

California Department of Education
Public Management Analysis

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The California Department of Education (CDE) is one of the largest government organizations in the state. CDE oversees a very dynamic public education system that is responsible for the education of more than seven million people, mainly children, in over nine thousand schools. CDE is the government body responsible for enforcing the comprehensive education code and implementing various educational programs throughout the state. The following public management analysis will explore the dynamics within the California Department of Education, identify its strengths and shortcomings in providing effective educational services mainly to the citizens of California, and discuss possible recommendations for public management changes that may improve their services.

Purpose & Beliefs

The California Department of Education is organized around four main beliefs:

- (1) *“We believe that the public school system must meet the comprehensive learning needs of each student to reach high expectations.”* (CDE, 2008) CDE acknowledges that a strong education system will provide numerous benefits to those participating in the system. Research has shown that not only does education have a positive effect on economic factors in a community, but education may also foster social benefits of taking care of ourselves and creating a better society in which to live. (Behrman & Stacy, 1997) From having an opportunity to attend college to gaining skills to be successful in the workforce to a higher quality of life, CDE is committed to helping people achieve their full potential.
- (2) *“Equity of access to quality public education is the right of every student and the responsibility of the State of California.”* (CDE, 2008) CDE is committed to affording every citizen of California with the opportunity to attend school. This is done through

strategically locating educational facilities throughout the state, providing transportation services to students living in more remote locations, and leveraging technology to improve educational services.

- (3) *“The Core Purpose of the California Department of Education is to lead and support the continuous improvement of student achievement, with a specific focus on closing achievement gaps.”* (CDE, 2008) The educational achievement gap is a pervasive phenomenon throughout the country that results in the majority, well-educated, and wealthy students achieving high educational status while leaving their minority, less-educated, and poorer counterparts behind. This phenomenon is evident in many school districts throughout California. Research has shown that the effects of the achievement gap result in the continued prosperity of the majority and the continued economic struggles of the minority. Research has shown that the achievement gap between whites and minorities still exists today, and some of the economic effects of the gap include higher unemployment, lower earnings, higher crime, and a greater dependency on welfare and other social services. (Rumberger, 1987) CDE is committed to closing the achievement gap through the continued investment in equality of educational services.
- (4) *“California Department of Education provides leadership for strong schools and equitable outcomes for ALL students!”* (CDE, 2008) Through the implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), schools are held accountable for their performance. CDE provides various resources to ensure all schools meet the minimum requirements of NCLB. Also, with regards to students receiving special education services, CDE provides those students with the opportunity to learn just like students in normal education programs.

Mission Statement

“The CDE's mission is to provide leadership, assistance, oversight, and resources so that every Californian has access to an education that meets world-class standards. The CDE is committed to working in partnership with local schools to improve student achievement.” (CDE, 2008) CDE’s mission is no small task considering the diversity of California’s population and the economic disparities that exist between the wealthy and poorer communities. In order to provide a “world-class” education to all students, a wide array of educational services must be provided for many students speaking English as a second language, those requiring special educational services, those needing to be bussed to school, and those living in foster care, to name a few.

Goals

CDE has outlined many important goals on their website in which they work to achieve:

- *Holding local educational agencies (LEA) accountable for student achievement in all programs and for all groups of students.*
- *Building local capacity to enable all students to achieve state standards.*
- *Expanding and improving a system of recruiting, developing, and supporting teachers that instills excellence in every classroom, preschool through adult.*
- *Providing statewide leadership that promotes effective use of technology to improve teaching and learning.*
- *Increasing efficiency and effectiveness in administration of kindergarten through grade twelve education, including student record keeping, and good financial management practices.*
- *Providing broader and more effective communication among the home, school, district, county, and state.*
- *Establishing and fostering systems of school, home, and community resources that provide the physical, emotional, and intellectual support that each student needs to succeed.*
- *Advocating for additional resources and flexibility, and providing statewide leadership that promotes good business practices, so that California schools can target their resources to assure success for all students.*
- *Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Department.*

