



**BEYOND  
THE  
MOUNTAINS**

AN EARLY LOOK AT  
RESTRUCTURING  
RESULTS  
IN CALIFORNIA



**Center on Education Policy**

1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 522  
Washington, D.C. 20036

tel: 202.822.8065

fax: 202.822.6008

e: [cep-dc@cep-dc.org](mailto:cep-dc@cep-dc.org)

w: [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org)

## BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS

### AN EARLY LOOK AT RESTRUCTURING RESULTS IN CALIFORNIA

A Haitian proverb, “Beyond the mountains, there are mountains again,” could describe school improvement efforts under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), according to Gordon Jackson, the administrator in the District and School Program Coordination Office at the California Department of Education (CDE).

When Jackson shared his insight at a day-long workshop for schools and districts identified for improvement under NCLB, the audience laughed knowingly. Jackson, a former high school language teacher and principal, explained that many of these California schools have made progress but that challenges remain, particularly for schools in restructuring.

Restructuring is the controversial last consequence under Title I of NCLB for schools failing to make “adequate yearly progress” (AYP) toward their state’s student achievement targets for five or more consecutive years. The sanctions associated with restructuring, from replacing school staff to contracting with an outside organization to run the school, are intended to reshape underperforming schools dramatically. The law itself requires districts to choose one of five options for their schools in restructuring. New federal guidance issued in the summer of 2006 (U.S. Department of Education, 2006) emphasized the need for schools to make large changes in response to restructuring but left much of the details of decision making and implementation to districts and schools.

The first peak that districts with schools in restructuring must summit is the choice of an appropriate restructuring option. Districts and schools then embark on the trek of implementation. While states are charged with supporting districts with these tasks, much is left to the discretion of districts. How will districts make choices about restructuring? How will these choices be implemented? What will the initial impact of these choices be?

To explore these questions, the Center on Education Policy (CEP) turned to California, a state with a substantial number of schools in restructuring and several state and regional supports for restructuring. In the fall and winter of 2006, we reviewed restructuring documents and interviewed decision makers at the state and regional level. We also conducted case studies of restructuring through interviews and document reviews in four school districts and eight schools. Several key points emerged from our analysis.

#### Key Findings

- ***More schools are being placed in restructuring each year.*** During the 2005-06 school year, 401 California schools that received federal Title I funds were in the planning or implementation phase of NCLB restructuring.<sup>1</sup> In school year 2006-07, the number of schools in restructuring increased to 701, including 343 schools in the planning phase (their fourth year of school improvement) and 358 in the implementation phase (their fifth, sixth, or seventh year of improvement). Of those in the implementation phase, 207 schools have failed to make AYP for seven consecutive years, which puts them in their sixth year of school improvement, and 10 have failed to make AYP for eight consecutive years, which puts them in their seventh year.
- ***Only a few schools have improved enough to exit restructuring.*** Between school years 2005-06 and 2006-07, 10 schools that were in the planning phase of NCLB restructuring exited school improvement, but none of the schools that were implementing a restructuring plan made sufficient achievement gains to exit. Among our eight case study schools, only Sobrante Park Elementary in Oakland improved enough to make AYP and exit restructuring planning; the others did not exit either

<sup>1</sup> The number of schools in restructuring in 2005-06 differs from the number reported in our previous study due to data appeals or closures of three schools.

restructuring planning or implementation, despite major reform efforts. Some restructuring schools started out with very low test scores and in recent years have seen their scores fluctuate, with some increases, some stagnation, and even some declines for specific subgroups. Schools not making AYP reported being disappointed that they don't see bigger payoff for their hard work. Interviewees in all of our case study schools said they would like to see the law give credit for individual students' growth.

- ***State and regional supports focus on data.*** State and regional education offices have developed surveys and processes for districts and schools to use to make restructuring decisions. These tools do not mandate particular actions. Instead, they require districts and schools to collect data about past student achievement, past efforts to improve, and current school and district structures that affect achievement. The districts and schools then analyze these data and make decisions about restructuring based on the data. District and school interviewees in all of our case studies reported using data analysis to guide reforms. For example, Palmdale Elementary School District holds twice-a-month meetings where teachers examine data and plan instruction accordingly.
- ***Taking “any other” action to restructure governance is the most popular choice.*** Among the five restructuring options in federal law, a large majority (89%) of California schools implementing restructuring in 2005-06 are using the fifth, the so-called any-other option. This option allows schools and districts to take any major action, other than the preceding four options in the law, that will produce fundamental change in the school's governance structure. Actions taken under this option vary widely. For example, the Grant Joint Union High School District designated a district-level coordinator to help oversee Grant Union High School, with assistance from the principal and teacher teams. In the Tahoe-Truckee Unified School District, North Tahoe Middle School changed the school schedule, shifted staff to accommodate the new schedule, hired coaches to improve instruction, and added new instructional programs to address student motivation and improve teaching for English language learners (ELLs).
- ***Reopening schools as charter schools is the least popular option, but still a viable one.*** Just 2% of all California schools in restructuring became charter schools, another option for restructuring in the law. Although this choice was the least popular in California, it was still more popular than in states like Michigan and Maryland, where no restructuring school has chosen to become a charter school. In the Oakland Unified School District in California, two schools became charter schools. For these schools, restructuring meant changing the administration and staff and having more flexibility to let go of teachers who weren't performing well. The curriculum, however, remained the same.
- ***Half the schools that used the any-other option made AYP in English language arts (ELA).*** Our case studies showed that the any-other option varied a great deal from school to school and often included multiple reform efforts that officials tailored to schools' needs. Schools that used the any-other restructuring option and did not replace staff, contract with an outside expert, or become a charter school in 2005-06 were more likely than restructuring schools in general to meet AYP targets in English language arts. Of the 164 schools that fit these criteria, 50% met AYP targets in ELA based on 2005-06 testing, compared with 44% of all schools in restructuring implementation in 2005-06. Conclusions about this finding should be made with extreme caution, however, since only one year of data was available and the types of actions taken under the any-other option varied a great deal.
- ***Case study schools had some commonalities.*** In addition to using data to inform instruction, all case study schools have increased staff collaboration to improve student achievement. For example, all have instituted some type of teacher team planning time. In addition, all have added “coaches” for teachers or principals; these coaches model effective work, observe staff, and provide suggestions for improvement. Furthermore, all case study schools have changed their schedules to allow more time for interventions for struggling students.

## Methods and Background

### STUDY METHODS

For the past two years, the Center on Education Policy has conducted a series of analyses of the school restructuring process in selected states as part of its comprehensive, multiyear study of the No Child Left Behind Act. Previously, we issued reports on the restructuring process in Michigan for school years 2003-04 and 2004-05, in California for 2004-05, and in Maryland for 2005-06 (CEP 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b). These reports are available at [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org), and future reports on additional states will follow.

CEP chose to focus its restructuring reports on Michigan, Maryland, and California because they had already begun implementing test-based accountability systems and calculating AYP under the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) of 1994, the federal law that preceded NCLB. As a result, these three states had schools reach the restructuring phase of NCLB as early as 2003-04—sooner than most other states. As more states see more and more schools enter restructuring, they can learn from the experiences of these states in the vanguard.

In California, school year 2004-05 was the first year the state collected information on district and school restructuring choices, and the first time state and regional education organizations offered extensive support to districts and schools. To see how this process was maturing and take stock of its early results, CEP decided to take a second look at restructuring in California, focusing on activities and impacts that occurred during 2005-06. This report describes our findings.

To conduct this second California review, CEP turned to Caitlin Scott, the consultant who did the first California restructuring report. Scott interviewed state department of education officials and regional administrators. She also conducted case studies of four districts with schools in restructuring, primarily by conducting onsite interviews with district administrators, principals, and other staff. These case studies focused on the following four districts and eight schools:

- Grant Joint Union High School District, an urban secondary school district in Sacramento, enrolls almost 14,000 students in grades 7-12. Martin Luther King, Jr. Junior High School and Grant

Union High School were the schools involved in our case study.

- Oakland Unified School District, a large urban district, serves 41,000 students in the city of Oakland. Four Oakland schools participated in our case study: Cox Elementary, Highland Elementary, Sobrante Park Elementary, and Whittier Elementary.
- Palmdale Elementary School District, a district of 22,000 students, serves an outer ring suburb of Los Angeles. Yucca Elementary was the focus of our study.
- Tahoe-Truckee Joint Unified School District, a rural district near Lake Tahoe, enrolls 4,200 students. North Tahoe Middle School participated in our case study.

Oakland, Palmdale, and Tahoe-Truckee were involved in CEP's previous study of restructuring in California. They had been selected from a list of districts recommended by the California Department of Education, the former Southern California Comprehensive Assistance Center (SCCAC), and West Ed, an educational research laboratory, in the summer of 2004. CEP chose these three districts because they represented an urban, suburban, and rural district and had all engaged in a collaborative district-school process to determine which restructuring options were best for their schools. For 2006, CEP added the Grant district, which had participated in our local case studies of NCLB since 2004 and was making interesting changes in schools in restructuring. District personnel chose restructuring schools for participation in this study.

In addition to conducting interviews, Scott observed a day-long workshop held by the California Department of Education in September. At this workshop, state administrators and consultants presented strategies for schools and districts in restructuring planning and implementation. Scott also reviewed state, regional, district, and school data and documents, such as state restructuring and school improvement policies, state records tracking restructuring implementation, state report cards, and state test score data. The interviews, observations, document reviews, and data analysis were conducted from August 2006 through December 2006.

