addition to intervention programs under the Public Schools Accountability Act, legislators have responded to a lawsuit filed on behalf of students in low-performing schools. The settlement of *Williams v. California* in 2004 included accountability measures (such as empowering county superintendents to intervene in the lowest-performing schools) and about \$1.2 billion to make facilities repairs, buy textbooks, create a statewide facilities inventory, and continue the High Priority Schools Grant Program (described on page 4).

The law created a method of summarizing test score results into one number—an Academic Performance Index (API) score. Based on API scores, the state divides schools by 10 performance levels (deciles) and ranks them

from I (lowest) to 10 (highest). The state also uses API scores to set annual improvement targets for schools and student subgroups, which are based on ethnicity and status as disabled, socio-economically disadvantaged, or English learner. By publicizing API scores and decile rankings, policymakers try to pressure schools to improve toward specified achievement levels.

Eligibility for the state's intervention programs is based on schools' API scores. Over time, these programs have evolved and continue to be modified periodically. The first program—the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP)—was initiated in 1999. Two years later, legislators created School Assistance and Intervention Teams (SAITs) to aid II/USP schools that were not improving along with schools that struggled to improve in a second program, the High Priority Schools Grant Program (HPSGP). The latter, authorized in 2001, was similar to II/USP in many ways but different in the school selection process, some program particulars, and funding.

On the whole, the schools in intervention programs under PSAA have served disproportionate numbers of students who are Latinos, African Americans, English learners, and/or from low-income families. Thus a broader intention behind the intervention programs has been to help close the achievement gap between these students and their white or Asian, English-fluent, and higher-income counterparts.

The state's first intervention program (II/USP) under PSAA was voluntary

The Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP) was the first major effort to intervene in schools subsequent to the state adoption of content standards, which specify what students are to know and be able to do in each subject and/or grade. The

program provided funding for an external evaluator to work with the school community during a “planning year” to assess needs and develop an action plan for reform. Once the plan was developed, the state provided funding to implement the plan over two to three years. Varying levels of success, as measured by performance results, met with different consequences—but a school that made no progress faced state sanctions.

Three cohorts of 430 schools each were selected for II/USP from 1999 through 2001. No new cohorts have been authorized by legislation since then. Schools that were in the bottom half of the API rankings and did not meet their API growth targets in the prior year were eligible for the program. The California Department of Education asked districts whether eligible schools wished to volunteer to participate.

II/USP provided funds to carry out an action plan designed with the help of an external evaluator

Once a school was selected, its district received \$50,000 to contract with an external evaluator, chosen from a list of state-approved entities and individuals. Evaluators tended to be private consulting groups, county offices of education, or persons affiliated with research organizations or universities. State policy dictated that the evaluator could not already be working for the district. The evaluator was supposed to be an outside, neutral party who was to identify weaknesses under the assumption that these schools would not see themselves clearly. Working with the school site council or a team of staff and community members, evaluators were to develop an action plan describing barriers to improvement and strategies to overcome them. The action plan also had to include an examination of student achievement data broken down by student subgroups.

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This report was written by:

Brian Edwards
Susan Frey
Mary Perry

Researched by:

Brian Edwards
Noli Brazil

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The federal Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program predated state efforts

The federal Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program (CSRD) started one year before California created the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program (II/USP). CSRD's approach was to provide schools with extra resources so they could adopt established whole-school reform models. CSRD initially provided the state with enough funding for 80 schools to assess their needs and select a reform model from a federally approved list. The implementation funding was for three years.

The CSRD application process and programmatic requirements were similar to action plan requirements for II/USP. Given the similarities between the state and federal programs, California considered the initial 80 CSRD schools as part of II/USP. This subset of CSRD schools had to fulfill the requirements of both the federal and state programs.

The state continued receiving funding through CSRD, later renamed Comprehensive School Reform. Altogether 331 schools have received \$238 million funneled through various state programs. The federal government discontinued the program in 2006.

Evaluators were usually strangers to the school personnel and had no decision-making power at the school. Although some evaluators formed good working relationships with their schools, others spent little time with them. There were a few reports of evaluators' working with multiple schools and not tailoring action plans to individual schools. The external evaluator's work was expected to conclude at the end of the planning year, and implementation of the action plan was left to the school.

After the State Board of Education approved the action plan at the end of

the planning year, schools received \$200 per pupil (or \$50,000, whichever was greater) for each of two years to implement the plan. The state tried to send these funds well before the beginning of the school year to facilitate schools' implementation efforts. Participating districts were required to match the implementation grant to bolster improvement efforts and demonstrate "buy-in" to the II/USP process.

II/USP schools that met all their targets in both "implementation years" graduated from the program and no longer received implementation funding. On the other hand, if a school did not meet its growth targets in the first year of implementation, its district governing board was required to intervene in some way, such as reassigning personnel or amending site-specific collective bargaining agreements if any existed. If a school did not meet its growth targets in either year but made "significant growth"—defined by the state board as improving by one API point in either year—the school received a third year of implementation funding.

Legislators created SAITs as an alternative to more severe sanctions

Under the original PSAA, a school that did not make significant growth faced serious sanctions. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) was to assume all rights and responsibilities for the school from the governing district and could reassign the principal. Furthermore, the PSAA required the SPI to choose at least one other serious sanction from a list that included closing the school. Some policymakers saw II/USP as not giving struggling schools enough time to improve and as being too punitive.

In 2001—before any schools faced state takeover—policymakers in Sacramento amended the statute to allow for another option: the assignment of a

school assistance and intervention team (SAIT). These teams are supposed to be composed of people who are experts in helping struggling schools. Many teams come from county offices of education or consortia of county offices, but there are also university-affiliated groups, research organizations, or private consultants, some of which operate for profit. (To see the state's list of SAITs, go to: www.cde.ca.gov/ta/lp/sm/saitproviders.asp)

SAITs have 60 days to complete a report outlining corrective actions, which the local school board must then adopt within the next 30 days. Under the SAIT approach, an intervention team recommends corrective actions after it assesses the school's implementation of "essential program components," a set of nine factors the state considered necessary for improvement under the state accountability system. The components vary somewhat by grade level. (See the box on page 4 for a description of the nine components.)

In 2001 a total of 24 II/USP schools failed to achieve significant growth and were deemed "state-monitored" schools. Each was assigned a SAIT. The state did not take over any of these schools. As of November 2006, 253 II/USP schools had been assigned SAITs, and 109 of them had successfully exited the SAIT process.