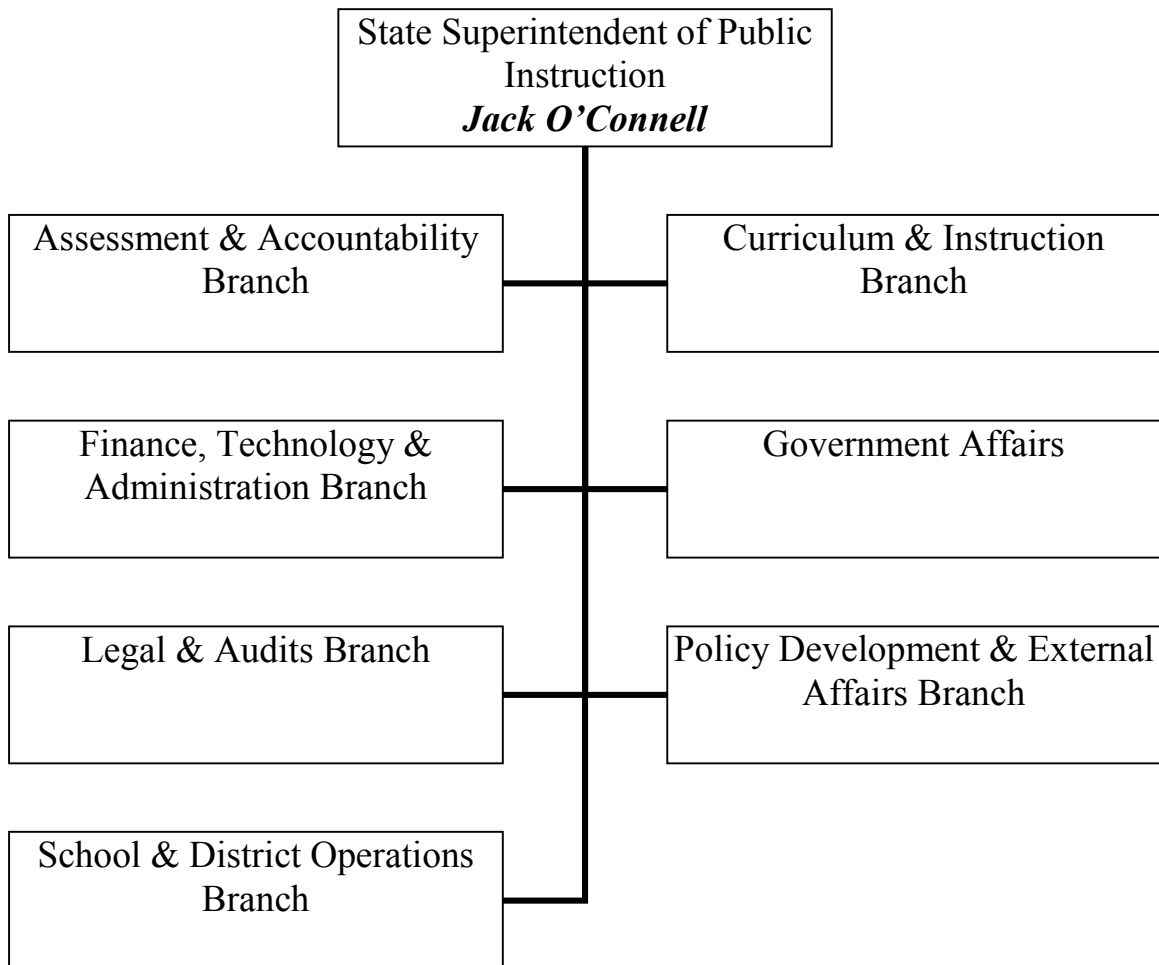
These goals are clearly communicated to the stakeholders of the public education system through various means. CDE has invested in a very user-friendly website that all who have access to the Internet can use. Research has shown that Internet technologies have a powerful influence in fostering a free flow of ideas and communication around an organization. (McIvor, McHugh, & Cadden, 2002) From parents to school administrators to teachers to CDE employees, many people rely on the CDE website to learn about education services offered, the strategies and challenges of CDE in the coming years, the organization structure, fiscal information, and their focus in special education areas.

