Realizing the Potential of California Standards for the Teaching Profession to Transform Teaching & Learning:

Recommendations from Teach Plus California Policy Fellows

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INTRODUCTION

We are a group of K-12 educators and Teach Plus California Policy Fellows, serving a diverse group of students with a range of life experiences and needs. Alongside many teachers across the state, we strive to ensure our students actively engage in their education in order to achieve high levels of learning. The California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTP) were developed as a tool to provide a "common language and a vision of the scope and complexity of the teaching profession to help teachers define and develop their practice."[1] The CSTP are often used as the foundation for teacher preparation, professional learning, and evaluation. We were pleased when, in 2020, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) took on the task of updating the CSTP to better reflect the skills, understanding, and mindsets that teachers need to support students in our current classrooms. In order to help shape both the content and implementation of the revised CSTP, we reviewed the draft revision that was shared for feedback in February 2021 and provide recommendations in this brief for how to ensure that the standards best meet the needs of our students.

BACKGROUND

What are the California Standards for the Teaching Profession?

The California Standards for the Teaching Profession provide California's educators with a scaffold of support as they progress through their professional responsibilities, growing from teacher candidates into seasoned professionals. While the CSTP are not a set of regulations, they are used as a guide for teachers as they develop, refine, and extend their practice by providing a tool for reflection to assess their progress toward their professional goals. At the same time, the CSTP serve as a vision of what high quality instruction should look like in service of California's diverse student population.

Since their inception in the 1990s, the CSTP have shaped formative assessments in new teacher induction and served as guideposts for pre-service preparation through the Teaching Performance Expectations (TPE) and the related summative Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA). Additionally, teacher preparation programs, schools, and school districts, as well as individual teachers, teacher educators, and other educational professionals have utilized the CSTP to prompt reflection, formulate professional goals, guide, monitor, and assess the progress of a teacher's practice, and promote the improvement of teaching in support of student learning.

Recognizing that the most recent version of the CSTP, which was updated in 2009, needed to be revised to ensure the standards utilized pedagogical practices that nurture and educate all children, the CTC began a process for revising them in June 2020. The CTC, in collaboration with the California Department of Education and the Region 15 Comprehensive Center (WestEd), convened a group of diverse individuals to serve as part of a work group to provide recommended revisions to the current CSTP. The work group's 26 members included California P-12 teachers, induction program coordinators and directors, induction program mentors, administrators, and university faculty. In February 2021, the CTC shared the draft revisions with the public for feedback and then continued an internal process for reviewing and responding to that feedback. The CTC is expected to adopt the new version of the CSTP in early 2022.

How can standards for teaching improve teaching and learning?

Since the 1990s, states and countries have been establishing standards for educators to help guide expectations for what they should know and be able to do. States rely on professional standards to anchor teacher preparation coursework, pre-service field experiences, licensure assessments, induction programming, systems of evaluation, and professional development requirements for in-service growth and licensure renewal.

When the CSTP were updated in 2009, the authors identified three ways these standards had been used: (1) to prompt reflection about student learning and teaching practice; (2) to formulate professional goals to improve teaching practice in support of student learning; and (3) to guide, monitor, and assess the progress of a teacher's practice toward professional goals.[2]

Beyond prompting reflection, the CSTP improve teaching and learning by promoting and supporting the active learning process for teachers, when they are used as a progress monitoring tool for the development of the art and science of teaching. In addition to serving as a model of best practice in the field, they have the potential to be used as a tool for collaborative learning with peers. The standards provide a streamlined framework for ensuring that the professional development of teaching practices are deliberately focused on state standards of excellence. The CSTP transcends all subject areas and grade levels and voices the expectations of a high-quality instructional approach.

The CSTP serve as tools that provide a common structure for accountability, thus holding teachers and school site leaders responsible for the learning and development that takes place in the classroom. When site leaders foster a school site culture and climate that supports teachers in refining and aligning their practices to the standards it helps to ensure that a higher level of learning is attained by students.

How have our perceptions of essential skills and attributes for teachers serving students and classrooms shifted since 2009?