SAITs are funded with a combination of state and district dollars. Both the state and district contribute to SAIT members' salaries. In addition, the state provides \$150 per pupil to implement the intervention team's recommendations, and districts are required to match these funds with money or in-kind contributions.

SAITs have played an important role in II/USP and in the High Priority Schools Grant Program, California's second-generation intervention program under PSAA.

The California Department of Education has identified nine “essential program components” of successful schools

Early in the SAIT process, the intervention team assesses the school's implementation of “essential program components,” a set of nine factors seen as necessary for a school to improve student achievement. The nine components vary somewhat by grade level, but in their basic form they include:

1. Use of English and math instructional materials that are aligned to state content standards, including materials to help struggling students.
2. Dedication of time to standards-aligned instruction in English/reading/language arts and math.
3. Participation in the School Administrator Training Program.
4. Employment of fully credentialed, highly qualified teachers and participation in the Math and Reading Professional Development Program (created in 2001 by Assembly Bill 466 and reauthorized in 2006 by Senate Bill 472).
5. Student achievement monitoring system (use of data to monitor student progress on curriculum-embedded assessments and modify instruction).
6. Ongoing instructional assistance and support for teachers (use of content experts and instructional coaches).
7. Monthly teacher collaboration by grade level (K–8) and department (9–12) facilitated by the principal.
8. Lesson- and course-pacing schedule (K–8) and master schedule flexibility for sufficient numbers of intervention courses (9–12).
9. Fiscal support: use of general and categorical funds of the school or district to support the school's English/reading/language arts and math program goals.

The High Priority Schools Grant Program addresses some of II/USP's weaknesses

In 2001, when II/USP was in its third year of implementation, state policymakers established the High Priority Schools Grant Program (HPSGP) as part of PSAA. (The SAIT concept was part of the same legislation.) The two intervention programs have much in common. Both provide supplemental resources for schools to implement a plan to raise student academic achievement. They both hold participating schools accountable for results. Both require schools to involve the community. And should HPSGP schools not achieve specified levels of growth on the API, they too face state sanctions, including state takeover or being required to work with a SAIT.

But the new program differs from II/USP in several ways, including the school selection process, some program particulars, and the amount of funding granted to schools.

High Priority Schools Grant Program differs from II/USP in the details

One difference between the programs is which schools participate. In HPSGP, schools in API deciles 1–5 are technically eligible for assistance; but priority for funding goes to schools with the lowest API scores. That has meant that primarily Decile I schools—those in the bottom 10% of the API rankings—have participated.

Although both II/USP and HPSGP are voluntary, the latter program puts more pressure on eligible schools to participate. If a school is “invited” to

apply to HPSGP, the local governing board must discuss at a public meeting reasons to accept or deny the invitation and explain what will be done for the school if the board decides not to apply.

The two programs also differ in their planning requirements. HPSGP allows schools to use existing plans to serve as their action plans and enter implementation mode immediately—as long as the plan addresses a multitude of program requirements. That is in contrast to II/USP, which required schools to take a year to draw up a separate action plan. Part of the reason for the difference is that schools already in II/USP or the federal CSRD were allowed to participate in HPSGP, and a separate action plan would likely have been duplicative. (In fact, almost half the schools in the first cohort of HPSGP had also received some funding from II/USP or CSRD.)

Schools in HPSGP that choose to take a year for planning, however, receive grants of \$50,000, the same amount given to II/USP schools from 1999 through 2001.

HPSGP has also differed from II/USP in the external evaluator component. II/USP forbade district personnel from serving as evaluators. Responding to feedback from the field on II/USP, state policymakers specifically allowed district staff to serve as evaluators for the first cohort of HPSGP schools. However, for the second cohort, the state is discouraging districts from playing that role while still urging districts to be actively involved in school improvement efforts, such as playing a role in a district/school liaison team and helping the school implement its action plan.

HPSGP also provides greater implementation funding than II/USP—\$400 as opposed to \$200 per pupil. (Schools that were already in II/USP when they joined HPSGP received an additional \$200 per pupil to bring their funding to \$400 per pupil.)

Districts are expected to play a greater role in HPSGP

HPSGP seeks greater involvement of the district in the school improvement process by requiring districts to participate in the development of the action plan. They must also submit annual reports to the California Department of Education (CDE); and these reports must include participating schools' use of instructional materials, courses offered, levels of parental involvement, teacher professional development, and principal's experience.

In addition, under HPSGP, participating schools must send their teachers and principals to professional development programs recently created by the state. Teachers are expected to participate in the Math and Reading Professional Development Program training. Under that program, teachers receive training in the use of district-adopted instructional materials that are aligned to the state's content standards. Similarly, principals of High Priority schools are supposed to attend the state's Administrator Training Program, which is a 160-hour intensive institute made up of three modules: 1) Leadership and Support of Student Instructional Programs, 2) Leadership and Management for Instructional Improvement, and 3) Instructional Technology to Improve Pupil Performance.

Triggering of sanctions differs from II/USP schools

Finally, the triggering of sanctions is different. High Priority schools have more time to improve before sanctions can be applied, but the "significant growth" requirement calls for more API improvement. II/USP gave schools two years to meet API growth targets or at least make "significant growth" on the API (defined by the state board as *one API point in either implementation year*). HPSGP, on the other hand, gives schools three years to meet API targets or make significant growth, which is

defined as a minimum total increase of *10 API points over three years*, with growth being positive in two out of three years.

High Priority schools that do not show significant growth are deemed "state-monitored" schools and can

Factors that hindered greater success for HPSGP schools, according to AIR, included a resource deficit faced by many participating schools, lack of district support, and flaws in program design and implementation.

Those schools that did succeed had strong leadership and a spirit of collaboration among teachers, AIR researchers found.

either be required to work with a SAIT or be taken over by the state. So far, all 53 schools that have not shown significant growth have been assigned SAITs from the list of state-approved teams. It is interesting to note that most HPSGP schools in this category began as II/USP or CSRD schools; few that participated only in HPSGP have failed to show the requisite growth.

Evaluations of state intervention programs find little overall effect on student achievement

Of the \$1.3 billion invested in II/USP and HPSGP, a small part was set aside to assess the effectiveness of the two intervention programs. The state contracted with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to evaluate both programs. AIR's reports—published in June 2003 and September 2005 on II/USP and a Year I report in September 2006 on HPSGP—found that both programs produced only modest effects on student achievement for most schools.

AIR's evaluations of II/USP identified three major problems: 1) the state did not target the schools most in need; 2) planning was divorced from implementation in participating schools; and 3) greater district involvement was needed. Those schools that did succeed had strong leadership and a spirit of collaboration among teachers, the researchers found.

