

EdSource Extra!

What's happening at EdSource

Save the Date!

EdSource Forum
on California
Education Policy

Friday, March 18, 2011

Hyatt Regency Irvine

Check the web for
details as they unfold:

www.edsource.org

The Middle Grades: Getting All Students “High School Ready”

Suddenly the calls for improving student academic achievement seem to be coming from everywhere: President Barack Obama, NBC's Education Nation, and several new movies focused on education reform.

But if we want to significantly increase the number of students who graduate from high school ready for work and college, we MUST start when students are younger by dramatically increasing the number of students who leave the middle grades ready to succeed in a rigorous high school curriculum.

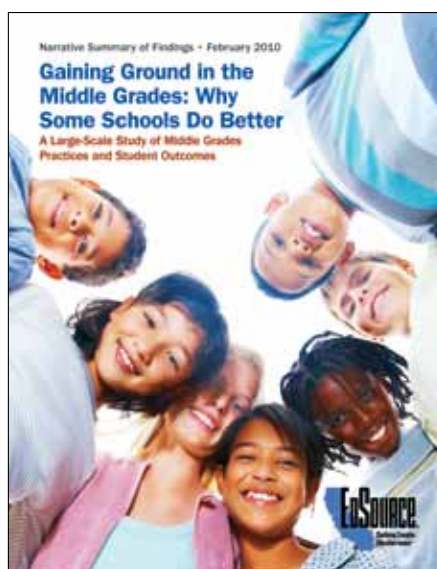
That means these students must master key grade 6–8 academic content Common Core standards in math and English language arts, and in science and history when they are developed. It means they need to develop foundational study and organizational skills. It also means they need to understand how their middle grades achievement relates to their high school course options, and how high school courses and activities relate to their post-high school job and college opportunities. In other words, they need to begin developing a “future orientation.”

According to a landmark study by EdSource, these are the kinds of student competencies that higher-performing middle grades schools focus on developing. And they can make the difference between students who enter high school with confidence, competence, and a plan, and students who struggle to find relevance and to stay in school until graduation.

Since *Gaining Ground in the Middle Grades: Why Some Schools Do Better* was released on Feb. 24, 2010, more than 12,000 copies of the study materials have been downloaded. Half of the web traffic to our middle grades study is from K–12 educators around the country; the other half includes policy leaders, philanthropists and advocates, and researchers.

The importance of the middle grades to the “college and work ready agenda” is gaining traction. EdSource senior staff was invited to present the study last June at a weeklong series of events in Washington, D.C. Stops on the speaking tour included a congressional briefing on middle grades and the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; a meeting with the Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education Thelma

continued on page 4



Follow-up: Action Guide for Middle Grades Leaders

One of the most important findings of the EdSource middle grades study was that the leadership of the superintendent and the principal were key in driving student outcome gains.

The Stuart Foundation has provided support to help underwrite the costs of an Action Guide for Middle Grades Leaders. In addition, the United Way of Greater Los Angeles has provided support to develop six school profiles of high-performing middle grades schools in Southern California. EdSource is seeking funding for the other components of the project. Look for these new materials in spring 2011.

“The EdSource study will no doubt serve as a milestone and a marker for systemic, programmatic changes in the Intermediate Schools throughout our district for years to follow.”

—DR. GREGORY S. PLUTKO, DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT EDUCATIONAL SERVICES, CORONA-NORCO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Follow-Up: A Close and In-Depth Examination of 8th Grade Math

Supported by the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation and Reed Hastings, EdSource and its research team from Stanford and AIR have just completed a new analysis of the data file from the *Gaining Ground in the Middle Grades* study. This new analysis focuses on 8th grade student outcomes in General Math and Algebra I and their relationship to prior student achievement. Watch for our announcement when the study is released in early January.

If you're not signed up for our e-mail announcements, sign up now at www.edsource.org so you won't miss out on these new products!

Middle Grades Reform Is Gaining Traction

A scan of the winning Federal i3 and Race to the Top applications indicates that many policy leaders and educators are seeing the middle grades as a key leverage point for improving high school student attainment.

EdSource congratulates the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform for their receipt of a federal i3 grant to improve middle grades schools in California, Illinois, and North Carolina.