The 2009 version of the CSTP addressed some of the critical components that lead to the academic success of some students, but it was missing essential elements that would allow it to address the success of all students. These elements include:

Affirming students' voices, identities, and development to promote equity and inclusivity for every student and their family are essential skills for teachers. According to research, implicit bias, an unconscious attitude or stereotype that affects our actions, beliefs, and memories, is one of the greatest barriers to closing the achievement gap and providing equitable education access for all students.[3] Students come to school with multiple identities and those identities should not be a barrier to them receiving a rigorous education. However, studies have shown and continue to show that an educator's beliefs and attitude have a great impact on student achievement outcomes for students who identify with various groups, including Black and Asian American students. In order for teachers to successfully affirm students and promote equity and inclusivity in their classrooms, they must recognize their own explicit and implicit biases. Furthermore, they must be able to identify and develop strategies and tools to support them in countering the effects of their biases, so they can create a community of learners whose cultural, racial, and linguistic differences are leveraged as an asset in their classroom.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is an instructional approach that disrupts implicit biases and accelerates learning for all students. In this, the focus is on improving the learning capacity of diverse students who have been historically marginalized in the educational system. Culturally responsive pedagogy leverages the science of learning while utilizing the cultural schema and funds of knowledge that students come to school with in an effort to make learning relevant, meaningful, and long-lasting.[4]

When the teaching workforce is not representative of the demographics of the students they serve, students of color are at higher risk for school failure and negative experiences with their teachers. In California, less than 22 percent of K-12 students identify as white, yet more than 61 percent of California's teaching population identifies as white.[5] Research has shown that a more racially diverse teaching workforce can dramatically improve cultural responsiveness in schools.[6] But all teachers, regardless of background, benefit from support in reaching the diverse learners they are likely to serve. Teaching with this instructional approach does not happen organically. Without the clear intention, as well as the appropriate training and support, even the most well-meaning teachers can unwittingly provide instruction that is irrelevant, ineffective, and even antagonistic to today's diverse learners.

Supporting and affirming the social and emotional well-being and development of every student is central to the work of every teacher today. In the last few years, terms like "whole child" and "social-emotional learning" have become buzzwords. But they are more than that. Social-emotional learning (SEL) is the "process through which people acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions."[7] Research has shown that when students have supportive relationships and consistent opportunities to develop and practice social, emotional, and cognitive skills, academic learning accelerates.[8] Other research has shown that effective SEL instruction can enhance young people's social and emotional skills and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety in the short term.[9] The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have put in stark relief how essential it is that every educator is equipped to make the social and emotional development of students a priority.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **The California Commission on the Teacher Credentialing should maintain and reinforce the shifts in the CSTP to utilize more actionable and empowering language.**

We were inspired by much of the CSTP draft the CTC shared in February 2021. In particular there were shifts in the expectations reflected in the 2021 draft standards that we believe are essential to keep when the CTC adopts the new standards, both in their content and in how they are written.

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One key shift in the structure of the standards is the use of more active language in their descriptions. Within each standard and element of the proposed draft, there is actionable language used to support the educator in actively seeking out opportunities to employ best practices. Words such as "design," "create," "target," "employ," are more specific (in contrast to the 2009 CSTP which often use words such as, "The teacher *may…*"). This language provides clarity and guidance to new and veteran teachers alike, and allows for visible evidence of these standards in practice. With clearer language, the CSTP can better serve as the foundation for a shift to a more evaluative criteria. We can see the power of this actionable language in the two other unique shifts in the standards, outlined below.

2. **The California Commission on the Teacher Credentialing should maintain and reinforce the shifts in the CSTP to prioritize culturally responsive pedagogy and approach students as complex, whole individuals with full social, emotional, and academic dimensions to serve.**

In the last decade since the CSTP were revised, education leaders have recognized that it is critical that all teachers are equipped and supported to affirm students' voices, identities, and development, and incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy to ensure all students are academically successful. The CSTP must include an emphasis on a culturally responsive pedagogical approach that is inclusive and affirming of all students. Being more explicit about culturally responsive teaching in the CSTP would allow for increased student engagement and positive student outcomes, as the standards connect academics to everyday life, real world experiences, and student identities. Ensuring that the CSTP are crafted with culturally responsive pedagogy not only centers the student experience in the classroom, but also removes existing barriers for our most vulnerable student groups.

