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# MEANINGFUL CREDENTIAL RENEWAL

A Policy Proposal to Strengthen  
Teaching Quality in California



CALIFORNIA EDUCATION PROGRAM

NEW AMERICA FOUNDATION

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This report was researched and written by Camille Esch of the New America Foundation, Julia Koppich of J. Koppich & Associates, and Richard Seder.



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## Proposal Summary

Teacher effectiveness is known to be a critical factor in student learning and success. California has made some notable efforts to strengthen teaching, but the most coherent state-level initiatives have been limited to the earliest stages of teachers' careers. After the credentialing and induction phase, state policy does virtually nothing to ensure teaching quality or foster continual improvement.

This report argues the state should play a stronger role in strengthening teaching quality beyond these early phases. One underutilized policy lever for doing so is the renewal of the Clear teaching credential. Currently, teachers renew their credentials every five years by paying a fee to the state—nothing more. This is a missed opportunity for the state both in terms of accountability *and* improvement. By implementing a new process—local review—at the point of renewal, the state could ensure that teachers are demonstrating acceptable levels of performance and professional growth, while providing districts and teachers a structure for improving instructional practice.

In the new process for credential renewal proposed here, local panels would review teacher professional portfolios and use the results of these reviews as the basis for recommending renewal of teacher Clear credentials every five years. Electronic portfolios would contain information about:

1. Growth in student learning (with a variety of allowed sources of assessment data);
2. Teaching performance in the classroom, as documented by the principal and other instructional experts; and
3. The teacher's individual efforts to improve his or her teaching practice and grow professionally.

Local panels would be composed of three individuals who are selected locally according to state-established criteria and who collectively represent the interests of the surrounding education community. Working from state-developed rubrics (or locally developed rubrics with state approval), local panels would review portfolios and recommend to California's Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) that teachers' Clear credentials be renewed for the full five years, renewed provisionally for up to one year, or not be renewed at all.

In *all* cases, the review panels would provide teachers with written feedback about the portfolios and their decisions. For teachers whose credentials are provisionally renewed, the panels would identify areas for improvement. These teachers would work with their districts to develop individualized intervention and assistance plans to make the necessary improvements over the course of one year. After this period, teachers would approach their local panel again to seek credential renewal. For teachers not recommended for renewal, the Clear credential would expire. (Teachers with expired credentials could seek a provisional credential directly from CTC via a similar portfolio-review process.)

As a first step toward implementing this plan, we recommend the state fund and evaluate a pilot of the review panel process in a small sample of districts and use the evaluation results to refine the process before statewide implementation.

Reforming the credential renewal process as suggested in this paper would strengthen the state role in ensuring teaching quality while maintaining local authority and influence over the process.

## Improving teacher effectiveness is once again at the top of the education policy agenda, and for good reason: What teachers know and can do has a more significant influence on student learning than any other available school resource.

Time and again, research shows that effective teachers produce continuous learning growth, even with challenging student populations. Ineffective teachers, on the other hand, can slow or stall student learning.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the question of exactly how to measure and define teaching quality remains the subject of ongoing research and increasingly intense public policy discussions. In particular, measuring teaching quality for purposes of teacher evaluation and compensation has become a flash point for heated debates involving not just educators and policy-makers, but also parents, the media, and foundations that have the ability to fund major education initiatives.

In its first two years in office, the Obama administration has shown a keen interest in teaching quality. The Race to the Top program has offered over \$4 billion in incentive funds to encourage states to adopt tougher teacher evaluation requirements and take other actions to strengthen the teaching workforce. To date, Race to the Top has prompted at least seven states to remove firewalls between student and teacher data and at least 12 states to incorporate learning outcomes into teacher evaluations or tenure decisions. Moreover, the Obama administration has expanded funding (from \$1 million to \$4 million) for the Teacher Incentive Fund to enable districts and states to redesign teacher compensation systems to better attract, retain, and reward high-quality educators. Looking ahead, it appears likely the federal government will continue to push states to address teacher effectiveness, and may use the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to do so. Given the federal push and available federal dollars, many states are thinking carefully about how to develop policies that align with federal priorities for improving teaching quality, that are appropriate to the state context, and that build on existing state and local policies and infrastructures.

California has made significant changes in its teaching quality system over the past decade, compelled in part by the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the settlement of the *Williams v. California* lawsuit in 2004, and more recently by the federal Race to the Top competition. For instance, California has strengthened subject matter competency

requirements for teachers, phased out emergency permits, increased monitoring of credentials, and begun tracking how teachers with varying years of experience are distributed.

Moreover, state policymakers have spent the last two decades establishing a coherent and aligned system of teacher preparation, credentialing, and induction. In 1997, the state adopted the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP). Since then, the state has developed an aligned set of programs and policies around those standards, including a two-tier credentialing system that requires a teacher performance assessment for the Preliminary (Tier I) credential and completion of a two-year induction program for the Clear (Tier II) credential.

What impact these reforms have had on teaching quality and student achievement is largely unknown, and certainly room for improvement remains. Still, taken together, these state efforts constitute a reasonably coherent and aligned policy strategy—at least to the point the Clear credential is issued. After that point, however, the state’s policy strategy for ensuring teaching quality all but disappears. Clear credentials are renewed every five years; the teacher’s only responsibility in this process is to pay a fee to CTC.

