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CALIFORNIA'S BEGINNING TEACHERS: THE BUMPY PATH TO A PROFESSION

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Lead Authors: Julia E. Koppich and Daniel C. Humphrey

Contributors: Jennifer Bland, Barbara Heenan,
Teresa McCaffery, Katherine Ramage, and Laura Stokes

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California's Beginning Teachers: The Bumpy Path to a Profession

Executive Summary

This study addresses education policies that affect beginning teachers in California—induction, clear credentialing, evaluation, and tenure. During the 1990s and early 2000s, California policymakers developed a set of policies designed to support beginning teachers, increase their effectiveness, and reduce their attrition. Landmark legislation (AB 2042) in 1998 remade the credentialing system and established the nation's first mandatory new teacher induction program. Policies on teacher evaluation and tenure had been established earlier. How beginning teachers experience these policies is the focus of this study.

The research team examined the history and current status of state policies, interviewed key state education leaders, and conducted eight case studies in a sample of California school districts and consortia. Researchers partnered with three case study districts and their local unions to review a sample of redacted beginning teacher evaluation files. We worked with one of these districts to access a corresponding set of redacted Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) files.

California policies assume that most aspiring teachers complete a preparation program and earn a preliminary credential, take a job and assume probationary status, complete a 2-year induction program and earn a Clear Credential, and are tenured after 2 years of satisfactory evaluations. The study found that the policy system designed for beginning teachers does not match the actual trajectory that most of these teachers take. Most begin in some sort of temporary status—on an intern permit, short-term staff permit, or as a long-term substitute or temporary teacher.

Although the state's data systems do not allow for exact counts of how many beginning teachers are employed on temporary status, we do know that nearly a quarter of 1st-through 3rd-year teachers work as temporary teachers or long-term substitutes. More telling, the number of 3rd-year teachers who actually earn tenure is surprisingly low. During the past decade, only 31% of 3rd-year teachers had tenure in 2000. By 2010 the percent of 3rd-year teachers with tenure had increased, but only to 45%. The path to making a career out of teaching is thus a bumpy one for California beginning teachers.

Temporary teacher status is just one contributor to the bumpy path, albeit a major one. Temporary teachers, especially those hired after the beginning of the school year, do not receive the support so important for beginning teachers. Moreover, temporary teachers typically are not evaluated. As a result, the schools and districts where they teach have no way of assessing whether these teachers are performing effectively. Yet they often are hired year after year.

When the state linked BTSA with clear credentialing, teachers had 5 years to complete their induction program and earn a Clear Credential. The result was that many teachers delay BTSA. Much of that program's curriculum (designed for 1st- and 2nd-year teachers) is far less helpful to teachers in their 3rd, 4th, and 5th years.

The study also examined the consequences for beginning teacher induction (BTSA) of the state's change to flexible funding. Some districts developed creative ways to preserve previously targeted funding or used dollars more efficiently to maintain a functioning new teacher induction program. Other study sites chose to divert former BTSA dollars to other purposes, resulting in diminished services for beginning teachers.

Our examination of evaluations of beginning teachers revealed a broken system. Whether a teacher is evaluated at all largely depends on the teacher's employment status. The California Education Code does not require temporary teachers or long-term (or short-term) substitutes to be evaluated. Although some principals assigned top priority to the support and evaluation of beginning teachers, most of the evaluations were largely unhelpful in diagnosing beginning teachers' needs or designing support for them.

Earning tenure is another part of California beginning teachers' bumpy career path. State policy may intend that tenure follows 2 years of successful teaching, but for most beginning teachers earning tenure often stretches out considerably longer than 2 years. Temporary status, coupled with annual layoffs caused by years of fiscal decline, make tenure irrelevant for many beginning teachers. Earning tenure is neither a process they understand nor a goal they believe they can achieve in the foreseeable future.

We cannot know how many good teachers the state has lost because of the incoherence and inconsistency of policies for beginning teachers. Certainly, our data indicate that pursuing a teaching career in California requires substantial persistence and more than a little good luck. However, the state cannot rely on individual perseverance and good fortune to ensure an effective teacher in every classroom. Policy makers need to reexamine the assumption that existing state policies advance the goal of improving beginning teachers' effectiveness. Our findings strongly suggest that this is not the case for too many beginning teachers in California.

Recommendations

The state should:

- Require districts to keep accurate counts of the number of temporary teachers by type of temporary appointment.
- Include temporary teachers and long-term substitutes among those who must be supported and evaluated, regardless of when they are hired during the school year.
- Allow individual districts and consortia of districts to tailor induction support to the needs of beginning teachers and take their backgrounds, experience, and skill sets into account. In this regard, the state might redesign the framework for effective induction programs or allow districts that so choose to continue to use BTSA.
- Allow districts and their local unions to develop induction programs that eliminate the firewall between support and evaluation.
- Decouple BTSA from clear credentialing.
- Support local experiments in educator evaluation systems, including peer assistance and review (PAR) for beginning teachers.
- Refocus evaluation to emphasize support and improvement.
- Require that all teachers, regardless of employment status, be evaluated.

CALIFORNIA'S BEGINNING TEACHERS: THE BUMPY PATH TO A PROFESSION

Introduction

California has long prided itself on the attention it pays to its beginning teachers. State policymakers spent a good deal of time in the 1990s and early 2000s crafting a policy system for novice teachers designed to support them, reduce attrition, and increase their effectiveness. Those policies included Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) based on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) and tied to the credentialing system.

The research detailed here began as a study of BTSA. Path-breaking when it was enacted, the BTSA program had not been examined in some time. Moreover, some of the members of this research team had recently studied Peer Assistance and Review (PAR)¹ in two California school districts—San Juan (near Sacramento) and Poway (in San Diego County). Among the findings was what we described as the “BTSA dilemma”.² State BTSA regulations precluded these districts from offering PAR to beginning teachers, although Poway had done so successfully for a quarter of a century and San Juan wanted to do so. We concluded that a careful look at BTSA was thus in order.

State education policy officials agreed that BTSA was due for a review, but perhaps so were other state policies that affect beginning teachers. Instead of a stand-alone BTSA study, they suggested we look more broadly at the range of state policies that are significant in beginning teachers’ initial career years. How teachers begin their careers—the standards and conditions they must meet to earn the right to teach and continue teaching, and the nature of early career supports and appraisals of practice—are largely determined by state policy. Thus, this broader look at beginning teacher state policies made sense.

We believe that how California chooses to approach beginning teacher policy says much about its degree of commitment to building and sustaining a cadre of effective teachers for the state’s students. Accordingly, this study has focused on four key state policies that affect teachers’ early years: induction, evaluation, tenure, and clear credentialing.

1 PAR is a program in which highly effective experienced teachers support colleagues for a year and then conduct their summative evaluations. In most states with PAR, the program applies to both beginning and struggling experienced teachers. In California, PAR is limited to struggling tenured teachers.

2 Humphrey, D., Koppich, J., Bland, J., & Bosetti, K. (2011). *Peer review: Getting serious about teacher support and evaluation*. Menlo Park, CA: SRI International.

As we began interviewing beginning teachers, we soon uncovered an unexpected issue with substantial ramifications for California’s policy: teachers classified as “temporary” occupied teaching positions up and down the state. This situation has major implications for beginning teachers, for current state policies meant to shape their professional lives, and for the quality of California’s teaching force.

The next section briefly describes our data collection strategies. (Appendix A provides a more detailed review of data collection strategies.) We then introduce a theme that informs the report, namely, that California beginning teachers must tread a “bumpy path” in pursuing teaching careers. The following sections address temporary teachers, the linked topics of BTSA and clear credentialing, evaluation of beginning teachers’ practice, and the tenure process. We conclude with state policy implications of our findings.

Methods

The research team examined the history and current status of state policies related to California’s induction, evaluation, clear credentialing, and tenure practices for beginning teachers. To understand the policies as intended, we reviewed a range of legislation, program and budget documents, and other background data and conducted interviews with key state education leaders. To understand the policies as implemented, we conducted eight case studies in a purposefully selected sample of California school districts and consortia. Our aim was to document how multiple parties—from administrators to new teachers—perceived and experienced these policies.

Researchers also partnered with three case study districts and their local unions to review a sample of redacted beginning teacher evaluation files. We worked with one of these districts to access a corresponding set of redacted BTSA files. Researchers reviewed these files to appraise the evidence used for formative and summative assessments and, when applicable, assess the consistency and coherence between the BTSA assessments and the principals’ evaluations.

The research team met several times to examine the collected data and develop hypotheses about what the data told us. We then met with a panel of four California policy experts to present initial findings, test hypotheses, and discuss the implications of the work. Finally, the research team refined analyses, considered policy options and implications, and incorporated those conclusions in this report.

