



The Education Trust–West

2018 Candidate Questionnaire

Office: State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Candidate: Marshall Tuck

- 1) **Newly released graduation rates show that schools continue to struggle to support all students on their path to graduation, with low-income students, English learners, and students of color, including Black, Latino, and Native American students not graduating at the same rate as higher-income students, non-English learners, or White students. What are your three top priorities when it comes to not just narrowing - but closing - these gaps across the state?**

I have spent the last 16 years working in public education, mostly leading public school systems serving predominantly children of color, English Learners, and children living in poverty. In one public school system I led, we significantly increased student achievement, which included raising graduation rates by 60% and having the fastest improvement of any large public school system in California. In another public school system I led, eight of ten of our high schools have been ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as among the very best high schools in the country. So my career has been not just talking about the need to close the achievement gap, but actually making real progress on closing it. That's what informs my priorities to continue this work as State Superintendent:

- a. **Increase funding for schools and ensure additional dollars meant for children with additional needs actually reaches those children.** We need to increase funding in our public schools. We are 41st in the country in per pupil spending and we need to increase our funding in order to ensure all of our low income students have the supports they need to be successful. At the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools one of the reasons we were able to double graduation rates in our schools was because we raised \$100 million over a decade, which allowed us to provide a better education to our children. Beyond just the amount of funding, we need to ensure additional dollars are getting to our students of greatest need. The current State Superintendent has undermined the intent of the Local Control Funding Formula, by issuing guidance to school districts that tells them they can use additional dollars meant for high-needs students on across-the-board raises-- irrespective of whether the person receiving the raise actually serves those high-needs students. I will reverse that decision, and ensure that dollars intended to provide additional services and supports for children living in poverty, English Learners, and children in the foster care systems, are actually spent serving those students.
- b. **Fight to finally make universal pre-k a reality.** In the public schools I led, we saw that the achievement existed on the first day of Kindergarten, and that was because our students lacked access to quality pre-k. I will fight to make this a priority in the state budget. Over the last six years our state has approved an increase of about \$800 million annually in our prisons, despite a reduction in the number of prisoners. My opponent voted for those increases, but they could have helped to pay for universal pre-k. It's

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time for education leadership in our state that is going to put our kids' interests ahead of that of special interest groups in Sacramento.

- c. **Drive policy changes to help ensure our low income students have equal access to high quality instruction and school leadership.** In California, low income students overall have younger and less experienced teachers and principals that turn over more often than higher income schools. They also see substitutes in their classroom more often than higher income students. We must change this trend if we are going to have real equity in our public schools and make meaningful progress on closing the achievement gap. As State Superintendent, I will pursue strategies to help address this issue, including paying principals, teachers, and counselors more to work in low income, historically low performing schools. The state can pass direct policy to make this a reality and can also incentivize districts to make paying teachers and principals more to work in our most challenging schools a priority. By changing the current interpretation of the LCFF law, as described in (a) above, we will significantly increase the likelihood that districts will pay more for teacher and principals to work in low performing schools as more money will be allocated for those schools. And it isn't just about money. To both attract and retain educators in our highest need schools, we need to provide more support to our teachers and principals through high quality coaching and mentoring programs and we also need to increase counseling and related supports given the extent of the needs of our students in historically low performing schools.

We will not close these pervasive gaps with more of the same. It is time for a leader who has worked successfully to close these gaps in the past, a the record of challenging broken systems that aren't working for kids. You can read much more about my plans to finally and truly serve *all* kids on my website, [here](#).

- 2) **California is struggling to attract and retain teachers, especially teachers in STEM fields and those who reflect the demographics of our students. While the vast majority of California's students are from communities of color, 63% of teachers are white. Teacher diversity matters for a multitude of reasons. If elected, what concrete steps would you take to diversity the teacher pipeline and incentivize teacher retention, especially among teachers in STEM fields and teachers of color?**

The most important, long-term step we can take to diversify the teacher pipeline is to significantly improve our public schools. Doing so will diversify the population of students that are graduating from our public high schools, colleges, and universities. As long as, for example, only 35% of Hispanic/Latino students graduate from public high schools prepared for college, we will continue to have

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underrepresentation in our teaching force, as well as in all other areas of opportunity.