The natural check on teachers’ professional growth and development is through the regular evaluation of professional practice—a district-driven process. The state plays little role in evaluation other than providing a basic framework in law. Lacking any other sort of periodic quality appraisal of its own, the state effectively absolves itself of any independent responsibility for ensuring that teachers in California classrooms are effective.

Though not enough is known about local teacher evaluation practices in California, what is known is not promising. Research from SRI International and the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning concludes that in California, “The periodic evaluations of veteran teachers by principals tend to be *pro forma*, rarely consider the learning outcomes for students, and are not connected to the professional development needs of the teachers.”<sup>2</sup> Furthermore,

“teachers don’t get constructive feedback, which they routinely say they would welcome.”

Local evaluation systems that consider neither student learning nor teacher professional growth create serious problems for California’s education system. Without more robust systems for strengthening teaching quality by improving teacher practice, California likely will not reach its goal of improving achievement for all students.

Ensuring ongoing teaching quality will require a true partnership between the state and local school districts. The state has the authority to set broad policies and goals for teacher development and effectiveness. School districts, in turn, have the responsibility to refine these state-established policies to meet their own educational visions and needs and to put in place strategies, including supports and incentives, designed to move teachers toward greater professional effectiveness. Currently, the division between state and local responsibility is off-balance: the state has ceded nearly all responsibility and oversight for teaching quality to local districts, and districts by and large have not risen to the challenge, particularly in the areas of evaluating teacher practice and providing supports aimed at improvement.

### Time for a Change

Under current law, California requires that employed teachers renew their credentials every five years for the duration of their careers. As implemented, however, the rule serves no apparent purpose. Teachers pay a \$55 fee to the state and their credentials are renewed automatically. No further process ensues and no further requirements need to be met.

Previously, the state required teachers to complete 150 hours of continuing education to renew their credentials, but that requirement was removed in 2006 with the passage of SB 1209. Current law states only the legislature’s *intent* that teachers engage in an individual program of professional growth and that school districts establish “professional growth programs that give individual teachers a wide range of options to pursue as well as significant roles in determining the course of their professional development.” The law lists a variety of activities that such a professional growth program might include, from university coursework to participation in school curriculum projects to service in a leadership role in a professional organization. The law also makes the terms of the professional growth programs subject to negotiations between the local union and school district. The state plays no role in determin-

ing what professional growth activities or appraisals of these activities are sufficient. In effect, then, the state imposes no credential renewal requirements at all.

We are not arguing here that the 150-hour requirement that preceded SB 1209 was effective. Those hours were not necessarily aligned to the needs of the individual teacher, school, or district. As far as the state was concerned, virtually any professional development would do. It was a policy that did little to systematically foster growth and instructional improvement. But SB 1209 didn’t fix the problem. Instead it exchanged a requirement of dubious utility for no requirement at all. In essence, California has returned to granting lifetime credentials, a policy eliminated in 1983 based on the argument that professional growth is a continuous process, not a completed event.

Moving forward, the state should adopt a clearer, stronger, and more coherent role in ensuring teaching quality throughout a teacher’s career. Fortunately, California has an existing policy lever that can be used for this purpose: the Clear credential, and specifically the way it is renewed. In our current policy landscape, the initial license is meant to certify that a teacher has met baseline professional requirements and is prepared to assume responsibility for a classroom. The purpose of credential renewal is to verify that teachers are still effective in the classroom, improving their instructional practices, and growing as professionals.

In this report, we offer a proposal for making credential renewal a more meaningful and effective teacher growth and development process and for appropriately strengthening the state’s role in ensuring teaching quality across the teacher career span. This proposal is not a call for eliminating, or even reducing, local authority for ensuring that classrooms are staffed by high quality teachers. Indeed, it puts more responsibility squarely in local hands. But it is also a call for the state to assert its rightful place as a key player in the teaching quality arena.

Moreover, this proposal for reforming credential renewal is envisioned as just one component of a comprehensive teacher development system. [See text box.] In and of itself, credential renewal is no silver bullet for improving teacher effectiveness. But if implemented correctly, a more rigorous credential renewal process could help to focus other teacher policies and practices around a common purpose and bring the state closer to an aligned system of teacher development and, ultimately, improved teacher effectiveness. ■

## **An Aligned System of Teacher Development**

This report focuses primarily on credential renewal. However, the proposal in it is grounded in a broader conceptualization of an aligned system of teacher development that would provide a career-long continuum of teacher support and professional growth. The goal of such a system is improved teacher effectiveness and, by extension, improved student learning through integrated policies and practices that align vertically from the classroom through the system and horizontally from preparation and selection through evaluation and compensation. This aligned system of teacher development would deliver a continuous chain of opportunities for professional learning and appraisal that assists teachers, throughout their careers, to build on their instructional strengths and shore up their weaknesses.

Such a system encompasses six component elements: 1) preparation; 2) recruitment, selection, and assignment; 3) induction and mentoring; 4) professional development; 5) evaluation; and, 6) compensation. These elements, threaded throughout the teacher development system, should be linked through standards of professional practice and clearly stated expectations for student performance.

### **1. Preparation**

Teachers must be prepared to face the many challenges of the classroom. Pre-service preparation, in essence, “forecasts” the knowledge, skills, and competencies teachers will need to be effective. Credentialing is meant to certify that beginning teachers possess the foundational knowledge, skills, and competencies on which they will build during the course of their careers. Credential renewal is the state’s opportunity to be assured that teachers have continued to enhance their professional prowess and improve their instructional effectiveness.