Evaluation of II/USP raises issues regarding implementation and design

In its evaluation of II/USP, AIR found that small increases in participating schools' rate of achievement growth during the planning year tended to dissipate in the implementation years. Although the researchers found a negligible gain for II/USP schools overall, that was partly because of averaging the scores of all schools. In addition, the researchers said that achievement trends in participating schools were more associated with what the local district was doing than with II/USP directly. (For where to find the full evaluation online, see "To Learn More" on page I3.)

AIR found that, as intended by the PSAA, schools spent their funds on goods and services directly related to instruction, such as professional development and release time for teachers, instructional materials, and personnel. However, the report pointed out a number of ways in which the program in reality often did not match policymakers' vision. Going beyond that, AIR raised questions about the basic design of the program.

II/USP did not reflect policymakers' vision in a number of ways

The actual implementation of programs often varies from what policy dictates, and II/USP is no exception. For example:

- The voluntary nature of II/USP, which was designed to ensure that schools had bought in to the program, was not realized. A majority of participating schools did not volunteer for the program. (Apparently their governing districts “volunteered” these schools without the schools’ knowledge.) However, that did not appear to have any long-term effect on improvement efforts or achievement gains.
- Some school personnel complained of a lack of sufficient information about II/USP, which they believed was an impediment either to buy-in at the school site or appropriate implementation.

many educators did not believe that the state would actually carry out severe sanctions. They believed that less serious consequences, such as required public hearings or the assignment of a state assistance team (SAIT), were more likely to occur. History has proved them right.

AIR found flaws in eligibility criteria, funding levels, and the district’s role

Going beyond implementation details, AIR found flaws in the II/USP policy itself. For example, the researchers pointed out that II/USP eligibility criteria did not target schools most in need. Schools near the middle of the API rank-

create a coordinated and coherent instructional program, AIR found. Keys to such coherence included strong leadership from the principal and other site leaders and a spirit of collaboration and professional community among teachers, the researchers said.

In a research study published in June 2006—*Similar Students, Different Results: Why Do Some Schools Do Better?*—EdSource, AIR, Stanford University, and UC–Berkeley looked at differences in performance (as measured by API scores) among a group of elementary schools that were primarily in deciles 2 through 6 (with a majority in deciles 3 and 4). The researchers’ results reinforce AIR’s findings in the II/USP evaluation. Schools that had higher API scores were likely to use student-assessment data to inform instruction and to have strong leadership from the principal, a collaborative community of teachers, and an alignment of goals, activities, and resources toward teaching the state’s standards. In addition, principals from the more successful schools reported that their districts shared their intense focus on achievement.

“II/USP did little to harness and direct district influence or to hold districts accountable for ensuring the success of their II/USP schools,” according to AIR.

- Schools’ planning was often divorced from implementation. This was in part because external evaluators tended to be involved only initially rather than continually tying implementation back to the needs assessment and action plan. The PSAA did not require evaluators to provide this longer-term assistance.
- Funding arrived late for many schools, hampering their planning and implementation activities.
- The threat of sanctions did not have the intended effect. AIR found that many participants were aware of the potential sanctions for II/USP schools, but they held mixed views on the ability of such threats to motivate improvement. Some educators saw the program as punitive rather than motivating, an attitude that the researchers deemed “disheartening.” In addition,

ings that had missed only one subgroup growth target in one year were as eligible as the lowest-ranking schools that had repeatedly missed several targets. In addition, AIR reported that while planning grants appeared sufficient for most schools, most survey respondents believed that the implementation grants were not.

Another important issue that the researchers raised concerned the role of the district. AIR’s June 2003 report stated that despite “the powerful influence of district context in conditioning schools’ achievement growth...II/USP did little to harness and direct district influence or to hold districts accountable for ensuring the success of their II/USP schools.”

Some schools succeeded, and they had several things in common

Schools that succeeded did so by aligning goals, activities, and resources to

Evaluation of HPSGP suggests ways to make the program more effective

In its Year I evaluation of HPSGP, AIR found that this program also had little impact on the achievement of students in the average participating school. Perhaps just as important, AIR found that after being in the program for three years, many participating schools were operating with fewer resources than similar schools. In addition, the evaluators noted that a lack of support of the High Priority schools by some districts as well as breakdowns in implementation of the program have to date compromised policymakers’ intent. It is important to note, however, that AIR will continue to analyze performance and resource data as well as survey responses from participating and simi-

lar nonparticipating schools. Its Year 2 report is due in late summer 2007.

AIR finds a modest positive effect

When AIR compared the test scores of High Priority schools to non-HPSGP schools, it looked only at HPSGP schools that received planning grants and on-time implementation funds and that had not participated in any other reform program (e.g., II/USP).

AIR found a very modest positive program effect. AIR tracked both groups' achievement on 12 tests (two to five tests per year) during three years of program implementation. The tests were the norm-referenced component of the STAR program (SAT-9 and CAT/6 Survey) and the California Standards Tests in English and math. For elementary schools, the High Priority schools performed better by a statistically significant margin on 7 of 12 tests, about the same on three, and worse on two. For the seven tests on which the High Priority schools did better, the difference was slight—0.03 standard deviations, which translates to about 1.8 points on a test for which the average scale score was 308.2.

For middle and high schools, the results were similar, with middle schools in HPSGP scoring better than comparison schools on 8 of 12 tests and high schools in the program scoring better on 6 of 12 tests. The performance differential was also very small—0.02 and 0.01 standard deviations, respectively.

Participating High Priority Schools had a staffing deficit at one point

AIR found that High Priority schools at one point in the program (2004–05) operated with a staffing deficit as compared to similar schools and the state average. When AIR conducted these resource analyses, it focused on HPSGP schools that had received funds only through HPSGP and not through II/USP or CSRD (“pure HPSGP” schools). The researchers found that the

average number of full-time equivalent administrators, teachers, and pupil support staff per 100 students was 5.42, while comparison schools had 5.68 and the state average was 5.54. (Staff members who do not work at a specific school site, such as a teacher coach who helps teachers throughout a district, are not counted.) In a school of 1,000 students, this staffing differential would equate to one fewer employee than the average school and almost three fewer than a comparison school.

AIR found that many High Priority schools have used their program funds to address staffing needs despite guidance from CDE that the short-term funding of the program should not be spent on the long-term cost of permanent personnel.

AIR found disparities not just in staffing broadly speaking, but also in the teaching force in particular. Among High Priority schools, 90% of teachers were credentialed, which was better than comparison schools (87%) but worse than the state's average school (94%).

