EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ONE SCHOOL OF THOUGHT
MOVING TOWARD THE COMMON CORE

May 2015
“Let us not be content to wait and see what will happen, but give us the determination to make the right things happen.”

HORACE MANN
California’s education system is in an exciting moment of transition. For too long, we have had a gap in the skills needed for college and careers and the content knowledge our old standards laid out. The successful implementation of the Common Core State Standards, adopted in California in 2010, has the potential to bridge that gap and ensure that all of our students are graduating truly college and career ready. The transition to Common Core is urgent, but just as urgent is the need to ensure implementation is thoughtful, well-planned and well-executed so that these much-needed standards drive actual changes in school policy and teaching practices.

This paper encapsulates our vision, as teachers, of what that plan for implementation should look like. Our recommendations reflect academic research on the impact of deeper learning, best practices from around our city, state and nation, and polling of over 350 teachers, 150 parents and 490 students. Here, we present recommendations for implementation that recognize the long-term implications of such a momentous shift, while also maintaining accountability and a clear roadmap forward.
## Working Together for Students

### Vision

The state should create and articulate a clear vision and timetable, with a communications plan for sharing this vision across the state.

Unions should publicly support Common Core, and demonstrate that support by investing in and providing messaging materials to members and to the community.

### Leadership

Districts should create and communicate a clear vision and timetable.

Districts should create Common Core-focused teacher leadership roles at the district level to ensure district-wide equity.

Unions should advocate for Common Core-focused leadership roles, and more planning and collaboration time in the schedule.

### Transparency

The state should provide access to adequate student data.

Schools should create Common Core-focused teacher leadership roles at the school level to support implementation at the school site.

Schools should provide Common Core workshops to families and the community.
Parents and students recognize the problem
- 42% of parents agree or strongly agree that they understand how their child is progressing toward meeting the new Common Core State Standards.
- 58% of students agree or strongly agree that they understand how they are progressing toward meeting the new standards.

Teachers agree on a solution
- 83% of teachers agree or strongly agree that the state should invest in data systems that are efficient and transparent for teachers and families.

Parents recognize the problem
- 16% of parents agree or strongly agree that they understand why, how and on what timeline the state is implementing the Common Core State Standards.

Teachers agree on a solution
- 90% of teachers agree or strongly agree that the state should invest in a vision and timetable for CCSS implementation, and 91% agree that the state should invest in a media plan.

FOCUS ON TRANSPARENCY
The state should provide access to adequate student data to inform instruction, keep community informed and monitor progress toward student, school and district growth.
- The State Board of Education should:
  1) Pass a resolution creating a data strategist office, much like we see in the Delaware Department of Education.
  2) Partner with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) to alter the Smarter Balanced portal so that teachers, school leaders, parents and community can access their relevant data reports.
- The California Department of Education (CDE) should
  1) Through the data strategist office, produce clear, user-friendly reports for schools, teachers, parents and community to monitor student growth;
  2) Partner with other research and community partners to create a user-friendly platform for districts to upload and share benchmark data, similar to the “Data Tunnel” being used in Georgia.

FOCUS ON VISION AND COMMUNICATION:
The state will create and articulate a clear vision and timetable for CCSS implementation, with a communications plan for disseminating this vision across the state.
- The State Board of Education should:
  1) Pass a resolution calling for the CDE to create a California Implementation Plan that mirrors Kentucky’s Innovation Configuration Map, which has clear indicators of stages of transition and evidence of progress.
  2) The state board should then pass a resolution to invest in a communications plan that shares this vision broadly.
- The California Department of Education (CDE) should:
  1) Create and execute on the vision, timetable and communications plan, partnering with community, civil rights, philanthropic, media, union and business organizations.
DISTRIBUT RECOMMENDATIONS

FOCUS ON VISION AND COMMUNICATION

The District will create and communicate a clear CCSS transition plan to the schools and the community with an overall vision and goals.

- The LAUSD School Board should:
  1) Pass a resolution demanding a clear transition plan and laying out the scope of what needs to be included in the plan.
  2) Ensure the plan is aligned to the state vision and timeline, and integrated into the budget and Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP).

- The district administration should:
  1) Through the transition plan, lay out clear expectations for each year of implementation, as well as action steps that will be taken if schools are not meeting those expectations.
  2) Ensure the plan is publicly available, and err on the side of brevity and simplicity so that all stakeholders can be active participants in its roll-out.

FOCUS ON TEACHER LEADERSHIP

The district should leverage teachers as leaders by empowering them to lead professional development (PD) approved by the district, build out a database of resources and provide training around technology.

- The LAUSD School Board should:
  1) pass a resolution demanding that Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) dollars or Common Core-focused LCFF dollars be used for Common Core-focused teacher leaders.

- The district administration should:
  1) Create the specific job description and evaluation, and develop the hiring process for onboarding teacher leaders.
  2) Assign teacher leaders to a manageable cluster of schools, using the Student Need Index to ensure our highest-need schools are getting the most support.
  3) Select these teacher leaders using a multi-measure evaluation system to ensure all candidates are high-quality teachers.

Parents recognize the problem

- 16% of parents agree or strongly agree that they understand why, how and on what timeline their district is implementing the Common Core State Standards. 23% agree or strongly agree that they have access to data on how their school is progressing toward meeting the Common Core State Standards.

Teachers agree on a solution

- 89% of teachers agree or strongly agree that the district should create and communicate a clear plan for transitioning to Common Core, and 81% agree or strongly agree that the district should provide public access to data.

Parents recognize the problem

- 47% of parents agree or strongly agree that their school has access to the content, materials and technology needed to prepare students for college and 21st-century careers.