### **2. Recruitment, Selection, and Assignment**

Recruiting, selecting, and assigning teachers represents a crucial early district responsibility. In aligned systems, districts have a vision of the qualities and competencies teachers need in order to be successful with their students. Districts use this conceptual framework to seek out candidates for available positions and place teachers in assignments for which they are appropriately qualified.

### **3. Induction and Mentoring**

Novice teachers require support and guidance in their initial years of teaching. In particular, they need mentoring from experienced colleagues to meet the standards of professional practice and student achievement expectations that will carry throughout their teaching career. As they gain experience, teachers develop a deeper understanding of professional standards and student learning expectations and more sophisticated strategies for meeting them.

### **4. Professional Development**

Professional development is a career-long process designed continuously to enhance teachers’ professional skills. Professional development can take many forms—college and university classes, district-provided professional learning opportunities, and in-school collaboration with colleagues around lesson planning and examination of student work. Regardless of the form, professional development in an aligned teacher development system is designed to improve practice so that teachers are able to meet student learning needs.

## 5. Evaluation of Professional Practice

In an aligned teacher development system, evaluation of professional practice is part of the larger professional support and development continuum. Appraisal of teachers' effectiveness makes clear teachers' instructional strengths and areas for improvement based on the standards of professional practice and expectations for student learning. In addition to helping shape ongoing programs of professional learning, evaluation results provide the evidence for high stakes decisions, such as tenure and retention.

## 6. Compensation

Compensation can reward, promote, and retain effective teachers. The teacher pay system can provide fiscal incentives for those who build their knowledge, skills, and competencies and demonstrate enhanced instructional effectiveness and improved student learning. In an aligned system, the assessment of teacher effectiveness, and eligibility for incentive dollars, is drawn from the system's standards of professional practice and expectations for student achievement.

Presently, California's efforts to strengthen teaching quality are focused on two areas: preparation and credentialing (element #1) and induction (element #3). While it is not appropriate for the state to control each of the elements described above, the state should provide a policy framework that encourages continuity and coherence among these elements. To achieve this, the state must align its own policies around a consistent set of standards for teacher professional practice and provide direction and significant incentives to align locally driven system components.

This is not the case in California. The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning and its research partner, SRI International, have, for more than a decade, documented California's teacher development policies. Their conclusion:

"... the state has a long way to go to realize the goal of a coherent system. In general, California's current set of teacher development programs does not comprise a system at all and fails to measure teaching quality rigorously or use what information it does collect to improve teaching quality."<sup>3</sup>

The authors issue this call to action:

"California needs to build a true teacher development system that ensures consistent teaching quality and effectiveness of instruction. This will involve transforming the various independent components of our fragmented teacher development continuum into a system that is capable of supporting and assisting teachers to be the best they can be."<sup>4</sup>

The proposal in this report would be a first step in bringing greater coherence to California's policies regarding teaching quality and greater cohesion and balance between state and local efforts in this area.

## A New Course for Credential Renewal

In the rest of this report, we present a proposal for reforming the state's credential renewal process. We assert that California should make credential renewal contingent on a meaningful review of teaching performance and professional growth. The key components of this review process would be: 1) portfolios that provide the evidence of teachers' professional growth and development, and, 2) local review panels that certify teachers' evidence. This renewal process would provide the state with a regular opportunity to check on the performance and progress of experienced teachers in a way that is both rigorous and fair. Additionally, this review could serve other purposes. It could provide teachers with a coherent framework for organizing their own growth as professionals and provide districts with a framework for strengthening and aligning their local evaluation and professional development procedures.

We begin with a description of the content of portfolios; move on to selection, composition, and responsibilities of review panels; then discuss the strengths of the proposal and options for implementation. Additional information in the back of the report includes frequently asked questions and answers and more detail on implementation options.

### Professional Portfolios

At the time of credential renewal, each teacher would submit a professional portfolio to the local review panel. [See next section for a description of local review panels.] Portfolios would contain information about three areas of professional performance: growth in student achievement, observed performance in the classroom, and professional development efforts that have contributed to growth in professional practice and student learning.

Specifically, teachers' portfolios would include:

**1) Student assessment data that demonstrates growth in achievement.** We propose that the state accept a range of data sources to accommodate the preferences and priorities of local education communities and the availability of data. The state could allow data that are derived from any exam that is aligned with California's academic content standards—including district benchmark assessments, district end-of-course exams, or the state's own standardized tests—and let local review panels determine what is available and appropriate

for teachers in different subjects and grade levels. Panels would use at least three years of data to provide a more fair and complete picture of the teacher's impact. Regardless of the form of the data, evidence of student achievement growth would be a required portfolio element. In addition, the teacher could choose to include other evidence of students' classroom performance and the teacher's efforts to enhance that performance.

**2) Classroom observation reports, including at least one summative evaluation.** A second required element of teacher portfolios would be classroom observation reports. These would include reports by the principal or other school administrator, department head or grade-level chair, or a consulting teacher in a peer review program. At least one of these reports would be a summative evaluation from within the five-year credential renewal period. Local panels would set specific requirements for the number and sources of the reports, and would be encouraged to require reports from several individuals.