## FEDERAL RESTRUCTURING MANDATES

The No Child Left Behind Act requires all states to test virtually all students annually in reading/language arts and mathematics in grades 3 through 8, plus once during high school. It also requires all schools and districts to meet targets for adequate yearly progress that place them on track for ensuring that 100% of students will be academically proficient by 2014. The law also specifies consequences for schools and districts that do not meet AYP targets. After five consecutive years of not making AYP, schools must plan for restructuring. After six consecutive years of not making AYP, they must implement their restructuring plans. In this last consequence for failure to make AYP, schools and districts must choose from a menu of options designed to completely revamp the school. By federal law, these options include the following:

- Entering into a contract to have an outside organization with a record of effectiveness operate the school
- Reopening the school as a charter school
- Replacing all or most of the school staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP
- Turning operation of the school over to the state, if the state agrees
- Undertaking any other major restructuring of the school's governance that produces fundamental reform

Perhaps because these options are designed to radically change schools, implementation is complex. All require adjustments to schools' financial operations, and some may require additional resources, particularly if the school must train staff to work together in new ways.

States vary widely in their numbers of schools in restructuring—largely because some states started earlier to actively develop standards-based testing and accountability systems and collect data on schools making AYP. As a result, some states with relatively new testing and accountability systems, such as Idaho and Oregon, have few schools in restructuring at this point, while states like California and Michigan currently have schools in their seventh year of improvement under NCLB and their third year of restructuring implementation.

## Overview of Restructuring in California

### NUMBER OF SCHOOLS IN RESTRUCTURING

In order to meet AYP targets in California for 2005-06 and 2006-07, elementary and middle schools must have at least 24.4% of students scoring at or above the proficient level on state tests in English language arts and 26.5% of students scoring at or above proficient in mathematics. High schools must have 22.3% of students at or above proficient in English language arts and 20.9% at or above proficient in math. Schools must also meet testing participation targets of 95%, as well as other state-determined targets in such areas as attendance and graduation rates.

In the 2005-06 school year, 401 California Title I schools—or about 4% of California's schools—were placed in the planning phase of restructuring (year 4 of school improvement) or the implementation phase of restructuring (year 5 of school improvement) based on their 2004-05 test scores.<sup>2</sup> Of these 401 schools, about 5% were in rural areas, 26% in suburban areas, and 69% in urban areas. Los Angeles Unified School District had the most schools in restructuring, accounting for 20% of all such schools.

In the 2006-07 school year, the number of California schools planning and implementing restructuring increased by 75% over the previous year, while only a tiny percentage of schools increased student achievement enough to exit improvement status. A total of 701 schools, or about 8% of California's schools, were in restructuring planning or implementation for 2006-07, based on their 2005-06 test scores. Of these 701, about 5% were in rural areas, 33% in suburban areas, and 62% in urban areas, so the share of restructuring schools in suburban districts increased. Los Angeles continued to have the most schools in restructuring, but the city's percentage of the total fell from 20% to 14%. In 2006-07, 10 schools in the planning phase of restructuring raised their test scores enough to exit school improvement, but no school in the implementation phase of restructuring exited.

The state of California does not officially move schools beyond “year 5” of school improvement, the reporting level required under NCLB. This is because there are no

<sup>2</sup> The number of schools in restructuring in 2005-06 differs from the number reported in our previous study due to data appeals or closures of three schools.

federal provisions specifically for schools in year 6 or 7 of improvement, said Wendy Harris, the state's assistant superintendent for school improvement. Still, of the 358 schools in year 5 status, 207 have actually failed to make AYP for seven consecutive years, putting them in their sixth year of school improvement, and 10 schools have failed to make AYP for eight consecutive years, putting them in their seventh year of school improvement.

### FUNDING FOR RESTRUCTURING

Beginning in 2004, all states were required by federal law to set aside 4% of Title I funds to assist districts and schools in improvement, including schools in restructuring.<sup>3</sup> How states use these funds to monitor and assist restructuring is a state decision, and states have taken a range of approaches. Some states help schools design restructuring plans and explicitly sign off on those plans, while others do not collect any information on schools in restructuring beyond what they collect from other schools in improvement. California has taken a moderate approach, according to Harris.

Since 2004-05, the California Department of Education has required districts and schools to report which federal restructuring options they plan to use. For school years 2005-06 and 2006-07, CDE has also held regional workshops aimed at helping districts and schools make good choices about restructuring. In addition, state and regional education offices provide tools for district and state decision making as well as technical assistance on restructuring when requested. CDE does not, however, dictate the actions districts and schools must take in order to benefit from the state's Title I set-aside for schools in improvement, and does not monitor these actions. Instead, the state requires that the money be used to revise and implement school improvement plans as the school and district see fit.

In 2005-06, CDE had set aside close to \$71 million for school improvement, Harris said. These funds were used as follows:

- About \$31 million went to the 153 districts that had been identified for improvement, of which 42% had schools in restructuring planning or implementation.

- About \$4 million was used for districts that weren't yet in improvement but had large numbers or percentages of schools in improvement.
- Just over \$23 million was distributed to 170 Title I schools targeted for monitoring under the state accountability system; 19% of these schools were in year 4 or 5 of federal school improvement.
- Some \$10 million went to county offices of education as part of California's Regional System of District and School Support (RSDSS), which provides an array of technical assistance services to schools and districts identified for NCLB improvement.
- A small portion of the school improvement set-aside, roughly \$1 million, was used by CDE for state administration specifically related to school improvement, and the rest was rolled over to 2006-07.

In 2006-07, the school improvement set-aside decreased slightly to \$70 million. The set-aside funds for 2006-07 are being used in much the same way as they were the previous year. Harris estimates that close to \$18 million has been used for grants to 163 Title I schools targeted for monitoring under the state's accountability system; 34% of these schools are in NCLB restructuring. About \$7 million has been used for districts in improvement under NCLB; 65% of these districts have schools in restructuring. Another \$10 million has gone to RSDSS for technical assistance and \$2 million to CDE for state administrative activities. As of January 2007, state officials were still discussing how the rest of the funds would be used.

### STATE RESTRUCTURING OPTIONS

In its largest departure from the federal options, California decided not to allow districts to turn schools in restructuring over to the state. This restructuring option is not practical, Assistant Superintendent Harris noted, because the state department of education does not have the resources or the desire to run large numbers of school.

To help districts and schools make sense of the other NCLB restructuring options, the state department of

<sup>3</sup> Although all states were required to set aside 4%, some were not able to do so because of a hold-harmless provision in NCLB. This situation is explained in more detail in two CEP reports (2006c; 2006d) available at [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org).

education has created what it calls “build outs” for each option. These build outs consist of short explanations for each option that define terms, give tips for successful strategies, and suggest questions that schools and districts should ask before adopting the option.

For example, to help schools and districts understand the option of “reopening the school as a public charter school,” the state defines charter schools as “generally founded by a group of teachers, parents, community leaders, community-based organizations, or private organizations,” and operated “under a written contract (charter) between the sponsoring agency (authorizer) and a charter developer for a period of one to five years.” The build out also states that “critical to the success of creating a high-quality charter school are grassroots support, a strong governing board, and a well-thought-out redesign plan.” Furthermore, the build out suggests that before choosing to create a charter school, districts and schools ask themselves such questions as, “What is the level of parent, [school district], teacher, and community support for a charter school? Who are the key charter developers? What is the structure and experience of the governing board?”

For 2006-07, Harris noted that CDE revised these build outs to incorporate some of the examples used in the new federal guidance (U.S. Department of Education, 2006), although the substance did not change. In particular, Harris noted, the federal guidance clarified that Title I and Title II funds could be used to provide incentives to teachers, so more California districts have started using these funds to offer stipends to teachers for working in extended-day programs or participating in additional professional development.

Harris also said the new federal guidance helped California clarify what it means to close a school and reopen it as a new school with a clean AYP status. Currently in California, a school does not necessarily become a new school with a clean slate for AYP purposes just because it may have a new principal, new staff, and new students. In accordance with NCLB, schools in California are not able to get out from under NCLB sanctions by simply becoming a charter school or breaking into schools within schools, Harris explained. If a school is broken up into smaller schools, the state requires at least one of the smaller schools to retain the AYP status of the original school. But in light of the new federal guidance, the state is considering the issue of

how much change in a school’s enrollment and configuration merits a change in the school’s AYP status.

### OPTIONS CHOSEN BY SCHOOLS

States are not required by law to track schools’ restructuring choices. In the 2005-06 school year, CDE went beyond the requirements of the law and collected data on restructuring choices from 245 schools in the implementation stage of restructuring (year 5, 6, or 7 of improvement). California tracked which schools were using each of the five broad options offered under federal law; Michigan, by contrast, went even further and tracked the specific actions schools were taking within each federal option. California’s general approach to data collection means that within each federal option schools are taking a variety of actions and that each option may not completely describe all the actions a school has taken to restructure. In particular, our case study schools that used the any-other option reported multiple efforts to improve student achievement and change school governance.

**Table 1** shows the number and percentage of schools that used the various restructuring options during 2005-06. (Seventy schools implemented more than one option, so the percentages total more than 100%.) The most popular choice for restructuring in that year was the any-other option, chosen by 89% of schools. Replacing staff was next in popularity, chosen by 30% of schools. Less popular options were contracting with an outside organization to run the school, a choice made by 10% of the restructuring schools, and converting to a charter school, which just 2% of the schools did. The relative popularity of these options stayed the same as in 2004-05, although the percentages changed slightly, partly because in school year 2004-05 the state had asked schools in both the planning and implementation phases of restructuring to report their choices (CEP, 2006a). Restructuring choices for 2006-07 had not yet been collected and recorded as of October 2006.