According to research, teachers are most likely to make unconscious instructional decisions based on implicit bias when they have vague and incomplete information.[10] Therefore, it is imperative that the CSTP not be ambiguous when it comes to enforcing California's commitment to equitably serving all of its diverse populations. The CSTP should establish a more consistent and clear framework that is meant to set a standard of equity statewide. The proposed CSTP expects teachers to authentically get to know their students and use that knowledge to design learning experiences, e.g. teachers are expected to "create learning opportunities drawing upon students' interests, prior experiences, culture, and linguistic assets." This empowers not only students, but also the teacher, in that they can be the true architects of their instructional design. It also makes it clear that pre-service teacher candidates must be educated to identify, counter, and address their implicit biases as they prepare to enter the profession. Moreover, it is just as important that credentialed teachers are challenged to continue this reflective work and use the CSTP as a constant guiding model and evaluation tool.

One final shift evident in the proposed CSTP is the idea that students are human beings with their own funds of knowledge accompanying them to school each day. This notion is in contrast to one-size-fits-all approaches historically tried in many schools and districts throughout the state. The revised standards and elements imply that there needs to be a balance between social, emotional, and academic learning within the classroom. The inclusion of standards that clearly define the

importance of teachers creating dynamic and engaging asset-based academic and social-emotional learning environments and climates that promote growth for each student reflect much of what we have learned about how to approach the social and emotional well-being of each individual student. There is also a prioritization of understanding unique identities, needs, interests, and abilities of all students, and viewing those attributes as assets that add to the classroom as well as foundations on which to continue building. The revised CSTP allows for teachers to begin viewing assessment differently: not as a tool to diagnose weaknesses, but to discover strengths. Teachers can then utilize those strengths to leverage learning for that student.

3. **The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing should develop a comprehensive CSTP rollout plan to ensure the standards' shifts are understood and utilized at all levels from preservice training to professional development to educator assessment and reflection.**

Research has shown when implementing any type of change or initiative, a strategic plan or roadmap is needed.[11] We cannot simply provide the teachers with a "to-do" list of standards that have been heavily revised without the means and support to accomplish their implementation. There needs to be a strategic rollout and consistent message from the state to the classroom level.

As the body that sets these standards, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing holds much of the responsibility to ensure there is a plan to integrate these shifts in the systems shaping teaching and learning from pre-service preparation programs to the professional development and educator assessment. To begin with, the CTC would need to ensure the updated standards are reflected in all preparation programs throughout the state by updating the accreditation process, Teacher Performance Expectations, and Teacher Performance Assessments. The CTC should partner with preparation institutions to ensure the use of the CSTP in guiding the design of preservice teacher coursework. The CSTP should also be used by supervising and mentor teachers who support the preservice teacher candidates during observations, reflection activities, etc.

There needs to be a common thread of integrating the proposed CSTP throughout a pre-service teacher's experience in teacher education to prevent a disconnect between what the teachers learned in their programs and how they are being evaluated in their first two years of teaching.[12] Having experienced the CSTP at an in-depth level will also encourage new teachers to cultivate a positive and affirming environment in their classroom, teach with a culturally responsive mindset, form learning partnerships with their students and families, and contribute positively to their school site culture as well.

Beyond the work with the educator preparation programs, we recommend that the CTC also develop trainings to help inform and instruct Local Education Agencies (LEAs) on the shifts from the 2009 CSTP to the new CSTP. This training would consist of the rationale behind the shifts, defining and explaining of terms, examples that show these shifts in action, and steps for training their district stakeholders. It would be most beneficial if this training was provided to all LEAs in an effort to be systematic and consistent with the state's vision and message.

