

## **Content Standards, Merit Pay, and Standardized Testing: Teacher Attitudes toward Contemporary Education Policies**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines the impact of content standards, merit pay, and standardized testing on teacher instruction during the era of the California Department of Education's (CDE) Certificated Staff Performance Incentive program (CSPI). The CSPI awarded California schoolteachers monetary bonuses if their students were successful, or showed improvement on the Stanford Achievement Test 9 (SAT9) — the standardized test used in the California educational system. 114 teachers were surveyed to discover the impact the CSPI program and associated policies had on attitudes toward their profession. Study results showed that generally, most teachers felt negatively toward CDE accountability programs. In light of the findings, the efficacy of comprehensive accountability programs is discussed.

**Keywords:** Elementary Education, Content Standards, Merit Pay, Standardized Testing

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## Introduction

This study examines teachers' attitudes toward the Certificated Staff Performance Incentive (CSPI), the Academic Performance Index (API), and the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) that defined the California elementary educational system in the 2000s. These programs are discussed to discover if the comprehensive accountability system implemented by the California State Legislature accomplished its goals—and more specifically—what residual effects it created on teacher efficacy and morale. The main purpose of the study was to illuminate the fact that many teachers did not view policy mandates as positive, and for this reason to question the overall efficacy of comprehensive accountability systems as they are practiced in elementary education.

There is a lack of research regarding teacher attitudes on the impact of comprehensive accountability systems. This paper addresses the question of how comprehensive accountability systems affect the everyday practice of teaching. Comprehensive accountability systems purport to ameliorate education, but—as this study revealed—many teachers believe that accountability programs do more harm than good. This research presents a different side of the story regarding accountability programs, from the perspective of the teachers who are most directly affected by them.

In this paper I first provide a background of the policies employed by the California Department of Education in the early 2000s. I discuss the components of the Public Schools Accountability Act by focusing on standardized testing and reporting, scripted learning, incentive pay, content standards, and programs that addressed the needs of students who did not speak English as their primary language. I then address the impact of these components by presenting a study that surveyed teachers' attitudes and behaviors. The results show that comprehensive accountability programs often create an atmosphere of fear, distrust, and doubt among teachers: Teachers feel strongly that the reliance on standardized testing, scripted learning, and other policies have lowered morale and created a defeatist attitude toward the profession of teaching.

## Background

While the use of standardized tests in elementary education is not a new phenomenon, there has been a greater emphasis on their use over time. In the last few

decades the state of California adopted a set of content standards that classified everything a student should know for his or her respective grade level. Content standards were created to ensure that students were exposed to material that would appear on end-of-the-year exams, such as the Stanford Achievement Test 9 (SAT9) and California Achievement Test (CAT). These standardized tests report student test scores as a percentile; students are ranked according to their numeric score.

The emphasis on state standards in California echoed changes made at the federal level. Mandates for educational reform came from top-level authorities, including the President of the United States. In early 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the largest reform of public education in forty years. This reform mandated that every child in every state from the third through the eighth grade be tested annually. The message from the White House and the CDE was clear: students were to show their performance—and performance was defined by scores on standardized tests.

### **California Standards for the Teaching Profession**

In 1997, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) implemented the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP). The CSTP was a set of pre-determined guidelines that delineated and diagrammed all areas of classroom instruction. The guidelines addressed specific areas of education and classified exactly what was to be taught in California public schools. The new standards addressed criticism concerning falling student aptitude and were created to improve education. The CSTP directed and identified specific curriculum for teachers, and teachers were expected to adhere to the material covered by them.

While the implementation of the federal requirements for annual standardized testing is required for all states, it is up to each individual state to decide exactly what those standards should be. In an attempt to increase student performance on standardized tests, the California State Legislature passed Assembly Bill 1114 (AB1114). The Legislature declared that,

The purpose of the California public school system is to provide for the academic development of each pupil and prepare each pupil, to the extent of his or her ability, to become a lifelong learner, equipped to live and succeed within the economic and societal complexities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (CDE 2001, legislative intent description page from legislative intent link).

At the time (1997), assessments of California pupils indicated that students were not learning at a satisfactory rate. To remedy California's stagnant educational system, the PSAA was mandated. The PSAA was a comprehensive accountability system that held each state's public schools accountable for the academic progress and achievement of its pupils. The PSAA purported to reward schools that met the accountability standards, and to sanction schools that did not. The PSAA called for the development of the Academic Performance Index to assess California schools. In order to motivate California educators to accept and adopt the new API accountability system, the PSAA Awards were created. The PSAA Awards consisted of two components: The Governor's Performance Awards (GPA), and the CSPI. The GPA and the CSPI both rewarded California schools that met state targets, based on the schools' API. The GPA allocated money for individual school use, and the CSPI program provided financial rewards to certificated staff. The system of ranking used by the CDE is the API.

### **The Academic Performance Index**

In addition to the federal mandates, the CDE created its own set of standards that students were required to meet. California elementary school teachers were given grade-appropriate standards and were required to teach those standards directly to their pupils—the Academic Performance Index (API). The API was created to measure performance of schools—especially the academic performance of pupils. The API was the metric by which schools would demonstrate comparable improvement in academic achievement by all numerically significant ethnic and socioeconomically disadvantaged subgroups within schools.

A school's API score is calculated by combining all subject areas of students' standardized test scores into a single number. The national percentile rank (NPR) for each student is used to make the calculation. The summation of a school's NPR is weighted and combined to produce a summary result for each subject area; the summary results are used to produce a number between 200 and 1000, which becomes the school's API score. Next, the schools are placed into deciles; the statewide rank of a school is a number ranging from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). Ten percent of all elementary schools fell into each decile.

A school's API score is then used to determine the following year's target. The State Board of Education adopted expected annual percentage growth targets for all schools, based on API baseline scores. In the 2000s, each California school's

minimum growth target was five percent annually. For a school to be eligible for one of the PSAA Awards, it had to meet its expected growth target. The use of these targets was twofold: first, to measure the progress of schools selected for participation in the Immediate Intervention/Underperforming Schools Program; and second, to rank all public schools in the state for the purpose of the High Achieving/Improving Schools Program. The major difference between the two programs is funding; the schools that were succeeding in meeting their API goals received more money; those that did not received less.