In the short-term, I propose several policies that will increase the total number of people looking to enter the teaching profession, as well as increase the diversity of that workforce:

- Pay and support our teachers more-- especially in schools and subjects that are hard-to-staff. Over the long-term, we need to provide stronger professional development and pay across-the-board, but the immediate priority needs to be on targeting additional dollars and support in the areas where we most need to attract and retain high quality educators. This was a practice we were able to employ at the schools I led, particularly for principals, and it increased the quantity of applicants, as well as the quality and stability of our program.
- Make college and credentialing free to all people who commit to teach for at least five years. The teacher shortage in our state makes this an urgent priority, and our first priority here should be teachers who commit to teach in high-needs communities, and in hard-to-staff subject areas.
- Move most of the coursework for teacher credentialing into undergraduate programs, so that the credentialing year can serve as a residency, where the teacher-candidate is spending the vast majority of her or his time in the field, learning from highly effective teachers.
- Support programs that identify, recruit and train individuals of color to enter the teaching profession. There are a number of districts in California, like Fresno Unified, that have programs to help classified staff members (office staff, teaching aids, etc.) become teachers. Given individuals in these jobs are typically from the communities where they work, these programs have been able to increase the teachers of color within those school communities. Additionally, we should streamline the process for experienced professionals who want to come into to teaching to be able to.

[You can read more about my plan to invest in our teachers and principals here.](#)

- 3) **While California collects a substantial amount of education data, gaps in both collection and reporting hinder our ability to know how well students are learning and progressing through school, from kindergarten to college. Currently, we have no way to see where students from California high schools attend college and how successful they are, and it's difficult to have a full picture of how well our educational systems are serving low-income students and students of color. As a technology powerhouse state, it is unacceptable that we do not know how many of our high school graduates progress to and through higher education — something 45 other states can already do. If elected Superintendent, would you support a longitudinal data system, and if so, what specific steps would you take in your first year in office to put such a system in place?**

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I strongly support a longitudinal data system, and share the view that it is unacceptable that California is one of only six states that doesn't already have such a system or is working to develop one. As State Superintendent I will work with the governor and legislature to make this a priority, and will work with other state's to learn what has worked best when creating and utilizing such a data system.

But getting more complete data is just the first step. We then need to use that data to better understand which schools and programs are having the greatest success, especially serving student populations that have traditionally been underserved. With that knowledge, we can provide resources to leverage the educators and practitioners who are having that success to coach and train others.

A robust data system will allow us to better target supports and share best practices, but it will also provide greater clarity about which programs are, unfortunately, persistently failing to meet students' needs, despite significant support. We cannot permit this to continue indefinitely, and if it becomes clear that a school or district is unable or willing to make the necessary changes to serve students well, we must act to intervene more directly. Importantly, we must make sure that the performance of smaller populations in a school or district- such as African American males, or English Learners- are not obscured by total, aggregate performance; we must disaggregate the data to ensure that no group of students is being left behind, and act to intervene if a school or district is chronically under-serving a group of students. We should work with local leaders and school operators that have a proven track record of turning around underperforming schools to help translate state intervention into improved outcomes for children.

[You can read more about my plans to utilize data to improve how the CDE supports schools here.](#)

- 4) **Currently the California Department of Education collects student outcome data on 15 student groups within the Asian student category. However, that information is lumped into only 3 groups when the state reports it to the public. If you were to be the next Superintendent, would you support public reporting of student outcomes, disaggregated beyond the current 3 student groups reported?**

Yes. I believe strongly that we can only grow and learn if we have high quality, transparent information about what we are doing.

In addition to reporting on disaggregated performance for every subgroup for which we currently collect data, I also believe we need to expand data reporting to easily show how students are doing at the intersection of various identities. For instance, academic research has demonstrated the way in which our public school system has significantly underserved African American males-- in fact, only one-in-ten African American males graduate prepared for college. Yet, the CDE doesn't have public data that allows

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us to better understand the performance of this subgroup.

Another major gap in data disaggregation and reporting that permits great inequities to persist is in the area of special education. Access to quality statewide data on special education is very slim, and even more limited when trying to understand how designations are distributed across various subgroups. Again, more local data and third-party research tells us that there are great disparities here, yet the state has so far failed to roll up existing local data for statewide reporting, and disaggregation by subgroup.

As State Superintendent, I will make sure we are collecting and reporting existing data, and pushing for the collection of additional data that will help us better understand where inequities exist, so we can address them.

