

Sample Editorials: First Day of School

This editorial uses the timely topic of the opening of the school year to reinvigorate a conversation about education as a public good, and to build the public's understanding about how children learn. It opens with the tested Value of *Future Preparation*, establishing a collective benefit as a way of executing a public-good frame. It continues with the Explanatory Metaphor *Cooking with Information*, which FrameWorks' research has shown to be a reliable way of reframing instruction. Focusing on the nature of active, engaged pedagogy is an important task for strategic framers, as the public defaults to thinking of education as a passive process that simply requires willpower and discipline on the part of students and teachers. Finally, the piece ends with the frame element of *Solutions*, by providing examples of what can be done to prepare teachers, schools, and the community to support active learning. The Common Core State Standards are positioned as a specific policy that is encouraging effective teaching and learning – a strategy that can reduce the ability of opposition to construct an effective rebuttal. Who wants to argue against kids doing more hands-on, minds-on learning?

Tomorrow morning, kindergarteners from Eureka to San Diego will take a seat on colorful rugs and begin school for the first time. How we tap into and develop this human potential over the next 12 years will determine the future of our state – the kids on the rug today are the voters, entrepreneurs, parents, and civic leaders of tomorrow.

Advances in technology have utterly transformed our world every decade for the past 30 years. That transformation process will only speed up in the time these kindergarteners, and all of today's students, navigate through school. So what can we do to equip them for an uncertain future?

We must prepare them to be experts in the acquiring, handling, and skillful use of information.

If we think of information like ingredients, and our students as aspiring chefs, then one of the first tasks our students must learn is how to select the information they cook with and judge its quality. Where can we find the freshest produce? Is this food healthy or just empty calories? *Which of the websites in a Google search return are reliable and accurate, and which are dubious at best?*

They must learn the purpose and nature of information. Which oil do you use for frying? Which do you use for salads? *Which formula should I use to calculate circumference? Why does this formula work that way?*

They must learn how that information can be applied in different contexts and the different places and processes one goes to and through to acquire new information. How is rice prepared in different cultures? Which gets hotter, a wok or a frying pan? *How can I use this data set to predict future population growth and its impacts on the local environment? And then, how would I use the same data set to create a compelling argument for or against wetland protection?*

They need well-designed spaces to explore, get their hands dirty, make mistakes and learn to correct them, and create new things. And they need master chefs with deep knowledge and skills who can mentor them as they learn. Teachers who guide them toward their own creation of a complete meal - without spoon-feeding them a microwave version of the process.

We have an unprecedented opportunity to provide this kind of education for all our students in California thanks to the Common Core State Standards. These goals outline the critical learning that should take place in literacy and math in grades K – 12, and they are sparking a renewed focus on making sure that the next generation is ready for college, work, and life. But just as a list of good cooking skills won't make you a four-star chef, the standards alone won't help our students to graduate college and career ready.

Like master chefs, our teachers must be well prepared and supported as they challenge their students to cook in this new way. This preparation and support includes high quality professional development, time to collaborate and share ideas, and access to the best resources available to improve student learning.

Like the best test-kitchens, our schools must be well equipped with what is needed to bring this learning to fruition. Being well equipped involves resources such as access to modern technology and high speed internet, flexible assessments and learning tools that can be respond to a variety of learner needs, and clean and safe indoor and outdoor spaces where learning can take place.

Like the farms from which our chefs get the very best ingredients, our communities must become learning-resource rich. Our libraries can make online learning accessible for those who don't have access at home. Our museums and public spaces can become an extension of the classroom. And our communities can come together to support the work of schools economically, culturally, and politically.

Kindergarteners are beginning their schooling journey this week. Let's make sure when they walk across the graduation stage in 2027 it's a journey we can be proud of. It's time for us to begin investing in a kind of schooling that will truly prepare them for the future.

Sample Editorials: Teacher Appreciation Week

This editorial takes advantage of a perennial education news-peg: Teacher Appreciation Week. The communications challenge of this event, from a framing perspective, is that communications can reinforce public perceptions that ultimately limit policy thinking. First, if the work of schools is framed as solely as the responsibility of teachers, then the role of other actors and factors in creating the conditions for effective teaching become less visible. Second, focusing messages on “hardworking, dedicated teachers” can invigorate the public’s model of the ‘Caring Teacher,’ which oversimplifies the complexity of effective teaching to “how much they care.” This, too, makes the role of teacher professionalism, school working conditions, and other elements of school quality “hard to think” This piece attempts to reframe the discourse on effective teaching – particularly in a Common Core context – by emphasizing the essential nature of professional support for educators. It uses the Explanatory Metaphor of *Scaffolding* to provide the public with a simple, concrete way to understand complex, abstract ideas such as professional development, the role of leadership in supporting practitioners’ professional judgment, and the ways in which the overall availability of resources influence teacher effectiveness. In extensive message testing, this metaphor was shown to help the public think of the craft of teaching in ways more akin to expert thinking, and to provide communicators with a way to bring these issues to public attention without being seen as obstructionist or self-interested.

This week, parents across California are acknowledging their children’s teachers with baked goods, and districts are distributing grateful messages printed on pens and post-its. These gestures are authentic expressions of thanks, and the acknowledgments are well deserved. Yet, the occasion of Teacher Appreciation Week also gives us a reason to ask: What would it mean for our education system to reflect a deep appreciation for the professional needs of teachers, all year round?