After a school's API had been determined, it was presented to the public and used to assess which schools qualified for the PSAA Awards programs. According to the Policy and Evaluation Division of the CDE, both of these measures (the rank and the score) were a significant and useful means by which education policy leaders, the media, and the general public could draw conclusions about the academic performance of California's schools. The CDE believed the API to be a valid and reliable instrument with which to assess elementary education. Indeed, over \$250 million was appropriated and disbursed based on the scores. It is clear that the CDE believed in its strategies. But what did California teachers feel about such mandates? How would these policies affect day to day teaching practice in the classroom? These elements were not directly addressed by the CDE at the time. Teacher morale and the latent functions of the API were not conceived as important issues.

### **Certificated Staff Performance Incentive**

The CDE believed in the API as a valid indicator of school performance, but for the system to work California teachers needed to comply with the mandates and accept the new policies. In other words, the CDE wanted to ensure that teachers took the new system seriously: every teacher's goal was to increase API scores and improve their students' performance. To increase the likelihood that teachers would be on board with the new system, the Certificated Staff Performance Incentive (CSPI) was created. The CSPI was seen by the California State Legislature as a good way to motivate teachers to become better educators; this would presumably result in higher standardized test scores. Schools were ranked from highest to lowest gains based on points over their API targets (the API targets are explained shortly). Schools with API scores that fell within the top five deciles statewide in the year 2000 were eligible for the CSPI Award. The CSPI appropriated \$100 million to be awarded to qualifying schools, and awards were allocated successively until the funds were gone. Disbursement of award money to individual certificated staff was as follows:

1. 1,000 certificated staff in schools with the largest growth received \$25,000 each.
2. 3,750 certificated staff received \$10,000 each.

3. 7,500 certificated staff received \$5,000 each.

After a school qualified for the award, its local district and teachers' union decided which certificated personnel were to receive funds. Specifically, the following points describe the distribution of award money:

1. Under the Certificated Staff Incentive, all school-certificated staff (all site positions requiring certificated staff such as teachers and principals) received money for this award. Teachers with emergency credentials were included in the awards funding.
2. The governing board of the school district negotiated individual teacher and other certificated staff salary award amounts with the exclusive representative of the bargaining unit.
3. School staff members that had resigned from the district qualified for the School Site Employee Bonus. Even though staff members had resigned or retired from the district, they were eligible for award funding if they were assigned to and worked at the eligible site during the year of testing.

To qualify for the CSPI program award, a teacher's elementary school must have met the following criteria, based on the school's API: 1. Growth from the previous years standardized test scores was to be demonstrated. The basic criterion of the CSPI and the PSAA was that schools showed improvement from year to year. 2. Future API scores needed to show at least two times annual growth target (minimum of 10% of the annual growth target). The biggest gains received the most money based on growth; specifically, the number of API points increased over two times the school's target. Two times the annual growth target for a school is ten percent of the distance between the school's API and the interim statewide performance target of 800. For example, a school with a 1999 API of 500 had a 1999-2000 API growth target of 15 points. Two times the growth target is 30, or ten percent of the distance between 500 and 800. 3. All subgroups must have made 80% of the school target. The API growth for each numerically significant subgroup must have met or exceeded 80 percent of this 10 percent growth target, which is a minimum 8 percent of the distance between the school's API and 800.

4. Schools must have had a 95% participation rate on the annual standardized testing. While the CSPI was originally created to be an ongoing program, it was eliminated for the 2000-2001 API awards cycle as part of the solution to the state budget crisis that was currently unfolding.

### **The Standardized Testing and Reporting Program**

In November 1997, the California State Board of Education designated the Stanford 9 Standardized Test as California's STAR achievement test. The STAR program included three components: the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition, Form T (SAT9); the California Standards Tests (CST); and the Spanish Assessment of Basic Education, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (SABE/2). Students in grades 2-11 were tested in reading, language (written expression) and mathematics. Students in grades 2-8 were also tested for spelling ability. The purpose of the SAT9 was to determine how well California students were achieving academically compared to a national sample of students tested in the same grade at the same time of the school year.

In addition to the material on the SAT9, The California State Board of Education adopted additional content standards that specify what all California children should be taught. The California content standards were grade and course specific, with additional material required in mathematics and the language arts. California teachers were given a packet that specifically diagrammed every area of instruction. At the end of the school year, students were required to take the California Standards Test in addition to their regular battery of standardized tests.

At this time California also offered the SABE/2. The SABE/2 was a nationally norm-referenced achievement test in Spanish. The test battery included items that measure Spanish reading, language, spelling, and mathematics tests in Spanish. Students who did not speak English as their primary language (referred to as ESL students) enrolled in school less than 12 months were required to take the SABE/2 in addition to the other two tests.

### **Scripted Learning**

In addition to the CSTP that defined areas of curricula to be taught, some California school districts went further and implemented scripted learning programs. Scripted learning incorporated the California content standards with pre-set teaching scripts that teachers were to follow verbatim. These programs told a teacher exactly what to say and exactly what the students' response should be. Scripted learning programs were slowly introduced in the late 1990's and went from being used in one in every 100 schools to one in every eight elementary schools in California by the year 2000 (Posnick-Goodwin, 2002). Scripted learning was mostly used by schools that were populated with poor and minority students and seen by policy makers as a

way to help school districts “desperate to raise standardized test scores” (Posnick-Goodwin, 2002, p.12). Scripted learning programs focused primarily on rote memorization and word recognition rather than critical thinking skills and comprehension. Because of this, critics have questioned the efficacy of such programs. Some believe that the growth of scripted curriculum was fueled by financial assistance from two sources: government and big business (Posnick-Goodwin, 2002).

### **Incentive Pay: Career Ladders or Pitfalls?**

California was not the first state to implement a system of incentive payment. Florida and Virginia also experimented with various programs in the past (Springer, 2009). Proponents of merit pay claim that incentive pay systems based on the accountability of schools and individuals—in addition to regular salaries—are logical, fair, and necessary (Janey, 1997; Nadler and Wiswall, 2011). Others are skeptical of their efficacy when applied to education (Ramirez, 2010; Sawchuk, 2010). Merit pay systems are nothing new for corporate businesses; many industries utilize incentive programs that pay over and above base salaries. Merit pay systems differ between industries, but whether teachers would or should accept these principles is another matter altogether. Some believe that the education system is inherently different from the business world, and that teachers might perceive merit pay as a ruse rather than as an incentive (Murnane and Cohen, 1986). For example, some have claimed that the traditional command-and-control model of school management is incompatible with the spirit of collaboration (Wagner, 2002). Skeptics of merit pay systems in education perceive accountability-based evaluation to be associated with traditional, top-down management—a development that teachers are unlikely to accept (Ramirez, 2010).