To see whether any specific strategies for restructuring seemed to help schools improve more than others, CEP examined how many schools using various options in 2005-06 made AYP overall, as well as how many met the separate AYP targets in either English language arts or mathematics. To make AYP, a school or district must meet the state’s achievement targets in *both* subjects for

**Table 1. Number and Percentage of California Schools Using Various Restructuring Strategies in 2005-06 and Percentages Meeting AYP Targets**

Restructuring Option	Number of Schools Using Option <sup>*</sup>	Percentage of Schools Using Option <sup>*</sup>	Percentage of Schools Making AYP	Percentage of Schools Meeting ELA Targets	Percentage of Schools Meeting Math Targets
All schools in restructuring	245	100%	11%	44%	55%
Undertaking any other major restructuring of the school's governance that produces fundamental reform	219	89%	12%	46%	55%
Replacing all or most of the staff who are relevant to the failure to make AYP	73	30%	5%	32% <sup>†</sup>	48%
Entering into a contract to have an outside organization with a record of effectiveness operate the school <sup>‡</sup>	24	10%	8%	46%	54%
Reopening the school as a charter school <sup>§</sup>	5	2%	60%	60%	60%

<sup>\*</sup> Some schools chose more than one restructuring option, so numbers in these columns total more than 245 schools or 100%.

<sup>†</sup> Schools using this strategy were significantly less likely to meet targets in English language arts. CEP's analysis used Chi square to compare schools replacing staff to all other schools in restructuring: ( $\chi^2$ );  $\chi^2(1, N = 245) = 6.67, p = 0.01$ .

<sup>‡</sup> This category was intended by the California Department of Education to contain just those schools that had contracted with an outside entity to run the school; however, several districts reporting this option have instead contracted with an outside entity for technical assistance only, according to CDE. Furthermore, the cell size for schools making AYP was too small to analyze using Chi square. The analysis was done for schools making either ELA targets or math targets, but the results were not significant.

<sup>§</sup> Too few schools used this strategy to analyze using Chi square.

Source: Analysis by the Center on Education Policy, based on unpublished data from the California Department of Education, November 2006.

all students and for each major student subgroup, in addition to meeting federal test participation requirements and other state-specified benchmarks.

Table 1 also shows the percentage of schools within each category of options that made AYP based on 2005-06 test data, met targets in ELA, and met targets in math. Using statistical techniques called Chi squares to determine whether variations were significant, CEP compared the likelihood of a school making AYP using each particular strategy with the overall likelihood of a school in restructuring making AYP. For most strategies, there were no significant differences. (It was not possible to apply this statistical test to schools that became charters

because the sample size of just five schools was too small.) Replacing staff was an exception. Our analysis showed that schools replacing staff were significantly less likely to meet AYP targets in English language arts than schools in restructuring in general.

Although a larger than average percentage of schools using the any-other strategy met AYP targets, the difference was not statistically significant—in other words, it could have occurred by chance. To further explore the any-other option, we took a closer look at the 164 schools that chose this option *without* also replacing staff, becoming a charter, or contracting with an outside entity. As shown in **table 2**, a slightly higher

**Table 2. AYP Status of Schools Using the Any-Other Option Alone**

<b>Restructuring Option</b>	<b>Number of Schools Using Option</b>	<b>Percentage of Schools Using Option</b>	<b>Percentage of Schools Making AYP</b>	<b>Percentage of Schools Meeting ELA Targets</b>	<b>Percentage of Schools Meeting Math Targets</b>
All schools in restructuring	245	100%	11%	44%	55%
Schools undertaking any other major restructuring of the school's governance that produces fundamental reform as the ONLY option	164	67%	14%	50%*	59%

\* Schools using the any-other restructuring strategy alone were significantly more likely to meet ELA targets. The analysis used Chi square to compare schools in this category with the rest of the schools in the implementation phase of restructuring: ( $\chi^2$ );  $\chi^2(1, N = 245) = 7.05, p = 0.008$ .

Source: Analysis by the Center on Education Policy, based on unpublished data from the California Department of Education, November 2006.

percentage of these schools met AYP targets than restructuring schools in general. In the case of schools meeting targets in English language arts, the difference was statistically significant.

Our findings could indicate that the any-other option was more effective in English language arts than the other restructuring strategies and that replacing staff was less effective, but our statistical tests did not account for the schools' initial test scores. For example, restructuring schools that did not meet AYP targets may simply have started out farther behind those that did meet the targets. In order to account for a school's level of academic achievement the previous year, CEP examined the percentage of students at a school who scored at or above the proficient level on state tests in English language arts in 2004-05. On average, 19.7% of students in schools using the any-other option alone scored proficient in ELA, compared with 18.5% of students in schools that replaced staff.

Using a different statistical technique called linear regression, we determined that differences in meeting ELA targets between schools that replaced staff and other restructuring schools were not statistically significant, once the school's previous achievement was taken into account.<sup>4</sup> In other words, once we accounted for the fact that schools replacing staff started with a lower percentage of students reaching proficiency in English language arts, their performance the following year could be attributed to chance.

We did find, however, that schools using the any-other option alone were statistically more likely to meet targets in English language arts, even when their previous achievement was taken into account.<sup>5</sup> In other words, even though these schools started at a slightly higher level of academic achievement, they still had significantly higher percentages of students meeting AYP targets in English language arts in 2005-06 testing.

<sup>4</sup> In this linear regression, the dependent variable was the percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient level in English language arts on tests administered in 2006; the independent variables were the percentage of students scoring at or above proficient in ELA in 2005, and whether a school replaced staff as its restructuring strategy. The overall model was significant:  $F(2, 243) = 211.38, p < .001$ . However, the choice to replace staff was not significant ( $\beta = -.068, t = -1.74, p = .08$ ), while the percentage of students scoring at or above proficient in ELA in 2005 was significant ( $\beta = .79, t = 20.26, p < .001$ ).

<sup>5</sup> In this linear regression, the dependent variable was the percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient level in English language arts in 2006; the independent variables were the percentage of students scoring at or above proficient in ELA in 2005 and the use of the any-other option alone. The overall model was significant:  $F(2, 243) = 212.90, p < .001$ . In addition, use of the any-other option alone was significant ( $\beta = .079, t = 2.03, p = .04$ ), as was the percentage of students scoring at or above proficient in ELA in 2005 ( $\beta = .79, t = 20.29, p < .001$ ).

One should be cautious, however, in interpreting these data. Only one year of testing was available. More time is needed to fully understand the effect of restructuring strategies. When replacing staff, for example, it may take a year before the new staff is oriented to the school and can have an effect on instruction.

In addition, the specific features of restructuring vary greatly from school to school, particularly for schools using the any-other option. Recent studies of comprehensive school reform have shown that the level of implementation of reforms and the support for implementation affect the success of reform efforts in raising student achievement (Vernez et al., 2006; American Institutes for Research, 2006). NCLB does not require states or districts to collect information on how restructuring options are implemented, so we did not have this type of vital information for our analysis. Still, the case studies discussed in this report do provide details about how restructuring strategies have played out in four California districts and eight schools.

## State and Regional Tools to Assist in Restructuring

### GUIDANCE FROM STATE WORKSHOPS

As it did in 2005, the California Department of Education held regional workshops in school year 2006-07 for districts and schools in improvement, with a special breakout session for schools in restructuring. In revising the workshops for 2006-07, Assistant Superintendent Harris said state officials carefully reviewed the new federal guidance and made changes accordingly. As discussed below, the workshops provided participants with stronger examples of restructuring choices, particularly for the any-other option, and clarified ways to replace staff while complying with collective bargaining agreements. State officials at the workshops also elaborated on the various surveys developed by the state that districts can administer to help them determine how to restructure.

#### Guidance on the any-other option

While the option of undertaking any other restructuring of governance is still relatively open-ended, the new federal guidance clarified what this option might look like. At the workshop, CDE officials provided the fol-

lowing examples of governance changes that districts and schools could make based on the federal guidance:

- Change the governance structure in a significant manner that either diminishes school-based management and decision making or increases the district's control, monitoring, and oversight of the school's operations and educational program
- Close the school and reopen it as a school with a specific focus or theme (such as math and science, dual language, or communication arts) and with new staff or staff skilled in the focus area
- Reconstitute the school into smaller autonomous learning communities, such as a school-within-a-school or a learning academy, and change decision making practices by having an administrative director or assistant principal lead each small learning community
- Dissolve the school and assign students to other schools in the district
- Pair the school in restructuring with a higher performing school; for example, two schools could be paired in a way that combines grades K-3 from both schools and grades 4-5 from both schools

#### Guidance on replacing staff

Districts and schools that choose to replace staff must have specific plans to replace the exiting staff with highly qualified staff, said Harris during an interview. The breakout session on restructuring emphasized that restructuring may not reduce the rights or remedies of employees under the terms of a collective bargaining agreement. Within these limitations, CDE suggested that schools and districts consider the methods for replacing staff condoned in new federal guidance. For example, districts may require all staff to reapply for their positions and be part of the restructuring process. In addition, district staff and unions can work together to include provisions in their contracts that compensate teachers for working longer school days and a longer school year. Districts may also use Title I and Title II funds to provide financial incentives to hire and retain highly qualified teachers and principals for schools in restructuring.