Beginning Teachers in California: The Bumpy Path to a Career

When observers familiar with state policy think of a teacher’s career path in California, they assume that most aspiring teachers complete a preparation program and earn a preliminary credential, take a job and are assigned probationary status, complete a 2-year induction program and earn a Clear Credential, and receive tenure after 2 years of satisfactory evaluations. This is, in fact, the career path that state beginning teacher policies envision. As we learned from interviews with beginning teachers across the

state and from examination of available state datasets, however, for the majority of beginning teachers the path to a career in teaching is far less straightforward.

Why is this the case? First and foremost, the policy system designed for beginning teachers does not match the actual trajectory that most of these teachers take. Available data suggest that only a minority of teachers begin their careers on probationary status. Instead, most begin in some sort of temporary status—on an intern permit, short-term staff permit, or as a long-term substitute or temporary teacher.

Beginning teachers often serve for several years in temporary status. During this time, although we found exceptions to this finding, many are neither supported nor evaluated. By the time these teachers are appointed to probationary positions, they often have taught for 3, 4, 5 years, even more. If they have not yet had the state-required BTSA induction (we found in our case study sites that sometimes temporary teachers are not eligible), they must enroll in and complete this induction program designed for teachers in their first two years of teaching before they can earn their Clear Credential. Probationary teachers hired after the state's end of October "count day" are not eligible to participate in BTSA until the following year.

The 2-year clock to tenure does not begin to run until a teacher achieves probationary status. Moreover, that clock can start and stop, making tenure longer than the 2-year process called for in state policy. We interviewed many beginning teachers who were placed in probationary positions one year only to be laid off when those positions were cut, and then rehired in temporary assignments the next year.

Further complicating matters, assignments for beginning teachers are often cobbled together on the basis of gaps in staffing. Many beginning teachers indicated that they had been moved among different schools, grade levels, and subject areas in each of their years of teaching. After hiring, some teachers were required to switch assignments at mid-year. In addition, beginning teachers are frequently assigned to the most difficult classes and the most challenging schedules, including being required to teach multiple subjects in more than one school.

Teachers' experiences exemplify the bumpy path to a career. One veteran teacher told us that his 14th year of teaching was the first in which he did not receive a pink slip in the spring. Another who was on the verge of earning tenure told this story:

[In] January 2008, I was a long-term sub for a semester... Then I was hired on a 1-year contract [and] taught 4th grade... Then I subbed for another year and then taught 3rd grade for a year... And now I am a resource teacher. In my 5 years, there was only one where I started in my classroom on the first day of school.

For new teachers, being rehired, or continuing in a probationary position, depends on changes in enrollment, the status of the district's budget, and how many and what kinds of positions the district chooses to create. As a result, beginning teachers related stories of career stops and starts, job uncertainty, and frustration. These teachers have shown remarkable persistence and tenacity. But the state policy system designed to provide a supported pathway to teaching has failed many of them.

Next, we take a closer look at a major contributing factor to the mismatch between state policy and practice—the prevalence of temporary teachers.

Temporary Teachers

Background and Context

Once we designed this study to examine state policies affecting beginning teachers and began our interviews, we could not help but notice that many of the beginning teachers we talked to were on or had been on temporary status. As we explored the implications of this, we realized that we had stumbled onto an important impediment to the state's goal of improving teacher effectiveness. Although temporary status is not the only contributor to beginning teachers' bumpy career path, almost a quarter of all 1st- through 3rd-year teachers have been in positions with temporary/long-term substitute employment status each year since at least 1999.

We initially concluded that the use of temporary teachers was a predictable response to the fiscal crisis and the \$20 billion in cumulative cuts from 2007–08 through 2010–11.³ Because temporary teachers do not have the same re-employment rights as probationary and tenured teachers, using temporary teachers allowed districts to prudently manage their declining resources. And, in fact, some district officials indicated that they use temporary teachers to maintain flexibility in times of shrinking enrollment and uncertain funding. However, we found that the use of temporary teachers was not solely a result of the fiscal downturn. Examination of the relevant state datasets indicated that California has a long history of hiring teachers on temporary status.

This section explores the temporary teacher issue because it has important implications for induction, evaluation, tenure, and clear credentialing policies for beginning teachers. We define temporary status, estimate the number of teachers on temporary status over time, and describe temporary teachers' reports on their experiences.

Definitions of Teachers on Temporary Status

Under the California Education Code, districts replacing a teacher on leave of absence or filling a position supported by temporary funds (e.g., grants, non-mandatory categorical funds) can hire teachers on temporary status. Districts do not have to follow the regular procedures for layoffs for temporary teachers. Moreover, temporary teachers do not have the same re-employment rights that probationary or tenured teachers do.

A teacher can accept a job with temporary status at any point during the school year. Temporary teachers are not always considered eligible for induction support through the state's BTSA program (see the next section), especially if they are hired after the beginning of the school year. Nor are districts required to evaluate temporary teachers, although some do. One case study district, for example, was implementing a new policy

³ Bland, J., Sherer, D., Guha, R., Woodworth, K., Shields, P., Tiffany-Morales, J., & Campbell, A. (2011). *The status of the teaching profession 2011*. Sacramento, CA: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning at WestEd.

that required all teachers to be evaluated if they had taught for more than 10 consecutive days. That policy is the exception, not the rule, however. Finally, because current state policy stipulates 2 years of teaching on probationary status and “re-election” for the third year, temporary teachers are not on track to earn tenure.

Counting Temporary Teachers

The California data system makes it difficult to determine the number of teachers hired on temporary status. We do know, however, that California school districts have employed teachers on temporary status for a long time. Although the total number of temporary teachers tends to fluctuate, the proportion of beginning teachers hired on temporary employment status at some point during their first 3 years appears to have remained about the same for over a decade.

The state’s counting of temporary teachers entails at least three problems. First, districts appear to lack a common definition for determining who has been given temporary employment status. From the case study sites, we found that administrators had varying criteria for assigning temporary status and that the numbers districts report to the state may thus not be based on a uniform definition of what constitutes a temporary teacher.

Second, the state combines temporary teachers with long-term substitutes in its count,⁴ even though these designated teacher categories differ from one another.

Third, and most importantly, the state counts the number of temporary teachers only once during the school year (typically October 30), even though temporary teachers are hired throughout the year. Thus, we believe state data undercounts temporary teachers, omitting those hired after the October count date.

The problem with the state counts of temporary teachers was apparent as we interviewed beginning teachers (defined here as those with up to 3 years of experience) in the eight case study sites. Most beginning teachers reported that they had been on temporary status at least once during their careers. Some said they have moved from temporary to probationary status and back to temporary status.

Despite the problems with the state’s data on temporary teachers, arriving at a sense of the proportion among beginning teachers, along with a rough idea of trends over time, is possible. Exhibit 1 shows both the number and percentage of teachers in their 1st, 2nd, and 3rd years on temporary or long-term substitute status in the years for which the data are available.

⁴ A long-term substitute is defined as a person who replaces a regular teacher in one position in excess of 10 consecutive days. Long-term substitutes lose their positions once the regular teacher returns. The California Education Code contains a variety of definitions of temporary teachers, but those teachers are essentially the same as long-term substitutes, except they have clearly defined periods of employment.

Exhibit 1: Number and Percent of 1st Through 3rd Year Teachers on Temporary or Long-term Substitute Status

Year	Number of 1st–3rd Year Teachers	Percent of 1st–3rd Year Teachers
1999	14,666	23%
2000	14,582	24%
2003	8,950	19%
2004	9,159	20%
2005	10,318	22%
2006	9,893	21%
2007	10,160	22%
2008	8,913	23%
2009	5,046	21%
2010	4,582	24%

As previously indicated, the state’s counting of temporary teachers and their status amounts to a snapshot of the numbers on one day during the school year. Thus, the numbers in Exhibit 1 do not reveal how many temporary teachers districts hire over the course of a school year. Despite the limits of the state’s numbers, the data suggest that the use of temporary teachers has been common practice in California for many years. This practice is not solely the result of budget fluctuations; it has become *de facto* policy.

Although the percentage of beginning teachers on temporary status has remained steady, the total number of temporary teachers has fluctuated widely and appears to be in decline. Some of the decline is attributable to the overall reduction in the number of teachers and lessened demand for new hires, as well as shifts in state and federal and discretionary funding (e.g., California’s sweep of categorical funds into districts’ general funds; the end to federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (AARA) funding).

Recent court cases may further reduce the numbers of temporary teachers in the future.⁵ Finally, teachers with more than 3 years of experience (and not part of our count) may be occupying temporary status positions because layoffs include both beginning and more experienced teachers. Overall, though, the salient point here is that temporary teachers have been a significant and overlooked portion of the California teacher population.

The issue of temporary teachers can also be examined by determining how many beginning teachers are on the traditional path to tenure. State policies assume that once teachers earn their preliminary credential they achieve probationary status, complete BTSA, earn tenure, and are on permanent status after 2 years. But, as Exhibit 2 illustrates, the majority of beginning teachers must take a different path. The exhibit, which isolates the status of 3rd-year teachers, indicates that, over time, only 31 to 45% of California teachers earn tenure by their third year in the profession.