To assist with ensuring consistent messaging around the revised CSTP, the CTC should also create a digital guide complete with a glossary of terms that can be utilized and referenced at any time. This guide can be a tool used by district officials, teachers, administrators, instructional coaches, colleges and universities, teacher accreditation programs, induction programs, community partners, families, etc.

4. **The California State Legislature and Governor Newsom should invest in a comprehensive approach to rolling out the new CSTP by investing in the capacity of the CTC, as well as educator preparation programs and Local Education Agencies to incorporate the critical shifts in the standards.**

As state leaders wrestle with how to invest billions of dollars wisely to support schools, educators, and students, we hope that they consider investing in supports to ensure the new CSTP have the transformative effect on teaching and learning that we think is possible. We recommend that the State provide sufficient support to the CTC to lead the important work outlined in recommendation 3 but that it also goes beyond this. The effective implementation of any type of initiative often rests on the shoulders of the school districts.[13] Therefore, once the school districts have received the state-level training and guide for the new CSTP, we recommend that district stakeholders prioritize and engage in calibration. This calibration should consult the state's guidance, while also allowing representatives from different stakeholder groups, e.g. teachers, families, students, etc. to explore and define what the new CSTP mean, especially for implementation. The state should also support in-depth training at the district level, including explanations of the shifts, defining terms within each standard, as well as how that standard "looks" through the use of teaching scenarios and videos.

It is essential that the state invest in districts to provide extensive opportunities for administrators to be trained in the new CSTP. Administrators are evaluating teachers based on these standards and there must be a consistent understanding among them and teachers so that the expectations in the classroom are clear to all involved. The use of the state-created guide and glossary would be an integral piece of this training, as the administrators could draw upon it following the training. This administrator training will be essential to ensure that the shifts in the CSTP are reflected in what is happening in the classroom. Site administrators will lead that transformation not only through evaluation but in fostering professional learning communities for teacher teams to learn together. This type of training should not be superficial, rushed, or expected for teachers to do "on their own time." It is essential that teachers make meaning of it through discussion and interaction, and internalize a deep understanding of the standards.

State leaders should also support districts to conduct outreach to parents, families, and community members to inform them of the changes and the implications it has on the classroom experience. Throughout each of these levels from the CTC to the classroom, there needs to be consistency and continuous reflection over time. This type of change will not happen overnight and must be given the ample time and support needed to really begin seeing implementation.

IMPACT

In our efforts to make positive shifts in our California education system, we search for mechanisms that can take hold and provide significant foundational changes that will benefit our state, schools, teachers, students, and communities. Revising the CSTP can be just the type of mechanism we seek. These standards have the potential to influence teacher credentialing, preparation programs, preservice teacher candidate attitude and practice, current teachers and their evaluation process, as well as meaningful and culturally responsive learning experiences for students in classrooms across the state.

Implementing a strategic and focused roll out of the newly revised CSTP will be essential in ensuring the significant impacts described above. Without a proactive, multi-level implementation design, the notable shifts described in these newer standards will be lost in the shuffle of the education world: Teachers will be caught off guard with expectations they do not fully understand and this could therefore lead to decreased efficacy and increased turnover; administrators will be forced to interpret the standards as they see fit; brand-new teachers will feel the floor drop out from under them as they enter a classroom with expectations they'd not heard about nor seen before. These are just a few of the possible outcomes if the rollout is not thought out, adequately resourced, and strategically implemented.

CONCLUSION

We appreciate the current revisions that have been made to the CSTP. These revisions boldly recognize the need to universally establish multiple shifts in the art and science of teaching. The CSTP have the potential to provide a continuum of teaching practice that centers the whole child, elevates the understanding of the humanness in teaching and learning, and help educators to realize that meaningful connections with students impacts learning in great ways. The standards can also emphasize that true educational justice embodies the integration of high-quality, rigorous instruction, culturally relevant pedagogy, and social emotional learning. With the combination of more actionable and empowering language that allows for in-depth access and understanding for teachers, along with the focus on the whole child, the new CSTP have the potential to transform teaching and learning in California.