### State surveys for restructuring

As emphasized at the regional workshops, California has developed four surveys to help schools identified for improvement and restructuring collect data they can use to develop their required plans. Districts can also use these surveys to assess how they can support these school improvement plans. The surveys are available on the state Web site at [www.cde.ca.gov/ta/lp/vl/improvtools.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/lp/vl/improvtools.asp).

The first survey, the District Assistance Survey (DAS), analyzes the kinds of district-level support that schools will need in seven areas, including 1) standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment; 2) professional development; 3) human resources; 4) data systems, analysis, and monitoring; 5) parent and community involvement; 6) fiscal operations; and 7) governance and leadership.

The second survey, the Academic Program Survey (APS), gauges how effectively the school has implemented nine “essential program components” that state research has cited as being present at California schools with higher academic achievement. The survey’s evaluation of these components are based on the materials available at the school and include, among others, the use of a master schedule to monitor instructional time; specific amounts and types of intensive training for teachers and principals; an assessment and monitoring system that is embedded in instruction; coaching to support teachers; and pacing schedules for teachers in grades K-8.

The third and fourth surveys, the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) Survey Self Assessment and the English Learner Subgroup Self Assessment (ELSSA), focus specifically on how schools and districts are serving students with disabilities and English language learners, two subgroups that often have a more difficult time meeting AYP targets than the general population.

Once schools and districts complete these surveys of their needs, they can use four state-developed worksheets, each focused on a different restructuring option, to help determine which option to use. For example, the worksheet on reopening a school as a charter school asks districts and schools to consider which identified needs could best be addressed in a charter school format and whether evidence suggests that autonomy from state and district constraints will improve the school’s academic success.

These state tools do not provide all the answers for schools in restructuring. Instead, state officials have urged districts and schools to use the worksheets to refine their thinking and come to consensus about the best restructuring choices.

For schools in their second or third year of restructuring, the message given by state officials at the regional workshops was the same as that given to schools just entering restructuring. “Some of these schools need to change tactics, but some just need more time,” explained Gordon Jackson of the state coordination office. His advice to such schools was: “Do another assessment. Revise. And then continue to implement the plan.”

### SCCAC TOOLS FOR RESTRUCTURING

*Look Before You Leap: Responding Effectively to PI Year 4 Requirements* was created by Dennis Fox, a consultant to the former Southern California Comprehensive Assistance Center and currently an employee of the Los Angeles County Office of Education (SCCAC, 2005). This decision-making guide is designed to help administrators develop a major restructuring plan or select an alternative form of governance that will best meet the needs of their school. Fox noted that before NCLB’s restructuring requirements, many educators did not give a great deal of consideration to school governance, so the first step in restructuring was to develop a working definition of “governance.” *Look Before You Leap* defines school governance as consisting of six components: organization, systems, policies, procedures, practices, and personnel.

The guide then leads school administrators and staff through a series of steps that address eight critical questions, which ultimately lead to a major restructuring plan or the selection of an alternative form of governance for that particular school. The eight critical questions encourage school personnel to examine evidence indicating that the school and its subgroups are or are not making AYP, to consider which components of governance may be impeding the school’s academic progress, to examine the effects of changes in governance already made, and to consider which types of governance changes will contribute to academic progress, among other issues. In most cases, according to Fox, the schools haven’t had sufficient time to fully implement their major restructuring plan.

Fox began training district and school personnel in 2005 in the use of the *Look Before You Leap* tools. Since then, he said, all the schools and districts he has worked with have chosen the any-other option, but each of their strategies was tailored to the school's particular context. He noted that many schools he has worked with have made improvement, although few have improved enough to make AYP.

As Fox began the 2006-07 school year, he reported making a few revisions in his training. First, he said, he encourages school teams to look at data from the last three years, rather than from a single year, to gain a more accurate picture of their school's progress. For example, he noted that aligning curriculum and instruction to standards may give an initial bump to test scores, but scores won't continue to rise if schools stop with alignment.

Second, he intended to give greater emphasis to the direct connection between the evidence that something is wrong and a strategy for improvement. For example, several schools he has worked with determined that they needed to implement standards-based instruction. Simply saying the school would use standards-based instruction, however, would not necessarily be enough to increase student learning, Fox observed. Instead, schools and districts needed to look at how changes in governance would ensure that new standards-based instructional practices were fully implemented.

Reflecting on his work, Fox also offered some cautions for schools and districts that are developing restructuring plans. Some teams involved in discussing restructuring options tend to jump into action too quickly. "There's a big difference between doing something and accomplishing something," he said. In addition, he observed that on some teams "key people seemed to have sway with the whole group," but it is important to hear the voices of all team members in order to make good decisions. Finally, he noted, "It's hard for people to focus on things that are under their control," rather than being distracted by complaints about things they could not do anything about, such as the school's demographics or the home life of their students. Instead, Fox emphasized the importance of focusing on immediate changes to governance that help move student achievement forward.

## A Closer Look at Restructuring in Four California Districts

### THEMES FROM RESTRUCTURING DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS

To learn more about the details, challenges, and effects of restructuring at the local level, CEP conducted case studies of four school districts and eight schools within these districts. Tahoe-Truckee, a rural district, and Grant, an urban district, are using state-developed surveys. Suburban Palmdale is using *Look Before You Leap*, and urban Oakland has come up with a unique district approach to restructuring.

Some commonalities emerged from the analysis of our case studies. All districts and schools reported intensive use of data to make decisions about teaching students. Most also used data to place students with similar needs together for instruction. These groups changed frequently based on reassessment of students.

In addition, all case study schools have increased staff collaboration to improve student achievement. For example, all have instituted some type of teacher team planning time, and all have added "coaches" for teachers or principals; these coaches model effective work, observe staff, and provide suggestions for improvement. In addition, all case study schools have changed their schedules to allow more time for interventions for struggling students. Several have added before- or after-school programs that extend the school day for students who need more time to learn.

While most of the case study schools have made progress, only one, Sobrante Park in Oakland, has improved enough to make AYP for two years in a row and come off the state's list of schools in need of improvement. Several other schools said they needed more time for reforms to work, and a few did not believe they had the resources to make the changes needed.

### RESTRUCTURING IN TAHOE-TRUCKEE UNIFIED

The Tahoe-Truckee Unified School District is located in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California, about 100 miles northeast of Sacramento and 35 miles west of Reno, Nevada. The district includes the north shore and some of the western shore of Lake Tahoe and encompasses more than 720 square miles. Its 4,200 students come from

three counties—Nevada, Placer, and El Dorado. The students served by the district’s five Title I targeted assistance schools have had more difficulty demonstrating proficiency on state tests than students in the other schools. Both Title I elementary schools are in school improvement—one in year 3 and one in year 1. (The district has five elementary schools altogether.) The students in the elementary school in year 3 feed into North Tahoe Middle School, which is in year 5, restructuring implementation, under NCLB. This targeted assistance Title I middle school serves approximately 350 students, 36% of whom are low-income and 40% of whom are Latino.

Since NCLB took effect, the general population at Tahoe-Truckee has typically made gains in student achievement each year and met AYP targets. In English language arts, the percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient level on state tests rose by about 12 points from 2002-03 to 2005-06 for the district as a whole. In math during the same period, the percentage at or above proficient rose by about 19 points. Subgroups, particularly English language learners, Latino students, and low-income students, have also improved but not as quickly as the general population. English language learners and Latino students did not make AYP in English language arts, based on test scores from 2005-06. Low-income students exceeded AYP targets in English language arts but only by 0.3%. All subgroups met math targets.

At North Tahoe Middle School, the percentage of students scoring at or above proficient on state tests also rose from 2002-03 to 2005-06. Proficiency rates in English language arts increased at the school by about 16 percentage points. In math during the same period, the percentage scoring at or above proficient rose by about 25 points. But at this middle school, as in the district as a whole, subgroups other than white students have not kept pace with the general population in English language arts. The Latino, English language learner, and low-income subgroups all failed to meet AYP targets in English language arts in 2005-06. For the school as a whole, the percentage of students meeting AYP targets in English language arts also dropped slightly, from 52% proficient to 51%. In math, however, the percentage of students scoring at or above proficient increased for both the general population and all subgroups. School officials noted that the entering 6<sup>th</sup> grade class in 2005-06 made less progress on state tests than 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders.

### **Using the state surveys and other technical assistance in Tahoe-Truckee**

When NCLB took effect in 2002, North Tahoe Middle School was placed in year 1 of school improvement. “Since North Tahoe Middle School was one of the first schools in the country to do program improvement [under NCLB] it was kind of an experiment,” explained Principal Dave Curry. In the first years of school improvement, Curry said the school and district tried and abandoned a number of strategies to improve student achievement. About three years ago, Curry and staff used the APS, one of the state-developed surveys mentioned above, to gauge how well the school was implementing nine research-based program components and to come up with a comprehensive plan to improve the school.

In addition, Curry was proactive about asking a team from his county education office to come visit the school before such a visit became mandatory under the state accountability system. The purpose of the visit, Curry said, was to “get their input, their buy-in to the changes that we’re making, and their modifications, if they had any.”

The visit paid off, according to Curry. “The team interpreted our survey in certain ways we hadn’t, and they focused us,” he explained, adding that the team also gave him a list of other schools to visit that were similar to North Tahoe Middle and were making progress academically. The county team was and remains “a tremendous, tremendous support,” he added.