**3) Evidence of a coherent program of targeted individual professional development.** At the beginning of each five-year credential cycle, each teacher would develop an individualized professional growth plan. The plan would be developed collaboratively with and need the approval of the principal. Plans would include one or more specific topics the teacher will pursue to help improve teaching practice. The principal would be responsible for ensuring that individual plans are aligned with broader school and district objectives and for helping teachers connect with appropriate professional development resources and activities. At the time of credential renewal, teachers would include in their portfolio a description of their individualized professional growth plan, changes they have made to their practice as a result, and any available documentation of the impact of their professional development on student learning outcomes.

For each portfolio element, the state would develop minimum requirements that ensure rigor but also allow local flexibility. To guide the review process and minimize sub-

jectivity, the state would develop rubrics that clearly state what reviewers should be looking for in each component of the portfolio.<sup>5</sup> Districts preferring to develop their own rubrics could submit them to the state for approval.

### **Local Panels**

At the time of credential renewal, teachers' portfolios would be reviewed by locally convened panels of instructional experts. These panels would be composed of individuals who collectively represent the interests of the local education community and the state. Each panel would consist of:

- One appointee of the district superintendent;
- One appointee of the local bargaining agent; and

- One person from an external education agency, such as the county office of education or a local institution of higher education, who is jointly approved by the district and the local union.<sup>6</sup>

The state would require all panel members to have teaching and/or administrative experience, and require that at least one panel member have expertise at the same school level (elementary or secondary) as the teacher being reviewed. Panelists might be drawn, for example, from the ranks of district or school administrators, instructional coaches, National Board Certified teachers, or other experienced teachers with demonstrated instructional expertise. The dis-

## **Making Local Review Panels Work: An Example from Minneapolis**

More than a dozen years ago, Minneapolis adopted a unique approach to teacher tenure that placed significant responsibility in the hands of local review panels. While the purpose of the tenure review panels is different from the credential renewal function that we propose in this report, the Minneapolis case nevertheless offers insight into how local panels can be successfully employed to make fair assessments and important decisions.

Minneapolis's system was established by an agreement between the Minneapolis Public Schools and the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers. Probationary teachers become part of the district's Achievement of Tenure process, a three-year program that encompasses mentoring, rigorous professional development, and peer and administrator evaluation. A school-based panel, called an Achievement of Tenure team, oversees the process leading to tenure. The panel, composed of the principal, the teacher's mentor, and teachers from the school, assists the probationary teacher in developing an individualized tenure plan which must be approved by the tenure review team. The plan must include a program of ongoing professional development, annual parent and student surveys, an action research project, and annual peer and administrator evaluations.

The novice teacher presents a progress report to the Achievement of Tenure team in the spring and winter of each year of probation. The panel reviews the plan as well as videotapes of the teacher's teaching, helping the teacher to build on professional strengths and overcome weaknesses. With the guidance of the panel, the teacher assembles a professional portfolio containing artifacts of the initial three years of teaching.

Three months prior to the conclusion of probation, the novice teacher meets with the Achievement of Tenure Review Panel composed of the school's professional development coordinator, the site union representative, an administrator from the school, one or more members of the original school-based Achievement of Tenure team, and a representative from the school district's Teacher and Instructional Services or Human Resources Department. The teacher presents his or her professional portfolio and makes a case for being granted tenure in Minneapolis. The Review Panel has the authority to grant or deny tenure. Any teacher denied tenure by the Review Panel loses employment in the district.

The Achievement of Tenure review teams and panels have operated well and successfully in Minneapolis for many years.<sup>8</sup> Panels take their role seriously, knowing that their decisions deeply impact a colleague's career. Teachers who are awarded tenure say they believe they have earned something meaningful that has both tested and improved their professional practice.

district and union might choose to have a pool of appointees to reduce the burden on any one individual reviewer. Given that portfolios would be electronic and available online, local panels would have the option to meet face-to-face or conduct their reviews asynchronously.

Using locally convened panels for important decisions such as credential renewal is not untested. In Wisconsin, for example, the license renewal process involves a three-person panel. For beginning teachers, (like those seeking the equivalent of California's Preliminary credential), the panel includes a peer, an administrator, and a representative from an institution of higher education. For professional educators (like those seeking the equivalent of California's Clear credential), review panels are composed of three peers, and may include other state-trained evaluators.<sup>7</sup> In Minneapolis, locally convened panels make tenure decisions (see text box).

### **Panel Decision-making**

Panelists would review teachers' portfolios and arrive at one of three recommendations: 1) renew the clear credential for the full five years, 2) renew it provisionally for up to one year, or, 3) do not renew it at all. Panels would work

toward consensus, taking formal votes only when necessary. They would transmit their recommendations to CTC, which, barring any findings of irregularity, would accept the recommendations and take the appropriate actions.

For teachers whose credentials were provisionally renewed, the panel would identify specific areas for improvement. Districts would be required to work with teachers to develop individualized intervention and assistance plans to make the necessary improvements to practice. As part of these plans, the district might assign a mentor or provide other kinds of professional development. The intention here is not to require districts to develop a new set of activities, but rather to organize and utilize all current efforts—instructional coaching, professional development, peer assistance and review, and the like—in service of the specific improvements needed by the individual teacher. The provisionally renewed teacher would have up to one year to make improvements and would then return to the panel for another review. If the panel did not recommend renewal after the teacher's second try, the credential would expire.

Any teacher receiving a nonrenewal decision could appeal to CTC in instances in which the panel was split or the

## **Establishing Inter-District Reliability**

With any locally implemented process, the state has a vested interest in ensuring consistency of rigor and quality across districts. In this proposal, local panels would review teacher portfolios and make recommendations to the state, and so—similar to its accreditation responsibility for teacher preparation programs—the state would need to ensure the quality of the credential renewal process across all districts. This could be accomplished in a variety of ways. Three options are suggested below.