Another problem with merit pay systems concerns the quality of education children receive. Different system models depend on different bases; incentive pay uses the “market model.” Raymond Bolam differentiates among three types of models that educational institutions may use—the bureaucratic, the professional, and the market model (Duke, 1995, p.191):

The bureaucratic model holds teachers accountable for complying with policies, regulations, and contractual obligations. The professional model is based on the expectation that teachers will demonstrate certain proficiencies or competencies associated with effective practice. The market model meanwhile is based on student outcomes and customer satisfaction.



Compliance and competence are largely irrelevant as long as students learn what they are expected to learn.

An important element concerning the market model (which is where merit pay falls) is that compliance and competence are largely secondary. It is true that teachers must be competent enough to follow the diagrammed program, but student outcomes and customer (parent, media, business community, politician, etc.) satisfaction are the main cornerstones. Just because the “customer” is satisfied with results doesn’t mean the results are beneficial. The CSPI program purported to rank successful teachers and schools as “succeeding” or “failing,” but the criterion for what constitutes a successful teacher or school may be faulty.

Teacher salaries are at the heart of the merit pay issue. The amount of money earned by public school teachers is modest, and implementing merit pay could upset cooperation and solidarity among teaching personnel. Many feel new salary structures are needed if incentive pay for standards-based education is to work:

If the country is to accomplish the aspirations of standards-based education reform—educating many more students to much higher levels of performance—then recruiting and retaining quality teachers must be a high-priority issue. And paying teachers differently—as well as paying them more—must be a part of this equation (Odden and Kelley, 2002, p.1).

Returning to the changes in teaching strategies, the following passage examines the standards created by the CDE.

### **The Effect of Educational Reform on Students: The California Content Standards**

The debate concerning what assessment techniques should be used and what the standards should be goes on seemingly ad infinitum. It is difficult to find strong evidence to prove that the current methods have increased or diminished the quality of education, though studies have revealed that standardized test scores improve in schools that implement content standards in subjects like mathematics (Bailey, 2010). Of course, a definition of what constitutes a “quality education” is needed in order to judge how current strategies are affecting it. Historically definitions of such an education included a balanced exposure to subjects such as history, language (reading, speaking and written), mathematics, physical education, science (both natural and social), and fine arts (music, drama, art, etc.). Generally, education

included teaching facts and knowledge, encouraging creativity, and fostering rigorous thinking skills that lead to abstract problem solving (Brint, 2006).

Because of the increased influence (and control) of elementary school curriculum by the CDE, what was taught during the PSAA program was easily identified. What was not so easily identified, however, were important curricular areas that were eliminated or dramatically decreased. For example, many agree that the teaching of values is an important part of a student's education (referring to learning tolerance, acceptance, self-esteem, cooperation, fairness, morality, etc.) (Durkheim, 1961; Sergiovanni, 1992). In fact, according to a past Public Agenda Foundation Study, over 70% of all Americans believe that teaching values is more important than teaching academics (Wagner, 2002). If teaching values is indeed crucial, how were such values taught within a curriculum that was defined in strict and structured terms, i.e. a curriculum mostly centered on specific types of skills that do not include values? How were teachers maintaining a balance between traditional academics and important value-based pedagogy? These questions emerged in the wake of content standards and the educational reform of the past decades.

### **The ESL Problem in California Education**

The California content standards were designed to serve students equally. However, California's student population was (and is) all but egalitarian; ethnic and cultural diversity is ubiquitous throughout most of the state. Pupils from all economic, racial, and class backgrounds attend public schools. Schools with student populations from lower income families are often filled with ESL (English as a second language) students. These ESL students prove to be a great challenge for California teachers; not only do teachers have to prepare their English-speaking students for standardized tests, but they simultaneously have to prepare students who are learning to speak, read, and write the English language (Archerd, 2006; Hakuta, 1986).

ESL students and students from multicultural backgrounds continue to pose challenges to the efficacy of standardized testing (Collier, 1987; Collier and Thomas, 2001; Hakuta, 1999; Sleeter, 2005, Tse, 1995). The tests are designed to assess all students and accurately measure their growth. However, in California, a vast number of students have not mastered the basic skills that other, English speaking students have. Information on content standards included a statement that they were intended for all students, but some questioned whether the standards indeed were appropriate for all types of students. Some claimed that when one examines the actual materials, "they simply don't reflect all students" (Lockwood, 1998, p. 41). Deborah J Short, a past Co-Director of the English Language and Multicultural division at the Center for

Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC, noted the paradox that the goals of standards based curricula created:

National standards are not equitable for English language learners...but, on the other hand, content standards should be the same for all students. One of the most difficult issues facing schools and districts is how to integrate standards and, at the same time, work with students who aren't the average English-speaking students (Lockwood, 1998, p.41).

One problem ESL students present to educators is that ESL populations in themselves are diverse. In California many elementary school classrooms have not only English speaking students, but students who are at varying levels of English language acquisition and development. The ESL umbrella includes a vast array of unique learners, most of whom have varying levels of ability and preparedness. These varying levels of ability are exemplified by the great diversity of ESL students' language backgrounds, differing previous educational experience, and length of time residing in the United States (Heubert and Hauser, 1999, p.212). ESL students in the early 2000s posed particular challenges for schools in lower income and ethnic minority locations. The CDE expected all schools to show improvement on standardized tests scores from year to year, but, even with the SABLE/2, which was created to address the needs of second language learners, the vast disparity between ESL students made it difficult. ESL students required more attention than English speaking students, they learned at a slower pace due to their language deficiency, and they often were not able to compete on standardized tests (whether written in English or Spanish) equally with English speaking students.

### **Effects of the California Department of Education Policies: The Impact on Teachers**

To this point we have detailed the past programs and mandates placed on teachers by the California Department of Education. But we have not considered some important things. For example, what were the effect of all these reforms on teachers? How did teachers navigate their jobs given the pressure placed on them by the CDE? How did teachers change their pedagogical strategies in the classroom (or did they)? What was the effect of such policies on teacher morale and camaraderie? How did incentive pay influence the teaching practice at the ground level, i.e. how did the motivation to earn extra money for increasing student performance affect teachers' experiences at their school? The CDE carefully delineated what was expected of teachers regarding the API and other reforms, but none such effort was aimed at understanding what ramifications would occur within the teaching profession—between teachers themselves. How were day-to-day lives of the teachers

affected? An empirical study was conducted to answer these questions. The following section describes the methods used in the study.

