

EdSource Extra!

What's happening at EdSource

Upcoming Study Explores Middle Grades Math Placement and Performance

In February 2010, EdSource released *Gaining Ground in the Middle Grades*, a landmark study on middle grades education in California. Conducted with research partners from Stanford University and the American Institutes for Research, the study identified a comprehensive set of concrete, actionable practices that support academic improvement in the critical 6th to 8th grade years. Our study sample included 303 middle grades schools in California, serving both low- and middle-income communities.

As we began the study in mid-2008, middle grades math became a hot topic. The California State Board of Education passed a controversial motion—subsequently blocked through legal action—to make the state's Algebra I test the "sole test of record" for grade 8 math for federal accountability purposes. And the Brookings Institution released a widely publicized report that argued that many students across the nation had been placed in grade 8 algebra courses before they were ready.

As we conducted the *Gaining Ground* study, the research team recognized that schools in our sample differed in how they placed students into Algebra I in grade 8. This prompted a follow-up analysis, using our data file to take a more in-depth look at middle grades math practices and policies. That analysis is about to be released.

The centerpiece of our report is a look at the relationship between students' 7th grade CST scores, their 8th grade

mathematics placements, and their subsequent performance on either the Algebra I or General Math CST.

We followed 69,663 students in our sample who took the Grade 7 Mathematics CST in 2008. The table below shows how well they performed on that test.

As the table shows, these students entered grade 8 at widely varying levels of preparedness based on their CST scores. Our analysis addressed a number of questions about these students, such as:

- How do students' placements in grade 8 relate to their prior achievement in grade 7?
- To what extent does placement into Algebra I in grade 8 vary among schools?
- To what extent does prior achievement matter for students' test scores in grade 8?

You'll find our answers to these vital questions in our follow-up analysis—*Improving Middle Grades Mathematics Performance*—to be released in mid-February.

A companion Policy and Practice Brief will summarize what we learned and also explore the implications of our findings as California looks toward implementation of recently adopted Common Core standards in mathematics, which revisit the question of what mathematics should be taught in grade 8. Both will be available on the EdSource website, www.edsource.org.

Prior-Year (2008) Achievement on the Grade 7 Mathematics CST, Among 69,663 8th Graders Enrolled in the 303 Sample Schools in 2009

Five State-Defined CST Performance Levels	Seven Performance Levels Considered in Our Follow-Up Analysis	Percent of 8th Graders (in 2009) Who Scored at Each Level on the Grade 7 Mathematics CST in 2008
Far Below Basic	Far Below Basic	5%
Below Basic	Below Basic	19%
Basic }	Low-Basic	15%
	High-Basic	16%
Proficient }	Low-Proficient	15%
	High-Proficient	16%
Advanced	Advanced	13%

Data: California Department of Education, restricted-use longitudinal research file
Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 due to rounding.

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34th Annual EdSource Forum on California Education Policy
The Future for Public Education in California
A statewide event

When and Where

Friday, March 18, 2011

Hyatt Regency Irvine, California

Program: 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Cost

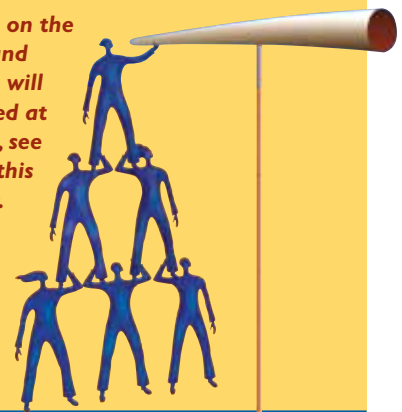
\$80 for EdSource Annual Information Service subscribers

\$95 for non-subscribers

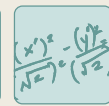
Early Bird Special for All: Register by Feb. 21 and take \$20 off the registration fee!

Go to www.edsource.org to register or call 650-917-9481.

For details on the speakers and issues that will be discussed at the Forum, see page 2 of this newsletter.