On a related note, districts with schools in the program generally failed to comply with an assurance required as part of the application process. By the second year of implementation, the percentage of fully credentialed teachers in participating schools was supposed to at least match the districtwide average. AIR found that only 56% of the pure HPSGP schools were able to meet this mark, and the percentage did not go up in the third year of implementation.

District support, or lack thereof, affects reform efforts

As part of its Year I evaluation effort, AIR spent time at 16 schools in nine districts to interview staff and community members. Among these “case study” schools, district offices played varying roles in the reform effort. AIR viewed three districts as quite helpful, four as

AIR suggests policy and implementation changes for HPSGP in the Year 1 report

AIR recommended several preliminary policy and implementation modifications, including:

- Enhancing the role of the district and holding it accountable for school improvement and for establishing and maintaining conditions for success.
- Enhancing CDE's monitoring of nonachievement measures, such as participating schools' spending levels and districts' compliance with their agreements to provide resources.
- Clarifying the long-term role of external evaluators and incorporating some measurement of their effectiveness.
- Targeting “failure” early by monitoring the performance of HPSGP schools annually and identifying actions for schools that do not meet their API growth targets in a given year.
- Modifying the timing for distribution of funds to schools and establishing timelines so schools can plan effectively and make smooth transitions out of HPSGP.
- Issuing guidance for integrating the program's objectives and API growth targets into schools' Single Plan for Pupil Achievement in a meaningful way.

impeding their schools' efforts, and two as neither a great help nor hindrance.

Districts helped by providing student assessment data and professional development and by recruiting and maintaining strong staffs. In contrast, districts that undermined school improvement efforts did not help secure stable school leadership, were focused on turning around district-level financial crises as opposed to helping individual schools improve, and did not offer targeted support for these struggling schools.

AIR finds flaws in implementation and possibly program design

AIR found during its site visits that about one-third of the 16 schools visited had been able to implement the main components as intended. These schools understood what the program

regardless of enrollment changes, some schools received about \$100 per pupil in some years while others received up to \$800 per pupil.

It is interesting to note that the researchers found that implementation problems per se were not a predictor of

as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), the federal government extended its reach considerably, applying very specific, rigorous performance targets to all schools. This made the federal systems much more visible.

Technically, California could have chosen not to go along with the federal approach if it also was willing to forego a large piece of federal funding. Although some states considered passing up the money to avoid meeting the federal conditions, California policymakers never seriously weighed that option. Leaders in Sacramento decided to adopt the NCLB system and simultaneously maintain the accountability program the state had already established. There are several reasons California has chosen to run both systems:

- Adopting the federal approach ensures that Basic Grant funds under Title I of ESEA continue flowing to California. These funds are used to help schools with large percentages of children from low-income families. In 2006–07 California is receiving about \$1.7 billion in Title I Basic Grant funding, which is about 2.5% of the \$67.1 billion in total revenue for K–12 education this year.
- Elements of the state program (i.e., API scores) could be used to meet federal funding conditions.
- State policymakers could not be sure that the federal system would be maintained over the long term; if it went away and the state had abandoned its own systems, California would not have an accountability system.

The two systems (state and federal) measure performance differently, which creates different incentives for schools. Thus some schools are “successful” in one system but “failing” in the other.

required and allowed, and they created a relatively stable teaching staff and school leadership team able to spend funds strategically over a multiyear period.

But in about half of the schools visited, there were “substantial fundamental breakdowns in the implementation” of HPSGP caused by a lack of awareness of the program, variability in the use—and perceived effectiveness—of external evaluators, and disruptions in effective planning. AIR posited that implementation may not have gone as desired in part because of an absence of “preconditions” facilitating success, such as district support, stable school leadership, and resources at least on par with comparable schools.

A state-level implementation issue also arose. Some schools did not receive their funds in a timely manner, and some did not receive the intended \$400 per pupil during at least part of the implementation period. With a fixed pot of money, CDE determined the number of eligible schools that could be funded based on their 2000–01 enrollments even though enrollments could, and did, change—substantially in some cases. With the total allotment the same every year for each school

success. Some of the schools with implementation problems made little improvement, while others showed consistent growth in API scores.

In its report, AIR went beyond implementation issues to question the design of the policy. The research team suggested that the “lack of substantial HPSGP impact may result from the basic design of the program; i.e., a relatively short-term injection of funds may be insufficient to substantially affect school performance.” (For where to find the full Year I evaluation online, see “To Learn More” on page 13.)

California layers the federal accountability systems on top of the state’s approach

While the state was developing its accountability and intervention systems, the federal government had its own systems, as outlined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Prior to 2002, the federal system was relatively flexible. That meant that it had affected only a small subset of schools in California, and the state had expected to meet its requirements with the systems it had set up in the late 1990s. With the revised ESEA of 2002, which is known

State and federal programs differ in expectations and who is accountable

Despite some strong reasons for operating both systems, California educators and parents have been frustrated by several important differences between the two approaches to accountability. For example, the two systems measure

performance differently, which creates different incentives for schools. This leads to situations in which some schools are “successful” in one system but “failing” in the other.

The two systems measure school performance differently

California’s API system focuses on improvement of students at nearly all performance levels, with more credit awarded to gains made by lower-performing students. Under this system, all schools are expected to either show progress or maintain high achievement. Targets are not subject-specific; excellent performance in one area can compensate for weak achievement in another.

The federal measure centers not on improvement but on specific goals. In every school, a specified percentage of students and all student subgroups must demonstrate proficiency on state standards in math and English every year. (Since 2006 the state and federal government recognize the same subgroups.) The yearly federal targets—known as “annual measurable objectives” (AMOs)—are subject-specific and vary by grade span (elementary, middle, high school). But for every grade span, they periodically increase until 2013–14 when all students must be proficient in English and math. For high schools, results from the grade-level California Standards Tests (CSTs) are not used for NCLB purposes. The only test that matters is the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), which mostly covers material that students are supposed to have been exposed to well before they take the exam.

In addition to the AMOs, schools and subgroups face a rigorous testing participation rate minimum of 95%, and schools must meet specified API criteria involving minimum scores or improvement. High schools must also meet a certain graduation rate. All those factors—which some would argue form

a more well-rounded approach to school accountability than one based on API scores alone—compose the federal performance measure, “adequate yearly progress” (AYP).

The measures used by the state and federal systems create different incentives. Under the API system, schools have an incentive to work with all students who could realistically move from one CST performance level to another, especially students who scored high in the “far below basic” performance level. Helping a student at that level move up—or preventing a student who scored low in the “below basic” level from slipping down a level—will help a school’s API score the most.