### **Method of the Study**

This study analyzed elementary teachers' attitudes (and behaviors) regarding various components of the comprehensive accountability programs described previously in this paper. The study was exploratory, and thus descriptive in nature. The purpose was to discover and document the way teachers felt about their changing profession and the mandates that defined their practice. Data was collected in 2002 and consisted of the administration of a survey questionnaire that was presented to teachers through each school's project coordinator. The questionnaires were distributed during staff meetings to ensure that all teachers were aware of the study and had access to participate. The teachers were given a week to complete the survey at their leisure. Approximately half (114 out of 231) of the potential teachers participated in the survey. The surveys were constructed to be anonymous. While no survey items covered any sensitive information related to personal background, certain items addressed feelings towards administration and pressure from employers to perform (see Appendix for a complete list of survey questions). Because of this, the questionnaire was constructed to maintain anonymity. Information linking the surveys to their respective school was recorded, but no identifying information beyond basic background characteristics was recorded from teachers in the sample.

The questionnaire consisted of fifty items that required subjects to circle the appropriate response. The first seven items measured background information, such as teacher's sex, grade taught, and years teaching. The remaining forty-three items were agreement statements ranked on a five-point Likert scale. The statements asked a variety of questions regarding standardized testing, content standards, merit pay, and the general effect of CDE policies on the teaching practice. For example, one item asked whether teachers agreed or disagreed that the monetary award program created counterproductive competition between teachers. Another item asked whether monetary compensation motivated teachers to become better educators (again, see appendix for a complete list of survey questions). Responses for each question were coded 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. The survey could be completed in about ten minutes.

### **Sample**

The sample used in the study included elementary school teachers selected from eight elementary schools in central California. Each school was in a lower

income neighborhood and defined as “socioeconomically disadvantaged” by the California Department of Education. Many students at the respective schools were minorities, and some were children from migrant families. A total of 114 teachers participated in the study. The majority of teachers surveyed were female. Over ninety percent were women (93.9%;  $n=107$ ); less than ten percent were men (6.1%;  $n=7$ ). Most teachers were married (67.5%;  $n=77$ ), with a third being either single (20.2%;  $n=23$ ), divorced, or separated (12.3%;  $n=14$ ). The distribution of teachers was selected from kindergarten through sixth grade, with a few special education teachers included as well (2.6%;  $n=3$ ). The mode was second grade teachers (28.9%;  $n=33$ ). Most teachers claimed that they were from middle class backgrounds.

A cautionary note should be mentioned concerning the sample used in this study. Because the sample size was relatively small and selected from one general geographic area its generalizability and representativeness of general attitudes to the greater teaching population are in question. However, there is no obvious factor beyond the demographic variables that lead one to believe the sample to be biased or inappropriate for making inferences to other teachers who work in similar socio-economic locations. The sample should be valid in providing detailed insight from the perspective of teachers who were the most specific targets of comprehensive accountability programs.

## **Results and Discussion**

As mentioned in the methods section, this study was exploratory in nature. Because of this descriptive statistics are presented rather than inferential statistics. The nature of the data makes inferential analysis difficult or inappropriate (many of the demographic variables are skewed in terms of variance [i.e. not normally distributed], or lack variance in their attributes).

I begin with a summary description of the overall results of the study. Details and descriptive statistics are presented following the summary. First, teachers generally felt that the emphasis on standardized testing and content standards was problematic. Most doubted the efficacy of standardized testing as a true assessment of elementary education. Many also doubted whether student test performance is truly a function of the quality of instruction. Second, many teachers felt pressure from administrators to produce high student test scores, and many teachers felt that administrators doubted their teaching effectiveness when their students' scores were low. Third, accountability programs limited the time teachers spent on traditional curricula such as art, music, history, and physical education. Fourth, teachers strongly

disagreed that incentive pay for student performance motivated teachers to be better educators. Teachers also felt overwhelmingly that offering incentive pay in elementary education is unethical. Fifth, teachers felt that incentive pay and the reliance on Academic Performance Index scores lowered morale and created a divided effort among teachers. And lastly, teachers felt strongly that content standards and accountability programs were especially inept since many students did not speak English as their primary language. Details regarding these summary results are presented below.

### **California Content Standards**

When asked directly whether the California Content Standards have caused teachers to change their teaching regimen in order to “teach to the test” results were spread across the spectrum ( $M=3.25$ ,  $SD=1.78$ ). Over half the respondents (52.7%;  $n=60$ ) agreed that they had altered their style of teaching and that it was necessary to spend their time only on material that would appear on the CST and standardized tests. However, roughly a third of the respondents (36%;  $n=41$ ) reported that the emphasis on standardized testing had not changed their teaching technique. A tenth of the teachers (11.4%;  $n=13$ ) were undecided about the issue. It appears that most teachers changed their teaching in some way to focus on the material delineated by the California Content Standards.

When asked whether standardized tests give an accurate assessment of what individual students know, most teachers disagreed ( $M=1.93$ ,  $SD=.83$ ). Negative responses toward the accuracy of standardized test scores made up over four fifths (82.4%;  $n=94$ ) of the entire sample. Only six percent (6.1%;  $n=7$ ) of the respondents agreed that standardized tests are an accurate measure for assessing student progress. About ten percent were undecided (11.4%;  $n=13$ ).

A related item asked if an individual’s education comprises much more than what can be measured quantitatively by standardized tests. Responses to this question were intriguing ( $M=4.47$ ,  $SD=.29$ ), especially when considering the absolute dependency on testing mandated by the California State Legislature and the CDE. Almost one hundred percent (98.2%;  $n=112$ ) agreed that that standardized tests were inadequate as a main measure and that education should comprise much more. Additionally, not one teacher disagreed, and only two teachers were undecided (1.8%;  $n=2$ ).

When asked if poor student performance on standardized tests is directly related to poor teaching, most respondents disagreed ( $M=1.54$ ,  $SD=.59$ ). Teachers said that other factors contribute to low student test scores. Over ninety percent of the respondents disagreed (92.9%;  $n=106$ ) that poor teaching is the reason for poor student performance on standardized tests. Only three teachers (2.7%;  $n=3$ ) thought that poor teaching methods were responsible for poor student performance. A few more were undecided (3.5%;  $n=4$ ).