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Reflecting on a Productive 2009–10 Year for EdSource

EdSource was amazingly productive in the past year, with kudos going to the hard-working staff and engaged and supportive Board of Directors!

As the trend graphs on this page show, our e-mail bulletin listserv has grown dramatically, as have our publication downloads. We're especially pleased with the role diversity of our website audience. In addition, unique visitors to our site grew by 66% last year to 129,000, and overall web visits rose by 75% to 175,000. Just over 35% of our website audience comes from outside of California.

In 2009–10, EdSource completed **two major research projects**—one of middle grades education (released February 2010) and another on student pathways through California's community college basic skills courses (released October 2010). (See related articles on page 1 and page 3, respectively.)

In addition, staff researched and published six single-topic reports:

- *Local Revenues for Schools: Limits and Options in California*
- *The New Federal Education Policies: California's Challenge*
- *Multiple Pathways in California: An Emerging Option for High School Reform*
- *School Finance 2009–10: Budget Cataclysm and its Aftermath*
- *2010 Resource Cards on California Education* (42 cards)
- *California and the "Common Core": Will There Be a New Debate About K–12 Standards?*

Overall, staff produced publications with a total of **166 pages of analysis, data, and information** during the year and received feedback on publication drafts from 95 different education experts, who donated their time and served as external reviewers for EdSource. (See the insert.)

EdSource staff also kept our **content-rich website** updated with a new News & Resources section and policy updates from Strategic Education Services and School Services of California.

Our **2010 Annual Forum on California Education Policy**—our 33rd—drew the largest audience ever at nearly 400. The **comments from attendees were strongly positive** and can be found at www.edsource.org/forum10_feedback.html.

And Looking Ahead to 2011 and Beyond...

In May 2009, the EdSource Board extended our mission to include community colleges as well as K–12. In February 2010, the Board reinforced its commitment to California public education, but authorized the staff to expand its program activities and partnerships outside of California.

Looking ahead, we are exploring our opportunities across several dimensions. I am appreciative of an organizational capacity grant EdSource received from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation this summer! We matched the grant and have hired Education First Consulting (EFC) to help us gather information for a strategy assessment to address these two broad objectives:

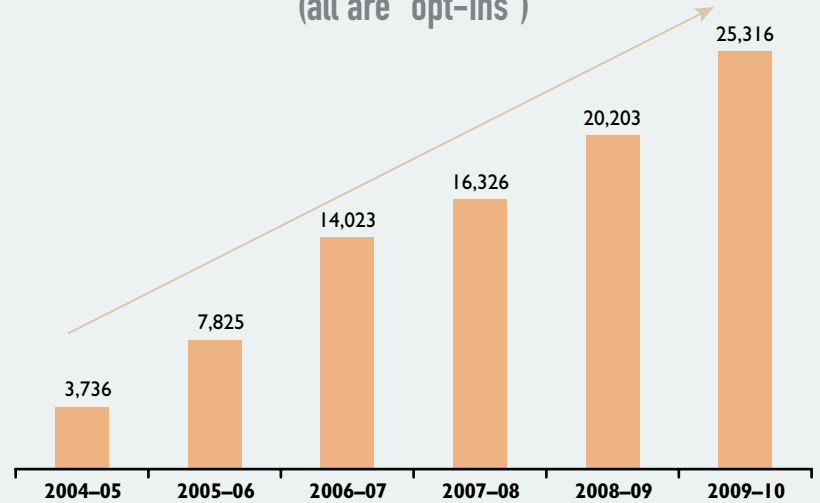
- 1) Identify a variety of ways in which EdSource can build on its capabilities and assets to add maximum value to K–14 educational improvement; and
- 2) Secure the funding needed to support the agency's mission and to implement the most effective program possible.

Toward this end, EFC has interviewed the CEOs of six successful national education organizations to create case studies on how they are adapting to the economic downturn and to the changed education policy and reform landscape. In addition, EFC is interviewing 20 to 25 thought leaders in California and across the country to get their insights and perspectives on the major education issues and trends in the coming years—and their ideas on how EdSource might most effectively use our assets and skills for maximum impact.