⁵ See http://www.lozanosmith.com/news_info.php?id=510

Exhibit 2: Number and Percent of 3rd-Year Teachers with Permanent Status (Tenure)

Year	Number of 3rd-Year Teachers with Tenure	Percent of 3rd-Year Teachers with Tenure
1999	6,779	33%
2000	5,994	31%
2003	5,372	32%
2004	4,682	34%
2005	4,685	34%
2006	5,444	38%
2007	6,311	43%
2008	5,771	42%
2009	4,655	42%
2010	3,527	45%

Temporary teacher status is just one contributor to beginning teachers' bumpy career path, albeit a major one. Temporary teachers, especially those hired after the beginning of the school year, do not receive the support so important for beginning teachers. Moreover, because temporary teachers typically are not evaluated, the schools and districts in which they teach have no way of assessing whether they are performing effectively. Yet they often are hired year after year. We explore issues regarding induction and evaluation in later sections of this report.

The Temporary Teacher Dilemma

One rural district has been hiring a high proportion of beginning teachers into temporary positions—about half of such teachers in the year we interviewed. An administrator told us, “The hiring process is the same; they just get different kinds of contracts.” Like many other rural districts, this one has been suffering both from declining enrollment and from shrinking state budgets. The district indicated that hiring teachers as temporary enables it to staff as many classrooms as possible while maintaining flexibility in the face of uncertainty. For the beginning teachers, however, assignment to temporary positions introduces uncertainty into their access to support and progress toward permanence.

One teacher reported that in his first year he was hired as a long-term substitute at the high school, into a temporary position at the middle school when a teacher retired in his second year, and in his third year went back to the high school as a .4 temporary hire. Thus, in his third year of teaching, he had not yet reached probationary status 1. He said that had he been hired as a fulltime substitute in his second year, he would have made more money than he made as a temporary teacher. Because he did not qualify for BTSA in any of these positions and although he was able to rely on a teacher who had served as his master teacher during his student teaching year for informal support, “It was tough.”

Occasionally a teacher in this district is given a “combination” appointment that blends temporary and probationary status. For example, one teacher had held a .8 probationary assignment the previous year (his first year of teaching), which qualified him as probationary 1. He was rehired for his second year in a position that combined .6 probationary and .4 temporary statuses. Thus, during his second year, he was uncertain whether he would qualify as probationary 2 and be put forward for permanence.

If this district wants to retain a teacher into the third year after the second probationary year, but faces uncertainty in enrollment or funding, the district hires the third-year teacher into a temporary position on a 100-day contract. If fall enrollment is lower than expected, the district lets the teacher go at the end of the contract. If enrollment holds steady, the district changes the terms of the contract and offers the regular position.

Next, we examine beginning teachers’ induction and clear credentialing.

BTSA and Clear Credentialing

California made history in 1998 when the Legislature required 2 years of induction to earn a full license to teach, called a Clear Credential. California's move to a structured program of induction—BTSA—as a mandatory component of the state's licensing system marked what was hailed as a significant advance in teacher preparation.

Like most policy changes, linking BTSA and Clear Credentialing had unintended consequences. This section explores the evolution of BTSA and the results of this policy linkage.

A Brief History of BTSA

In the late 1980s, California policymakers were concerned about the high attrition rate of new teachers, especially minority, urban, and rural teachers. Early BTSA advocates recognized that teaching is complex; that preservice teacher preparation cannot provide beginning teachers with all of the knowledge, skills, and competencies they need to be successful; and that much that needs to be learned about teaching is best learned on the job.

To deal with this issue, the state established the California New Teacher Project (CNTP). Jointly administered by the state's Department of Education (CDE) and Commission on Teacher Credentialing,⁶ the CNTP developed 37 pilot studies around the state designed to test the efficacy of various forms of new teacher support.

In addition, CNTP looked beyond the form of new teacher support to ascertain the knowledge, skills, and abilities beginning teachers needed to be successful. The work of the CNTP resulted in BTSA and ultimately in the development of the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTPs).

BTSA, which was designed for teachers in their first 2 years of teaching, was meant to strengthen the foundation for effective teaching and increase the likelihood that new teachers would remain in the profession.

Much of the work of the CNTP was incorporated into law in Senate Bill (SB) 1422 in 1992. That law:

1. Formalized BTSA and established a gradual phase-in of required induction for all beginning teachers in the first 2 years of practice.
2. Prompted a comprehensive review of teaching credential requirements, including making mandatory new teacher induction part of those requirements.

⁶ The CNTP operated out of the Santa Cruz Office of Education and was directed by Ellen Moir who went on to found the Santa Cruz-based New Teacher Center.

3. Called for the development of a broad framework of expectations—a set of standards—for beginning teachers.⁷

The state appointed a CSTP Development Task Force to flesh out the teaching standards. Many members of that task force were also strong advocates for a BTSA program that incorporated the new teaching standards and would be non-evaluative.

In 1998, California enacted a related law, SB 2042, that revised the credentialing system to require that teacher preparation programs be aligned with the CSTPs; it also required beginning teachers to complete 2 years of induction⁸ in order to earn a full license, called a Clear Credential.⁹

SB 2042 permitted teachers to choose among three induction routes: BTSA, alternative induction programs sponsored by school districts, and university-run induction programs. BTSA became, and remains, the program of choice for most public school teachers. As a result of SB 2042, BTSA immediately transitioned from a relatively small pilot program meant to be phased in over time to a mandatory statewide requirement.

Since the 1990s, then, required new teacher induction has been a hallmark of teacher preparation in California. Opinion in case study sites was virtually unanimous that new teacher induction is essential for the learning-to-teach system. Moreover, administrators at several study sites noted that providing strong, effective support to beginning teachers increases their retention rate.

Our work in the eight case study sites also revealed BTSA induction challenges. Study sites' accommodations to these situations have shaped the efficacy of their programs.

Challenging Times, Changing Circumstances, Varied Responses

We first discuss support providers—the experienced teachers who guide BTSA teachers through their induction program. We then address issues that have challenged some of the BTSA programs we studied: the state's revamped mechanism for funding BTSA, some BTSA bureaucratic and organizational dilemmas, and the diverse cohort of new teachers who fall under the BTSA umbrella.

Support Providers

Each new teacher in a BTSA program works with an experienced teacher, called a “support provider.” The support provider helps move the beginning teacher forward on a range of BTSA-specified activities designed to promote professional growth and

⁷ For more complete information, see Whittaker, A., Snyder, J., & Susan Freeman, S. (2001). Restoring balance: A chronology of the development and uses of the California standards for the teaching profession, *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Vol. 28, 1, 85-106.

⁸ Legislation in 2001 added a BTSA early completion option that allows “eligible candidates” (eligibility is determined by the employing school district) to complete induction requirements in less than 2 years.

⁹ California has a two-tier credentialing system. Tier 1, the Preliminary Credential, certifies that a teacher has met baseline professional requirements. Tier 2, the Clear Credential, is earned after completing BTSA.

development. Study results strongly suggest that support providers constitute the most positive feature of BTSA.

At all case study sites, teachers and administrators indicated that the support provider is crucial. One interviewee noted, “The support provider is key to the beginning teacher’s experience.” Another said, “[New teachers] love their support providers. They couldn’t ... survive without their support provider.”

We were impressed with the seriousness and creativity with which some study sites approached the support provider’s role. One district, for example, takes the long view of the contributions these individuals can make. This district recruits and trains support providers with an eye toward preparing those who are interested in leadership positions. District-designed training for support providers includes equipping them with the coaching skills that effective principals possess. Many of these BTSA support providers then leverage the skills they develop in this role and move on to leadership positions in their schools and districts. As an associate superintendent in this district told us, “We have a dozen coaches [support providers] right now that could get a principal’s job and do the job well.”

Another district views support providers as emissaries of that district’s key teaching and learning strategies. This study site’s support providers not only help beginning teachers complete state-specified BTSA requirements, but also ensure that they are fully engaged with the school district’s goals and instructional approaches.

Through their work with beginning teachers, support providers come to know well these teachers’ professional strengths and their weaknesses. They understand where the beginning teachers shine and where they struggle. This information largely remains between the support provider and the BTSA teacher. Support providers are precluded from formally sharing their knowledge of beginning teachers’ practice with principals. This is known as BTSA’s “firewall,” the boundary between providing support and gathering evidence that could be used as part of a summative evaluation. We will return to this issue in the section of the report on beginning teacher evaluation.

Support providers received considerable praise for helping new teachers transition from novices fresh out of school to classroom professionals. Nonetheless, we found that study sites often had no stated selection criteria or standards for support providers. School or district administrators typically select the teachers to fill the support provider role, but how that selection is made is not transparent. In some districts, teachers volunteer to be support providers. One principal selected a teacher to be a support provider because she had wanted a student teacher and was not assigned one. Again, although the quality of support providers’ work was rarely criticized, the case study sites were unable to tell us the skills and competencies they look for as they select these people who are key to ensuring that beginning teachers’ BTSA experience is successful.