- 5) **1 out of every 5 students in California schools is an English Learner, and more than 2 out of 5 students speaks a language other than English at home. Last year the State Board of Education passed a landmark policy, the California English Learner Roadmap, to better support educators and schools in strengthening English Learner educational opportunities and celebrating multilingualism. If elected Superintendent, what would you do to prioritize the continued implementation of the Roadmap?**

The English Learner Roadmap is a strong foundation upon which we can develop policies and programs that improve our services to English Learners in California’s public schools, and the need to focus on our English Learner population is great. Making up over 20% of our public school population, English Learners must be a major focus of the California Department of Education (CDE). As with other policy areas, I will work with the CDE, county offices of education, school districts, and schools to ensure that the principles the English Learner Roadmap advances are upheld, and that the policies it directs are implemented effectively.

I believe that we must shift the culture and practice of the CDE from one of compliance to one of support, and the English Learner Roadmap provides a good example of how this can be to the great benefit of schools and students. The CDE can help to identify schools, districts, and counties that have had the greatest success with various components of the Roadmap, and then provide the resources to highlight, share, and spread those best practices.

Specifically, it will be important to ensure that staff at the CDE have a strong understanding of the Roadmap, as well as of the needs of English Learner students. However, rather than lean exclusively on the expertise of CDE staff, we will utilize the department to identify and leverage the expertise of

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practitioners in the field who have found success with their English Learner students. The CDE can also improve its collection and analysis of data to provide greater visibility into English Learner performance, to better understand our status and progress, and to set goals for improving our work with English Learners.

- 6) **Although California’s a-g rates have steadily risen, there are still significant disparities when it comes to which students are able to enroll in and complete the coursework necessary to apply to a UC or CSU campus. We know, for example, that only 65% of English classes are a-g approved in high schools in high poverty schools compared to 76% of classes in more affluent schools. And only 29% of Black 12th graders in the class of 2017 completed the a-g course sequence. What would you do to ensure more students of color and first-generation college students have access to a-g and other college preparatory opportunities?**

We need to conduct a statewide equity audit, to shine a light on the causes of these gaps, and to inform next steps to close them. If schools and school districts are going to differentiate their resources and supports to ensure we have equity in our public schools, they need to have a good understanding of how resources and supports are currently allocated. In an equity audit, districts will gather data that impacts the critical resources and supports that are available to students: financial resource allocations; educator experience levels and rates of turnover; access to a college preparatory curriculum; access to art, music, civics, and other enrichment experiences; and, learning time, among other key school-based opportunities. This data will then be analyzed across and race and class, so that we have a clear picture at the school, district, and state level of the inequities that exist in our system, as a critical starting point for addressing them. Districts and schools, with the help of the state, can then begin implementing the necessary changes to ensure that our system is actually meeting the needs of all students.

When I began leading some of the lowest performing public schools in Los Angeles, we discovered that many of our students- primarily children-of-color living in poverty- did not have access to college preparatory courses. We made immediate changes to our master schedules to change this inequity and get more and more of our students access to college prep courses. This wasn't always easy or popular as it required us to shut down some popular courses that were not college preparatory courses; there wasn't enough funding to both expand college prep courses and keep all existing non-college-prep courses. But we made the decision because it was essential that our students had a chance to go to college. We must be willing to make hard decisions to correct the deep inequities in our public education system and the State Superintendent needs to lead on bringing real transparency to these inequities and driving the change needed to correct them.

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***An additional note about inequity in our public schools:***

When we first started working in some of the lowest-performing schools in Los Angeles, we learned that only 1% - 2% of our students were classified as “gifted” even though the district average was around 11%. This had been the case for years, but we knew it didn’t make any sense. Our kids were growing up in poverty, but they had no less propensity for being gifted-- yet, almost none of them were being identified as such.

We discovered that the existing policy was that a child was only tested for giftedness if the teacher or parent requested the test. Parents were unaware of the policy and so were not making the request, and most teachers were not requesting either. We decided to just test all of our students. That year, we had a gifted rate of that was above the district average.

I share this story because it is one concrete example of the many ways systemic inequities persist in our public schools, disparately impacting the opportunity our low-income children-of-color have, year after year. We know all kids- no matter their background- can accomplish great things, and my career has been about pushing back against systems that fail to let them do so.

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