Based on the APS, county assistance, school visits, and staff and community input, North Tahoe Middle School has made major changes over the last three years, as described below. These changes have evolved into a restructuring plan that fits under the any-other option for restructuring. This year, the school and district are focusing on fully implementing these changes in all classrooms. Jessamy Lasher, the district’s director of curriculum and categorical programs, noted that classroom implementation “is a critical restructuring piece because [the district] needs to have the staff not only become comfortable with it, but see different ways of teaching that are more successful. We have to give it three to five years to really see it make a change.”

### Major changes at North Tahoe Middle School

One of the first major changes Curry made at the school was to create a schedule that grouped students by skill level so struggling students could receive additional instruction, and that allowed these groups to change as needed. Teachers were shifted to fill these new classes. Under the new schedule, students who are behind in reading or math may now take up to three periods of reading and up to two periods of math. As a result, some students do not receive science, social studies, or other electives. However, as students improved, Curry said, “we found that we needed fewer low-level classes. Kids were starting to perform, and the kids that were really low were starting to move up.” After initial parent resistance, he said, the new schedule is accepted and appreciated.

For the 2005-06 school year, the school implemented a program called Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), which emphasizes study habits, note taking, and commitment to learning. Students who are not performing up to their capacity receive an extra period that emphasizes study skills and motivational activities. Guest speakers talk to students about the value of graduating from high school and college and give advice on how to do it. In addition, the notebook and note taking procedures used in AVID have been adopted by all the teachers in the school. Curry noted that the program has helped the staff be more consistent in their classroom procedures and that classes are running more smoothly.

AVID targets what Curry described as the middle group of students who could perform better but who lack drive and may not have a good support structure at home. Students are recruited by staff and must formally apply to participate in AVID. While the program had benefits for many students in 2005-06, Curry noted that it did not reach all of the targeted students: “Some students we had wished would apply didn’t, so we still don’t have an answer for the students that don’t believe college is important. They’re just biding their time to get out of school.” The school and district are still searching for strategies to reach low-income, non-minority students who do not qualify for special services and often do not have community groups to advocate for them, Curry said.

In 2005-06, North Tahoe also implemented the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)

program. This program trains all teachers, not just teachers of English language learners, to teach in ways that support ELLs and help them learn academic content within the regular classroom. SIOP training was part of a districtwide initiative to improve academic achievement among ELLs in Tahoe-Truckee, Lasher explained. At North Tahoe, a coach focusing on English language learners helped train teachers in SIOP.

In addition to the ELL coach, North Tahoe had coaches in 2005-06 for English language arts and math. Curry called this the biggest change of the year and noted that it was initially difficult to implement because “there wasn’t really any job description.” Teachers received training to become coaches through the California Statewide Beginning Teachers Support System and Assessment, a training program designed to teach educators to mentor new teachers.

Ultimately, Curry said, “all [coaches] were very highly qualified, specialized in their subject matter, very experienced teachers, and, I have to say, did a tremendous job without having much structure.” At the beginning of 2006-07, the coaches hit the ground running, Curry said, adding, “I am very happy with the growth of the support structure that we put in place last year.”

A new addition to the school’s improvement strategies for 2006-07 is a system of peer observation among teachers. “We’re trying to encourage teachers to observe other teachers, to learn what they may about best practices,” Curry explained. “We’re encouraging teachers to volunteer to be observed so that we can begin to have open sharing about what works and what doesn’t.” Curry’s hope is that this system of observation, in conjunction with support from coaches, can help teachers implement restructuring efforts at a deeper level.

In light of the breadth of changes North Tahoe Middle School has undertaken and the rise in test scores for many of its students, Lasher noted that the any-other option for restructuring was really the only choice for the school. “We couldn’t see restructuring as a charter,” she said. “We only have one middle school, so that was not an option.” And removing the principal or replacing the staff did not make sense, she explained, because Curry and the current staff are responsible for making significant changes in the school, increasing student achievement, and regaining parent and student trust after the difficult schedule changes.

## RESTRUCTURING IN THE GRANT JOINT UNION DISTRICT

Grant Joint Union High School District in Sacramento serves almost 14,000 students in six middle schools, five high schools, and six alternative schools. Within the boundaries of this large secondary district are six independent elementary school districts that have their own schools for grades K-6. The Grant district, which covers 100 square miles, is mostly urban but includes some rural areas and suburbs. McClellan Air Force Base, a central part of the Grant district for many years, has closed but its facilities are being used by private industry. New businesses are moving in, and the school district has offices there. Low-income housing has taken the place of the former military barracks, and a homeless shelter has been established at the site. Low-income students make up 69% of the student population; about 29% of Grant's students are English language learners, and 11% are students with disabilities.

The district as a whole has increased its percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient level since the inception of NCLB. From 2002-03 to 2005-06, the percentage proficient increased by 7 points in English language arts and 12 points in math. All subgroups, except Filipino students in English language arts, have also increased their percentages of proficient students since 2002-03, although some subgroups still fall short of making AYP. African American students and students with disabilities failed to meet AYP targets in math on the 2005-06 state tests. Based on 2005-06 testing, three schools are in year 2 of improvement, one school is in year 3, four are in year 4, and three are in year 5. Of the three schools officially in year 5, two are actually in their sixth year of school improvement.

### Using the state surveys in Grant

As a district, Grant has long been accustomed to using data and outside observers to evaluate schools and implement improvements. As Superintendent Larry Buchanan reported, the district went through a voluntary state audit process about four years ago to help make changes to improve achievement. The district is now heavily technology and data driven, he said. For example, a districtwide computer system allows teachers to easily record and analyze informal and formal assessments so they can group students by instructional needs and plan lessons based on individual needs (Erenben, 2006; Buchanan, 2006). "If we're

going to really achieve the results that are legitimate, regardless of No Child Left Behind accountability, the only way we can do that is using a laser on each kid," Buchanan explained. "We've got to target exactly what those kids need, have time for curriculum to be re-taught and remediated, and do all those different kinds of things that get down to an individual, personalized level of instruction. And we can do that. We're on the way there, in different stages in different schools."

This emphasis on data analysis for decision making fits well with NCLB and restructuring, said Rick Carder, director of the district's categorical programs. Within restructuring, the any-other option worked best for Grant's data-driven schools, district officials said. Changing staff or hiring an outside entity would not work as well because the new staff and the outside entity would need extensive training on the district's data management and analysis systems, Buchanan said.

Pat Newsome, Grant's associate superintendent for educational services, added that staff changes were not always possible due to union contract agreements. Instead, she said the district supports schools in restructuring by hiring coaches and additional staff for these schools, using county office staff or the RSDSS staff to help schools plan for restructuring, and using the state APS to inform restructuring plans.

### Major changes at MLK Jr. Junior High

Martin Luther King, Jr. Junior High School (MLK Jr.), one of two Grant schools participating in the CEP case studies, is in restructuring implementation (its sixth year of school improvement). The school enrolls about 940 students in grades 7 and 8. Virtually all (99%) of its students are low-income, and 42% are English language learners.

Principal Samuel Harris came to Martin Luther King Jr. Junior High in 1999. At that time, he said, "Everything you can think of that's wrong was happening [at the school]—an inner-city, socioeconomically deprived school, drugs, fights, early pregnancies, poor staff." Since then, he said, "We've brought our school from the bottom of the stack to a school that is really moving on."

In addition to receiving district support for restructuring, MLK Jr. volunteered to participate in a review by

the state's School Assistance and Intervention Team (SAIT). The SAIT review involved a formal evaluation using the APS.

Describing restructuring at MLK Jr., Curriculum Coordinator Sydney Smith said, "So many pieces have been in place that it's almost more of just a shift in the focus rather than a giant change in any one particular thing." Harris agreed. Partly due to the SAIT review, MLK hired a full-time curriculum coordinator, brought on an additional math teacher to reduce class size, arranged for release time for six teachers to coach their peers in English language arts and math, and implemented staff development in standards-aligned instructional strategies.

In addition to the recommended changes from the SAIT team, the school has implemented Explicit Direct Instruction, a teacher-directed instructional method that uses a step-by-step process and frequent teacher-student interactions to present information and check students' understanding. The school has also revamped its schedule to group students by their documented instructional needs; set up "safety net meetings" where teachers discuss students with behavioral and academic problems; and switched to a single lunch period to cut down on transition times and increase instructional time.

Despite the many changes, student achievement did not improve last year. Between 2002-03 and 2004-05, the percentage of the school's students scoring at or above the proficient level on state tests did rise by 6 points in English language arts and 11 points in math. But on the 2005-06 tests, the percentage proficient remained almost the same as the previous year. The school did not make AYP as a whole or for any subgroup. And the school's Academic Performance Index (API) score, the state measure of accountability, dropped 10 points.

"Actually, it's kind of frustrating," Harris said of the stagnation in test scores. "Because we're doing everything we can. What do I do now? It gets tough." The principal does think the school is on the right track, but said it might need more time.

Smith agreed. "Last year, we really were focused on making the changes, getting them in place, getting people kind of used to a new system, a new way of

structuring things." This year, she said, the school will have a "tunnel vision" focus on three academic issues: data-driven instruction, effective instructional delivery, and student motivation.

While Harris and Smith expressed high hopes for this school year, both regretted changes they were not able to put in place due to lack of funds. The initial recommendation from the SAIT team was for two full-time coaches on site, Smith explained, but the school could not afford to hire additional staff and also implement all the other changes, so it had to make difficult choices.

### Many changes at Grant Union High

Grant Union High School, the other school participating in CEP's case study of the Grant district, serves about 1,600 students in grades 9 through 12. The vast majority (92%) of its students come from low-income families, and more than a third (39%) are English language learners.