Also, Superintendent O'Connell delivers a State of Education Address on January of every year. In these addresses, the Superintendent identifies focus areas in which his department will concentrate resources in developing solutions to existing educational problems. In O'Connell's 2008 State of Education Address, he expressed the concerns surrounding the overwhelming education achievement gap that exists in California. He also described the following four ways in which CDE will address the gap: access to educational services, culture and climate, expectations of students, and strategies. (O'Connell, 2008) These two major avenues of communication, along with more subtle approaches, communicate the goals of the California Department of Education to the general public and all those involved in educating students in California.

Organizational Structure

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Jack O'Connell, is elected by the citizens of California on a non-partisan ballot and serves a four-year term. "He is accountable to the people of California for performing all the duties and responsibilities of his office." (CDE, 2008)

Below is an organization chart showing the individual departments that report to the Superintendent.



The Assessment and Accountability Branch oversees educational programs and develops programs ranging from testing to educational data. (CDE, 2008) The Curriculum & Instruction Branch develops the curriculum used in the schools throughout California. (CDE, 2008) The Finance, Technology & Administration Branch oversees budgeting, accounting, information technology, personnel, and apportionment activities. (CDE, 2008) The Government Affairs Branch develops and promotes the legislative and fiscal policies of CDE. (CDE, 2008) The Legal & Audits Branch is an advisory board to the Superintendent and the Board of Education. (CDE, 2008) The Policy Development & External Affairs Branch helps to identify best practices

and identifies alternatives to current educational policies. (CDE, 2008) The School & District Operations Branch supports the educational programs throughout the state by promoting a positive learning environment for all students. (CDE, 2008)

The organizational structure of CDE is effective for a variety of reasons. First, each department has developed an expertise in each of their particular fields. The Curriculum & Instruction Branch concentrates their resources only developing curriculum services while the Finance, Technology, & Administrative Branch handles the business dealings of the department. Each department supports one another and focuses their efforts within their particular missions. Second, each department is able to effectively advise the Superintendent and the Board of Education in all facets of the education process. Through meetings and reports, their work is communicated to those who are responsible for representing CDE at the State level. And finally, each department is able to focus their strengths in providing effective educational services to the thousands of school districts and other educational agencies throughout the state.

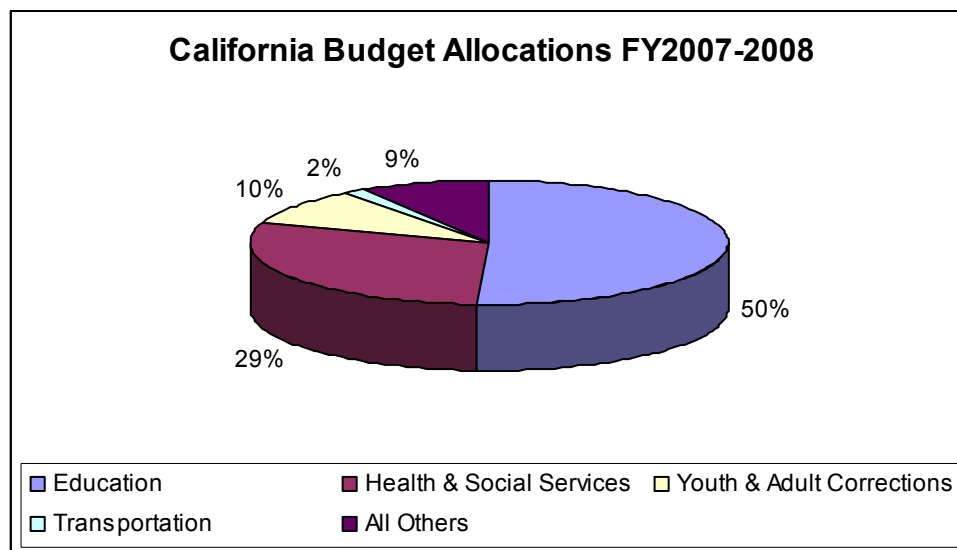
Not unlike any other large bureaucracy in the United States, this organization can be very inefficient at times. From a more local point of view, educational agencies throughout the state depend on CDE for timely financial apportionments throughout the year. Often times, CDE fails to adhere to their own deadlines, and the LEAs struggle to meet financial requirements. Also, the red tape that exists in many of CDE's organizations hinders their ability of providing effective services to school districts. Having to abide by their own rules and regulations sometimes hinders their ability in solving problems.