Coming Soon to EdSource.org A New Section on STEM



Conversation, debate, and policy in education are full of acronyms. But "STEM"—which stands for science,

technology, engineering, and mathematics—is an increasingly important acronym that all California policymakers, educators, parents, and students ought to recognize. From the White House to Sacramento, and from the boardroom to the classroom, "STEM" is on everyone's lips.

From an economic perspective, STEM means work performed in these fields and the occupations and industries in which that work is done—work that is vital to California as the eighth-largest economy in the world.

From an educational perspective, STEM means the subject-matter knowledge, skills, dispositions, and excitement that are essential to success and innovation in these fields. All educational institutions—from K–12 schools to community colleges and public universities—have a role in helping California students get there and keep learning.

EdSource.org is launching a new issue section devoted to STEM. The section highlights STEM-related EdSource publications and web content. It also links to helpful resources and key organizations geared toward strengthening California's STEM capacity and student success in these fields.

EdSource thanks the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation for its support of our new web content and agency focus on STEM issues.

The Future for Public Education in California

34th Annual EdSource Forum on California Education Policy

It is clearly a time of tremendous change for public education nationally and in California. At this year's EdSource Forum, we'll get a view of what the future holds from state and national leaders who see K-14 education issues from a variety of vantage points.



Carl Cohn—president of the EdSource Board of Directors and co-director of Urban School Leadership at Claremont Graduate University—will moderate the Forum.

Session I California's Fiscal Crisis and its Impact on K-12 Education and Community Colleges

Two speakers well versed in California's budget will offer their perspectives on the seriousness of the state's fiscal crisis, including a timely analysis of the governor's January budget proposal for 2011-12 and how it will affect K-12 schools and community colleges. A third speaker will discuss public attitudes toward increasing taxes to prevent funding cuts to schools.



Michael Cohen, chief deputy director of the state Department of Finance, will discuss the budget from the current administration's perspective. His role as chief deputy director is to advise the governor on the state budget and serve as the department's lead contact with the state Legislature. From 1997 to 2010, Cohen worked at the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), most recently as deputy legislative analyst.



Mac Taylor, the state's legislative analyst, will present a nonpartisan analysis of the budget as well as proposed solutions for education that he has developed for the Legislature. Taylor was appointed as California's legislative analyst in October 2008, only the fifth person to serve in that capacity since the office was founded in 1941. In his 33-year career with the office, he has served as program analyst, section head, and as deputy legislative analyst.



Gov. Jerry Brown's main solution for protecting K-12 education in the 2011-12 budget is to extend temporary tax increases and use the additional funding for schools. But will voters go along with his plan? Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) President **Mark Baldassare** will discuss the level of effort it will take to get voters to pass those tax extensions in June. Baldassare directs the PPIC Statewide Survey—a large-scale public opinion project that profiles the social, economic, and political forces at work in California elections and in shaping the state's public policies.



This session will be moderated by **Kenneth Hall**, executive in residence at the Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California; founder and chairman emeritus of School Services of California, Inc.; and the fiscal officer on EdSource's Board of Directors.

Session II California's New Common Core K-12 Academic Standards

The State Board of Education adopted new Common Core K-12 Standards last August. When will districts be expected to begin teaching to them and testing students on them? How will the budget projections affect the availability of resources for this work? Three speakers with solid backgrounds in standards and curriculum will address those questions in this session.



Gavin Payne served for seven years as chief deputy state superintendent of public instruction under former Superintendent Jack O'Connell. Since leaving the California Department of Education (CDE), Payne has established a consultancy practice serving major national foundations, institutes, and professional organizations on education policy matters, including college- and career-ready standards implementation.



He will be joined on the panel by **Deb Sigman**, deputy superintendent of the Curriculum, Learning, and Accountability Branch of CDE. The branch promotes improved student achievement through a variety of programs, including ones involving standards and curriculum. Sigman has more than 30 years experience in assessment and accountability in California's K-12 public school system.



Sue Stickel, assistant superintendent of K-12 Curriculum and Intervention for the Sacramento County Office of Education, will round out the panel. Recently, she served as the project director for the California Academic Content Standards Commission. In this role, she supported the work of the commission as members deliberated regarding their recommendation to adopt the Common Core Standards. Since the completion of that assignment, she has been working to assist districts and counties with the implementation of the standards.