1. The state could establish an accrediting system similar to the one that already exists to accredit local Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) programs, which are responsible for recommending individual teachers for their Clear credential after completion of the two-year induction program. The state could accredit renewal systems every three to five years, conduct audits of credential renewal panel recommendations, and provide training to panelists and those who coordinate local credential renewal systems.
2. The state could certify “master” reviewers who have demonstrated a high level of portfolio scoring reliability. Master reviewers could serve as quality control checks by, for example, serving as arbiters in cases of split panel decisions. Master reviewers could be connected to a particular district, or the state could have a statewide pool of master reviewers that regularly reviews a portion of renewal decisions.
3. The state could also choose to have a combination of an accrediting process and master reviewers. Master reviewers could support the accreditation process by performing spot audits and training district-based panelists.<sup>9</sup>

teacher contends bias. Teachers with expired credentials—either because of a nonrenewal decision by a local panel or a period of time out of the workforce—could seek a provisional credential directly from CTC via a similar portfolio-review process by experienced educators. Teachers receiving these provisional credentials could then seek employment and would have up to two years to apply to their employing district’s local panel for regular renewal of the credential.

In *all* cases—even for teachers who are renewed outright—the review panel would provide the teacher with written feedback about its decision.

Teachers who have earned initial or renewed certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards within five years of the state credential renewal date would automatically have their Clear credentials renewed.

### Strengths of This Proposal

The proposal we offer for strengthening credential renewal has several advantages. First, it provides an appropriate balance of state and local influence. It gives the state a mechanism for monitoring teaching quality on an ongoing basis across the span of a teacher’s career, but relies on the judgment of local educators and allows for variation that results from local context.

Second, this proposal would facilitate better use of existing professional development funds. Districts could use the credential renewal process to systematically identify the kinds and levels of support teachers need as well as the best mechanisms for delivering that support.

A third strength of this proposal is that it uses multiple measures for assessing teaching quality and effectiveness. By incorporating observational *and* assessment data as measures of teaching quality, this proposal addresses concerns about both overreliance and underreliance on any single measure. By giving teachers the opportunity to collect and present data over five years, this approach also helps to smooth out irregularities in the data. Moreover, using portfolios with multiple artifacts provides teachers the opportunity to present additional data or explanatory information.

### Implementation Steps and Costs

As with any significant policy change, the state should

implement a new credential renewal process thoughtfully and over the course of several years, allowing time for input from the broader education community. At the same time, the process should not be unnecessarily bogged down by excessive study or the need for consensus on every detail. In a span of three years, the state should be able to accomplish three goals:

- Develop rubrics local panels would use to evaluate teacher portfolios. These rubrics, perhaps geared to different stages in a teacher’s career, would provide a clear standard for judging each of the required elements of the portfolio;
- Develop additional resources to guide and support local review panels. These might include suggested criteria for selecting panel members and a suggested timeline and process for portfolio review; and
- Pilot the new credential renewal process in a few volunteer districts. This pilot could provide time and experience for the state to refine the review panel process and fine-tune the rubrics.

After a careful process of developing, piloting and refining the state should take steps to implement the process more broadly, either by creating strong incentives for districts to adopt it or making statutory changes that require districts to comply.

The initial costs of the credential renewal system might include:

- The development of rubrics that clearly state what reviewers should be looking for in each component of the portfolio;
- The cost of training portfolio reviewers online or in person; and
- The development of a secure online portal that would allow teachers and reviewers to submit and review portfolio materials—similar to the online submittal process for teachers participating in BTSA. An electronic system would not be essential but would offer the substantial benefit of allowing reviews to happen remotely and asynchronously.

Ongoing costs for implementing the new credential renewal process statewide might include:

- Reimbursement for local portfolio reviewers, or some portion of reviewers (it may be possible to forgo reimbursement for non-teachers);
- Training for new reviewers and refresher training for

- returning reviewers; and
- Funds to monitor, evaluate, and refine the system over time.

We believe the annual cost of a new credential renewal system would likely be in the ballpark of \$12 to \$15 million, although the precise cost would depend considerably on the specific policy options chosen by the state. Unfortunately, other states have little to offer by way of example, although New Mexico’s portfolio-based licensure system provides some modest guidance on what some components of the proposal might cost (see Appendix 2 for further discussion of options and cost estimates).

An annual cost in this range is actually quite low—both in absolute terms and in comparison to other systemic state efforts to improve teaching quality across the workforce and across the teacher career span. In the past decade, the state’s approach has consisted of expensive, large-scale professional development programs like the AB 466 Mathematics and Reading Professional Development Program (\$57 million in 2008-09) and block grant funding for broadly defined local efforts (\$273 million in 2008-09).<sup>10</sup> Even lower-cost efforts such as the California Subject Matter Projects, California’s Professional Development Institutes, and the Peer Assistance and Review program have had much higher annual costs (\$35 million, \$61 million, and \$125 million in peak years, respectively) and served only a fraction of the teacher workforce.<sup>11</sup> In comparison, the cost of reforming the credential renewal system would be modest and would reach the entire workforce on a regular basis. Its potential value in terms of gains in teaching quality would more than offset the requisite financial outlay from the state.