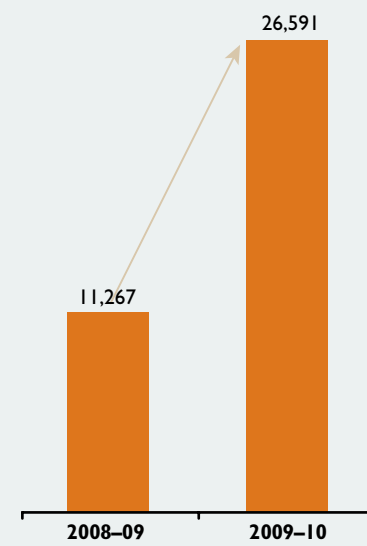
I want to personally thank every individual who was gracious enough to volunteer his or her time and insights to help EdSource with this important strategy analysis effort!

Education First's report and findings will be ready in December for EdSource Board review and discussion. I'm confident the case studies and interviews will provide EdSource with evidence and ideas to increase our value and make smart choices going forward. We'll keep our constituents posted as our plans unfold.

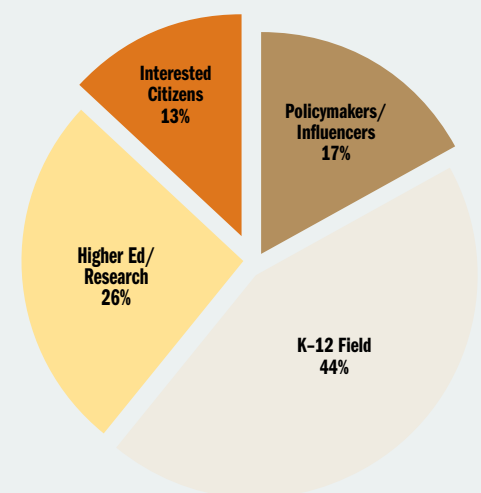
Numbers Signing Up for our E-mail Bulletin (all are "opt-ins")



Publication Downloads Rose 136%



EdSource.org Audience Profile



2010–11 EdSource Reports Published or Planned

- How California Ranks
- Something's Got to Give! (new Community College study)
- School Finance 2010–11
- 2011 Resource Cards on California Education
- Analysis: 7th and 8th Grade Math Achievement in California
- And others if funding becomes available:
 - Teacher Effectiveness and Evaluation
 - California's Current Science Standards and Student Achievement
 - Next Generation Instructional Technology

Something's Got to Give

California can't improve college completions without rethinking developmental education at its community colleges

The nation's community colleges have never had a spotlight shining so brightly on them. President Obama has set a national goal that by 2020 America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. And at an Oct. 5 White House Summit on Community Colleges—the first ever held—Obama told attendees that community colleges are crucial to ensuring that America has the highly skilled workforce needed in the global competition for jobs. Summit organizers say that will need 5 million more graduates from community colleges in the next decade.

California's importance in reaching this national goal cannot be ignored, given that this state educates about one-quarter of all community college students in the nation. But if California's community colleges are to rapidly and significantly increase the number of students completing certificates and associate degrees, or transferring successfully to four-year universities, something will have to give.

Most Students Are Not Ready for College-Level Work

The current challenges are numerous and may require changes in policy and practice. The community college system here has a long tradition of "open access" to any student who wants to enroll. The majority of new students who enter the system are not academically prepared to succeed in college-level courses, which has created a strong demand for basic skills instruction in mathematics and English. The system's 112 campuses have responded with a variety of developmental education programs that provide basic skills instruction but that vary in their effectiveness. Students get mixed signals in high school about what they need to do to prepare for community college. After they enroll, they typically receive little or no guidance about which courses to take and how to be successful.

Developmental Programs Need To Be More Effective

To significantly and quickly increase student completion rates at the community colleges, California must first make sure more students are ready to undertake college-level work. That means improving the effectiveness of developmental or basic skills programs. But colleges are being asked to do so at a time when budget and enrollment pressures are constraining their capacity to respond. California cannot significantly increase student completions using the same strategies it now has in place.

Full Research Report Is Available

EdSource was honored that California Community Colleges Chancellor Jack Scott approved a research contract for our agency to study the students who take remedial courses in math and writing, their progress through those courses, and their success at reaching and completing college-level work. **EdSource delivered our full research report to the Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) on June 30, 2010. Our October report—*Something's Got to Give*—summarizes that study.** A copy of the full research report and that summary can be found on the EdSource website, www.edsource.org/iss_research_communitycollege.html.