Teachers agree on a solution

- 90% agree or strongly agree that the district should train and leverage teacher leaders to lead professional development, including technology training.

Parents recognize the problem

- 16% of parents agree or strongly agree that they understand why, how and on what timeline their district is implementing the Common Core State Standards. 23% agree or strongly agree that they have access to data on how their school is progressing toward meeting the Common Core State Standards.

Teachers agree on a solution

- 89% of teachers agree or strongly agree that the district should create and communicate a clear plan for transitioning to Common Core, and 81% agree or strongly agree that the district should provide public access to data.
**UNION RECOMMENDATIONS**

**FOCUS ON VISION AND COMMUNICATION**

The union should publicly support Common Core. They should then show this support by investing in and providing clear messaging and messaging materials to union members. This will allow the union leadership and teachers to advocate for the high-quality professional development, parent and family engagement and training, and additional dollars the implementation of Common Core requires.

- Union leadership and governing bodies should:
  1) Continue to enact their plan to have a Chapter Parent Action Liaison (CPAL) at every school. These CPALs should be tasked with providing information to parents on Common Core, and providing useful materials to teachers on communicating around Common Core to parents and community.
  2) Ensure CPALs present at the Parent Workshops or even lead portions of it that focus on CCSS advocacy and purpose (not instruction).

**Parents and students recognize the problem**

- 62% of students agree or strongly agree that they have access to assignments and content that uses the new standards. 48% of parents agree or strongly agree that the instruction at their child’s school focuses on problem solving and critical thinking.

**Unionized teachers agree on the solution**

- 78% of unionized teachers agree or strongly agree that the union should prioritize additional collaboration time for Common Core implementation in contract negotiations. 79% agree or strongly agree that the union should prioritize Common Core-focused leadership roles.

**FOCUS ON TEACHER LEADERSHIP**

UTLA should prioritize CCSS and Student Focused Negotiating. Specifically, UTLA negotiations should prioritize teacher leadership roles with compensation focused on Common Core, and a balance of classroom and planning hours.

- Union leadership and governing bodies should:
  1) Advocate for a clear, incentivized career/leadership pathway that uses the strengths and passions of accomplished teachers to improve CCSS-aligned practices without removing them from the classroom.
  2) Prioritize a reduction in the ratio of instructional to non-instructional time over class size caps, to support CCSS implementation as well as long-term professional development.
SCHOOL RECOMMENDATIONS

FOCUS ON TRANSPARENCY

Schools should engage local communities by offering family and community workshops on Common Core State Standards (CCSS). This will allow parents the opportunity to become acquainted with CCSS, experience CCSS lessons, monitor student progress data, and provide valuable input.

- School leadership teams should:
  1) Work within a scope and sequence for the workshops created by the district that ranges from explaining the basics of CCSS to analyzing student and school-level data and tackling new techniques for homework help.
  2) Adjust the scope and sequence to meet the needs of the local school site, and pull materials from the district, state and union materials.
  3) Leverage parent meetings and committees already in place, such as Parent Teacher Association meetings, back-to-school nights or parent conferences, school site committees or LCAP committees (for charter schools).

Parents recognize the problem
- 22% of parents agree or strongly agree that they understand why, how and on what timeline their school is implementing the new standards.

Teachers agree on the solution
- 91% of teachers agree or strongly agree that schools should provide training for parents and to understand the Common Core and ways to support the implementation. 84% agree or strongly agree that schools should provide training around reading and analyzing student progress data from Common Core-aligned assessments.

Parents and students recognize the problem
- 48% of parents and 60% of students agree or strongly agree that Common Core instruction is focused on complex problem-solving and critical thinking.

Teachers agree on the solution
- 88% of teachers agree or strongly agree that schools should create teacher leadership roles that ensure schools are analyzing data, adapting and delivering professional development.

FOCUS ON TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Schools should leverage teachers as leaders by empowering them to analyze student data, adjust the local implementation plan, provide professional development (PD) and adapt curricular and instructional materials.

- School leadership teams should:
  1) Select school-level leaders based on a multi-measure evaluation system.
  2) Ensure these school-level leaders look at data across departments and grade levels, together with the administrators, to determine the course of PD that is needed, provide extra curricular and instructional support and make adjustments to the implementation plan.
  3) Ensure school-level leaders work in conjunction with district level leaders, receiving support and intervention as needed to meet school-level needs.
CONCLUSION

As mentioned throughout this paper, we recognize that we are raising the standards for teaching and learning and thus, the stakes for our students and our profession. Any bold change requires great courage to not just begin a transformation, but truly stay the course toward ongoing growth and improvement in our public schools. Our students show us this courage each day as they learn brand new ideas and solve new problems, become the first in their families to go to college, and eventually step into new seats of career leadership and community influence. Our finest teachers show us this courage each day as they take on hard-to-staff classrooms and help students leap two grade levels in a year.

Though tough, change is possible. But teachers, students and parents simply can’t make this shift alone. In this moment, we need our state, district, union, administrators and community to have courage along with us. Together, we can create a new generation of schools that offer the kind of deeper learning needed to access colleges, careers and—most importantly—the deepest potential of our student’s minds.
For far too long, education policy has been created without a critical voice at the table—the voice of classroom teachers.

Educators 4 Excellence (E4E), a teacher-led organization, is changing this dynamic by placing the voices of teachers at the forefront of the conversations that shape our classrooms and careers.

E4E has a quickly growing national network of educators united by our Declaration of Teachers’ Principles and Beliefs. E4E members can learn about education policy and research, network with like-minded peers and policymakers, and take action by advocating for teacher-created policies that lift student achievement and the teaching profession.

Learn more at Educators4Excellence.org.