### **Pressure from Administrators on Teachers**

The following results and discussion show that teachers changed their teaching style and curriculum content, omitted teaching specific subjects, and became skeptical of the effects of the California Content Standards, CSPI program, and standardized testing to a great degree. Three items address how pressure from school administrators has affected teaching. Teachers answered the following questions:

1. Are teachers pressured by administrators to produce high student scores on the SAT9?
2. Do administrators look negatively on teachers who have low student test scores?
3. Has the importance placed on standardized testing by school administrators affected your teaching style?

Responses to the first item indicated that most teachers felt pressure from administrators ( $M=4.13$ ,  $SD=.74$ ). Over eighty percent of the teachers (82.4%;  $n=94$ ) agreed that they were pressured, compared to only a very small portion who disagreed (5.3%;  $n=6$ ); a little over a tenth were undecided (12.3%;  $n=14$ ). The data show that most teachers felt pressure to have students perform well on tests, but the next item must be examined to discover whether that pressure is negative.

When asked if administrators look negatively on teachers who have low student test scores, responses still agreed, though somewhat less ( $M=3.49$ ,  $SD=1.05$ ). The mode for the third item was “agree” (55.3%;  $n=63$ ), though more teachers were undecided concerning this issue (27.2%;  $n=31$ ). Less than twenty percent (17.5%;  $n=20$ ) disagreed that the administration looks negatively on teachers when their students do poorly on standardized tests.

Finally, examining whether the importance placed on standardized tests by administrators has affected teaching style showed that it had ( $M=3.74$ ,  $SD=.74$ ). Almost three fourths of the respondents agreed (73.7%;  $n=84$ ); only a tenth disagreed (12.3%;  $n=14$ ), and a few more were undecided (14%;  $n=16$ ).

### **Effect of Standardized Testing on Curricula**

Four survey items were designed to investigate what subjects were being neglected in order to teach material for standardized tests. The following response data show that the time spent teaching certain subjects (such as art, drama, social studies, etc.) has diminished significantly because of the emphasis on standardized test scores.

Art, music and drama. The first item to be examined here questions whether or not the emphasis on standardized testing has diminished time spent teaching art, music, and drama. Results for this item were impressive ( $M=4.53$ ,  $SD=.52$ ), with nearly all teachers agreeing to an extent that they spend less time teaching these subjects because of the demands of the California Content standards. While the total percentage of respondents who felt they spent less time on these subjects (due to the emphasis on standardized testing) was remarkably high (93%;  $n=106$ ), most teachers felt strongly (strongly agreed: 62.3%;  $n=71$ ) that their time teaching art, music, and drama had been diminished. Only a fraction of respondents (3.5%;  $n=4$ ) disagreed that the new standards had changed the degree of time spent on the instruction of art, music, or drama, and even fewer respondents (2.6%;  $n=3$ ) had no opinion whatsoever.

Values and ethics. Another related item measured teachers' attitudes toward standardized testing and the time spent teaching values and ethics. This item considered whether or not the California Content Standards and the emphasis on standardized testing have diminished time spent teaching values and ethics. Responses were not as skewed ( $M=3.37$ ,  $SD=1.38$ ) as the previous relationship between testing and the fine arts, and results show more of a mixed feeling. However, the aggregate of the respondents in agreement was once again substantial (52.6%;  $n=60$ ). Responses concerning teachers who felt they had not lessened their time spent teaching values and ethics was higher (33.6%;  $n=38$ ) than the numbers for the relationship between testing and art, music, or drama. More respondents were undecided as well (13.2%;  $n=15$ ).



A related item asked if teachers thought monetary compensation motivates teachers to become better educators. Responses were strong in disagreement ( $M=2.02$ ,  $SD=.81$ ) with the idea that the CSPI served to motivate teachers. Almost three fourths (74.6%;  $n=85$ ) of the respondents disagreed that monetary compensation motivates teachers to become better educators. About a fifth were undecided (17.5%;  $n=20$ ), but less than ten percent agreed (7.9%;  $n=9$ ) that monetary compensation motivates teachers to improve their teaching skills.

History and social studies. The next related item measured the level of time spent teaching history and social studies, and whether those subjects were affected by the emphasis on standardized testing. The data for the issue ( $M=3.76$ ,  $SD=1.22$ ) concerning standardized testing diminishing the time spent teaching history and social studies showed greater agreement (71.1%;  $n=81$ ) when compared to the responses concerning values and ethics. Only a fifth of the respondents (22%;  $n=25$ ) claimed the emphasis on standardized testing did not affect their time spent teaching history and social studies, and only one respondent strongly disagreed with the question (0.9%;  $n=1$ ).

Physical education. The next item that directly measures the effect of standardized testing on curricula deals with physical education. This question covered the amount of time teachers spend on outside physical activity, apart from their normal academic subjects. As predicted, the emphasis on the standardized testing and the CST was reported to lessen the time teachers spend instructing with students in physical activities ( $M=4.19$ ,  $SD=1.10$ ). Most teachers (81.6%;  $n=93$ ) responded that they spend less time on physical education, while virtually only a tenth (13.3%;  $n=15$ ) disagreed to any extent. It is easily seen from the data how standardized tests have affected areas that were once considered crucial aspects of elementary education.

Curricular planning and design. The final item concerning the emphasis on standardized testing and its effect on teaching style and curricula addresses the issue directly. When asked whether “the current emphasis on test scores has changed curricular planning and design,” responses were strongly positive ( $M=4.32$ ,  $SD=.31$ ). A staggering percentage (95.6%;  $n=109$ ) agreed that the California standards and the SAT9 have changed their curricula. Additionally, not one teacher disagreed with the statement to any extent, and only a fraction were undecided (4.4%;  $n=5$ ).

When compared to the question of whether or not teachers feel that the importance placed on test scores has caused them to “teach to the test,” the previous five items show conflicting information. Thirty six percent responded that they do not “teach to the test,” but then strongly agreed when asked if the emphasis on

standardized tests has changed curricula and lessened time spent on certain subjects. It might be possible that the question, “Because of the importance of test scores it is necessary to ‘teach to the test’” has a negative connotation, and a teacher would respond accordingly. Perhaps some teachers felt that marking “agree” or “strongly agree” would be admitting to themselves that they are participating in a system of which they disapprove.