Funding & Allocation Mechanisms

Providing "world-class" education services in California is not cheap. During the 2007-2008 fiscal year, it is expected that education will receive 51% of the state's total revenues, over

\$52 billion in total. (LAO, 2007) Below shows a brief summary of how the \$103 billion of the state's revenue in the 2007-2008 fiscal year are distributed among the various state programs.

Major Program	Amount	% of Total
Education	\$52,514	51%
Health & Social Services	\$29,875	29%
Youth & Adult Corrections	\$10,043	10%
Transportation	\$1,558	2%
All Others	\$9,150	9%
Total	\$103,140	



Note: Amounts are in \$ Millions.

The fuel powering the engine that allocates a majority of the state's revenues to education is Proposition 98. The proposition mandated a minimum level of state spending on K-14 education, equated to the previous year's expenditures adjusted for enrollment growth and per capita income. (GAB, 2007) Mandating a minimum level of funding removes some of the politics from the budget process for public education in California. It also confirms the importance of providing high quality education services by California legislators and the citizens.

CDE’s funding mechanisms of distributing funds to the LEAs throughout the state are a combination of grants for specific educational programs and apportionments for general education. The following eleven allocations are the ways in which LEAs acquire state funding: categorical education block grant, apprenticeship, categorical programs, child development, consolidated application, Federal Rural Education Achievement Program, Fiscal Crisis & Management Assistance Team, Lottery, Nutrition Services, Principal Apportionment, and Special Education. Some of these allocation types, such as the categorical programs and child development, require periodic reporting from the LEA to confirm the proper usage of the funds. For some grants, if the funds sit idly or are not being used in accordance with the grant guidelines, CDE will retract the grant and hold the LEA accountable. Other allocations, such as principal apportionment, come to the LEA in lump sums at various times throughout the year and can be used to fund a variety of educational services.

Stakeholder Analysis

Many individuals and groups are involved with and depend on the services provided by the California Department of Education and the thousands of LEAs it services. The following analysis lists many of the stakeholders, their role as it pertains to CDE and the expansive school network in California, their powers, and their motivation.

Stakeholder	Role	Power	Motivation
Students	Recipient of educational services from public schools in California	Ability to express concern over their educational services to the school & to CDE	Motivated to learn and prepare for a career of their choosing
Parents/Guardians of Students	Ensuring their children receive adequate educational services	Ability to express concerns and file suit against a school if child is not receiving adequate services	Desire for their children to receive a “world-class” education