We turn now to the state’s current fiscal approach to BTSA.

BTSA Funding

Until the 2008–09 school year, BTSA was funded by the state as a categorical program. Districts were awarded special-purpose restricted funds, in addition to their state general fund allocations, to implement an array of programs, including BTSA.

By 2008 California, like the rest of the nation, was in a recession, and education was not immune from funding cuts. The state began to reduce funding allocated to school districts significantly, up to 20% from 2007–08 levels.¹⁰

In February 2009, in recognition of the severe programmatic challenges created by reduced funding, the Legislature granted districts the authority to “flex” formerly categorical funds. The state divided categorical programs into three tiers. Tier 1 programs experienced no changes in funding or program requirements. Funding for Tier 2 programs was reduced, although program requirements remained unchanged. For Tier 3 programs, districts were allowed to spend funds for “any educational purpose,” essentially repurposing Tier 3 funding as a block grant.¹¹

Because BTSA falls into Tier 3, districts can reallocate BTSA dollars as they see fit. Beginning teachers are still required to complete the BTSA requirement under the new fiscal arrangement, but the districts no longer are required to fund it.

BTSA and Flex Funding

Flexible BTSA funding would require our study sites to make a choices about what BTSA would look like and, indeed, if it would continue at all. Their choice would affect their beginning teachers’ careers long into the future.

Our study sites have dealt variously with flexible BTSA funding. Some differences among them are attributable to locale (urban, suburban, or rural), some to the organization of BTSA programs (single district programs versus BTSA consortia), and some to selection among competing priorities for available dollars.

The study sites, as have all California districts, have had to grapple with the state’s significant fiscal downturn. Some cash-strapped study sites reacted to the diminution of funding formerly tied to BTSA by taking steps to ensure the program would remain comprehensive and vibrant.

Districts in the rural counties we studied determined to maintain the countywide or regional BTSA consortia they had formed under the old funding arrangement, with each member district contributing annually to sustain the BTSA program in that county.

The rural BTSA consortia serve multiple purposes. They constitute the sole induction program and the sole source of professional and leadership development for teachers. In addition, the rural consortia provide opportunities for administrators in small and isolated districts to meet and discuss emerging issues.

¹⁰ School districts in California receive more than half their funding from the state.

¹¹ For a more complete explanation, see Weston, M. *California’s new school funding flexibility* (2011). San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California. Retrieved from http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_511MWR.pdf

Imperial County: Building and Maintaining a Successful BTSA Program

Imperial County, geographically isolated and sparsely populated, has 17 small school districts scattered across the county. More than 90% of students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch and nearly three-quarters are English language learners. The county is home to the successful and respected Imperial County Consortium BTSA Induction program.

Individually, consortium districts have little or no capacity to support new teachers. Accordingly, they decided not to reduce BTSA funds but to pool formerly dedicated state dollars to support a centrally located and managed countywide program. As the sole source of support for new teachers in Imperial County, participating teachers, support providers, and administrators value the BTSA program.

The Imperial County BTSA program is notable for its longevity, leadership, access to outside knowledge and expertise, and strong network of educators. The program serves as a professional beacon for many educators in the county, in addition to the new teachers it serves directly.

Several aspects of Imperial County's BTSA program help explain its efficacy. First, in this close-knit community of educators everyone knows everyone else. Moreover, these community members are mutually committed to improving education in the country.

Second, the program promotes a strong, supportive vision of teaching and learning centered on high expectations for teachers and students.

Third, the Imperial BTSA program is multilayered and inclusive. Each BTSA teacher has a support provider who reports to a BTSA District Lead designated in each of the county's 17 districts. Each district also has a BTSA (administrative) Liaison. Four Advisors in the county facilitate BTSA teachers' work when the time comes for them to demonstrate that they have completed BTSA tasks.

As a result of the Imperial structure, support providers feel supported by the District Leads and BTSA Advisors. District Leads feel supported by one another and by the BTSA Induction Director. Indicative of the professional dynamic in this BTSA network, many of the BTSA teachers interviewed indicated that the valuable support and sustenance they received from their support providers encouraged them to aspire to become support providers themselves. They also hoped to maintain their sense of professionalism through a continued relationship with BTSA.

One of the non-rural study sites also started a BTSA consortium consisting of the initiating district and six other local districts and six private schools. The private schools receive BTSA on a fee-for-service basis and generate added revenue for the lead consortium district.

Two study sites previously contracted with their county office of education or a larger school district to provide BTSA. Both decided to bring BTSA in-house to save money and give the induction program a more local flavor.

Some study districts, then, indicated commitment to new teacher induction in the face of flexible funding by developing mechanisms to preserve their BTSA programs. Other sites, however, struggled as they weighed competing demands on their resources. Some made decisions that resulted in diminished BTSA programs and reduced services for beginning teachers.

Some districts have reduced the number of support providers and increased the number of beginning teachers those providers are expected to serve. Some sites have curtailed the training support that providers receive. One district, which reduced the funds available to BTSA, has a waiting list of probationary teachers trying to gain access to the program.

Yet another district all but dismantled its BTSA program and is now trying to build it back. When flexible funding was introduced, this district reduced funds for BTSA from \$800,000 annually to \$100,000. A reduction in the number of new teachers needing to be served made this cut somewhat less painful, but the reduced funds nevertheless substantially curtailed the services the district could provide to beginning teachers. BTSA staff were significantly reduced and, according to district officials, the quality and scope of the program suffered. This site has now secured grant funds to supplement state funding for use in reinvigorating its BTSA program.

State flexible funding for BTSA offered the case study sites a choice. Some developed creative ways to preserve previously targeted funding or use it more efficiently to maintain a functioning new teacher induction program. Other sites diverted former BTSA funding to other purposes, with the result that services to beginning teachers were diminished.¹²

Redundant or Reinforcing?

Several beginning teachers we interviewed reported that significant parts of the BTSA curriculum duplicated portions of their teacher preparation program. Such duplication is perhaps not surprising. California's Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) establishes the standards that teachers must meet to complete BTSA,¹³ as well as those

¹² According to the California Legislative Analyst's Office, since the state implemented the BTSA flexible funding arrangement, more than half (55%) of districts have shifted dollars away from BTSA; 10% have eliminated their programs entirely.

¹³ For detailed information about the Standards for Quality and Effectiveness for Professional Teacher Induction, see <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/standards/induction-program-standards.pdf>

for approved teacher preparation programs. Because both programs are structured around the CSTPs, it is inevitable that some topics are repeated.

To be sure, learning something well—or learning how to do something well, such as teach—requires both repetition and reinforcement. Some level of redundancy is warranted, and even desirable, in the service of achieving deeper understanding.

But the interviews also suggested that the repetition often inherent in BTSA curriculum can present a dilemma for novice teachers struggling to meet their daily professional responsibilities. These beginners often feel as if they are running in place trying to learn how to navigate a school, manage a classroom, and teach their students. They want to learn new skills and strategies—thus, their high ratings of support providers and of the one-on-one time those providers spend with new teachers. At the same time, beginning teachers report that, given all they must learn as they work in their own classrooms, they cannot afford to repeat ground they recently covered. The beginning teachers who find BTSA curriculum duplicates teacher preparation see redundancy, not reinforcement.

BTSA paperwork requirements also contribute to the sense of doubling back on what already has been done. Interviewees told us that many of the program’s paperwork requirements are burdensome, duplicative, and do not contribute significantly to induction.¹⁴

It is important here to distinguish between different kinds of required BTSA paperwork. Both support providers and BTSA participants indicated that paperwork designed to help teachers reflect on their teaching is useful and adds a needed dimension to the BTSA experience. Other BTSA paperwork, however, is viewed as a source of frustration. Said one support provider, “Honestly, I feel bad about all the paperwork. ... Is it really helping them [beginning teachers] to be better teachers or is it just adding more stress?... Sometimes a lot of it feels redundant, over and over, kind of saying the same things.”

Some case study sites have developed “work arounds” to manage the paperwork load and to make some of this required work useful and relevant. In some sites, support providers complete the paperwork for the beginning BTSA teachers to free more time for them to focus on their teaching. Others sites have tried to streamline BTSA paperwork. One district aligns paperwork requirements with its own district goals. Another is working hard to incorporate BTSA goals into its district priorities to enable a more seamless and district-focused induction process for beginning teachers.

BTSA Often Out of Sync

BTSA was intended to be a support program for teachers in their first and second years of teaching. As noted, the BTSA framers were convinced that targeted induction support for teachers in their formative years of teaching is critical.

¹⁴ Interviewees who were familiar with both Formative Assessment of California Teachers (FACT) and its replacement, California Formative Assessment and Support System for Teachers (CFASST), said that CFASST is an improvement in terms of reduced paperwork requirements. However, they noted that CFASST requirements still remain too burdensome.