EdSource Deputy Director Mary Perry and CCCCCO Vice Chancellor Patrick Perry gave a presentation on the study on Oct. 7 at the Strengthening Student Success Conference, sponsored by the Research & Planning Group for California Community Colleges. EdSource looks forward to continuing to work with the CCCCCO and the RP Group, as well as other researchers and advocates interested in community colleges, to help shed light on the challenges that will confront the community college system as it responds to President Obama's call to action.



Community Colleges Are Key to College Completions in California and Nationally

The California Community College System has:

- 112 separate colleges in 72 districts (as of 2009–10);
- A total student enrollment of 1.82 million in the fall of 2008, nearly evenly divided between those under and over 25 years of age;
- A student body (in fall 2008) that is 34% white, 30% Hispanic/Latino, 15% Asian/Pacific Islander/Filipino, and 7% African American.
- Of first-time freshmen (age 19 or younger) who enrolled in a public postsecondary institution in California, 61% went to community college.
- In 2007–08, 55% of bachelor's degree graduates from California State University (CSU) and 29% of graduates from University of California (UC) had attended a California community college.

Thank you to 2010 Forum Sponsors

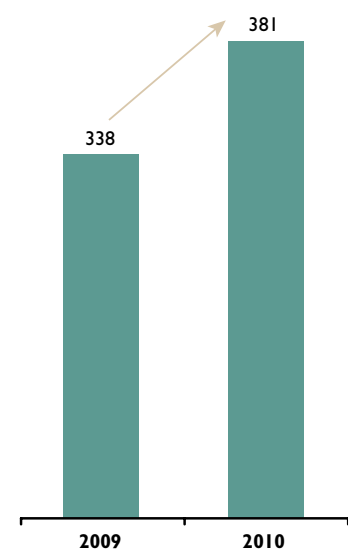
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- California Casualty Group
- California Collegiate Brain Trust
- DecisionInsite
- Olson Hagel & Fishburn LLP

2010 Forum Attendance Was Highest Ever



Thank You to 2010–11 Funders!

We've just completed the first quarter of our 2010–11 year, and EdSource wants to thank the following foundations, individuals, and organizations for their early financial commitments to EdSource:

- The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- Reed Hastings
- The James Irvine Foundation
- Stuart Foundation
- S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation
- Joyce and Larry Stupski
- United Way of Greater Los Angeles
- The Dirk and Charlene Kabcenell Foundation

Thinking About End-of-Year Giving?

Think about EdSource! In this difficult financial year, we welcome your donation—large or small. Contact Maggie Rancatore at mrancatore@edsource.org or call 650-917-9481.

Melendez and her colleagues at the Department of Education; and a visit with Institute of Education Sciences Director John Easton and Associate Commissioner for Policy and Systems Allen Ruby.

In November, EdSource staff will present the study and its policy implications to New Mexico's Legislative Education Study Committee.

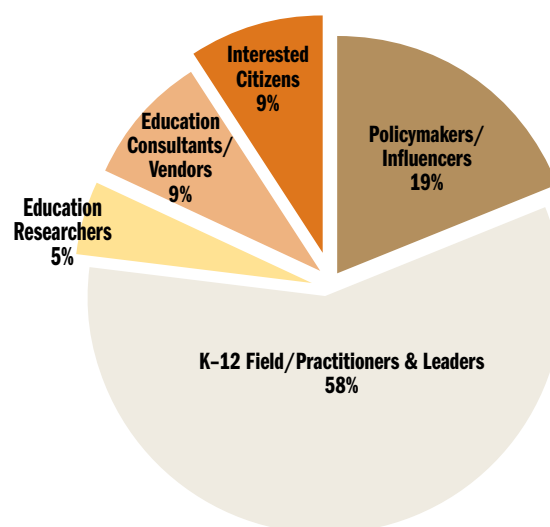
Widely covered in the media when it was released, the *Gaining Ground* study will be featured in upcoming stories in the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) *Leadership* magazine and in *Education Next* this winter. In addition, EdSource will be presenting the study at the California School Boards Association annual

conference in December and as a featured presentation at the California Educational Research Association conference in November.