### **The CSPI, Monetary Awards, and Cheating**

The following discussion examines survey items that addressed similar sentiments concerning the California standards and the emphasis on standardized testing. The CSPI was implemented with the idea that California teachers would be better motivated to produce increased student scores on standardized tests. Certain survey questions were designed to discover what effects the CSPI had on teachers, apart from the function expected by the CDE. The survey was constructed to find out if the CSPI had unanticipated, latent functions that the CDE had perhaps not counted on.

The first item concerning the CSPI program’s latent functions addressed cheating. With the program awarding individual teachers and certificated staff up to \$25,000 in bonus money, the possibility of cheating was a reality. Teachers in this study were asked if awarding extra money for test score improvement encouraged cheating between teachers. Results were skewed greatly towards the positive ( $M=3.94$ ,  $SD=1.19$ ) — that cheating is a problem with the program. Most teachers agreed (72.8%;  $n=83$ ) that the CSPI has encouraged cheating; only a small amount disagreed to any extent (12.3%;  $n=14$ ), and a small percentage were undecided (14.9%;  $n=17$ ).

### **The Ethics of the CSPI and Monetary Compensation**

Another question was constructed to measure attitudes concerning ethical issues possibly inherent in a system promoting merit pay. The CSPI program was sold to California teachers as a way to recognize schools that made their API growth targets, but if the means used to achieve those targets were under question, did the program truly make California education better? When asked if receiving payment for student test performance raised ethical questions, responses were strongly skewed ( $M=4.19$ ,  $SD=.89$ ). This result was quite high, especially when responses were positive that teachers would have accepted monetary compensation for increased performance on the SAT9 ( $M=3.51$ ,  $SD=1.33$ ).

Close to sixty percent of the teachers polled (57.9%;  $n=66$ ) agreed that they would have gladly accepted the compensation; yet over eighty percent (83.4%;  $n=95$ ) felt the distribution of funds under such circumstances was unethical. In fact, more respondents strongly agreed (43.9%;  $n=50$ ) that paying teachers for student test scores was unethical than simply agreed (39.5%;  $n=45$ ). It is possible that the profession's relatively modest salaries can explain this discrepancy; teachers on average did (and do) not make a great deal of money, and additional income might have been welcomed if offered. Yet they still saw ethical difficulties with paying teachers for increased student success.

### **Counterproductive Competition and Solidarity among Teachers**

In addition to the ethical considerations of the CSPI program, teachers were asked about the climate the system of merit pay created. Two survey items addressed this issue with the following questions: First, did the CSPI program create counterproductive competition between teachers; and second, did receiving additional money for high performance on test scores create a united effort among school personnel and promote solidarity? Responses to the first question ( $M=3.55$ ,  $SD=1.15$ ) showed many teachers felt the CSPI program created counterproductive competition; over half of those surveyed agreed that it did (52.6%,  $n=60$ ). Some teachers were undecided on the issue (28.9%,  $n=33$ ), yet less than twenty percent (18.5%,  $n=21$ ) felt the program did not create unhealthy competition.

Sentiments were stronger for the second item ( $M=2.12$ ,  $SD=.82$ ), as most teachers disagreed that receiving additional money for high performance on test scores created a united effort among school personnel. Over two thirds of the teachers disagreed (71.9%,  $n=82$ ), compared to less than a tenth who thought additional money promoted solidarity (9.6%,  $n=11$ ). Nearly a fifth of those polled were undecided concerning the issue (18.4%,  $n=21$ ).

From the strong responses shown concerning the effect of the CSPI program on creating unhealthy competition and not promoting solidarity among teachers, it becomes evident that the CSPI program had some problems. If it is true that teachers felt monetary awards created unhealthy competition, promoted cheating, and undermined solidarity, was the CSPI be as good as it purported for California education? From the results of this project, it seems a reexamination of the philosophy of what constitutes rewards for meeting standards is needed by the CDE.

**ESL Students: A Challenge for California Elementary Schools**

Recall that the teachers polled in the study taught at lower income schools. It is common in California, especially in schools who serve students of lower socioeconomic background, to have high populations of students who are not fluent in speaking, reading, or writing English. These students are called second language learners, or students with English as their second language (ESL students). While constructing the survey I interviewed teachers from around the state and discovered that many felt the California content standards were particularly difficult to meet when instructing ESL students. Many of these students are only beginning to assimilate into American culture and struggle when first enrolled in public school. To compensate for this, the CDE and the State Board of Education created the SABE/2 test for Spanish speaking students (the test itself was written in Spanish), but sentiments about the test indicated that many ESL students did not have the proper skills in literacy for the tests to be of use. At the beginning of this project, challenges centered on educating ESL students were defined. The survey was constructed with these challenges in mind. The questionnaire asked if it was difficult to meet the content standards at a teacher's respective grade level when some students were second language learners. Results for this item showed that most of the teachers agreed heavily ( $M=4.09$ ,  $SD=.95$ ). Eighty percent agreed (80.7%,  $n=92$ ) while only ten percent disagreed (10.5%,  $n=12$ ); the remainder were undecided (8.8%,  $n=10$ ).

**Political Interests**

Opinions have been raised that the California Content Standards and the emphasis on standardized testing had political implications. When asked if the requirements of the new content standards and the CDE's emphasis on standardized test scores served political interests, most teachers responded that they felt they did ( $M=4.11$ ,  $SD=.69$ ). Nearly eighty percent (79%;  $n=90$ ) agreed that the standards served political interests. A fifth (18.4%;  $n=21$ ) were undecided on the issue, but only three teachers (2.7%;  $n=3$ ) disagreed to any extent that the standards and testing practices served political interests. The data reflect what has been written concerning politics and education: "There is no doubt in any teacher's mind that assessment, evaluation, grades, and test scores are politically charged" (Strickland and Strickland, 1998, p. 180).