In contrast, under the AYP system, schools have an incentive, especially in the short term, to focus their attention on students who could realistically move from “basic” to “proficient” (or slide down the opposite direction).

Even if schools ignore both sets of incentives, they might do well according to one measure and miss the other system’s targets. Every year, hundreds of California schools find themselves in this position.

Under the federal system, more alternative schools and fewer high schools are affected

Another significant difference is the set of schools whose performance is measured and that are subject to interventions. Under the original state system, only “mainstream” schools received API scores while “alternative” schools (those serving a majority of at-risk students) were held accountable to a different set of measures. Only schools in the main API system with low scores and/or low gains have been eligible for extra funding and the associated interventions. Elementary, middle, and high schools have been roughly proportionally represented in state intervention programs because the

API system has separate rankings for each level.

In the federal system, all schools—whether “mainstream” or “alternative”—are measured for adequate yearly progress. Schools that receive Title I Basic Grant funding because they serve a high percentage of poor students are the only schools subject to interventions, however. Such interventions are triggered by repeatedly failing to make adequate yearly progress. (In other words, extra funds come because of the students served, but extra accountability requirements are the result of inadequate performance.)

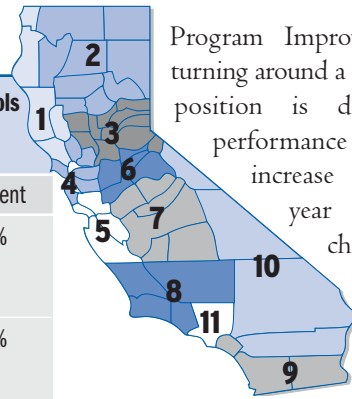
High schools are also less likely to be identified for intervention under the federal system for two reasons. First, fewer high schools receive Basic Grants, which decreases the percentage of high schools that are eligible for the federal intervention program. Second, high schools are less likely than middle (but not elementary) schools to not make AYP. This perhaps occurs because the major performance measure is the CAHSEE, which is less of a grade-level test than the CSTs used in middle and elementary schools. (California uses the CAHSEE for AYP purposes because the math portion of that test is the only math exam that all 10th grade students take.)

The federal system holds districts and county offices accountable

While the state system focuses on holding schools accountable, the federal system places equal attention on local education agencies and the state as a whole, measuring their performance in much the same way as schools and subgroups. (“Local education agencies” refers to districts and county offices of education. County offices are held accountable only for the schools that they run, which are generally schools for expelled or adjudicated youths, or special-needs students.) This means that local education agencies can be placed in an intervention program. That program

figure 1 | About 23% of California schools are in Program Improvement

	Total Schools in Region	Schools in PI in 2006-07		Additional Schools at Risk for PI in 2007-08	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1. North Coast (Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Lake, Sonoma)	404	61	15%	36	9%
2. Northeastern (Siskiyou, Modoc, Trinity, Shasta, Lassen, Tehama, Plumas, Butte, Glenn)	439	30	7%	22	5%
3. Capital Service Region (Colusa, Yolo, Sutter, Yuba, Sierra, Nevada, Placer, El Dorado, Sacramento, Alpine)	788	120	15%	31	4%
4. Bay (Marin, Napa, Solano, Contra Costa, Alameda, San Francisco, San Mateo)	1,153	235	20%	51	4%
5. South Bay (Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey)	608	124	20%	31	5%
6. Delta Sierra (Amador, San Joaquin, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Stanislaus)	467	106	23%	26	6%
7. Central Valley (Merced, Mariposa, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare)	749	262	35%	53	7%
8. Costa Del Sur (San Luis Obispo, Kern, Santa Barbara, Ventura)	654	158	24%	47	7%
9. Southern (Orange, San Diego, Imperial)	1,353	272	20%	47	3%
10. RIMS (Riverside, Inyo, Mono, San Bernardino)	994	284	29%	72	7%
11. Los Angeles (Los Angeles)	1,944	588	30%	125	6%
State Total	9,553	2,240	23%	541	6%



Program Improvement. Just turning around a school in that position is difficult, but performance targets that increase nearly every year make the challenge even greater. (The California County Superintendents Educational Services Association or CCSESA divides itself into 11 regions in the state. Figure I shows the number of schools that are in Program Improvement or at risk of going into Program Improvement by those regions.)

Consequences escalate every year that adequate progress is not made

A school enters Program Improvement (PI) after it has missed the same AYP indicator (e.g., the annual measurable objective in math) in two consecutive years. Once in PI, the school must revise its plan for how its Title I Basic Grant funds are spent and implement the revised plan promptly. The school must also set aside at least 10% of its Basic Grant for teacher professional development. In addition, the governing district must pay for transportation for pupils who exercise their option under NCLB to transfer out of PI schools. The district must also provide technical assistance to help the school improve.

For Title I schools that again fail to make AYP, the governing district must continue the activities described above and provide or pay for supplemental instructional services for students who request them. However, if the district itself is identified for PI (see page II), it must hire an outside agency to provide those services.

After a school has missed AYP for a fourth year, the district must continue the activities described above and take some “corrective action” with the

Note: The percentages in this table reflect the percentages of the schools in each individual region that are in Program Improvement. Therefore, they do not add up to 100% for the state as a whole.

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is much like the federal intervention program for schools, described next.

Finally, the interventions implemented when schools miss academic performance targets are different under the state and federal systems. The set of federal interventions is called “Program Improvement.”

Escalating performance targets and consequences characterize “Program Improvement” for schools under NCLB

Under Program Improvement for schools, the consequences escalate with every year that a school fails to make AYP. And only by making AYP in two consecutive years can a school exit

school, which could include replacing certain staff members, appointing an outside expert to help lead the school, or other actions. At this stage, districts are also encouraged to provide additional Title I resources to the school. Under NCLB, states must set aside a portion of their Title I monies to help local education agencies in these situations.

Specifically, states must reserve 4% of their Title I Basic Grants to assist struggling schools and LEAs. In 2005–06 California’s set-aside amounted to about \$70 million. Most of the reserved funds go toward helping schools and LEAs that receive Basic Grants and have not been successful in state or federal intervention programs. However, about one-seventh of the money goes to the “Statewide System of School Support” (S4), which works with these schools. The S4 is comprised of three entities:

- The Regional System of District and School Support (RSDSS), which consists of 11 regional support centers organized around the 11 CCSESA regions. The RSDSS is the primary recipient of the funding.
- A federally funded Comprehensive Assistance Center.
- The California Department of Education (CDE).