Since 2002-03, the percentage of Grant Union High students scoring at the proficient level has risen by 12 points in English language arts and 7 points in math. The overall school population has typically met AYP targets, but subgroups are still having difficulty. In 2004-05 testing, Asian students failed to meet targets in English language arts. In 2005-06 testing, African American students and English language learners failed to meet targets in math.

Grant Union is in the implementation phase of restructuring (its fifth year of school improvement) and is using the any-other restructuring option. The school also got a new principal, Craig Murray, in 2006. Although district officials said Murray was a key player in changing the school, they observed that changing the principal alone would not have made a difference and that the any-other option best described the school's efforts.

Like MLK Jr., Grant Union High School went through the SAIT process last year, but on a voluntary basis. Murray said the school volunteered for the process because school leaders believed it would provide valuable information about how to improve the school.

Specific changes the school implemented under its restructuring plan included assigning a district site coordinator to help oversee the school and work with

its teaching staff. The school also contracted with an outside consultant at the county education office to assist teachers, changed the bell schedule to create common prep periods for English 9 and Algebra 1 teachers who work with at-risk students, and developed an after-school program to assist students in English and math.

At the very beginning of the 2005-06 school year, Murray said some staff members didn't take the plan seriously: "I think there were some people who believed that we were going to go through this process, and [the plan] was going on the shelf." Not long into the school year, however, he said teachers realized the importance of the new initiatives.

In addition to making the changes listed on its restructuring plan, Grant Union High is focusing this year on implementing teacher observations. School administrators will be observing teachers informally on a random basis using an observation checklist. The aim, Murray said, is to assist teachers and promote an open environment. While some teachers have embraced the new observations, others seem less sure, he said. "There's always that group that's going to take it and run with it right away, because this is what you're supposed to do," he explained. "There's that other group that's saying, 'Hey, what does this mean?' And then, there's the other group that's going to be disruptive, saying, 'Hey, I don't want to deal with it.' That's a very small number."

Curriculum Coordinator Anna Trunnell noted that doing observations and implementing other changes at Grant Union was somewhat easier because the school's structure already relied on teacher collaboration, rather than top-down directives. Ideas are presented to teachers through a site leadership team and teacher groups. "There is a collaborative effort and collaborative voice," said Trunnell, "so that there is one accord."

This year Grant Union is also focusing on improving students' graduation rates, college readiness, and work preparation by making sure students have the necessary credits to graduate on time. Toward this end, school staff are scheduling students more carefully, and making them more aware of the courses they need for graduation, Murray said. The school is also offering a revamped after-school program called LEAP (Launching Educational and Academic Performance) that provides

tutoring as well as course credits for students who have previously failed a course. Last year, the after-school program shared space with detention, but this year, the program has been given its own classrooms, and student attendance has risen. LEAP is another example of the district and school commitment to student achievement and staff collaboration, Trunnell explained.

Both Murray and Trunnell were optimistic about improving the school. Trunnell, who worked as a teacher at Grant Union before restructuring, observed, "One thing that I'm very impressed with is the amount of involvement that teachers have in the decision making of this school, something that I didn't observe before [restructuring]. I feel that teachers are more empowered now because they have more information. They know what's going on, and they know what's at stake."

### **RESTRUCTURING IN THE PALMDALE ELEMENTARY DISTRICT**

Palmdale Elementary School District lies about 67 miles north of Los Angeles International Airport. While some residents commute to Los Angeles for work, the parents of many Palmdale students work in the Antelope Valley in the aerospace or service industry. Some also work at Edwards Air Force Base, about 50 miles away. The school district has been challenged by rapid growth and high rates of poverty: 59% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches and 28% are English language learners.

Between 2002-03 and 2005-06, the Palmdale district increased its percentage of students scoring at or above the proficient level by about 8 points in English language arts and about 9 points in math. The general population in Palmdale has typically met AYP targets, but subgroups have not. English language learners and students with disabilities did not meet AYP targets in either subject based on 2005-06 testing. That same year, African American students did not meet the math targets. Individual schools in Palmdale have also had difficulty making AYP. Eight schools are in restructuring planning, and four are in restructuring implementation. Of the four in implementation, three are in their sixth year of school improvement.

### Using *Look Before You Leap* in Palmdale

As a district, Palmdale decided that all restructuring schools would use the *Look Before You Leap* guide from the Southern California Comprehensive Assistance Center to make restructuring decisions. In 2005, consultant Dennis Fox trained the Palmdale central office leadership team to use the guide to answer questions about the district's schools in restructuring. The district team then trained principals at schools undergoing restructuring. The principals, in turn, did the process with their school staffs, which ultimately collaborated on the restructuring plans. While it was sometimes difficult for staff to face records of past low achievement and make the necessary changes, staff found the *Look Before You Leap* process very useful, said Betty Stiers, assistant superintendent of educational services.

In August 2006, Fox again met with Palmdale principals, assistant principals, and district office management. This year, all of the district's people in these positions, not just those in restructuring schools, were trained in *Building a Culture of Continuous Improvement*, which advocates decision-making techniques similar to those in *Look Before You Leap*. In addition, the administrators examined three years of data instead of one in order to discern trends in their school's data. In the fall, all school administrators led their staff in *Building a Culture of Continuous Improvement* activities to refine their school improvement plans.

As a result of *Building a Culture of Continuous Improvement* and *Look Before You Leap*, Palmdale schools in restructuring are using the any-other restructuring option. While each school's plan is slightly different, some districtwide initiatives will be crucial to helping improve achievement at these schools, Stiers said. The district has developed benchmark assessments and pacing guides that are aligned to state standards and assessments in English language arts and math. The benchmark assessments occur every six to eight weeks for the elementary school grades and every trimester for junior high. Teachers are expected to meet in grade-level teams to discuss results and plan instruction.

The pacing guides have some flexibility, Stiers noted. Strict pacing guides that require all teachers to be teaching from a specific page in their teachers' guide on the same day don't reflect "the reality of what goes on in the classroom," she explained. Fire drills, school

assemblies, or any number of things can disrupt a teacher's daily schedule. With the flexible pacing guide, Stiers said, "if the teacher should happen to miss part of the language arts period or math period or even the entire period, they won't be so off the pacing guide that it would affect whether they had really taught everything that needed to be taught before the next assessment was administered."

Other districtwide initiatives aimed at helping restructuring schools are also being implemented this year. A team from the Regional System of District and School Support, made up of county administrators, met with the leaders of schools in restructuring to help determine barriers to student achievement and identify supports that the district could provide to overcome those barriers, Stiers explained. RSDSS also provided additional staff development for principals and site leaders based on their needs.

Moreover, in 2006-07, members of the district administrative staff are scheduling regular visits to schools to observe classrooms, ensure that the instructional program is effective, and talk with administrators about the school's needs. The district has focused this year's professional development primarily on English language arts and math and has placed literary coaches in most of the schools in restructuring. Finally, Stiers explained, the district has encouraged schools to develop a collaborative model of school leadership. Schools have established leadership teams made up of teachers, who meet with the administrative staff to make decisions about the school.

The option of replacing principals and staff was unworkable for Palmdale, Stiers said. "We have such a high principal turnover that happens without No Child Left Behind," she noted. In addition, teacher turnover can be high, especially at the middle school level, because teachers are often recruited to teach in the nearby high school district. Instead of replacing staff, the district concentrates on training the new staff as they come in, Stiers said, adding that having even more new staff would not be desirable.

### Changes at Yucca Elementary

Yucca Elementary, the Palmdale school that was the subject of CEP's case study, is in its sixth year of school improvement. Some 12% of Yucca's students are

African American, 80% are Latino, and 6% are white. In addition, 48% of students are English language learners, and 97% are low income.

Since 2002-03, Yucca has increased its percentage of students performing at or above the proficient level by 5 points in English language arts and 8 points in math. Still these percentages have not been high enough for the overall student population at Yucca to make AYP in either math or English language arts for the past four years. Subgroups at Yucca have also had difficulty making AYP. Although most subgroups have increased the percentage of proficient students over time, 2005-06 testing showed a slight decrease for African American students in math, from 18% proficient to 16%.

Hector Algeria, principal of Yucca Elementary, agreed with Stiers that replacing staff was not a viable restructuring strategy for his school, which hired four new teachers this year—including two hired after the school year started. Having even more new teachers would not help school restructuring, he said. Algeria is himself a new principal this year, but he served as Yucca's assistant principal last year, which Stiers said is essential to continuing the school's restructuring plans.

In addition to implementing districtwide initiatives, Yucca will continue to use the restructuring strategies that emerged from its *Look Before You Leap* activities. "A lot of the problems that we had in [past] years, we no longer have," Algeria said. "So now we can really concentrate on the nitty-gritty." For example, physical plant and materials problems abounded at Yucca when Algeria came to the school two years ago. Algeria said that although the problems had to be solved, they distracted from the focus on student achievement and classroom initiatives.

School restructuring strategies at Yucca include expanding the Reading First program, implementing its "Voyagers" tutoring program, and arranging for all teachers to participate in state training in English language arts and math.

Reading First is a federal grant aimed at improving K-3 reading by using research-based methods and materials to teach essential components of reading. Yucca has not only implemented the program in the early grades, but it has also expanded Reading First methods and

materials to grades 4-6 and has arranged state Reading First training for its entire staff.

Through the Voyagers reading intervention program, Yucca teachers provide tutoring to students after school. The program comes with its own assessment system so that students can move in and out of the program as they need extra help, Algeria said. The school has been using the program to help students who fall behind catch up quickly, he explained.