However, as the case studies revealed, not all first- and second-year teachers have access to BTSA support. At some sites, teachers classified as temporary are not eligible for BTSA. In addition, as noted, teachers hired after the October 30 count date are ineligible for BTSA support until the following year. That ineligibility is an especially serious problem for rural sites that have no other induction support.

Another BTSA timing dilemma stems from state policies that link BTSA and clear credentialing. When BTSA became a requirement for a Clear Credential, the time beginning teachers had to complete BTSA was extended from 2 to 5 years. A program intended for the initial years of teaching became a requirement that could be completed over a substantially longer period, conceivably after beginners have developed their habits of teaching.

Making BTSA a 5-year credentialing requirement rather than a mandatory induction program for the first 2 years of teaching changed the sense of the program at some study sites. These sites view BTSA primarily as a hoop for teachers to jump through to earn their Clear Credential. In fact, an administrator in one these sites described BTSA as “box checking for a Clear Credential.”

Several sites purposely encourage beginning teachers to delay BTSA while they hone their teaching skills through the district’s own induction programs which they believe meet the needs of beginning teachers better than BTSA does. One site, for example, provides all new teachers with 6-week diagnosis-support-review cycles that are repeated until the district is satisfied the teacher can function effectively with school-based support. At study sites that offer their own induction programs, teachers often complete BTSA well after their first 2 years of teaching and do so only to earn a Clear Credential.

Linking BTSA to clear credentialing has resulted in unintended consequences. BTSA was initially conceived of as an organized program of support for the newest teachers—an investment in the future. When BTSA became a requirement for a Clear Credential, however, the connection between efficacious early career support and completing state BTSA requirements became complicated.

It is not clear why BTSA and clear credentialing should be linked. Perhaps the connection made sense at the time the policy bond was forged. At this juncture, however, it seems that BTSA’s competing demands as early career induction and credential requirement are often at odds.

Evaluation of Beginning Teachers

Teacher Evaluation Policy in California

Across the country states are revamping their educator evaluation systems. By one recent count, more than 40 states have passed laws establishing new evaluation procedures.¹⁵ Numerous forces drive this recent emphasis on educator evaluation, but a clear consensus has emerged that current evaluation practices need revision. A recent report from Stanford's National Board Resource Center identified the following problems with teacher evaluation in California:

- Teachers and their evaluators lack common well-defined and detailed pictures of what constitutes good professional practice at each level of teacher development.
- In most cases, the evaluations are conducted for compliance, not improvement.
- The time available for principals to conduct effective evaluations is seriously limited.
- Evaluations too often focus on practices that are easy to observe like classroom management and whether students are on task, rather than looking for evidence that students are actually mastering the learning goals set for them.
- Current evaluation procedures are scheduled in accordance with local mandates and do not take the needs of teachers into consideration. Nor do the procedures assign priority to those aspects of teachers' work that need greater support or scrutiny.
- Most evaluations are not used to help individual teachers select the professional development they need to obtain additional knowledge or skills.¹⁶

Historically, teacher evaluation became systematized in the 1920s as part of a larger movement for the "scientific management" of schools.¹⁷ That movement held that schools should be run like factories: management (principals and superintendents) had to be able to monitor and evaluate clearly defined tasks undertaken by teachers to ensure that money was being spent efficiently. The evaluation system developed in the 1920s closely resembles systems that are still in place today.

In California, the basic teacher evaluation framework has been in place since 1971 under the Stull Act (AB 293). Because evaluation is a mandatory subject of collective bargaining, specific teacher evaluation processes are negotiated locally.¹⁸ Each local

¹⁵ Donaldson, M. L., & Papay, J. P. (2012). *Reforming teacher evaluation: One district's story*. Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress.

¹⁶ National Board Resource Center. (2010). *A quality teacher in every classroom: Creating a teacher evaluation system that works for California*. Stanford, CA: National Board Resource Center.

¹⁷ Rousmaniere, K. (1997). *City Teachers: Teaching and school reform in historical perspective*. New York: Teachers College Press.

¹⁸ Statutory authority for collective bargaining in California is found in the Administrative Code, not the Education Code.

governing board is required by law to “establish a uniform system of evaluation and assessment of the performance of all certificated personnel...” The Stull Act has twice been amended (in 1983 and 1999) to further define the scope of evaluation to include:

- Pupils’ progress toward mastering state-adopted academic content standards as measured by state-adopted criterion-referenced assessments.
- The instructional techniques and strategies the teacher uses and the teacher’s adherence to curricular objectives.
- The establishment and maintenance of a suitable learning environment, within the scope of the teacher’s responsibilities.

The law requires that probationary teachers (those in their first 2 years of employment) be evaluated annually. Teachers who have passed probation are typically evaluated every other year, although teachers with 10 or more years of experience may be evaluated as infrequently as every 5 years. Any teacher who receives a rating of “unsatisfactory” is evaluated every year until rated “satisfactory” or dismissed. Most California districts use a similar evaluation sequence: a preliminary conference between the teacher and evaluator, followed by classroom observation, followed by a post-evaluation summary conference between the teacher and the evaluator. In most California districts, this sequence has changed little in decades.

The State of Evaluation for Beginning Teachers

California policy makers have responded to the consensus of experts who argue that beginning teachers are those most in need of high-quality evaluation. The New Teacher Center has identified development phases for beginning teachers (anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, and reflection) and argued that they need more frequent support and feedback than their veteran colleagues do.¹⁹

Beginning teachers in our case study sites reported that they need help in establishing classroom routines that foster effective classroom management, want ideas for engaging lessons, and need assistance in understanding why a lesson worked or did not work. Moreover, they indicated that they are likely to be given the most challenging teaching assignments, with the most challenging students, in the most challenging schools. Given these situations, evaluations designed to improve the practice of beginning teachers are particularly important. But in the interviews, beginning teachers and their principals reported that the teacher evaluation system is largely unhelpful in diagnosing beginning teachers’ needs or designing support for them.

As indicated in an earlier section of this report, whether a teacher is evaluated at all largely depends on the teacher’s employment status. The California Education Code does not require that temporary teachers or long-term (or short-term) substitutes be evaluated. For large numbers of beginning teachers, then, evaluations are either nonexistent or perfunctory.

¹⁹ <http://www.newteachercenter.org/blog/5-key-takeaways-supporting-and-evaluating-teachers-new-ntc-guide-il-leaders>

Exceptions do exist, however; some beginning teachers reported that their principals are instructional leaders who devote much time to evaluation and especially to beginning teacher evaluation. Beginning teachers consistently reported that the quality and utility of evaluation was nearly wholly dependent on the skill and commitment of the principal. A typical teacher comment was: "From my experience, it depends on who you get [to evaluate you]. Some administrators are good and others aren't." At the same time, principals reported that they aspired to conduct thorough evaluations, but that the demands of their jobs made it impossible to do so.

Among the district leaders, principals, and teachers interviewed, there was a broad consensus that the current evaluation systems are inadequate, especially for beginning teachers. As one human resources director reported:

We spend 90% of our time thinking how we're going to design an evaluation system around 3 to 4% of our teacher workforce. We need to flip that... [and] develop a system that includes multiple measures, is peer driven, takes our big chunk of teachers that are good teachers, 80%, and moves them along the spectrum to great teachers, and enables master teachers to support those that are struggling. ...[the law] allows you to not be evaluated for 5 years if you are experienced enough—help me understand that. It is so contradictory to what we are trying to do as a profession.

Evaluations of beginning teachers are also supposed to inform tenure decisions. But as teachers and administrators reported, most evaluations lack the rigor to serve as an adequate basis for making such a critical decision about a teacher's career. Unfortunately, general agreement is lacking about what level of performance warrants granting tenure. According to the beginning teachers in our small sample, tenure decisions are largely uncoupled from evaluation, instead being based on uneven and informal practices.

At the heart of the matter is how the basic purpose of evaluation is defined. We found that evaluation practice and the intended purposes of evaluation were not congruent. Despite educators' aspirations for an evaluation system that improves teachers' skills and knowledge, beginning teacher evaluation in California typically is not associated with professional supports. Most interviewees reported that evaluation is separate from support. As a result, evaluations tend to provide a rough approximation of a teacher's performance as measured by a broad set of minimum expectations. According to an assistant superintendent for human resources,

In a perfect world an evaluator should be a coach. But there is a stigma around evaluation, especially summative... Unfortunately, evaluation has a negative connotation when I really believe it is pure performance feedback. But we are having to reshape that because for years principals focused only on evaluations for people you want to get rid of, and we are trying to change the culture...

In addition to reports from administrators and beginning teachers, we examined the written record to further assess the quality of beginning teachers' evaluations. Next, we examine a sample of beginning teachers' evaluation files.

Evaluation File Review

To better understand the quality of teacher evaluations, the study team examined a sample of 41 beginning teacher evaluation files from 3 of the case study sites. Representatives of each district and the teachers' union redacted each file so that teacher confidentiality was ensured.