If aid from this support network does not help the school improve enough and it fails to make AYP yet again, the district and school together must develop a plan to restructure the school, which can include contracting with an outside organization to run the school, reopening it as a charter, making large-scale staff replacements, turning over operation of the school to the state, or some “other restructuring.”

Finally, if a Title I school does not make adequate yearly progress for six years, the district and school must implement the restructuring plan. In 2004–05, 271 California schools had reached that level in the federal inter-

ventions system. (This is possible because the state measured adequate yearly progress, then based on API growth targets, prior to the passage of NCLB.) Although federal policymakers may have envisioned a major overhaul of personnel and/or governance at that point, many California districts have stopped short of drastically reforming the governance structure for relevant schools, according to a report by the Center on Education Policy (CEP), a nonpartisan, Washington D.C.–based education policy research organization.

Center on Education Policy says many schools in the “restructuring” phase do not make major overhauls

States vary in how they monitor and support schools in restructuring, according to a March 2006 report by CEP. In some, the state education agency heavily influences what type of restructuring will occur with each school and signs off on the plans. In others, the state agency leaves everything up to the districts.

California is taking a middle-ground approach, with CDE offering tools to help districts decide on their course of action with relevant schools. These tools include regional workshops conducted by the S4 network as well as district-level self-assessments. These assessments look at a district’s support for schools in seven categories, such as standards-based curriculum, professional development, and fiscal operations. CDE also suggests that schools assess the extent to which they have the “essential program components” in place. (See page 4.) Finally, districts and schools together are asked to use a survey tool to examine and refine their practices concerning students with disabilities. After these self-assessments, districts and schools can use CDE-developed worksheets to think through whether the restructuring options they are considering will achieve the desired improvement.

From the case studies that CEP conducted, it became clear that these processes are forcing districts to ask themselves difficult questions. They are not lightly choosing one option among a list of five, but instead are wrestling with the details of their needs and the best way to address them.

California requires districts to report their restructuring choices to the state. Of the 271 schools in restructuring in 2004–05:

- 76% chose the “other restructuring” category,
- 28% replaced all or most of the staff,
- 14% contracted with an outside organization to run the school,
- 13% had no plan, and
- 2% reopened as charters.

(Percentages do not sum to 100% because some schools took advantage of more than one option.)

Examples of “other restructuring” include providing teachers with more professional development, using teacher coaches, creating more opportunities for teachers to analyze student achievement data and/or collaborate on instructional approaches, and adding extra periods for students struggling in math and English.

Federal requirements force the state to create interventions for school districts

Perhaps in recognition of the critical role that districts play in school performance, the federal accountability system includes measuring the academic performance of local education agencies and interventions for those that are not performing satisfactorily. The federal performance measurement and sequence of interventions for LEAs are similar to those for schools. But California has less experience with LEA accountability and is finding it challenging. A recently begun pilot program may help the state and

figure 2 | Local Education Agencies (LEAs) enter Program Improvement (PI) if they fail to make adequate progress

Number of Years the LEA Did Not Make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and Did Not Meet AYP Criteria in each Grade Span				
One	Two	Three	Four	Five
Did not make AYP and did not meet AYP grade span criteria	Did not make AYP and did not meet AYP grade span criteria	Planning	Plan Implementation	Corrective Action
		PI Year 1	PI Year 2	PI Year 3
		California Department of Education (CDE)	CDE	CDE
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate PI results with assistance of the LEA to the general public. Provide or arrange for technical assistance to the LEA. 	Continue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide technical assistance to the LEA. 	Continue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical assistance to the LEA. Notify parents/guardians and the public of corrective action taken by CDE.
		LEA	LEA	Add:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify parents or guardians, with CDE assistance, of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The identification of the LEA as in PI. Reasons for PI identification. How they can get involved in improving the LEA. Actions CDE will take to improve the LEA. Revise/develop improvement plan within three months of identification. Consult with parents, guardians, school staff, and others in development of the plan. Implement the plan immediately in current school year following plan development. Reserve not less than 10% of its Title I, Part A funds for high-quality professional development. 	Continue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the plan from Year 1. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide public hearing to the LEA within 45 days following notice of corrective action. May take corrective action at any time during improvement process, if necessary, but must take action during Year 3. Take at least one corrective action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defer programmatic funds or reduce administrative funds. Institute new curriculum and professional development for staff. Replace the LEA staff. Remove individual schools from jurisdiction of the LEA and arrange for governance. Appoint trustee in place of superintendent and school board. Abolish or restructure the LEA. <p>In conjunction with one of the above, CDE may authorize student transfers to a school not in PI in another LEA, with paid transportation.</p>

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regional support agencies learn how to efficiently help struggling districts get on track. A grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will significantly broaden the scope of that effort.

Program Improvement for districts is similar to PI for schools

As is the case with schools, local education agencies must receive Title I funds to be eligible for Program Improvement, and about 95% of them statewide do. LEAs enter Program Improvement in much the same way schools do. If for each of two consec-

utive years the LEA does not make adequate yearly progress on the same indicator (e.g., the annual measurable objective in English), it enters Program Improvement—unless students in any of three specific grade spans (3–5, 6–8, or 10) have in either year met the AYP indicator that the district as a whole failed. Today, 165 of California’s 1,034 LEAs are in Program Improvement. In addition, CDE data indicate that 76 more LEAs are at risk of entering PI in 2007–08.

Assisting and sanctioning districts and county offices of education is a new

and challenging frontier for California. Although the state has intervened in a few LEAs to aid recovery from fiscal crises, California does not have experience becoming involved in local agencies for purely academic reasons. The state’s size and the diversity of its districts make it difficult for CDE to intervene directly. Thus California has limited itself to providing some financial assistance and assigns technical-assistance responsibilities to people who are closer to the problem. When an LEA enters Program Improvement, the state expects the district to complete a self-

evaluation to identify barriers to success. The state also requires the LEA to contract with a county office of education or other external entity to help get it on the path to improvement. California provides \$50,000 to the LEA, and \$10,000 for each Program Improvement school, to help the LEA implement recommended changes.

As with schools, the interventions/sanctions get stronger each year a local education agency does not make adequate yearly progress. In the first year of Program Improvement, CDE must provide or arrange for technical assistance and help the LEA inform the community of its status. The LEA itself must revise its Title I plan in consultation with school staff and parents and begin implementing the revised plan. In addition, the LEA must set aside at least 10% of its Title I Basic Grant for teacher professional development.