In addition, Yucca has made an effort to ensure that all of its teachers receive state professional development in the use of state-approved English language arts and math instructional materials. As a district, Palmdale has provided funds for teachers to attend this training. All but two new Yucca teachers have completed the training, Algeria reported.

For 2006-07, its second year of restructuring implementation, Yucca plans to continue its current restructuring efforts rather than revising them, Algeria said, because the strategies appear to be working. "We are moving kids out of the bottom quintiles and pushing them up," he explained, pointing to overall rising percentages of proficient scores and rising marks on the state accountability system. "NCLB does not give us credit because we haven't hit the target or gotten students to the academic place they need to be. But we're on the right track, and we're building on that."

## RESTRUCTURING IN THE OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Oakland Unified School District serves the city of Oakland in northern California. Overall, Oakland's enrollment is 40% African American, 33% Latino, 16% Asian, and 6% white. In addition, 66% of students come from low-income families, 26% are English language learners, and 10% are students with disabilities. Student demographics vary by school, however, with some schools serving the city's more affluent "hill" neighborhoods and others serving very poor, high-minority neighborhoods in the "flatlands" between highways 880 and 580. Placed in state receivership in June 2003 due to financial difficulties, the Oakland district has continued to face a shrinking budget as a result of declining enrollment.

The district's overall percentage of students performing at the proficient level on state tests rose 11 points in English language arts and 13 points in math between 2002-03 and 2005-06. The district's subgroups made gains as well, but not as great as those made by the general population. Subgroup performance has kept the district from making AYP. In English language arts, Latino students, Pacific Islanders, English language learners, and students with disabilities fell short of AYP targets based on 2005-06 testing. For math during the same time period, Pacific Islanders and students with disabilities failed to meet the targets. Many individual schools in Oakland have also had difficulty making AYP. Based on 2005-06 testing, seven Oakland schools are in restructuring planning (year 4 of school improvement), and 11 are in restructuring implementation. Of the 11 in restructuring implementation, 10 are in their sixth year of school improvement.

Four Oakland schools participated in this study: Whittier Elementary, New Highland Elementary, Cox Elementary, and Sobrante Park Elementary. All four are Title I schools, and all have percentages of low-income students and English language learners that are above the district average. All four schools are located in the flatlands. In 2005-06, all were in restructuring implementation, except for Sobrante Park, which was officially in restructuring planning but implemented its plan a year early.

### Using district restructuring plans in Oakland

In 2005-06, Oakland took the lead in determining how schools were restructured by narrowing schools' choices. Only schools that achieved an API of 590 or greater on the state accountability index in 2004-05 and met schoolwide AYP targets for 2003-04 were eligible for what Oakland called "internal restructuring," an option corresponding to the any-other option in federal law. Three Oakland schools met these criteria—Allendale, Sobrante Park, and Stonehurst—and the first two chose to use this option.

The next option considered for schools in Oakland was "new school creation," which consists of appointing a leader to form a community-based design team that spends a year completely designing the new school and hiring a staff committed to the design team's vision. At the end of that year, the new school opens and the old school is either closed or phased out over

two years. This Oakland option also falls under the any-other option in federal law.

If a school was not eligible for internal restructuring and the district and/or school did not support the idea of new school creation, the third option was to become a contract or charter school. District documents emphasized that this option is only considered after the district rules out the first two options, and only if the district receives a viable application from an outside entity to run the school. The district uses a rubric to evaluate the applications. Typically, when a school becomes a charter school, all staff reapply for their jobs, and these jobs are non-union. In Oakland, a new chartering organization, Education for Change, was founded specifically to serve schools in restructuring. Although other chartering organizations could apply to manage schools, only Education for Change has been successful in contracting with schools in restructuring.

Replacing staff is also a frequently used option in Oakland, either alone or in conjunction with other options. While district documents state that replacing staff is only a partial solution to restructuring in Oakland, all schools in restructuring have, in fact, made some staff changes.

Schools entering restructuring in 2006-07 used this district process to help form their restructuring plans. For schools that restructured in 2005-06 but did not make AYP, district and school representatives examined whether the school had made progress on state tests and based decisions about future strategies on the test results, district officials explained. Schools that made progress were instructed to continue their restructuring efforts, while those that did not were asked to restructure again. Some in this latter group replaced more staff, and others went ahead with new school creation.

### Staff replacement and other strategies in Whittier Elementary

At Whittier Elementary, the percentage of students performing at or above proficient on state tests has remained relatively flat. The school's strategy for school year 2005-06, the first year of restructuring implementation, was to replace about half of its teachers. From 2004-05 to 2005-06, the percentage of proficient students rose by 1 point in English language arts and fell

by 1 point in math. Subgroup results were similar. Neither the school as a whole nor any of its subgroups met AYP targets in English language arts. In math, the general population met targets, but African American students did not.

In addition, many teachers and parents did not buy into the restructuring process, which resulted in community protests, explained Mary Pippitt Cervantes, the district's Reading First coordinator. As a result, the district instructed the school to replace staff again in 2006-07. This time both teachers and administrators were replaced. In addition, the district plans to open a new school on the site in 2007-08. This school year a new school creation committee is being formed that includes parents, teachers, and various representatives from the campus, explained Assistant Principal Laura Smith. The committee will address a range of issues and make the major decisions about what Whittier will look like in the future.

In addition to new staff, other changes are in the works for 2006-07, Smith said. The school has a new visitor policy. In the past, parents went in and out of classrooms without necessarily getting approval from the school's office, but this year parents are required to check in at the office, and classroom volunteers must have TB testing and fingerprinting. Among parents, Smith said, "there's a lot of good intention. It just needs to be organized."

The school has also been using math and reading coaches. The math coach was hired through general funds, while the reading coach was hired through the school's Reading First grant and has been in place for a number of years. These coaches will help teachers differentiate instruction to meet a variety of student skill levels, Smith said.

Knowing that they will have to reapply for their jobs for 2007-08 may be difficult for some teachers but exciting for others, Smith anticipated. She herself was an assistant principal at an Oakland school slated for new school creation in 2005-06. Because she came to the Oakland school in 2006 after the administrative staff for the new school had already been chosen, she knew she would not be working there in 2006-07. At times this made her work difficult, she said. "Every time you're on the playground and you're talking to some little kid about jumping rope or whatever, you know you're not

going to see them the next year," she remarked. Still, she said for 2006-07 she chose another school in restructuring, Whittier, over a job in another district because of the opportunity to be part of the new school creation—a "really positive" step in her view—and because she believes that restructuring schools can make changes more quickly than other schools. She plans on applying for a job at the new school for 2007-08.

### **New school creation at Highland Elementary**

New Highland Elementary is a new school that replaced the former Highland Elementary this year, but the school is considered to be in its sixth year of improvement because of state guidance limiting which schools can have a clean slate for AYP. In 2005-06, Highland Elementary restructured by replacing about half of its staff and hiring a new principal. The school also formed a committee to plan the creation of a new school for 2006-07.

Between 2004-05 and 2005-06 testing, the percentage of students at or above proficient dropped about 4 points in English language arts—falling below the 2002-03 ELA level—and about 6 points in math. Neither the student population as a whole nor any subgroup met AYP targets. New Highland was already scheduled to become a new school in 2006-07, so that action became its restructuring strategy for 2006-07. As a result, the school has a new principal, and more than half the teachers are new.

Liz Ozol, the new principal, said she came to the old Highland Elementary midway through 2005-06 as a vice principal with the understanding that she would become the principal in 2006-07. At the beginning of this school year, Ozol said safety was her first priority: "There's data that shows that when you create a safe and inclusive environment, test scores go up. So that's my first line of action." The emphasis on safety was partly a response to the atmosphere that existed at the school in 2005-06. "There were high levels of violence," Ozol explained, "from horseplay to real hitting and punching and kicking. There were large numbers of suspensions."

New Highland's core values, which are new for 2006-07, also emphasize safety and respectful behaviors: Be kind. Work hard. Get smart. Talk it out. "We're doing massive schoolwide teaching about what those behaviors look like and sound like," Ozol explained.

Instruction at New Highland will be more differentiated to address individual student needs, and teachers will have more leeway in how they teach. “The old Highland was very much regimented,” said Ozol. “It was pretty much ‘Open your workbook to page 24, and get to work.’” In addition, the school has added a variety of motivational activities, including a contest in which students and teachers wrote raps using one or more of the core values, and Friday assemblies designed to build community spirit.

While Ozol and staff said they were pleased with the new school, Ozol did have a few disappointments. In the original design, the new school, which was formerly K-5, was slated to open as a K-3 school and add 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades over the next two years. Partway through the design process the district decided that this would not be possible, she said, and the school has remained a K-5 school enrolling 340 students. This decision was “devastating,” in Ozol’s words, because many of the students with entrenched behavior problems at the old Highland would return to New Highland as 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders. In addition, Ozol initially thought that becoming a new school would allow New Highland to start over at year 0 of school improvement, as the other new school on the same campus, Rise Elementary, did last year. The state education department said, however, that at least one school on the site had to keep the same AYP status, since the student population was not changing significantly. Since New Highland was the second new school on the site, it kept old Highland’s AYP status.

As New Highland moves forward, three coaches support the principal and staff. One coach helps the new principal develop leadership skills and is from New Leaders for New Schools, a federally-funded, New York-based, nonprofit organization. Another coach provides professional development and assists with data analysis. This coach is from the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools, an Oakland nonprofit group committed to improving Bay area schools. The third coach, from the district’s own Office of New School Development, helps ensure full implementation of the new school design. Ozol expects the coaches to help her and the staff stay on track for implementing the school’s restructuring plan and to solve any problems that may come up. “I feel pretty well supported,” she said.