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APPENDIX

2009 California Standards for the Teaching Profession Standard Elements as compared to 2021 proposed version	
Current CSTP **(2009)**	**Proposed Revisions** **(December 2021 Draft)**
Standard 1: Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning	
1.1: Using knowledge of students to engage them in learning **1.2:** Connecting learning to students' prior knowledge, backgrounds, life experiences, and interests **1.3:** Connecting subject matter to meaningful, real-life contexts **1.4:** Using a variety of instructional strategies, resources, and technologies to meet students' diverse learning needs **1.5:** Promoting critical thinking through inquiry, problem solving, and reflection **1.6:** Monitoring student learning and adjusting instruction while teaching	**1A:** Teachers create a community of learners in an inclusive environment that views differences in learning and background as educational assets. **1B:** Teachers elicit and solicit knowledge of each student's assets and needs, including cognitive, cultural and linguistic, social-emotional, and physical and developmental capacities, in service of increasing active engagement in learning. **1C:** Teachers meaningfully involve all families and caregivers in addressing students' learning needs and well-being, and are responsive to the economic, social, cultural, linguistic, and community factors that impact student growth. **1D:** Teachers are responsive to and respectful toward learners' differing experiences, cultural identity, strengths, interests, and needs and are well-prepared and committed to further every learner's development.
Standard 2: Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning	
2.1: Promoting social development and responsibility within a caring community where each student is treated fairly and respectfully **2.2:** Creating physical or virtual learning environments that promote student learning, reflect diversity, and encourage constructive and productive interactions among students **2.3:** Establishing and maintaining learning environments that are physically, intellectually, and emotionally safe **2.4:** Creating a rigorous learning environment with high expectations and appropriate support for all students **2.5:** Developing, communicating, and maintaining high standards **2.6:** Employing classroom routines, procedures, norms and supports for positive behavior to ensure a climate in which all students can learn **2.7:** Using instructional time to optimize learning	**2A:** Teachers create dynamic and engaging asset-based academic and social-emotional learning environments and climates that promote growth, creativity, and intellectual curiosity for each student **2B:** Teachers develop, communicate, model, and sustain high standards of individual and group behavior that reflect, affirm, and respect diversity and productive interactions, and that maximize opportunities for each student to learn and thrive. **2C:** Teachers organize and manage an equitable learning environment by employing culturally relevant classroom routines, procedures, norms, and supports for positive behavior to ensure a climate in which each student can grow and learn. **2D:** Teachers develop and maintain a globally inclusive learning environment in which the diversity of all individuals within the school community and beyond are validated to ensure that the academic and social-emotional needs of each student are met.

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Standard 3: Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Student Learning

3.1: Demonstrating knowledge of subject matter, academic content standards, and curriculum frameworks	**3A:** Teachers identify, organize, and teach key concepts, underlying themes, and relationships that address state and local subject or grade-level expectations, language demands, content standards, and curriculum frameworks.
3.2: Applying knowledge of student development and proficiencies to ensure student understanding of subject matter	**3B:** Teachers create learning experiences that leverage students' identities as a resource for motivation and learning. They demonstrate how to connect concepts and integrate students' unique backgrounds, perspectives, and cultural identities to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem-solving related to authentic disciplinary issues and themes.
3.3: Organizing curriculum to facilitate student understanding of the subject matter	
3.4: Utilizing instructional strategies that are appropriate to the subject matter	**3C:** Teachers plan and implement practices that position each learner, including students with various levels of linguistic assets, learning abilities, and communicative proficiencies as well as students with special needs, with equitable access to critical concepts and themes in the academic content standards and state curriculum frameworks at an appropriate level to promote academic and linguistic growth.
3.5: Using and adapting resources, technologies, and standards-aligned instructional materials, including adopted materials, to make subject matter accessible to all students	
3.6: Addressing the needs of English learners and students with special needs to provide equitable access to the content	**3D:** Teachers elevate lessons by enabling students to apply interdisciplinary knowledge and skills to identify and explore complex, authentic, and relevant subject-matter issues and propose solutions.
	3E: Teachers use and adapt resources, technologies, and standards-aligned instructional materials, including adopted materials, to increase relevance, equity, and accessibility to curriculum and subject-matter learning.