Stakeholder	Role	Power	Motivation
Community Surrounding School	Involvement in schools & may prosper economically with thriving school	Ability to help improve school and voice concerns to CDE	Motivated by wanting a successful school in their community and potential economic prosperity
Governor	Sets the agenda for the State and advises Superintendent on education policies	Power to set the agenda and apportion budget to educational programs	Motivated by staying in office, ensuring civil rights of all citizens, & positive public opinion
Legislators	Developing educational policy which CDE implements & approving education budget	Learn importance of educational programs from experts and craft legislation to carry them out	Motivated by thriving education agencies that ultimately help California to prosper economically
CDE Bureaucrats	Implement educational policy, ensure effective services, & provide services to schools	Identify ineffective and effective services, adjust programs, and help schools become successful	Motivated by doing their job effectively to help schools achieve success
Special Interests	Educate policy makers on what services work better than others	Power of access to legislators & expertise in educational programs	Motivated to help students achieve success and increase knowledge in their particular field
Teachers	Educating students who attend California public schools	With help of their Union, fight for competitive wages with CDE & expertise in educating students	Motivated by the success of their students & good working environment
School Administrators	Implement CDE policy at the local educational agency level	Power of interpreting CDE policy and ensuring proper educational services at their schools	Motivated by implementing effective policies and ensuring for the education of their students
Education Vendors	Provide services and materials that aid in the education of all students	Provide services and materials to schools that CDE cannot provide themselves	Motivated by profit
Contractors	Provide services to schools & CDE that CDE cannot provide themselves	Power of expertise in educational policy, strategies and successes	Motivated by profit

Stakeholder	Role	Power	Motivation
Courts	Judicial review of educational policy through legal means	Power to determine specific educational policies of CDE to be unconstitutional	Motivated to ensure civil liberties of all citizens

As you can see, many individuals and groups are intimately involved with the inter-workings of the California Department of Education. CDE relies on many of them to provide services, educational materials, and expertise in all fields of education policy and administration to ensure the effective educational policies they develop. Together, all stakeholders work towards providing services to students in California so they can achieve a “world-class” education. All stakeholders are important to ensuring the successful implementation of education programs throughout the state.

Strengths

Through this public management analysis, four clear strengths describe the effectiveness that the California Department of Education has had on delivering educational services to the thousands of educational agencies.

First, the funding mechanisms used to distributed funds to the education agencies support specific education initiatives and programs, have guidelines for usage, and require reporting to keep agencies accountable for the funds. These mechanisms help to ensure that California taxpayer dollars are spent to fund effective educational programs. Also, Proposition 98 guarantees CDE a minimum amount of the states budget each year, significantly more than any other department in California. The overwhelming support for public education in California help the Superintendent and his department carry out education policy.

Second, CDE finds strength from its highly educated and diverse workforce of street-level bureaucrats, educators, policy professionals, and politicians. The nature of CDE's organization structure separates the various functions of the organization into focused departments. These departments concentrate on their individual goals, which are in line with the overarching goals of CDE, allowing them to take advantage of their in-house expertise and provide more effective services to educational agencies.

Third, the creative ways in which CDE is able to implement many of the education policies through the contracting of services keeps CDE focused on the services in which they provide best. Contracting examples can be found at LEAs throughout the state, some of which occur at the LEA in which I am currently employed, The San Mateo County Office of Education. Currently, our office receives Assembly Bill 602 funding for Special Education services. Some of the children require very specialized education services due to severe disabilities. Instead of being required to provide those specialized services in-house, educational agencies, with the support and guidance of CDE, contract out those services to private school providers who specialize in severe disability educational services. Through the contracting process, CDE is able to keep their workforce focused on the educational programs that meet the needs of most kids while still ensuring for the civil rights of all students by providing these specialized services through a third party.

And fourth, CDE communicates effectively with all of its stakeholders. Through a very user-friendly website to press releases to State of Education addresses by the Superintendent, CDE's mission of providing "world-class" educational services is made clear. Also, CDE ensures that the reporting, both financial and programmatic, they receive from the LEAs throughout the state is consistent and meaningful. Detailing the reporting requirements for each

grant distributed to the agencies and clearly identifying the services that are to be provided by the funds do this. From a financial reporting point of view, CDE requires all LEAs to report their financials using a Standardized Account Code Structure, or SACS. SACS gives CDE the ability of summarizing financial reporting data consistently throughout the state.