If the LEA fails to make adequate yearly progress again, CDE must continue to provide technical assistance and the LEA must continue to implement the revised Title I plan.

A third year of not making adequate yearly progress leads to corrective action by the State Board of Education. The board must choose at least one sanction from a list of six that includes replacing LEA staff, assuming governance over individual schools, and abolishing or restructuring the LEA. In addition, the state may authorize student transfers to a non-Program Improvement school in another LEA, with paid transportation. (See Figure 2 on page 12 for the full list of possible sanctions.)

The state is learning as it goes—with a pilot program as the first step

As the AIR evaluations and the *Similar Students* study discussed earlier show, district involvement appears important in any effort to help underperforming schools better serve their students.

● | To Learn More

To see AIR's evaluations of II/USP and HPSGP, go to

www.air.org/publications/pubs_ehd_school_reform.aspx and scroll to the bottom of the page.

WestEd, a nonprofit research, development, and service agency, has posted on its website an "R&D Alert" titled *Focus on Turning Around Low-Performing Schools and Districts*. The alert briefly summarizes research on strategies for helping underachieving schools get on track and discusses California's district assistance and intervention team (DAIT) process. See: www.wested.org/cs/we/view/rs/831

The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) has issued a report on California's Alternative Schools Accountability Model (ASAM) that includes recommended policy changes. See *Improving Alternative Education in California* at: www.lao.ca.gov

To see the Bush Administration's *Building on Results: A Blueprint for Strengthening the No Child Left Behind Act* (proposals for amending NCLB), go to:

www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/nclb/buildingonresults.pdf

The Aspen Institute, whose mission is to "foster enlightened leadership and open-minded dialogue" on a range of issues, has published a paper on NCLB reauthorization. See: www.aspeninstitute.org

For a more in-depth look at the state's newest intervention program, see EdSource's *Quality Education Investment Act embodies a new approach to interventions (2/07)*, available to download for free at: www.edsource.org

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With 165 of the state's 1,034 LEAs in Program Improvement—and 76 more at risk of entering the program in the coming year—the state is trying to find a way to get these districts on track to meet their AYP requirements and provide better support to their schools.

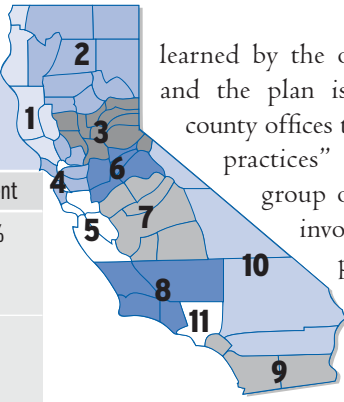
As part of that attempt, CDE has created a pilot program in which district assistance and intervention teams (DAITs) from four county offices of education are helping districts at risk of entering the corrective action phase of

Program Improvement. The DAITs are expected to help with needs assessment and mentor the district leadership. The DAIT process is supposed to be a collaborative and intense effort to improve district leadership and policies to support school improvement. Teams are expected to help districts prioritize key actions for improvement in seven areas: governance, alignment of curriculum and assessments to the state's academic content standards, fiscal operations, parent and community

figure 3 | In two regions, about a third of the LEAs are in Program Improvement

	Total LEAs in Region	LEAs in PI in 2006-07		Additional LEAs at Risk for PI in 2007-08	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1. North Coast (Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Lake, Sonoma)	95	8	8%	10	11%
2. Northeastern (Siskiyou, Modoc, Trinity, Shasta, Lassen, Tehama, Plumas, Butte, Glenn)	128	5	4%	5	4%
3. Capital Service Region (Colusa, Yolo, Sutter, Yuba, Sierra, Nevada, Placer, El Dorado, Sacramento, Alpine)	96	7	7%	6	6%
4. Bay (Marin, Napa, Solano, Contra Costa, Alameda, San Francisco, San Mateo)	97	14	14%	8	8%
5. South Bay (Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey)	82	12	15%	4	5%
6. Delta Sierra (Amador, San Joaquin, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Stanislaus)	63	7	11%	6	10%
7. Central Valley (Merced, Mariposa, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare)	131	26	20%	5	4%
8. Costa Del Sur (San Luis Obispo, Kern, Santa Barbara, Ventura)	104	23	22%	12	12%
9. Southern (Orange, San Diego, Imperial)	88	14	16%	5	6%
10. RIMS (Riverside, Inyo, Mono, San Bernardino)	69	24	35%	6	9%
11. Los Angeles (Los Angeles)	81	25	31%	9	11%
State Total	1,034	165	16%	76	7%

Note: The percentages in this table reflect the percentages of the local education agencies (LEAs) in each individual region that are in Program Improvement (PI). Therefore, they do not add up to 100% for the state as a whole.



learned by the original four, and the plan is for all 58 county offices to learn “best practices” from the group of 15 offices involved in the pilot project. Figure 3 shows how the local education agencies in PI in 2006–07—or at risk of entering PI because they did not make adequate yearly progress in the prior year—are distributed among the 11 CCSESA regions.

According to CDE and CCSESA, the timeline, in calendar years, for the Gates-funded project is as follows:

2006

- Evaluate work of initial four intervention teams and share best practices to refine 2007 outreach and support (completed).

2007

- Develop regional infrastructure in county offices of education.
- Establish intervention teams and expand into 15 districts.
- Provide data collection tools and online database for team members to diagnose needs and apply appropriate interventions.
- Communicate the findings and best practices to curriculum and instruction personnel in all 58 counties.

2008

- Collect and evaluate data on the second year of intervention in pilot districts.
- Refine the improvement plan and practices based on findings.

2009

- Implement intervention practices on a statewide scale.
- Develop statewide training for all intervention teams.
- Publish a report that can be shared with other states.

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involvement, human resources, data systems, and professional development. With AYP requirements escalating annually, the need for district assistance will only grow. Fortunately for California, the Gates Foundation has recently offered \$15.5 million to help

expand this pilot program. In November 2006, CDE announced that the Gates money would be used to expand from four to 15 teams. Each of the 11 new teams will serve one of the CCSESA regions. The work of the new teams will be informed by lessons

California's Quality Education Investment Act (QEIA) embodies a new approach to interventions

As part of a settlement of a lawsuit over funding for K–12 schools and community colleges, the state in 2006 created a \$2.7 billion, seven-year intervention program. The “Quality Education Investment Act” (QEIA)—to be implemented beginning in 2007–08—shares elements of the other state and federal intervention programs discussed above. But it is also different in many ways.