Moreover, a systemic policy change of this kind has the potential to qualify for federal funding. Title II of the current Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) authorizes the Teacher Quality State Grants program, a portion of whose funding can be used for state-level activities to strengthen teacher quality including reform of teacher and principal certification or recertification requirements. In the Obama administration’s blueprint for the reauthorization of ESEA, the Teacher Quality State Grants program would be replaced by a new funding stream, Developing Effective Teachers and Leaders, that could be used by states to, among other things, “improve teacher and principal certification...policies to better reflect a candidate’s ability to

improve outcomes for students.”<sup>12</sup> Another proposed funding stream in the reauthorization blueprint is the Teacher and Leader Innovation Fund, which would provide competitive grants to states that implement ambitious reforms that better identify and develop “effective” teachers and that use information about student growth as a basis for differentiating among teachers and principals and making decisions about credentialing, among other things. Both funds would be potential sources of dollars for an overhaul of the state’s credential renewal system, as described here. ❖

## Looking Forward

Teaching effectiveness is known to be a critical factor in student learning and achievement. Through existing policies (e.g. BTSA and the Teaching Performance Assessment), California has attempted to assess teacher preparedness to enter the profession and to support those new teachers to improve their practice in the first two years of teaching. After awarding the Clear credential, however, the state abrogates its responsibility to foster ongoing teaching quality. It is incumbent upon the state to restore the state-local balance of shared responsibility. As we have described in this report, one underutilized state policy lever to begin to restore this balance is the credential renewal process.

Credential renewal is a worthwhile step on its own, but it could also be a foundation for other related reforms that would strengthen the state’s teacher development system and create more robust and aligned teaching quality systems at the local level. For instance, the state could consider using the proposed credential renewal process to strengthen BTSA. Currently, BTSA has a strong support function but its assessment function is weak: teachers must complete a series of activities to strengthen their practice, but there is no level of performance they must meet in order to receive their Clear credential. Instead of local BTSA programs making the recommendation to award the Clear credential (current policy), the state could assign that task to local portfolio review panels that would make a credential recommendation based on their review of teachers’ completed BTSA materials. This change would add needed rigor to the process without compromising the support function of the BTSA program.

Using the framework of the credential renewal process, the state could also provide technical assistance to districts that want to align their local evaluation practices to the state’s approach to assessing and supporting teaching

quality. A rigorous and comprehensive local teacher evaluation system could then serve double duty by appraising and supporting teacher effectiveness at the local level while simultaneously helping teachers prepare for their next credential renewal cycle.

In sum, a rigorous state credential renewal process, aligned to equally rigorous state and local policies and processes, would provide California with the next level of a consistent, comprehensive, and appropriate state framework for ensuring a quality teacher in every classroom. ❖

## Extending Credential Renewal Reform to Principals

Though a great deal of policy attention is given to improving teaching quality, the need for highly effective principals is equally acute. Principals influence student achievement in two important ways: by supporting and developing effective teachers and by implementing organizational processes that contribute to overall school effectiveness.<sup>13</sup> Research has identified practices employed by effective principals and professional organizations have incorporated these practices into professional standards and measurement instruments for assessing the quality of school leadership.<sup>14</sup> Given the critical role principals play, the state should carefully review and revise the principal credential renewal process.

Currently, principals acquire Administrative Services credentials and renew them every five years. As with teachers, the renewal process involves a pro forma application and payment of a \$55 fee.

A more effective process would mirror the one we have proposed for teachers. A balanced local panel would review a principal's professional portfolio and make a recommendation to the state regarding credential renewal. That portfolio would include information regarding:

- 1) Growth in student learning at the school level (with emphasis on state assessments while allowing for other data as well);
- 2) Leadership performance in the school as documented by the supervising administrator or other school or district leaders against the six standards articulated in the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSEL); and
- 3) Evidence of a coherent program of individual professional development. At the beginning of each five-year credential cycle, each principal would develop an individualized professional growth plan. Plans would include one or more specific topics the principal will pursue to help improve the practice of the school's instructional staff and the overall effectiveness of the school. The plan would be developed collaboratively with and need the approval of the principal's supervisor. The supervisor would be responsible for ensuring that individual plans are aligned with broader district objectives and for helping principals connect with appropriate mentorship or other professional development resources and activities.

The panels for reviewing principal portfolios would balance the interests of the district's administration and the principals themselves. In districts in which principals are represented by a union or association, that organization would appoint one panel member. In districts without a principals' union, principals could nominate and select representatives from among themselves. The remaining two slots on the panel would include one representative designated by the district superintendent and one outside member from the county office of education or an institution of higher education.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is currently developing National Board Certification for Principals. When completed, those principals who hold active National Board Certification for administrators would be exempted from the state's credential renewal process if certification is earned within five years of credential renewal.

## Appendix 1: Frequently Asked Questions

### Would the new renewal process apply to all teachers?

Current law prevents the state from retroactively invalidating lifetime or other credentials or changing the laws and regulations that were in effect at the time the credential was issued. However, in recent history the state has revised credential *renewal* requirements. In 1983, the legislature added the 150-hour requirement for teachers renewing their credentials and more recently eliminated that requirement when it implemented SB 1209 in 2006.

### Would implementing this credential renewal process conflict with the local evaluation process?

No. Even if local evaluation practices are rigorous and consistent, the state is still responsible for the quality of its credentialing system. Credential renewal is the state's mechanism for certifying teachers' ongoing fitness to teach.

