

Click on this link to reach this page on website: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr08/yr08rel10.asp>
[California Department of Education](#)

Change Text Size: [A](#) [A](#) [A](#)

Search

[Advanced](#) | [Site Map](#) | [A-Z Index](#)

[Curriculum & Instruction](#)
[Testing & Accountability](#)
[Professional Development](#)
[Finance & Grants](#)
[Data & Statistics](#)
[Learning Support](#)
[Specialized Programs](#)

[Home](#) »

[Newsroom](#) »

[News Releases](#) »

[Year 2008](#)

[Printer-friendly version](#)



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION **NEWS RELEASE**

JACK O'CONNELL
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

Release: # 08-10
January 22, 2008
Contact: Tina Jung
E-mail: communications@cde.ca.gov
Phone: 916-319-0818

State Of Education 2008: State Schools Chief Jack O'Connell Lays Out Ambitious Plan For Closing Achievement Gap

SACRAMENTO — State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell today delivered his fifth annual State of Education Address and unveiled an ambitious, comprehensive plan aimed at closing California's pernicious achievement gap that exists between students who are white and students of color, as well as with English learners, students in poverty, and students with disabilities.

O'Connell also released a new report by his statewide P-16 Council that outlines what the state can do to create the conditions necessary to close the gap. O'Connell's new initiatives are based on his P-16 Council's recommendations.

"Closing the achievement gap is the key to ensuring California will have a well-qualified workforce that will secure a healthy economy in the future," O'Connell said.

Holding Schools Accountable for Closing the Achievement Gap

O'Connell announced the development of a set of Achievement Gap Intervention Benchmarks, which will contain key indicators that research shows are highly correlated with closing gaps in student achievement.

"To help me identify these benchmarks and ensure they measure what works best, Christopher Edley, Jr., a national leader in civil rights law and Dean of the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law (Boalt Hall), has agreed to co-chair a Superintendent's advisory committee to develop such a system," O'Connell said. "I've also directed my staff to ensure that, starting in 2009, to earn the California Distinguished School

award, schools will have to not only meet the current criteria but they will also have to narrow their achievement gap."

Other new initiatives O'Connell announced include a plan to increase quality preschool in California, offer increased flexibility to districts as part of a pilot partnership between the K-12 community, higher education, and the business community to better ensure high school graduates are ready for college or the world of work, plans to enhance the state's data system to improve student achievement, and plans to develop culturally responsive professional development.

Streamlining and Improving Prekindergarten in California

"I am sponsoring legislation that will consolidate all of the current Title 5 programs serving preschool-aged children to create the largest state-funded pre-Kindergarten program in the nation," O'Connell said. "This will make our pre-K delivery programs more streamlined and efficient and within this new streamlined program, I'm going to focus on delivering preschool of the highest quality."

To guide the quality and effectiveness of preschool programs, O'Connell released new "Preschool Foundations." These foundations are grounded in the best research on socially and developmentally appropriate benchmarks for learning as well as on how to reach English learners. They will provide the framework to guide the state's early childhood educators in providing the playful, enriching early learning experiences that create both kindergarten readiness and a love of learning.

Pilot Partnership for School District Success

In talking about the need for greater flexibility so schools and districts are able to raise student achievement and close the achievement gap, O'Connell stated: "The time for action is now; we needn't wait for further study or legislation. I intend to bring before the State Board of Education a pilot program allowing Long Beach and Fresno unified school districts — the third and fourth largest districts in the state — significant new flexibility in how they allocate their resources. This flexibility will allow them to be more innovative in designing programs to close the achievement gap. In exchange for the increased flexibility, the two districts have agreed to form a partnership to learn together, model, and replicate effective practices. Long Beach, which has been a national model for successful urban district management, will receive more flexibility, while Fresno, a district that greatly has improved but is still in transition, will receive a little less. Both districts, however, will commit to specific benchmark progress goals as a result of their partnership and increased flexibility."

Aligning Systems

"At my request and with the agreement of the Governor, all four systems of public education in California — K-12, community colleges, California State University, and the University of California, joined by private colleges, the business community, and career technical education community — have agreed to join 30 other states in the American Diploma Project. This endeavor will help to ensure that when a student graduates from a California high school, they will be fully prepared with the necessary skills to enter the world of work or higher education."

Using Data and Building a Continuous Learning Environment

The California Department of Education (CDE) is in the process of building an information system to track student achievement over time. But there is additional data the state can and should be collecting that would help educators make more informed decisions about effective programs and interventions. In his speech, O'Connell said that collecting and using such data effectively are key to creating a continuous learning system that leads to improved student performance.

"I am pleased to announce today we've been awarded a generous grant of more than \$2 million from the Gates and Hewlett foundations to help create a vision and roadmap for the kind of data our state needs to truly improve teaching and learning as well as decision making at both the state and local level. I also pleased to be joined by Governor Schwarzenegger as a full partner in this process. The grant we have

received will allow us to partner with highly regarded strategic management advisors, McKinsey and Company, to help guide this project. Together we will create a document by this summer that clearly lays out what additional information the State of California needs to collect and how much it will cost us to do it. This roadmap will then serve as the basis for the data commission I'm serving on with Governor Schwarzenegger, a commission that has the charge of turning our work into a reality."

Creating Culturally Responsive School Environments

O'Connell announced he has directed the CDE to include evaluations of racial and cultural issues within the existing California School Climate Survey or the California Healthy Kids Survey. This will cost schools no additional money or time, but it will provide valuable information to guide them in the important dialogue that must occur.

"Over the next year, I'm going to bring together experts from around the country to help develop world-class professional development on what it means to be culturally responsive in the classroom, principal's office, and administration building," O'Connell said. "This curriculum will help our educators provide a school climate in which students from all cultures and races feel equally supported in learning to high expectations.

"I also will be collaborating with the deans of California's schools of education to work to imbed culturally responsive instruction in California's teacher pre-service and professional development programs."

For a complete text of O'Connell's 2008 State of Education Address and accompanying materials, please visit [State of Education Address - January 22, 2008 - State of Education](#).

###

[Jack O'Connell](#) — State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Communications Division, Room 5206, 916-319-0818, Fax 916-319-0100

[Download Free Readers](#)

California Department of Education

1430 N Street

Sacramento, CA 95814

Contact Us | FAQ | Web Policy
Last Reviewed: Thursday, January 24, 2008