Sue Burr, executive director of the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA) and secretary on the EdSource Board of Directors, will moderate the panel.

Session III Next Generation Learning and Technology

The most effective uses of "next gen" technology may not be what you think they are. How is new educational technology being used in California and nationally to support teaching, customize student learning and assessment, and improve student outcomes? And can California afford it? Two speakers with experience applying this new technology offer their views.



John Danner is cofounder and CEO of Rocketship Education, a national network of high-performing K-5 charter schools whose mission is to eliminate the achievement gap. Rocketship's first two schools have already catapulted into the top #5 and #15 spots, out of more than 2,000 California public schools with similar low-income populations. Rocketship has pioneered the Hybrid School Model, which combines classroom teaching aimed at enhancing and extending students' critical thinking skills with individualized instruction using tutors and technology to strengthen students' basic skills. Danner also was chairman of the Charter School Resource Center of Tennessee and founding director of KIPP Academy Nashville.



Joel Rose is the founder and CEO of School of One, an initiative within the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) that uses a mix of live and online instruction in order to provide students with instruction that is customized to their unique academic needs and learning styles. The initiative was named by *Time* as one of the top 50 inventions of 2009. He has also served as chief executive for Human Capital and as chief of staff to the deputy chancellor at NYCDOE. Rose has been involved in education for more than 15 years, first as a Teach for America corps member in Houston and later as a senior executive at Edison Schools.



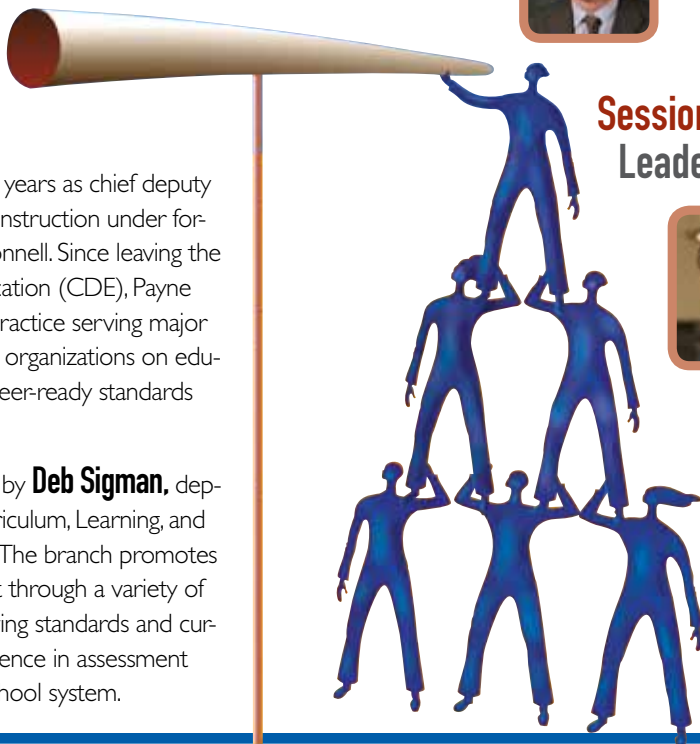
This session will be moderated by **Jonathan Raymond**, superintendent of the Sacramento City Unified School District and an advocate and practitioner of data-driven decision making.

Session IV View From the Top: New State Education Policy Leadership



Tom Torlakson—a former science teacher, high school coach, and state legislator—was elected this past November as California's new superintendent of public instruction. As a legislator, Torlakson acted to protect education funding, improve student nutrition and physical education, and ensure school safety. He authored the Quality Education Improvement Act and legislation leading to the development and expansion of the largest system of after-school programs in the nation. He takes over the California Department of Education at a time of leadership change in California.

What does he consider his top priorities for next year? How does he expect those to align with the priorities of the newly appointed State Board of Education and Gov. Jerry Brown? Torlakson will speak briefly and then take questions from the audience.



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