At the same time, the credential review process and local evaluation practices should be aligned and mutually supportive—not duplicative. The goal of this proposal is not to create a conflicting set of expectations, but rather a framework within which districts can develop robust local practices of evaluation and professional development.

Currently the state provides guidelines around evaluation practices, but allows wide latitude to local school districts to develop their own measures and practices. If there were a coherent credential renewal process in place, districts would have a clear incentive to align their own evaluation systems to it.

### What would prevent local panels from applying weak criteria and rubber-stamping all applications for renewal?

This concern about rigor is one reason for including one panelist with instructional expertise who is external to the district. The state has several options for how review panels are configured, what role the external panelist plays (whether a regular panelist or arbiter only), and who selects and approves the external panelist. In addition, the state can set the criteria used to approve these external reviewers. Another option we suggest is a CTC audit process conducted intermittently or as part of a regular accrediting process. We also describe the need to develop clear rubrics that have strong minimal requirements and clear guidance to panels on the decision-making process they use.

### What effect would this process have on BTSA?

The credential renewal process proposed here would build on several elements of California's existing Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program. In the same way that BTSA is intended to provide a structured path for improving teaching practice in the first and second years, this credential renewal process could provide a framework—albeit considerably less structured than BTSA—for improving teacher practice beyond the second year.

In addition, BTSA's infrastructure could help support the proposed credential renewal process. Because of BTSA, California already has empowered local districts as credentialing agents. When the state began to require BTSA completion for a Clear credential, it became the responsibility of local BTSA programs to verify program completion and recommend to the state that the Clear credential be issued. As credentialing agents, local BTSA programs must adhere to program standards and are accredited by CTC in a process that is similar to accreditation for institutions of higher education that recommend teachers for Preliminary credentials. If the state moved forward with the credential renewal process proposed here, it could choose to develop additional standards that cover the credential renewal process and conduct the accreditation on the same timeline as BTSA programs.

As is, this proposal extends some of the strong elements of the BTSA process into the post-induction years and adds a summative element for quality control. An additional policy option would be to add a credential renewal-type review process as a capstone assessment to the final year of BTSA (described briefly on page 12).

### How can local panels be expected to understand student achievement data and use it to make credential renewal decisions?

In creating rubrics and guidance for the review process, the state would want to take particular care in developing criteria for judging student achievement data. Local districts need clear guidance about what sources of data are appropriate for teachers of different subjects and grade levels, and which ones are not.

Teachers also need to understand early in the credential cycle what data will be included in their portfolio at the time of credential renewal. Teachers need access to their students' scores as soon as they are available so they can track their results during the five-year credential cycle. ■

## Appendix 2: Estimated Recurring Costs

Below, we discuss briefly the expected recurring costs to the state. We provide options and estimates where feasible, as well as cost information about New Mexico’s portfolio-based licensure system, which bears some similarities to the credential renewal process we propose.

We begin with the assumption that 10 percent of the state’s approximately 284,000 teachers are new teachers in their first two years of service, and thus not yet a part of the credential renewal process.<sup>15</sup> We also assume, for these purposes, that an average of one-fifth of the remaining 255,000 teachers will go through the credential renewal process in a given year, or roughly 51,000 teachers.

To compensate portfolio reviewers for their time, the state might offer annual stipends to individuals who apply and are selected. With \$1,500 stipends, the annual cost to the state would be in the ballpark of \$9 million (assumes 6,000 reviewers across the state who are handling around 25 portfolios per year).

Another approach would be to pay reviewers per portfolio reviewed, as New Mexico does in its portfolio-based licensure system. New Mexico reviewers are paid \$75 per portfolio, and typically spend less than two hours to review each one.<sup>16</sup> Assuming similar review time, this amount would approximate the average hourly salary of a California teacher, which is about \$40 per hour.<sup>17</sup> Reimbursing reviewers at this rate would cost the state about \$11.5 mil-

lion annually. That cost could be reduced somewhat—by about \$2 million—if the state chose to have two reviewers in most cases and required a third reviewer only to arbitrate in about half the cases.

Still another approach could be used for those reviewers who are not classroom teachers (i.e. those reviewers who are from districts or external agencies like county offices or institutes of higher education). In these instances, the state might consider reimbursing employers or offering other incentives if they will incorporate portfolio review into the regular job duties of some of their employees.

The cost of paying portfolio reviewers would generate the greatest recurring cost per year, but the state would also need to build in some modest funding to cover the additional workload required at the state level to oversee the process. In addition, the state would be wise to build in annual funds to evaluate and continually improve the new credential process. As a point of comparison, New Mexico spends approximately \$500,000 annually for continued research and development of its portfolio-based licensure system, with approximately \$100,000 of that amount expended for updated training and support of reviewers. With a larger workforce, California’s costs for ongoing training and support of reviewers would be somewhat higher.

All of these costs, together with others listed (but not estimated) in the main text of the report, would likely total between \$12 and 15 million annually. ➤

## Notes

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1 See for instance:

Ferguson, R. 1991. Paying for public education: New evidence of how and why money matters. *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 28:475.

Gordon, R., Kane, T., and Staiger, D. 2006. *Identifying effective teachers using performance on the job*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.

Rockoff, J. 2004. The impact of individual teachers on student achievement: Evidence from panel data. *The American Economic Review* 94, no. 2: 242-52.