Our analysis revealed that the evaluation files contained little documentation of teacher performance and almost no guidance about how the teacher was to improve. Moreover, nearly all beginning teachers in the sample received positive ratings.

Exhibit 3 presents a typical evaluation form from District "A" in the study.

Exhibit 3. Typical Evaluation Form

Teacher D-2

		Evaluation		
Name		Prob 0	Temporary	X
School		Prob 1	Permanent	
Grade/Subject	Date	2/22/11	Prob 2	
		Effective	Needs Attention	Unsatisfactory (Asst. Plan Required)
1.	Preparation and Planning			
	a. Daily and Weekly Written Plans Evident and Available with Correlation to Instructional Standards	x		
	b. Uses Appropriate Instructional Materials	x		
2.	Classroom Environment			
	a. Provides Effective Classroom Environment and Management		x	
	b. Maintains Appropriate Classroom Control Discipline	x		
3.	Classroom Instruction			
	a. Learning Objective Correlated with Instructional Standards	x		
	b. Independent Practice	x		
	c. Activating prior Knowledge	x		
	d. Concept Development	x		
	e. Importance	x		
	f. Skill Development	x		
	g. Guided Practice	x		
	h. Closure	x		
	i. Checking for Understanding	x		
	j. Instructional Decisions Made in Response to Student Learning	x		
	Student Work			
	a. Grade Level Appropriate	x		
	b. Effective Quantity for Mastery of Standard	x		
	Student Performance			
	a. Monitors Student Progress	x		
	b. Produces Effective Student Performance	x		
	c. Written Plan to Determine Grades	x		
4.	Professional Learning Communities			
	a. Active Participant	x		
	b. Follows PLC Norms	x		
5.	Professionalism			
	a. Maintains Appropriate Communications	x		
	b. Provides Effective Supervision	x		
	c. Prepares and Completes Accurate Records and Timely Reports	x		
	d. Displays Empathy and Respect for Students	x		
	e. Punctual	x		
	f. Works Well with Staff and Community	x		
	g. Adheres to District and School Policies and Regulations	x		

Commendations: [redacted] has embraced all aspects of EDI and focused [redacted] instructional delivery to meet the needs of all students. [redacted] has responded to all instructional/intervention recommendations and worked to improve on a daily basis. [redacted] has established appropriate rigor, developed appropriate assessment material, and worked diligently within PLCs, while continuing to seek additional learning opportunities and professional development.

Recommendations: Continue to build on EDI delivery and analysis of student learning through common assessments. Continue to have clear behavioral expectations and clear consequences for students who violate classroom norms/rules.

[redacted] 2/22/11 Admin [redacted] Date 2/22/11

I have received a copy of this report. My signature does not necessarily indicate my agreement. I may attach a written response within a reasonable period of time from the date on which the report is received. Such written response is to become a permanent part of the report.

As can be seen, the principal judged the teacher to be effective in nearly all aspects of teaching, but no evidence to support that judgment is part of the official record. Moreover, in the one area that needs attention—"provides effective classroom environment and management"—the principal provides few specifics and little guidance about how the teacher might improve. Although we might assume that the principal

provided such evidence and guidance in the post-observation conference with the teacher, the official evaluation report does not provide such guidance and on its face is of little help to the teacher.

Looking across the 41 evaluations, we did find some variation in the quality of the reports depending on the time and effort of the evaluator. That variation appeared to be as great within the same district as it was across districts. As beginning teachers told us, it all depends on the principal.

Even with the variation, we found no examples where the principal identified an area of the teacher's performance that needed improvement and provided guidance on how to improve. The majority of principal ratings were positive. Although our sample may have just happened to include a talented group of beginning teachers, we would have expected a more evenly distributed set of ratings.

Exhibit 4 presents a summary of principals' ratings from the three districts. (Appendix B presents the complete set of principal ratings by each area of performance.)

Exhibit 4: Evaluation Systems: Distribution of Ratings of Beginning Teachers

District A

	Effective	Needs Attention	Unsatisfactory		
Total = 20 evaluations	93.5%	6.5%	0%		
District B					
	Exceeds Performance Standards	Consistent with Performance Standards	Working to Meet Performance Standards	Does Not Meet Performance Standards	
Total = 11 evaluations	17%	71%	12%	0%	
District C					
	Exceeds Performance Standards	Consistent with Performance Standards	Working to Meet Performance Standards	Progress Not Evident	Does Not Meet Performance Standards
Total = 10 evaluations	7%	75%	18%	0%	0%

As Exhibit 4 shows, the vast majority of beginning teachers, 82% to 93.5%, fell on the high end of the rating scale. Remarkably, principals found no teacher to be unsatisfactory or unable to meet performance standards in any area of the CSTPs or, in the case of District A, a modified version of the standards.

Informal Evaluation Practices

Our examination of evaluation files focused on the formal process and the official record of that process. Although we found the written record of teacher evaluations sorely lacking, we did learn of an informal set of practices designed to assess teacher effectiveness. Typically, these informal evaluation activities took the form of frequent “walk-throughs”—brief, usually unannounced classroom visits—by principals. Most principals use these informal evaluation practices to inform their formal evaluations and to determine the kinds of supports teachers need. In two case study sites, leadership required principals to conduct walk-throughs, thus formalizing a common informal practice.

In one district, principals were expected to devote at least 5 hours a week to walk-throughs and to provide teachers with written or oral feedback to promote improvement. The principal was also expected to provide coaching support if a teacher’s performance was of concern. Previously, beginning teachers in this district were given release time to observe exemplary teaching in other classrooms and to receive coaching support.

However, budget cuts over the past several years have eliminated most “academic support teachers” (coaches) and nearly eliminated release time.

Finally, the separation between the support provided by BTSA and the evaluation by the principal has been the subject of debate. Although it is commonly understood that BTSA support providers do not confer with principals about a BTSA participant’s performance (see the BTSA section), we found the lines of communication to be rather porous in cases when a teacher needed additional support and when the principal and the support provider had established trust and a commitment to improving the effectiveness of the teacher. In those cases, blurring the line between support and evaluation appeared to benefit the teachers involved as well as the general professional climate of the school.

Barriers to Quality Evaluations

Well-meaning policies designed to ensure quality teacher evaluations, especially for beginning teachers, are no guarantee that teachers benefit from those policies. The interviews and our analysis of the evaluation files revealed that principals often lack the time to thoroughly evaluate teachers. As one Human Resources Director explained,

Principals have so much on their plates, more demands in my opinion than ever before, especially because we’ve cut half of the custodians and plant managers. Guess who is doing the vacuuming and raising the flag and cleaning the bathrooms? They [the demands] are at an all time workload high.

SRI’s 2011 research on principals and teacher evaluations revealed a statewide problem. Approximately one in three principals cited insufficient time to observe teachers for formal evaluation (34%) and insufficient time to debrief all teachers after classroom observations (30%) as serious barriers to improving teaching quality. Likewise, 35% noted limited resources to support the specific professional development needs of each teacher as a serious barrier and 32% identified limited resources to support school-wide professional development needs as a serious barrier.²⁰

For many principals, various demands of their jobs have limited the time and attention that they can spend evaluating teachers, especially beginning teachers, let alone providing aligned supports. At the same time, principals often have more teachers (and classified staff) to evaluate due to cuts in the number of administrative positions at a school. As an elementary school principal we spoke with reported,

I am it at my school. There’s no AP. When an emotionally disturbed kid goes off and runs, I am jogging. When a kid throws up, I clean it up. I can’t be in classrooms enough to get a really really good picture of what goes on every day. Walk-throughs? I sometimes have to do run-throughs. I do get to see things when I cover classes—yesterday I covered a class while the teacher sat in an IEP and it was wonderful, I got to teach them some math, and you can really see a lot about how the class is run when you teach it. That’s the way the evaluation system is done now. I don’t have the luxury of giving it the time it deserves.

²⁰ Bland, J., et al. (2011).

Our interviews with principals also revealed the unevenness of the quality of the evaluations and the varying levels of commitment principals had toward conducting thorough evaluations. Some principals expressed concerns about their ability to conduct 10 to 15 teacher evaluations well, but others told us that they had no problem completing twice that number. As one principal explained:

I'll just be very candid. The principal before me gave every one of the teachers who qualified for it a 5-year you're all wonderful, review timeline. OK, well, why do we have an achievement gap, and the school quality review talking about inconsistent instruction from site to site? So I pulled those 5-year timelines back—they're like cutting your nose off to spite your face... [Y]ou and I know informal walkthroughs are more meaningful. To me evaluation [should] be—not an informal process, but less rigid, not “you can only include these two observations in your feedback.” If I do a walkthrough and see something egregious, I can write a letter, but I have to go through a whole process. But beyond the egregious, I think teachers need more frequent feedback... and not just a great big nebulous tool that is pretty hard to perfect.

