

YCTA PRIORITIES FOR YCUSD

YCTA continues to promote a vision for education that gives our students opportunities and support for a diverse, high-quality educational experience that prepares them for a future with multiple possibilities. Every school and classroom should be a warm and welcoming place where students and staff feel valued and respected. Students and staff should be nurtured and challenged to bring forth their best work.

In addition to gathering and listening to the YCTA Members in YCUSD in both small groups and at successive YCTA Rep Council meetings in the fall of 2011, YCTA also consulted the literature from the California Department of Education as well as the US Department of Education. The CDE Report A Blueprint for Great Schools was released in August 2011 and is quoted extensively within this document. YCTA has laid out four areas of high priority; the bullets within each of these delineate the specific actions required to accomplish the broader goals. Our goal is to have the best education in our classrooms for our children.

"The Blueprint for Great Schools lays out the challenge before us: rejoining the ranks of high-achieving states by investing in quality teaching and creating a system that meets the demands of 21st century learning with forward-looking standards, curriculum, and assessments that ensure students are college and career ready," from the press release for the CDE report A Blueprint for Great Schools (August 2011).

"Our schools will not improve if we value only what tests measure. The tests we have now provide useful information about students' progress in reading and mathematics, but they cannot measure what matters most in education....What is tested may ultimately be less important than what is untested..." Diane Ravitch, former U.S. Asst. Sec. of Education

1. VALUE EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

Attract and retain the highest quality professionals. Hire great people and provide them the support they need to do great things.

Research has consistently shown that the two most important school-based factors affecting a child's academic success are the classroom teacher and the school principal. *"We know that from the moment students enter a school, the most important factor in their success is not the color of their skin or the income of their parents—it is the teacher standing at the front of the classroom,"* says Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education.

"Teaching is the most important job there is, so our goal is straightforward: We want a great teacher for every child," California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson stated in his unveiling of A Blueprint for Great Schools.

- **On-going professional development and support planned in collaboration with educators**
- **Evaluation focusing on professional growth to support excellence**
- **Competitive Salaries and Benefits**

► How important is this priority to you? Please circle the rating from 1 to 10.

NOT IMPORTANT ←—————→ VERY IMPORTANT
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Comments: _____

2. VALUE AND TRUST EDUCATORS' EXPERTISE

Build supportive, collaborative environments to maintain and cultivate the skills and expertise of the personnel. Allow teachers and teams of professionals to exercise professional judgment to address the needs of the students in their classrooms.

“There is growing recognition that expert teachers and school leaders are perhaps the most important resource for improving student learning, and the highest-achieving nations make substantial investments in them. A McKinsey study of 25 of the world's school systems, including 10 of the top performers, found that investments in teachers and teaching are central to improving student outcomes. They found that the top school systems emphasize (1) getting the right people to become teachers; (2) developing them into effective instructors; and (3) ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction for every child.” from the Educator Quality section of [A Blueprint for Great Schools](#).

- **Involve teachers in decisions in their classrooms, sites and the district**
 - Use pacing guides as a guide for instruction that allows for some latitude by the teacher to make modifications to meet the needs of the students in his/her classroom
 - Allow sites and grade levels to propose modifications to pacing guides or proposed time requirements
 - Expect that site leadership teams will have candid and real discussions about the challenges and successes at a site to make decisions to guide the site forward
- **Build supportive environments that encourage reflective practices such as professional learning communities or peer collaborations.**
- **Build a collaborative environment that expects best practices by allowing teachers to make decisions. Teachers should be actively involved in curriculum decisions as a team at their grade levels, sites, and district-wide as they collaborate, reflect and modify the delivery of instruction.**
- **Leadership roles for teachers should provide genuine opportunities to lead among their peers.**

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Comments: _____

3. VALUE TIME AS A FINITE RESOURCE

Recognize and support the contributions of educators by providing the time and resources to engage in their primary responsibilities. There is no substitute for time as a means of supporting best practices. Time is a limited resource, as is money, and it is often not treated as such. We need time devoted to those tasks that best serve our primary responsibility, which is providing the highest quality education to our students.

“The Transition Team’s recommendations aim to create a future in which California has a stable, uniformly high-quality teaching and leadership workforce from preschool through high school...In this system, teachers and leaders are well-prepared, well-supported, and work in collaborative environments...Teachers and leaders are evaluated based on meaningful professional standards integrated with evidence of student learning. Teacher and leader evaluations are used to inform professional development,” from the Educator Quality section of A Blueprint for Great Schools.

Teacher planning and preparation is a key part of effective teaching. *“Effective middle schools use flexible schedules and extensive team planning time to deliver standards-based education that meets the developmental needs of all the diverse students in the school. The need for time—to deliver standards-based lessons and interventions, create relationships and celebrate successes, and improve learning based on assessment results—deserves careful consideration. Wise management of time will help middle grades students to be prepared to face the challenges of high school and beyond,”* from Taking Center Stage - Act II (TCSII): Ensuring Success and Closing the Achievement Gap for All of California’s Middle Grades Students, a dynamic, web-based publication that takes educators to the next level of technical ease in accessing current, relevant information pertaining to middle grades.

- **Provide time within the work day for teachers in all grade levels to prepare for quality instruction and communicate with parents / staff. This cannot be accomplished by adding more time or responsibilities to the day.**
- **Provide time for case management of students with special needs.**
- **Provide time for collaboration / articulation within the workday.**
- **Provide professional development during nonstudent instructional time within contracted work days.**
- **Complete a cost-benefit analysis of some of the tasks required of teachers and others to determine whether these tasks are the best use of limited time. This may be accomplished by reducing time-intensive tasks that have little impact on student success.**

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Comments: _____

4. VALUE THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

While the teacher may have the greatest immediate impact on the education of students, we must also recognize the importance of the classroom, school, and community environments. Other school personnel and parents have a profound influence on our students as well.

"The first step in reaching a goal is setting one. We've taken an honest look at where we are and where we want to be, and created a vision about how to get there - with a focus on 21st century learning, meeting the needs of the whole child, and building the ranks of California's teachers with resources and respect." California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson

Recognizing that California faces a potential shortfall of up to one million college-educated workers by 2025, the *Blueprint* calls for steps to focus rigorous school curriculum, materials, assessments, and accountability measures on problem-solving and critical thinking skills that are vital to college and career readiness.

"Our schools will not improve if we continue to focus only on reading and mathematics while ignoring the other studies that are essential elements of a good education. Schools that expect nothing more of their students than mastery of basic skills will not produce graduates who are ready for college or the modern workplace." Diane Ravitch, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education

- **Optimize class size by providing (K-12) staffing that enhances the educational opportunities for all students.**
- **Provide schools with counselors, nurses, library services.**
- **Support personnel for interventions and special education – RtI, reading specialists**
- **Richness of the educational experience – provide a balance curriculum beyond what is tested: GATE, Art, Music, PE, electives, etc.**
- **Educate parents by providing them with the tools to support student learning.**

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Comments: _____

Please provide us with your feedback. This process has been an inclusive one to best reflect the position of our members. We appreciate your comments as we refine this draft.

Please return to YCTA Site Rep or YCTA.

Thank you.