### **Textbooks, the California Content Standards, and Student Assessment**

One of criticisms of the implementation of the PSAA Awards program and California content standards was that they were rushed into place. Public outrage, coupled with mandates from Legislators, led to quick reactions by the CDE to improve the lot of education. Some believed that the CSPI and content standards were put into action much too prematurely. One teacher was quoted concerning the preparation for the programs: "Well, we have these content standards over here on what ought to be in the curriculum, but we've got to grab a test off the shelf right away and test the kids, even if it doesn't match the content standards" (Tulenko, 2002, p. 9). James Popham, a test maker, commented on the efficacy of the new emphasis on tests: "The testing companies are in the business of making money, and they're going to create whatever kind of test seems most acceptable to most people. And as a consequence, the gaps between what is on a test and what is actually taught sometimes are profound" (Tulenko, 2002, p. 9).

When teachers in this study were asked if they changed their lessons to match requirements, responses were strongly positive ( $M=4.11$ ,  $SD=.83$ ). Over eighty percent (83.3%;  $n=95$ ) reported that they had to create their own lessons to match new standards. Additionally, less than ten percent disagreed (6.1%;  $n=7$ ). A related item asked about the nature of textbook companies and their products. Most current textbook companies design lessons so they can be quantitatively assessed; many textbooks incorporate multiple-choice answers as the principle methodology for review. This design works well in preparing students for standardized tests. Teachers were asked if the lessons found in the textbooks approved by the State were designed with little regard for holistic teaching or assessment. Results for this item ( $M=3.56$ ,  $SD=.63$ ) report that many teachers are undecided (29.8%;  $n=34$ ), but only ten percent disagreed (10.5%;  $n=12$ ) and believed that the current textbooks were designed with holistic teaching and authentic assessment in mind. While the amount of teachers that believed it was true that textbooks are designed with little concern for holistic teaching was not as large a percentage indicated in previous items, most still agreed (57.9%;  $n=66$ ).

### **The API and Teacher Failure**

The API wields a lot of power over schools. One questionnaire item attempted to measure how the influences of the API and test scores personally affected teachers. When asked if they felt defeated and experienced a sense of failure when student test scores failed to meet state growth expectations teachers, responses were positive ( $M=4.01$ ,  $SD=.68$ ). Over eighty percent (80.7%;  $n=92$ ) of the

respondents claimed they felt defeated if their students' scores were low (see Figure 24). Additionally, less than five percent (4.4%;  $n=5$ ) disagreed that they were affected by the API scores. Around fifteen percent (14.9%;  $n=17$ ) were undecided.

When asked if the CDE would provide valuable assistance to schools that do not meet their expected growth requirement and API target, most teachers responded negatively ( $M=2.43$ ,  $SD=.96$ ). Over half disagreed (56.1%;  $n=64$ ) that helpful assistance would be provided in such a situation, while only fifteen percent (15.8%;  $n=18$ ) thought valuable assistance would be offered. About a quarter of the respondents (28.1%;  $n=32$ ) were undecided.

### **Ambiguity and Error on Standardized Tests**

A recurring criticism of standardized testing is that the tests do not accurately measure what they purport. Even test makers have doubted the effectiveness and soundness of standardized testing instruments. Some have raised concerns with error terms in standardized tests, emphasizing that the public may believe test scores to be accurate and precise, but tests are like political polls—they may contain a margin of error (Tulenko, 2002, p. 15). David Driscoll, Massachusetts Commissioner of Education, supported using testing as an assessment tool. However, even he admitted that, “The standard error of measure is absolutely a fact, that any time you give a test...you worry about that standard of error and what would have happened on another day” (Tulenko, 2002, p. 16). Every standardized testing instrument has an element of error, regardless of how good it is perceived to be by educational policy makers and test creators.

One questionnaire item asked teachers about errors present on standardized tests. The question specifically addressed if the SAT9 achievement test was a sound-testing instrument which was free of ambiguity or error. Responses were overwhelmingly negative ( $M=1.86$ ,  $SD=.79$ ). Eighty percent (80.7%;  $n=92$ ) of the responders disagreed that the SAT9 was a sound testing instrument. And, more impressive, less than five percent (4.4%;  $n=5$ ) of the teachers felt the SAT9 was an adequate instrument. Fifteen percent (14.9%;  $n=17$ ) were undecided on the issue.

### **Effects of the CSPI and California Content Standards on Teacher Mobility**

An unanswered question concerning the merit pay program was the effect on teacher recruitment and attrition rates. Two questionnaire items were constructed to discover what trends might be forthcoming considering mobility of future teaching faculty. The first item asked teachers if the emphasis on test scores and monetary compensation for high scores would draw others to seek teaching as a profession.

Ironically, the relative modesty of teacher salaries did not seem to matter for this question; responses were greatly negative toward CSPI money attracting new teachers to the profession ( $M=1.97$ ,  $SD=.61$ ). Nearly eighty percent (78.1%;  $n=89$ ) of the respondents disagreed that the CSPI program will draw new teachers into the field, and, only a mere four teachers (3.5%;  $n=4$ ) agreed to any extent that incentive pay would serve to increase the teacher population. Less than twenty percent (18.4%;  $n=21$ ) were undecided.

The second item designed to measure teacher mobility concerned teacher attrition. Teachers were asked if the climate created by such an emphasis on student performance measured by norm-referenced test scores encouraged teachers to leave the profession ( $M=3.73$ ,  $SD=.77$ ). Results for this item showed more undecided responses (26.3%;  $n=30$ ), but most were still positive and agreed (64.9%;  $n=74$ ) that teachers were more apt to leave the profession because of such strong emphasis on standards and testing. Less than ten percent (8.8%;  $n=10$ ) disagreed that the emphasis on standards and testing would drive teachers to leave the profession.

### **Rating Schools with Test Scores**

A key element of California's implementation of content standards and the API was that they rate schools among one another. Schools that had poor student performance scores were sometimes exposed and vilified by the media. Teachers, administrators, and parents paid close attention to their respective school's API ranking. Steven Weinburg, a California teacher, described the pressure felt by the emphasis on standardized test scores: "We're in a situation here where we're under the gun, in terms of our SAT-9 scores. Our principal has been notified that he is on probation, based on our improving our scores. So no one here takes lightly the SAT-9" (Tulenko, 2002, p. 28). John Murrow added, "for teachers and schools, the test is serious business. Low scores on the SAT-9 can lead to penalties, high scores to rewards" (Tulenko, 2002, p. 11).

Another survey question measured attitudes concerning whether or not test scores should be used to rate failing schools. Most teachers responded negatively ( $M=2.02$ ,  $SD=.93$ ), with three fourths (75.2%;  $n=85$ ) disagreeing with the idea that scores should be used to rank schools against one another. Less than ten percent (9.7%;  $n=11$ ) agreed that tests should be used for ranking, and fifteen percent were undecided (15%;  $n=17$ ).