Our review of the evaluation files and our interview data suggest the need to rethink and reinvent how beginning teachers are evaluated. As the process is currently configured, beginning teachers are unlikely to receive evaluations that advance their teaching skills and knowledge unless they are fortunate enough to be in a school with a particularly driven principal who makes evaluation a top priority. In addition, most evaluation systems are too weak to serve as the basis for significant personnel decisions such as tenure.

Emerging New Evaluation Systems

Interest is widespread at the state level in examining teacher evaluation policies, although little legislation addressing this issue is being considered. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge ongoing work at the district level to rethink teacher evaluation. The Chief Academic Officer at one case study district described a new vision for teacher evaluation:

Right now our teacher evaluation is very singular... [It] needs to be multidimensional, more aligned to a 360-degree feedback process, with various stakeholders able to provide teachers with thoughts and ideas regarding the impact of their work and with the teachers also part of that process. It needs to not be done unto the teacher, but done with the teacher. And it needs to be a formative process rather than it being so narrow. [It needs to] use multiple data points, including, I would say, student work and impact of student learning. How we define that, determine what it is, going back to measure, [is] still to be determined, but it can't be just an observation in a classroom.

Among the study sites, the work to reinvent teacher evaluation, especially for beginning teachers, had just begun. However, we found a particularly significant effort at Green Dot Public Schools, one of our study sites. The Green Dot system uses multiple sources of data to assess teachers' skills and knowledge and provide them with intensive professional development to match their needs and evaluate their practice fairly and consistently.

To be sure, Green Dot is not a typical case. It has substantial dollars available beyond those provided under usual state and local funding arrangements. In particular, Green Dot is the recipient of one of the large Gates Foundation Intensive Partnership grants, as well as a Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) grant. In addition, although teachers at Green Dot are unionized, Green Dot's status as a charter management organization allows choices that are not available to traditional public school districts. Nevertheless, some school districts may want to emulate or adapt Green Dot's evaluation practices.

Teacher Evaluation in Green Dot Schools

A charter management organization that operates 18 middle and high schools in the highest need areas of Los Angeles, Green Dot Public School's mission is to prepare its low-income and minority student population for college.

Green Dot teachers are represented by the Asociación de Maestros, an affiliate of the California Teachers Association. Although the end product of the negotiated teacher evaluation system is a performance rating, the system focuses on teacher supports that, as Green Dot describes, are data-driven, practical, job-embedded, collaborative, and individualized.

For beginning teachers, Green Dot provides a variety of targeted support in the form of mentors, coaches, content and curriculum specialists, and demonstration teachers who model lessons.

Once school begins, each beginning teacher is placed in a diagnosis-support-review cycle. A curriculum specialist observes the new teacher in the classroom and diagnoses needs. On the basis of this diagnosis, a 6-week plan of targeted coaching and support is developed. The teacher's progress is reviewed after 6 weeks. The diagnosis and targeted support cycle continues until the specialist determines that the beginning teacher is making sufficient progress. At that point, diagnosis and coaching become less frequent, and the school site assumes responsibility for the beginning teacher's growth and development.

Green Dot's evaluation system is part of a comprehensive effort to attract and retain effective teachers, differentiate support to develop teacher effectiveness, and provide career pathways for all teachers. The multiple measures evaluation system, which operates for both beginning and experienced teachers, comprises of three component parts:

1. Classroom observations—Principals and other administrators observe teachers in their classrooms for 45 minutes six times each year, twice formally and four times informally. Informal evaluation results provide the data for targeted teacher support. Evaluators use a rubric derived from the Danielson Framework and are rigorously trained to collect evidence objectively and tie evidence to the rubric. Training pays special attention to inter-rater reliability. Evaluators must annually pass a certification test that includes observing a 60-minute teaching video, scripting the lesson, and tying observed evidence to Framework indicators. Green Dot recently added another assistant principal to each school to provide administrators with more time to conduct classroom observations.

(continued next page)

2. Student growth—Green Dot uses student growth percentiles (SGPs) based on the California Standards Tests. SGPs allow students, using their own past performance, to be compared with similarly situated Los Angeles Unified School District and other charter school students. For teachers in tested grades and subjects, the student growth measure is a combination of school-wide and individual classroom performance. Teachers in untested areas use school-wide performance for this part of their evaluation.

3. Surveys—Three surveys compose a portion of Green Dot teacher evaluations: a peer survey, a student survey, and a family survey. For the peer survey, each teacher receives anonymous feedback from randomly selected colleagues. The family survey asks questions about the student’s home-school interactions. The student survey centers on classroom environment and instruction.

Each measure is weighted, with the heaviest weight (40%) attached to classroom observations and the least weight (5–10%) given to each of the surveys. Measures are combined into a single teacher effectiveness rating that falls into one of five performance bands: entry, emerging, effective, highly effective 1, and highly effective 2.

Green Dot is not the only school system that is trying to make evaluation part of a broader effort to improve instruction, but its efforts are noteworthy. Essentially, Green Dot is redefining the purpose of evaluation by moving its focus away from identifying and removing the worst performers, and toward improving all teachers’ practice. Green Dot makes a special effort with beginning teachers.

We turn now to an examination of teacher tenure.

Tenure

*Every employee of a school district of any type or class having an average daily attendance of 250 or more who, after having been employed by the district for two complete consecutive school years in a position or positions requiring certification qualifications, is reelected for the next succeeding school year to a position requiring certification qualifications shall, at the commencement of the succeeding school year be classified as and become a permanent employee of the district.
California Education Code Sec. 44929.21(b)*

The section of the Education Code above defines what is called “permanence” in California, often referred to as “tenure.” Teachers in California earn tenure after successfully completing 2 years of probation and receiving two successive “meets standards” (or its equivalent) performance evaluation ratings. Principals typically conduct evaluations and determine whether to recommend a teacher for tenure. The employing school district makes the final decision about granting tenure.

Until 1983, it took 3 years for a teacher in California to earn tenure. Under SB 813, the state’s 1983 omnibus education reform measure, time to tenure was reduced to 2 years. In exchange for a shorter probationary period, districts were given the right to dismiss teachers in their first 2 years without offering a reason, in other words, without cause.

How Earning Tenure Works in Practice

Earning tenure is another part of California beginning teachers' bumpy career path. State policy may intend 2 years of successful teaching and then tenure. In practice, however, earning tenure often stretches out considerably longer than 2 years. As noted, teachers at several study sites are hired and rehired in temporary status, often with little expectation that a probationary appointment is on the horizon. In addition, several consecutive years of teacher layoffs, a consequence of declining revenues, have led to probationary teachers losing their jobs year after year at several study sites.

Given that temporary status results in delaying probation for several years, and given that annual layoffs often extend probation well beyond 2 years, tenure seems all but irrelevant to beginning teachers. As one teacher who has taught in a study district for 5 years but has completed only 1 year of probation told us, "I feel like I'm not even close [to tenure]. I think, without knowing, it makes it extremely difficult [for me] to plan for next year." This individual wants a career in teaching, but each year the layoff-rehire-layoff cycle repeats itself, that career seems ever more tenuous.

Administrators at some study sites acknowledge they are reluctant to grant tenure to beginning teachers, even when these teachers are performing well. Principals at one study site indicated that recommending a teacher for tenure requires them to "make the case" to the district to retain the teacher. These principals feel they are on the "hot seat" because, as they view it, once teachers have tenure, they cannot be dismissed.

State law is clear: 2 years of probation with 2 years of satisfactory or better performance evaluation ratings advance a teacher to permanence. Yet we found that even where tenure is a possibility, the process of earning it remains something of a mystery to beginning teachers. Many beginning teachers, for example, reported that they do not know or understand the link between evaluation and tenure.

As described in the Evaluation section, evaluation systems are generally quite weak and, as beginning teachers describe them, rather hit and miss. It is thus not surprising that the clear connection between performance review and advancing from probationary to permanent status intended by state policy is not evident to these teachers.

Time to Tenure

Debate about how long it should take for a teacher to earn tenure is ongoing. No clear answer emerged from our analysis of case study sites. In fact, opinions and points of view differ widely, sometimes more intensely so within case study sites than between them.

Some administrators interviewed indicated that 2 years is not enough time to determine whether a teacher should be granted tenure. These principals argued that they needed more time to be sure that teachers are currently effective and will continue to be effective into the future.

A principal at one study site said that he found some of the new teachers at his school extremely promising. However, he believed that 2 years did not offer him enough time to collect data to be certain that these teachers would continue to be effective. He reported that he sometimes denies tenure even though he would be happy to retain these teachers on his teaching staff. Significantly, some administrators who advocated a longer time to tenure also acknowledged that they were not sure they would make different decisions about recommending teachers for tenure even if they had more time.

Some study districts viewed the state-determined time to tenure as just about right. In a study district where administrators spend significant time in beginning teachers' classrooms, observing their practice and offering feedback, they told us they do not think they would gain a great deal of new information if the time to tenure were extended.