2 Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning. 2008. *California's teaching force: Key issues and trends*. Page 3. Santa Cruz, CA. Available at: <http://www.cftl.org/documents/2008/TCF/TCFSummaryFacto8.pdf>

3 Wechsler, M., Tiffany-Morales, J., Campbell, A., Humphrey, D., Kim, D., Shields, P., & Wang, H. 2007. *The status of the teaching profession 2007*. Page 61. Santa Cruz, CA: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning. Available at: <http://www.cftl.org/documents/2007/tcf07/TCFReport2007.pdf>

4 The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning. 2007. *The status of the teaching profession 2007. Our next steps. Recommendations supplement*. Page 1. Santa Cruz, CA. Available at: <http://www.cftl.org/documents/2007/tcf07/Recommendations2007.pdf>

5 To acknowledge and encourage growth in teachers' skills over time, the state might consider creating multiple sets of rubrics for different stages of a teacher's career. Other states have developed differentiated teaching standards along these lines. New Mexico, for example, has standards for beginning teachers (one-four years), mid-career teachers (five-10 years), and veteran teachers (10+).

6 One option is for the external panelist to be a local person who is involved in every portfolio review. Another option is for the external panelist to be someone the state has approved, and for that panelist to arbitrate only when there is a disagreement between the district and bargaining agent panelists—a less expensive option that would also give the state more control over the process.

7 For more information about Wisconsin's license renewal process, see <http://dpi.wi.gov/tepd/licensing.html>

8 Koppich, J. 2005. Addressing teacher quality through induction, professional compensation, and evaluation: The effects on labor-management relations. *Education Policy* 19, no. 1: 90-111.

9 A dilemma under any of these scenarios is how to handle districts that are determined to have flawed or inadequate systems for making credential renewal decisions. In such instances, the state might choose to hand over responsibility to its own cadre of master reviewers or enlist the local county office of education to handle the review process. The state might also take a more aggressive approach by making the credential renewal process a required element of school and district accreditation.

10 Guha, R., Shields, P., Tiffany-Morales, J., Bland, J., & Campbell, A. 2008. *California's teaching force: Key issues and trends*. Page 46. Santa Cruz, CA: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning. Available at: <http://www.cftl.org/documents/2008/TCF/TCFReport2008.pdf>

11 Esch, C., Chang-Ross, C., Guha, R., Humphrey, D., Shields, P., Tiffany-Morales, J., Wechsler, M., & Woodworth, K. 2005. *The status of the teaching profession 2005*. Pages A-4 and A-8. Santa Cruz, CA: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning. Available at: <http://www.cftl.org/documents/2005/stp05fullreport.pdf>

Shields, P., Humphrey, D., Wechsler, M., Riehl, L., Tiffany-Morales, J., Woodworth, K., Young, V., & Price, T. 2001. *The status of the teaching profession 2001*. Page 123. Santa Cruz, CA: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning. Available at: <http://www.cftl.org/documents/2001report/completereport.pdf>

12 U.S. Department of Education. 2010. *A blueprint for reform: The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. Washington, DC. Available at: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/blueprint.pdf>

Deans, Emilie. 2010. *A closer look at the president's K-12 education program consolidations*. Federal Education Budget Project. Washington, DC: The New America Foundation. Available at: <http://edmoney.newamerica.net/node/27181>

13 Davis, S., Darling-Hammond, L., LaPointe, M., and Meyerson, D. *School Leadership Study: Developing Successful Principals*. 2005. Stanford Educational Leadership Institute in conjunction with The Finance Project. Page 6.

14 See for instance:

Babo, G. 2010. The ISLLC standards' "footprints" and principal evaluation: A national study of school superintendents. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, 5, no. 1.

Rice, J. 2010. *Principal effectiveness and leadership in an era of accountability: What research says*. Washington, DC: National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research (CALDER) at the Urban Institute.

15 The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning. Percentage of Teachers by Experience & School Type, 2008-09, State Level. Available at [http://cftl.org/Data.htm?report=PAIF\\_X11&imageField.x=45&imageField.y=9](http://cftl.org/Data.htm?report=PAIF_X11&imageField.x=45&imageField.y=9)

16 Based on personal communication with representatives from the University of New Mexico and Resources for Learning, LLC, both closely involved with New Mexico's portfolio-based licensure system.

17 With average California teacher salary of \$70,458 (*Rankings & Estimates*, National Education Association, 2009-10, Summary Table G) and 1,760 hours per year, teachers earn, on average, \$40 per hour.

## About this Project

This paper is part of a nonpartisan research project supported by a grant from the Stuart Foundation. The purpose of the project was to identify specific state-level policy changes that could have a significant impact on teaching quality and be accomplished in a constrained fiscal environment. The project included an initial review of current state-level teacher policies in several areas, including teacher preparation, certification, evaluation, compensation, induction, and professional development. It also included a limited survey of teacher evaluation practices in several major California districts.

Following these research activities, the project team selected a specific state policy area—teacher credential renewal—for further exploration and development in this paper. Of course, many aspects of California’s teacher development system could be changed for the better. We chose to focus on teacher credential renewal because it is an underutilized policy lever and, we believe, can be significantly enhanced at relatively low cost.



MAIN OFFICE  
1899 L Street, NW  
Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone 202 986 2700  
Fax 202 986 3696

CALIFORNIA OFFICE  
921 11th Street  
Suite 901  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Phone 916 448 5189  
Fax 916 448 3724



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