Standard 4: Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students

4.1: Using knowledge of students' academic readiness, language proficiency, cultural background, and individual development to plan instruction	**4A:** Teachers plan instruction for student growth and achievement based on content-area knowledge, individual student performance data, linguistic strengths and needs, social-emotional and academic goals, diverse strengths, backgrounds, experiences, and the community context.
4.2: Establishing and articulating goals for student learning	**4B:** Teachers organize and prepare learning experiences, informed by evidence-based teaching strategies and materials, that are rigorous and relevant to students' diverse developmental needs and interests.
4.3: Developing and sequencing long-term and short-term instructional plans to support student learning	
4.4: Planning instruction that incorporates appropriate strategies to meet the learning needs of all students	**4C:** To facilitate student engagement, learning, well-being, and efficacy, teachers understand subject matter content and integrate it with how students learn.
4.5: Adapting instructional plans and curricular materials to meet the assessed learning needs of all students	**4D:** Teachers create and implement instructional plans, learning activities, curricular resources, and time allocations that result in differentiated learning and support activities and that address the dynamics of students' identified assets and needs.

Standard 5: Assessing Students for Learning

5.1: Applying knowledge of the purposes, characteristics, and uses of different types of assessments	**5A:** Teachers understand, collect, analyze, and interpret assessment data to plan and differentiate instruction and improve systems and practices that continuously promote student learning.
5.2: Collecting and analyzing assessment data from a variety of sources to inform instruction	**5B:** Teachers use varied methods of assessment, tools, and processes to enact data-based decisions, equitable grading practices, and curricular and instructional effectiveness, and adjust their practices to meet the strengths and needs of each student to facilitate their academic growth.
5.3: Reviewing data, both individually and with colleagues, to monitor student learning	
5.4: Using assessment data to establish learning goals and to plan, differentiate, and modify instruction	
5.5: Involving all students in self-assessment, goal setting, and monitoring progress	**5C:** Teachers collaborate with students, families, and caregivers to foster student learning by increasing their understanding and application of assessment information.
5.6: Using available technologies to assist in assessment, analysis, and communication of student learning	**5D:** Teachers, individually and with others, reflect upon and evaluate the effectiveness of the comprehensive assessment system to make adjustments to instruction, school programs, and district priorities.
5.7: Using assessment information to share timely and comprehensible feedback with students and their families	

Standard 6: Developing as a Professional Educator

	6A: Teachers continually examine and evaluate their own practice to apply intentional actions that incorporate their new understanding and perspectives as a guide for professional growth and effectiveness.
	6B: Teachers extend their expertise in ongoing professional learning related to subject matter content, teaching skills, and different equity perspectives that include race, gender, language, sexual orientation, religion, special abilities and needs, and socioeconomic status.
6.1: Reflecting on teaching practice in support of student learning	**6C:** Teachers consult, collaborate, and communicate with others to develop, enhance, and implement a common understanding of promising practices for academic, social, cultural, economic, and legal contexts and integrate their learning into teaching and support practices that meet students' diverse learning needs, interests, and strengths.
6.2: Establishing professional goals and engaging in continuous and purposeful professional growth and development	
6.3: Collaborating with colleagues and the broader professional community to support teacher and student learning	
6.4: Working with families to support student learning	**6D:** As part of a systematic and comprehensive community of learners, teachers promote student success through the alignment of school, family, and community support for a high-quality instructional program and coordinated student support, engagement, and success.
6.5: Engaging local communities in support of the instructional program	
6.6: Managing professional responsibilities to maintain motivation and commitment to all students	**6E:** Teachers promote positive relationships with members of the school community while modeling ethical conduct and maintaining professional boundaries and legal requirements.
6.7: Demonstrating professional responsibility, integrity, and ethical conduct	
	6F: Teachers strive to eradicate barriers to student access and opportunity by modeling integrity and fairness that results in the quality experiences necessary for every student to learn and thrive.
	6G: Teachers cultivate and sustain personal motivation, commitment, energy, and health by balancing continuous professional growth and their own physical and emotional wellness.

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ENDNOTES

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