Shortcomings

With many of the strengths that make CDE an effective organization in providing outstanding educational services to the thousands of educational agencies throughout the state come its inherent shortcomings. First and most obvious, the large bureaucratic organization can be very slow moving to policy changes and changes in the education environment from time to time. From having to abide by the rules governed by the state civil service system and adhering to equal opportunity employment regulations, hiring qualified personnel to fill vacant positions can take a number of months or sometimes even a year. For example, one of the offices in which I dialogue on a regular basis is the Office of Financial Accountability and Information Services under the School Fiscal Services Division of the Finance, Technology & Administration Branch. Of their eight positions, four of them are currently vacant and are awaiting placement of individuals currently enduring the long hiring process. These vacant positions place undue burden on the current analysts, make it more difficult for them to respond to school district questions and concerns, and ultimately decreases the efficiency of the department.

Also, even though CDE has developed a very user-friendly website that is very comprehensive in its content, many of the vehicles of communication between school districts and CDE are years behind today's current technology. CDE still requires a great deal of their information from school districts and other agencies to arrive via snail mail. Many of the documents, such as financial reports on grant spending, require original signatures from fiscal

agents of LEAs to ensure accountability of a responsible party. This requirement inherently increases the amount of paper needed to comply with the grant reporting rules and ultimately slows down the communication process.

And finally, many of the structured processes they've developed to implement their educational services to the thousands of LEAs throughout the state make it difficult for them to adapt to a changing educational and economic environment. With a bleak budget outlook in the 2008-2009 fiscal year, CDE will have difficulty adjusting to a reduced budget allocation. The Governor's proposal is to cut \$4.8 billion in education funding and suspend Proposition 98 for the next fiscal year. (CDE, 2008) A roughly 10% cut in educational funding will make providing effective services to LEAs very difficult when still having to adhere to their requirements laid out in California's Education Code.

Recommendations

The "world-class" education of students who attend school in one of the state's thousands of local education agencies is vitally important to those individuals and the growth and prosperity of the state. Californians must continue to support and vote for legislation that invests in educational programs to ensure all have an opportunity to receive an education. And the Governor and his educational bureaucratic staff must continue to keep public education issues as an important agenda item. The California Department of Education must continue to improve their services in order to achieve this.

First, CDE must continue to invest and promote effective means of communication between its own departments and with the LEAs required to submit reports and other communication materials. Through a continued investment in their useful website, they should explore the capability of LEAs being able to submit financial and programmatic reports directly

through the Internet. This will reduce the number of days it takes for the CDE to receive paper documents in the mail, reduce postage and paper expenses, and provide for an effective means of document tracking. A large, initial investment in this type of reporting capability may be costly at first; however, it may prove to be cost effective and much more of an efficient process in the future. Also, CDE should promote the desired means of communication through email as opposed to snail mail, faxes, and phone calls for more routine inquiries. Email will give educational analysts instant access to questions, provide for a paper trail of information, and reduce postage and paper costs as well.

Finally, CDE should continue to invest resources into educational research initiatives. For example, the California Child Development Administrators Association (CCDAA) is a group that provides and develops leadership that supports publicly funded early care and education programs. (CCDAA, 2008) CCDAA is an interest group who helps CDE develop effective pre-school and early childhood education programs. CDE should continue to strengthen the relationship they have with CCDAA and other similar organizations by investing in research initiatives designed to develop new and useful strategies to be used in California classrooms. It is widely acknowledged that these interest groups are experts in their particular educational fields, so CDE should take full advantage of that base of knowledge and continue to work hand in hand with them.

In closing, the California Department of Education is one of the most dynamic public organizations in the state. They are responsible for ensuring all students who attend public school in California receive an education that will help them to achieve success, both inside and outside of the classroom. Their mission is clear, their organization is structured to leverage the various areas of expertise, the funding they receive is somewhat fixed, and they are supported by

the many stakeholders who have an interest in public education. CDE is an example of public management success and must continue to invest in their services so all children continue to receive a “world class” education in the future.

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