### **Standards and Various Assessment Tools**

The California content standards were developed for and purport to address myriad areas of instruction. Proponents of using standard-based systems claimed that “Standards are statements about what is valued...classroom standards include teachers’ and students’ ideas about what is worth doing, thinking about, or celebrating” (Kordalewski, 2000, p. 3). Others were not so optimistic about content standards. The following passage describes the sentiments about standards of learning (SOL):

I am against the pressure and the stress that is put on us for getting children to master these SOLs at the same rate of speed, when everyone knows that all children do not learn the same way or at the same rate (Tulenko, 2002, p. 28).

Content standards were sold to teachers as a way to focus on the most important aspects of what should be taught, but there has been little consensus as to what that content should be. Virginia was one of the first states to implement SOLs, but the development of those standards was not without conflict. Debate over what historical figures should be included in curriculum abounded; for example, committee members argued over whether Robert E. Lee was more important than Frederick Douglass (Tulenko, 2002). What one group believes is appropriate for inclusion is often challenged by another.

A questionnaire item was constructed to measure attitudes concerning multiple measures of assessment. Did California schools utilize multiple measures of assessment, or did the SAT9 alone determine student performance? Results for this item were staggering ( $M=4.38$ ,  $SD=.38$ ). Over ninety five percent (96.5%;  $n=109$ ) of the teachers agreed that California elementary education focused primarily on student achievement as determined by standardized test scores. Only two teachers (1.8%;  $n=2$ ) disagreed to any measure of degree, and two (1.8%;  $n=2$ ) were undecided.



A closely related question asked teachers if their school's performance was measured primarily by norm-referenced standardized test scores, even though the CDE spoke of multiple measures of assessment. Responses to this item were strongly positive as well ( $M=4.14$ ,  $SD=.55$ ). More respondents (13.3%;  $n=15$ ) were undecided about this question than the previous item, but most teachers (85%;  $n=96$ ) still agreed that the SAT9 test was the primary measurement tool, used for determining accountability and not other measures. Only two teachers (1.8%;  $n=2$ ) disagreed with the statement.

A final survey item asked teachers if educational pedagogy that once focused on the individual child, now centered on testing strategies. Results were strongly skewed towards positive for this item as well ( $M=4.25$ ,  $SD=.421$ ). Ninety percent (90%;  $n=103$ ) of the respondents agreed that "child-centered education" had become "test-centered education." Only one teacher (0.9%;  $n=1$ ) disagreed, and less than ten percent (8.8%;  $n=10$ ) were undecided.

## Conclusion

At the onset of the project, it was questioned whether the CDE's recent developmental programs sponsored by the PSAA, i.e. the CSPI and the CSTP, had altered the overall quality of teaching. It was discovered that, as far as teachers were concerned, there are serious questions regarding the efficacy of the CSPI, CSTP, and the CDE's reliance on standardized testing to assess student achievement. By administering a questionnaire to a sample of elementary school teachers, knowledge could be obtained concerning the atmosphere of California classrooms that was not available to the CDE and educational administrators. The PSAA Awards Programs that sponsor the CSPI and the CDE's implementation of the CSTP purported to elevate California education, but these programs could not reveal how teachers felt they were treated or the latent functions of such an emphasis on standardized testing. Conceptually, the survey questionnaire was designed to reveal any latent functions of contemporary educational programs aimed at controlling more segments of classroom instruction. What was discovered was that many California teachers, or at least many from poorer school districts, did not appreciate the increased control by administrators over classroom curriculum and the importance placed on student test scores.

The questionnaire was successful in revealing what attitudes exist concerning the efficacy of content standards, merit pay, and standardized testing. Attitudes concerning neglected subject matter and ethical ramifications of the CDE's current programs were strong and showed that many aspects of these programs should be reevaluated, or at least investigated further to discover how teachers themselves are directly affected by such programs.

The results of this study are in accordance with much of the literature concerning the inadequacy of relying on standardized tests. It appears that while the CDE and upper-level administrators from California's many school districts supported merit pay and content standard based instruction, most classroom teachers did not. This study challenges the effectiveness of the programs sponsored by the PSAA that purported to improve California education. Because it has been discovered that teachers felt the CSPI raised ethical issues, and that they strongly disagreed with using standardized testing as a primary instrument to assess achievement, it is difficult to conclude that the PSAA Awards programs benefited California's educational system in all facets of pedagogy.

### **Implications for Future Research**

From the data gathered for this research project and the results of the analysis, it appears that there is good reason to conduct further research regarding the efficacy of merit pay, content standards, and standardized testing. This project focused on one area of California that included schools that were "socioeconomically disadvantaged." To better understand if the sentiments discovered in this study may be generalized to all California teachers, further data need to be collected from other cities and from districts that fall in other socioeconomic categories (i.e., middle and upper class school districts). It might be assumed that California teachers in other cities working in schools in similar socioeconomic categories feel the same about merit pay, content standards, and standardized testing, but it may not be assumed that teachers working at upper class schools have similar sentiments toward the CDE's programs.

Based on findings from this research, it appears that current practices related to course content, merit pay, and standardized testing need to be re-evaluated. While some type of assessment is necessary, the present approach should be seriously evaluated to determine whether it is indeed an obstacle to the goal of improving the quality of education. The curricula and goals championed by Horace Mann in early American history are not appropriate for modern American schools, especially California. The problems cited in this manuscript concerning ESL students and the

extreme diversity of 21<sup>st</sup> century California schools require new conceptions concerning instruction, learning, and assessment.

If programs that focus on standardized testing and pre-set content standards are creating tension for teachers, how can they truly be bettering the quality of education? Because the data analysis showed that many teachers felt negatively toward components of the CDE's educational programs, more research must be done to reveal if they are as effective as they purport.

Time constraints and financial resources limited this study to examining one area of California education, but it is believed that enough was revealed to demonstrate the need for a further investigation concerning the value of the programs discussed in this paper. With more resources and a larger sample we may discover if California teachers from around the state, and from schools drawing students from various socioeconomic backgrounds, are similar to those in this sample. In addition, serious questions arise concerning the neglect of subjects and important aspects that once existed in traditional educational curricula. With a more involved and comprehensive study, perhaps educators and administrators can truly improve the California educational system.

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