Administrators in this district indicated, for example, that they did not believe that, even with an additional 2 to 3 years of observation, they were better equipped to make tenure decisions for those teachers who initially enter in temporary positions. One high-level administrator in this district said us, "If you can't make a determination [about] a teacher in two years, then you shouldn't be the person doing it. If you're in the [class]room all the time, and you're doing the things you should be doing, ... you should know in the first year."

At the outset of this study, we assumed that tenure remained the hot policy topic it long has been. Instead, we found divided opinions regarding the state's established time to tenure. More importantly, we found that, given the large number of teachers who serve for several years in temporary status coupled with annual layoffs caused by years of fiscal decline, tenure is not beginning teachers' primary consideration. Earning tenure is neither a process they understand nor a goal they believe they can achieve in the foreseeable future.

Study Recommendations

Much about beginning teachers' experiences has yet to be elucidated. For example, how many beginning teachers complete their induction program and earn a Clear Credential in 2, 3, 4, or 5 years? What percentage of all teachers is evaluated each year, and what percentage of all beginning teachers (regardless of employment status or licensure) receives induction support? How do teachers' career trajectories affect their effectiveness? Answers to these questions notwithstanding, the study has revealed a consistent theme: beginning a teaching career in California is difficult. Teachers must tread a bumpy path.

State policymakers carefully put in place a coordinated system designed to provide a graduated pathway to teaching: preliminary credential, probationary appointment, required 2-year support and induction, annual evaluation, and tenure and clear credential. Fiscal realities, however, often have undermined the policies' original intent,

and some of the regulations surrounding these policies hamper doing what is best for beginning teachers.

As reported, many teachers are hired on temporary status, may remain temporary for several years, and too often are neither supported nor evaluated. Probation, once achieved, can be short-lived or interrupted because the annual layoff-rehire cycle often results in probationary teachers being reemployed as temporary teachers and then sometimes moving back to probationary status. The 2-year path to tenure that state policy intends is often much longer and certainly is unpredictable. BTSA, designed for teachers in their first 2 years of teaching, is sometimes unavailable to newly hired teachers because of their temporary status, or is linked to clear credentialing, resulting in its often being delayed. Evaluation, which typically is the weakest link in the somewhat incoherent policy chain, is generally of little help to beginning teachers in improving their practice and is unrelated to the supports they receive or the career advancement decisions of tenure and clear credentialing.

What should the state do, then? What actions can the state take to begin to reconstruct a policy framework that ensures that beginning teachers can maximize their classroom effectiveness and serve their students well?

Temporary Teachers

California has relied for some time on temporary teachers to fill gaps in the teacher workforce without attending to the need to support and evaluate them. The state should:

- Require districts to keep accurate counts of the number of temporary teachers by type of temporary appointment.
- Include temporary teachers and long-term substitutes among those who must be supported and evaluated, regardless of when they are hired during the school year.

BTSA and Clear Credentialing

BTSA remains a highly regarded model for new teacher induction. California should continue to require that beginning teachers receive systematic support and acknowledge that that support is most useful when received in the first 2 years of teaching. After that time, induction becomes less useful as a program of supported assistance for improving teaching. The state should:

- Allow individual districts and consortia of districts to tailor induction support to the needs of beginning teachers and their various backgrounds, experiences, and skill sets. The state might establish a basic framework that rethinks effective induction programs or allow districts that choose to do so to continue BTSA.
- Permit districts and their local unions the option of developing induction programs that eliminate the firewall between support and evaluation.
- Decouple BTSA from clear credentialing.

Evaluation

Educator evaluation is under scrutiny everywhere and under revision in most states. Many states have developed teacher evaluation systems that include multiple measures of performance, including observations by more than one observer, requirements for portfolios of lesson plans and student work, state and locally developed measures of student achievement, student and parent surveys, and other local sources of information. The state should:

- Require that all teachers, regardless of employment status, be evaluated.
- Support local experiments in educator evaluation systems, including peer review for beginning teachers.
- Rethink the purpose of evaluation so that it focuses primarily on support and improvement.

Tenure

Debates about the length of time before teachers earn tenure are largely irrelevant to the reality of most beginning teachers' circumstances. Improving the support and evaluation systems is likely to have far greater impact on educator effectiveness than will tinkering with tenure. Thus, we offer no tenure-specific recommendations for state action.

Conclusion

We cannot know how many good teachers the state has lost due to the incoherence and inconsistency of policies for beginning teachers. Certainly our data indicate that pursuing a teaching career in California requires substantial persistence and more than a little good luck. However, the state cannot continue to rely on individual perseverance and fortune as its approach to ensuring an effective teacher in every classroom. Policy makers need to reexamine the assumption that existing state policies further the goal of improving beginning teachers' effectiveness. Our findings strongly suggest that this is not the case for too many beginning teachers in California.

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APPENDIX A

Methods

The research team began its work with a detailed review of the historical development, evolution, and current status of state policies related to induction, evaluation, credentialing, and tenure practices for beginning teachers. Researchers reviewed a range of secondary data, including previous and current legislation, program documents, budget information, research and policy reports, and statewide data on teacher demographics (e.g., experience, distribution, assignment type). Researchers also conducted interviews with key state education leaders who were involved in crafting the policies on beginning teacher induction, evaluation, credentialing, and tenure. This examination of early career teacher policy development in California was an iterative process. The team initially reviewed and analyzed these data before the other data collection activities described below took place and then continued to explore relevant secondary data when the collected data raised issues that warranted further study.

Next, the research team conducted eight cases studies in a purposefully selected sample of California school districts and consortia of districts. To capture the diversity of new teacher experiences and contexts across the state, the case studies represented a broad range of district sizes and geographic, demographic, fiscal, and labor market conditions. Researchers developed the cases on the basis of a review of district documents; two-person site visits to each district or consortium of districts, which included 30- to 90-minute interviews with beginning teachers, support providers, school administrators, and district and county administrators over the course of 2 to 3 days; and subsequent phone interviews with certain key informants in which the researchers asked follow-up questions and tested hypotheses. In total, the research team interviewed 43 beginning teachers, 27 support providers, 16 principals or assistant principals, and 42 district and county officials across the 8 districts and consortia. Interviewers used semistructured interview guides linked to the study's overarching research questions about the implementation of early career policies. Interviewers recorded these interviews in electronic audio files and used these files to clean notes and check for accuracy. Each case study team completed a structured debriefing guide aligned with the study's research questions.

Additionally, the research team partnered with three of the districts in the case study sample to gain access to a set of redacted principal evaluation files on beginning teachers. District and union officials from these districts randomly selected a set of evaluation files, and the district-based teams then removed all identifying information from the files so that researchers would not have access to any such information. In one of these three districts, researchers were also able to review a set of redacted BTSA files that corresponded to the teachers whose evaluation files were reviewed; the same redaction procedures were followed for the BTSA files as for the evaluation files. The sets of files were linked only by a letter or number rather than by any identifying information. In total, the research team examined redacted evaluation files for 30 teachers and redacted BTSA files for 10 teachers. Researchers systematically reviewed these redacted files, conducting qualitative and quantitative analyses to

appraise the level of evidence used for formative and summative assessments of the teacher's practice, determine the amount of contact time between the teacher and the support provider or principal, and, when both types of files were available, assess consistency and coherence between the BTSA assessments and the principal evaluations.

The research team held a series of analysis meetings to examine data from the different sources and to form hypotheses based on integrated analyses of the policy review, case studies, and redacted files. The team then conducted a meeting with a panel of four experts representing a range of education expertise and perspectives on California teacher policies. At the meeting, the research team presented initial findings, tested hypotheses derived from the research, and discussed potential implications and policy options. Following the meeting, the research team refined analyses, assertions, and policy implications, and incorporated them in this report.

APPENDIX B

Exhibit B-1. Evaluation Systems: Distribution of Principal Ratings

District A

	Percent		
	Effective	Needs Attention	Unsatisfactory
Planning	20	0	0
Classroom environment	16	4	0
Instruction	17.5	2.5	0
Professional learning communities	20	0	0
Professionalism	20	0	0
Total	93.5%	6.5%	0%

District B

	Percent			
	Exceeds Performance Standards	Consistent with Performance Standards	Working to Meet Performance Standards	Does Not Meet Performance Standards
Engaging and supporting all students in learning	1	8	2	0
Effective environments	2	7	2	0
Organizing subject matter	1	9	1	0
Planning instruction	2	7	2	0
Assessing student learning	1	9	1	0
Professional educator	4	7	0	0
Total	17%	71%	12%	0%

Exhibit B-1. Evaluation Systems: Distribution of Principal Ratings (concluded)

District C					
	Percent				
	Exceeds Performance Standards	Consistent with Performance Standards	Working to Meet Performance Standards	Progress Not Evident	Does Not Meet Performance Standards
Engaging and supporting all students in learning	0	9	1	0	0
Effective environments	1	8	1	0	0
Organizing subject matter	0	8	2	0	0
Planning instruction	0	7	3	0	0
Assessing student learning	0	6	4	0	0
Professional educator	3	7	0	0	0
Total	7%	75%	18%	0%	0%