### **The charter school approach at Cox Elementary**

In 2005-06, Cox Elementary restructured by becoming a charter school, under the management of Education for Change. As part of this process, all staff reapplied for their jobs, and all agreed to be non-union, at-will, contract employees. The same principal, Michael Scott, was rehired, but more than half the teachers hired were new to the school.

The school continues to follow the district curriculum. Between 2004-05 and 2005-06, student achievement, as gauged by the percentage of students scoring proficient, improved by about 2 points in English language arts but decreased by about 10 points in math. It is important to note, however, that Cox’s enrollment fell by about 200 students between 2004-05 and 2005-06, so the students at the school were less comparable than at schools with less dramatic changes in student population.

Scott said he is not sure why test scores didn’t improve more. “We sought quality instruction and had an excellent system of professional development and coaching support,” he said. “To be quite honest with you, I don’t know why we didn’t do better.” Scott noted that in mid-September of this year, he and his staff were still combing through the testing data for more answers.

Efforts to increase student achievement during 2006-07 will include the continuation of some initiatives and a deepening of others, Scott said. Cox continues to offer a before-school tutoring program for students who score far below the basic level. This tutoring program “pre-teaches” the lessons that are taught in the classroom, and the teachers are Cox staff, Scott explained. An after-school tutoring program also exists for students who score below basic (but not far below). These students participate in activities that will reinforce what has been taught in the classroom, and the teachers come from the charter’s substitute pool, Scott said.

The school continues to implement Open Court, the district’s reading program, with support from a Reading First grant for grades K-3. The school has also expanded the Reading First model into the upper grades. “The great thing about Reading First is it’s been consistent,” Scott explained. “We’re used to it. It’s routine. It’s just what we do. And it’s a solid structure.”

To deepen the initiatives at Cox, Scott said he is increasing teacher monitoring for 2006-07, using a new monitoring system. The principal, assistant principal, and two Reading First coaches are observing teachers multiple times during the year. Observers record their observations in an electronic log, using a checklist of expected activities in reading and math. They also make notes about the feedback they gave the teacher and the follow-up that took place. "So, if we saw a teacher, and wanted something to improve, we'd document that, and it'd be there for the entire instructional team to see," Scott said, explaining that this helps ensure that all teachers receive consistent feedback and support. In 2006-07, about a fourth of Cox's 28 teachers are new, he said; two teachers were let go by the charter organization and a handful of teachers moved for personal reasons. The previous year, half the staff was new.

As part of this enhanced monitoring, Scott said school administrators and staff are more closely analyzing classroom data. He gave the following example: "In reading last year we said, 'Okay, we're going to focus on comprehension'. . . But along with that, there is an opportunity for us to drill down and say, 'All right, what specifically within the area of reading comprehension is impeding students' ability to produce results when called upon to do so independently?'" Cox's current math and reading programs are providing the assessments; teachers are analyzing the data and addressing students' needs during small group instruction. With this increased focus on individual teachers and students, Scott said, "I think we are on the right track."

### **Sobrante Park exits restructuring**

Because Sobrante Park Elementary had a higher API score than most Oakland schools in restructuring, the district allowed it to consider the any-other option for restructuring. Principal Marco Franco said staff quickly stepped in to hammer out the school's restructuring plans. Between 2004-05 and 2005-06 testing, the percentage of students performing at or above proficient rose about 8 points in English language arts and 20 points in math. All subgroups increased their percentages proficient as well, except for African American students, whose percentage in English language arts fell by about 3 points. Still, Sobrante Park Elementary made all AYP targets for two years in a row and is no longer in restructuring.

The school received positive press after making AYP (Better than you think, 2006), and the district has asked Franco and staff to report on the secrets to their success. The attention makes Franco slightly uneasy, he said. People are now coming to him wanting a quick fix for their schools, but that is unrealistic. "People think that we just started growth just last year. Well, that's not the case," he said. "I've been doing this for six years and just last year felt like, 'Okay, well, it's coming together.'"

Two important reforms started before the restructuring plan, Franco said: Open Court reading instruction and a move away from bilingual education. The Open Court reading program was a scripted program introduced by the district several years ago. In many schools, teachers resisted Open Court, he said, but at Sobrante Park, "teachers embraced the program."

In 2000-01, Franco eliminated bilingual education in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. Then, in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, Franco began a program in January to transition students out of bilingual instruction into English-only instruction. Franco, who himself was an English language learner as a student, said this focus on shifting students quickly to English instruction has been important in raising student achievement.

In the spring of 2005, Sobrante Park staff began planning for restructuring. Although by federal law the school did not have to implement its plan because it made AYP based on 2004-05 testing, Franco and staff went ahead with implementation in 2005-06. The planning process was facilitated by Performance Fact Inc., a local for-profit professional development provider. Hiring a facilitator freed staff to participate fully, Franco said. "[The provider] did all the legwork. They did all the note taking. They did all the formatting. They did all the copying. All we had to do was come here, think, and express ourselves."

Despite being allowed to use the any-other option, the district also required Sobrante Park to change almost half its staff. Initially, Franco said he was not sure this mandate was going to work. "It was a gamble," he explained. "I didn't know who I was going to get. I could work with the [current] staff and they were getting better." The union contract meant that he had to interview and choose teachers from a list of both voluntary and involuntary transfers. Ultimately, however, Franco said he thought the staff change worked well.

He worked with other district administrators and his own staff to identify good teachers who were on the list and recruit them to Sobrante Park.

As part of the restructuring plan implemented in 2005-06, the school introduced a new schedule. The school used to open at 8:30 a.m., but starting in 2005-06, the regular school day was pushed back to 9:00 a.m. From 8:00 to 8:50, the school provided intervention for targeted students. Teachers received stipends to teach small groups of students that shifted as needed based on student skills. The extra time for students before school was essential to their academic progress, Franco said.

Sobrante Park also instituted a mandatory math workshop during the regular school day. In the math workshop, teachers worked with students grouped by skill level. Ongoing assessments helped teachers regroup students frequently as they gained new skills. “As we started working, it became a straightforward standards-based intervention where we focused a lot on number sense,” Franco said, noting that number sense is essential to answer about 60% to 70% of the math questions on the state test.

Finally, to support teachers in making these curricular changes, Sobrante Park instituted what it called grade-level collaborative time. The school brings in substitutes twice a month during the day and pulls teachers out of the classroom for an hour and ten minutes by grade level, and sometimes across grade levels. This gives teachers time to analyze data, plan instruction, and offer one another support, Franco explained. This collaboration time is in addition to other planning periods and professional development.

For 2006-07, Franco said the school is continuing on the same track. Since Sobrante Park relied heavily on its own before-school tutoring time, it will not lose much by no longer offering the supplemental educational services that it had to arrange as part of NCLB improvement, he said. The following year, 2007-08, may be more difficult financially, because the school will need to pay for its Reading First coach entirely out of general funds. Franco is confident, however, that he will be able to shift funds and apply for grants to make up the gaps.

The school will also keep the element that Franco said was most important to its success: “a sense of collaboration.” He attributes much of the school’s gains to the

hard work of staff. He described his own job as one of keeping teachers “in the know, with the tools that they need, and happy campers.” Staff appeared to agree. In a letter to the editor in response to an article in *NovoMetro*, teacher Teri Hudson wrote, “Essentially, we have evolved into being a very dedicated staff who works well together and with our equally-dedicated principal” (Hudson, 2006).

## Conclusion

Schools in restructuring in our case studies, in California and across the nation, face an arduous journey. To come out of restructuring under NCLB, increasing percentages of all students and of all subgroups must meet rising state AYP targets in both reading and math on state tests in grades 3 through 8 and once in high school. Many schools in California have scaled one summit simply to find more mountains beyond the first. Even at Sobrante Park, which came off the list of schools in improvement this year, the principal said he had no secret maps to offer. Instead, improving instruction took many years of effort and a staff that went above and beyond what was required.

CEP’s analysis of California school improvement data showed that simply meeting the requirements of NCLB and the state by reporting which restructuring option a school will use does not typically lead to success. Our case studies found that school improvement is far more complicated than that. If NCLB is going to help improve these schools that are the farthest behind, more support and monitoring will be needed. Unlike some other states, California does provide assistance in the form of surveys, worksheets, and workshops to help schools make good restructuring choices. Our case studies show, however, that not all schools have the financial resources, knowledge base, collaborative drive, or stability of staff to make their restructuring plans a reality. Even for those schools that are able to implement all changes, get all teachers on board, and retain newly trained staff, it may take more than two years to get all students in these high-need schools on the right path.

Because many schools in restructuring started well below others in student achievement and had a history of poor management, changes in how AYP is determined may also be needed. All case study participants, as well as state officials, said they would like to see

schools get more credit for improvements they make along the road to meeting current AYP targets. This kind of credit might make it clearer which steps are the right ones for restructuring and might raise morale so that schools can maintain the staff collaboration essential to making reforms work. Several case study participants also noted that regulations around special education and English language learner subgroups make meeting AYP targets particularly difficult. Future changes in the law should consider these issues.

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**Center on Education Policy**

1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 522  
Washington, D.C. 20036

tel: 202.822.8065

fax: 202.822.6008

e: [cep-dc@cep-dc.org](mailto:cep-dc@cep-dc.org)

w: [www.cep-dc.org](http://www.cep-dc.org)