Secondary-to-postsecondary student attainment is an important issue strand for EdSource, and we see the middle grades as a pivotal, make-or-break point in that pipeline for many students. EdSource thanks Reed Hastings, CEO of Netflix, for his support of the *Gaining Ground* main study.

See the sidebar on page 1 for more work by EdSource coming out of that study's data file and findings. For downloads of the *Gaining Ground* documents and details on upcoming presentations, go to www.edsource.org/middle-grades-study.html.

Audiences Downloading *Gaining Ground* Study



New at EdSource

The EdSource Board of Directors has elected a new board president, Carl A. Cohn, and a new board secretary, Susan K. Burr (see below).

In addition, Kenneth F. Hall, project director of the School Business Management Program at Rossier School of Education at USC, has agreed to continue as fiscal officer. Lawrence O. Picus, a professor at the Rossier School of Education and director of the Center for Research in Education Finance (CREF), is continuing as vice president of the board. The board is also pleased to welcome a new member—Brice W. Harris—who began his two-year term in September (see below).



Carl A. Cohn is widely known as a reformer inside the K–12 system. After his early career as a teacher and counselor, Cohn in 1992 became the superintendent at Long Beach Unified School District. During his tenure, LBUSD achieved record attendance, the lowest rate of suspension in a decade, decreases in student failure and dropout rates, and an increase in the number of students taking college preparatory classes. Cohn won the Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education in 2002 for his leadership in boosting student achievement, and the district won the Broad Prize in 2003.

After retiring as LBUSD superintendent, Cohn has worked as a clinical professor for the Rossier School of Education at USC, as an independent court monitor, and as superintendent of San Diego Unified School District. He has also been a faculty adviser for the Broad Superintendents Academy and the Harvard Urban Superintendents Program.

Currently, Cohn is co-director of the Urban Leadership Program and clinical professor in the School of Educational Studies at Claremont Graduate University. In addition to his role as president of the EdSource Board, Cohn is

serving as vice chair of the National Task Force on Strategic Management of Human Capital, a member of the U.S. Department of Education's National Technical Advisory Committee, and on the boards of ACT and WestEd.



Susan K. Burr, EdSource's new secretary of the board, is executive director of the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA).

She joined CCSESA in 2003 as deputy executive director responsible for advocacy efforts on state and federal legislation and budget matters on behalf of California's 58 county superintendents. County superintendents are responsible for providing financial accountability and academic support to every California school district. Before that, she was the assistant superintendent for business services in the Elk Grove Unified School District, where she was responsible for the development and oversight of the district's nearly \$500 million annual budget.

Burr has also served as the interim secretary for education under former Gov. Gray Davis, where she helped craft the legislative package that created a landmark school accountability system, the nation's only statewide peer assistance program for teachers, and California's high school exit examination requirement.

She also co-directed, with Gary K. Hart, the California State University Institute for Education Reform (CSU-IER), administering teacher recruitment efforts.

In addition, Burr has 14 years of experience in the California State Legislature, where she served as education consultant to the Senate Education and Appropriations Committees, as well as policy analyst for the Legislative Analyst's Office.



Brice W. Harris, EdSource's newest board member, is the chancellor of the Los Rios Community College District in Sacramento, which is one of the largest multi-college districts in the nation, covering more than 2,400 square miles of central California. The district serves nearly 94,000 students each semester. Prior to becoming chancellor, Harris was president of Fresno City College.

Harris currently serves as a member of the Board of the American Council on Education in Washington, D.C., and is a frequent informal adviser to California Community Colleges Chancellor Jack Scott. He is past chairman of the Board of the California Community College Chief Executive Officers and a former commissioner of the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges. He previously chaired the Task Force on Leadership in California Community Colleges and the Community College Task Force on Global and International Education.

New Staff



Erin Brownfield joined the EdSource staff in April as development and communications manager. She is responsible for grant writing and development work, as well as related communications projects. Most recently,

Erin was a senior communications officer at The Wallace Foundation in New York, where she managed major grants related to increasing awareness of the value of high-quality, after-school programs and oversaw foundation communications projects. She holds an M.P.A. from New York University's Wagner School of Public Service and a B.A. in English from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

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