Like the other interventions, QEIA provides supplemental funds for schools and requires them to formally plan the use of those funds to improve student achievement. However, QEIA differs in the pool of eligible schools, the time given to schools to improve, the consequences for lack of progress, and the amount of funding provided. It also emphasizes resource measures that schools and districts must meet, such as small class sizes and experienced teachers.

QEIA is like the other state intervention programs in that its funding is triggered by performance rather than student demographics. It targets schools in the bottom 20% of the 2005 API rankings regardless of the students they serve or their rate of improvement.

QEIA provides more funding than previous state programs—\$500 for each K–3 pupil, \$900 for each student in grades 4–8, and \$1,000 for each high school student. (It provides two-thirds of these amounts in 2007–08, which is considered a planning and preparation year.) That compares to \$200 per pupil in II/USP and \$400 in HPSGP.

The authorizing legislation for QEIA is more explicit than previous state programs about coordinating funding. Participating schools are required to integrate QEIA funds into their Single Plan for Pupil Achievement, in which schools document how they plan to direct a multitude of fund-

ing sources toward improving student performance.

Unlike the other state and federal interventions, QEIA does not sanction schools for not making satisfactory progress. On the other hand, the program is a bit more prescriptive than other state intervention programs in that supplemental resources can be cut off if a school is not meeting benchmarks in teaching experience levels, class sizes, and professional development for teachers and principals. (The program does allow 15% of schools to take an “alternative” approach to school reform that does not necessarily involve meeting some of the specific benchmarks, but the approach must be research-based.) In addition, under both the standard and alternative programs, student performance benchmarks must be met.

One key element of QEIA that is certainly different from II/USP is the expected high level of district involvement. Districts must sign a set of assurances regarding their participation in the program. For example, districts must ensure that each administrator in a funded school is confirmed to have “exemplary qualifications and experience” by the end of 2008–09 and each year thereafter and that administrators will receive leadership training.

On the horizon: What can California expect next?

Nearly all California schools have shown steady improvement on accountability measures since the enactment of the Public Schools Accountability Act in 1999. However, a substantial number of schools continue to struggle. In addition, the rate of improvement has not been strong enough to prevent an increase in the number of schools and districts entering the federal intervention program. California is not the only state experiencing this situation. As the No Child Left Behind Act comes up for reauthorization in the near future,

federal lawmakers will likely hear calls for change—even from organizations that supported the Act in its very early years. The Bush Administration has already proposed amendments that Congress may take up in 2007.

Schools' rate of improvement may not match increasing federal targets

Observers may not agree on the cause, but it is undeniable that the state's schools have improved their API scores. This can be seen in many ways. In each of the past seven API cycles, from about a half to more than three-quarters of schools have met their schoolwide and subgroup API growth targets. And nearly all—99.6%—of schools have met their growth targets in at least one of the last seven cycles. Another way of tracking growth is by the median API score. This measure also indicates improvement: the median API for elementary schools climbed from 674 in 2000 to 751 in 2005. The medians for middle and high schools have also increased, from 656 to 714 (middle), and from 638 to 680 (high school).

Despite improvement in API scores, growth in the percentage of students scoring proficient and above on the California Standards Tests in English and math has not been fast enough to prevent the number of Program Improvement schools from swelling rapidly. From 2002–03 to 2006–07, that number has grown from 1,201 to 2,240 (or 13% to 23% of all schools). In addition, 541 more schools are at risk of entering Program Improvement (PI) in 2007–08 because they did not make adequate yearly progress last year.

Will NCLB reauthorization bring about changes in federal accountability?

As federal lawmakers consider the reauthorization of NCLB, they may feel pressure to reconsider the intervention provisions of the Act because of the

rapidly swelling ranks of PI schools and districts nationally.

Although most people agree with NCLB's principles, not all like the Act's details. Even among the segment that has supported NCLB's provisions, some are calling for substantial amendments. For example, Michael Petrilli, vice president for National Programs and Policy for the conservative Fordham Foundation, stated in a January 2007 commentary: "I've gradually and reluctantly come to the conclusion that NCLB as enacted is fundamentally flawed and probably beyond repair." Petrilli calls for eliminating several of the law's highly visible provisions, asserting in part: "No more 'cascade of sanctions' for failing schools. No more federal guarantee of school choice for children not being well-served. ... The states would decide when and how to intervene in failing schools."

Although not proposing changes as drastic as those Petrilli has called for, the Bush Administration in early 2007 suggested changes to the Act that would affect federal interventions, among other provisions. Examples include:


- Augmenting Title I funding such that high schools would get more and elementary and middle schools would not get less.
- Increasing funding to support schools in Program Improvement.
- Requiring schools in PI to offer supplemental education services in the first year along with school choice, but allowing schools to target choice and supplemental services to students not yet scoring "proficient."
- Requiring more substantial changes to the staff or governance of schools in the "restructuring" phase of PI.
- Providing funds for schools in restructuring to offer "scholarships" to low-income students to receive intensive tutoring or attend a private school or out-of-district public school.
- Authorizing districts with schools in restructuring to remove limitations on teacher transfers from collective bar-

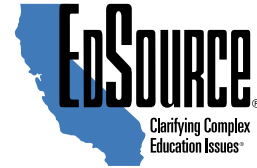
gaining agreements. (See "To Learn More" on page 13 for where to find the full set of proposals.)

The chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, Representative George Miller, will play a leading role in NCLB-reauthorization discussions. He welcomes some of the administration's ideas but finds the latter two proposals listed above unacceptable. Although the administration and Congress may tussle over policy direction, both Miller and Senator Edward Kennedy, chairman of the Senate's Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee, have NCLB reauthorization "on their lists for action" and are "laying the groundwork" for the process, according to the Jan. 10, 2007 edition of *Education Week*. And President George W. Bush has already expressed his desire for reauthorization to occur this year.

This is in contrast to the relatively recent conventional wisdom that held that federal policymakers might not tackle reauthorization until 2009. Not only is the timing of the reauthorization in question, but also its ultimate outcome.

Many prognosticators predict that the reauthorization will yield only small tweaks. However, the recently-altered political landscape in Washington, D.C., and pressure for significant changes from groups that have until now been supportive of NCLB, may bring about more than minor changes. California's major education stakeholders have come to a consensus on changes they seek—a key one being acceptance of California's "growth model" of measuring school performance, which would greatly affect which schools are targeted for intervention. These stakeholders have already begun actively pressing their case with federal officials.

Meanwhile, the state's education community hopes to see continuing improvement in public schools generally and to discover the special combination of incentives and resources that will lift student achievement in the schools that to date have had trouble meeting performance benchmarks. 



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