To grasp what’s needed for teachers to be effective, it helps to remember that they are building the learning environments where California’s future is developing. Just like construction workers, these builders need sturdy scaffolding and sufficient resources to do their work effectively. As our state’s schools undergo a significant remodeling job, updating curriculum and instruction to reflect a more modern design that imparts the skills needed for work and life in the 21st century, this scaffolding is more important than ever. It enables builders to reach all the places where improvements need to be made.

If we were to give teachers shiny scaffolding instead of shiny apples, what would it look like? It comes in the form of effective professional development that provides opportunities for teachers to learn both from outside experts in curriculum and instruction and from the expertise of one another. It comes in the form of high quality curricula that are chosen or created with teacher input and utilize up-to-date resources and technologies. It comes in the form of access to materials like computers and high speed internet.

The biggest educational remodeling job to hit our state in some time comes in the form of the Common Core State Standards: an updated blueprint for what we want all students in California to be able to do by the time they finish high school. If we make these updates the right way, we'll be building better learning environments and therefore a stronger future for our communities, and our economy.

Our teachers are doing much of the building, in the form of creating new lessons and making more frequent use of projects and assignments that challenge students to read more widely and deeply, apply what they know, think through problems, and explain how they arrived at their answers. These are the kinds of skills and habits of mind that are essential for today's information economy, and to ensure that these abilities are developed fully, teachers are the best craftsmen to rework and retool curriculum to customize the learning experiences that will allow their students to meet the standards.

But we all have a role to play in this renovation. Districts across the state need adequate funding to support their professional development, creative planning to give them time to collaborate and problem solve during the day, retrofitting to ensure that they have access to technology that meets the demands of new assessment tools, and wrap-around supports in the form of high quality learning spaces outside school buildings that further the learning that happens within them.

We're at that critical juncture in a remodeling project where you have to make decisions about cost-effectiveness, timelines, and prioritizing steps in the process, but our children's futures are at stake and it doesn't make sense to cut corners. Let's show our appreciation for teachers by making sure they have the resources they need to demonstrate their skills as master craftspeople. Teachers need time to adjust and adapt to new teaching techniques that accompany the new standards – and access to models of practical strategies they can apply right away to aid their transition to these changes. They need materials that support the kind of hands-on learning that these standards require. Especially if we really do appreciate our teachers – the builders who need our collective support to get the job done. What happens in our schools determines what happens in our future. There is no more important place to focus our efforts if we want to create a better tomorrow.

Sample Editorials: CCSS-Aligned Assessments

The topic of assessment is fraught with framing challenges. Lacking robust models of instruction and learning, ideas such as formative assessment, higher-order skills, and multi-modal assessment are “hard to think.” At the same time, the public are good learners; given the public policies of the last decade, they have learned that assessment = standardized, summative tests. In the context of multi-state assessment consortia, this issue can also run into default thinking about the role of government. In the California context specifically, a communications challenge likely to attend to implementation of the online Smarter Balanced assessments is that access to the technology and training needed to make them work is bound to go awry at some point. What’s a framer to do? First, use the Value *Human Potential* when talking about assessments – among a dozen candidate frames tested, this was the only one that FrameWorks found effective in moving public thinking on assessment in a positive direction. Second, use the Explanatory Metaphor *Remodeling* to frame reform constructively – and to provide appropriate context for problems in implementation. Finally, throughout, maintain a thoroughly reasonable, explanatory Tone; to engage the public, it’s important to take a pragmatic rather than a polemic stance.

While California’s natural resources have always made it a special place, the most valuable resource we have is our people. Our state has been home to some of the greatest thinkers of our time, and with the largest population of any US state, it’s also home to the greatest human potential. To make the most of the possibility that lies within our youth, we need to find ways to foster the unique talents and interests that children bring. We need an education system that takes them as far on their chosen paths as they can go. In this way, we continue to ensure that a capable, agile workforce is available to fuel our economy, and that a diversity of skills and perspectives can inform and enrich our civic life.

Building and maintaining the education system we need is an ongoing process. Much like remodeling a kitchen, it always seems like a new fixture is invented just as the dust settles on the one just installed. As a state, when we make decisions about what to change in our schools, we must constantly weigh the options and make sensible decisions about the changes that will make the most difference.

That pragmatic approach is what has brought us to an ambitious remodeling project in the way our schools approach teaching and learning. Statewide – in an effort that has involved school boards and the state department of education, administrators and teachers, students and families, philanthropy and business – schools are adjusting and updating curriculum and instruction to focus more intently on the knowledge and skills that are needed for modern work and life. The adoption of the Common Core State Standards in 2010 set in motion the process of upgrading schools state-wide with the supports and resources necessary for all students to graduate ready to handle college-level studies and equipped with the skills necessary for a fulfilling career. How will we go about achieving these goals? We start with a thoughtful plan. We work carefully on implementing it, taking a step-by-step approach. (In this regard, California has much to be proud of – our methodical, collaborative approach to implementation is paying off, while other states

that rushed the process are running into predictable problems.) And, when the work has had time to take effect, we step back and assess whether it is accomplishing what we set out to do. Only by taking a levelheaded, objective look at the results will we know what's working and what still needs to be improved.

That's why the new statewide assessments are such an important piece of our ongoing work to improve learning outcomes. Different measures of progress were needed to go along with the updated goals for literacy and math. And, in order to be more inclusive of students with different learning needs, such as those learning English or students with diagnosed learning disabilities, we needed to take advantage of the power of technology to offer adaptive tests that can accommodate a wide range of diverse learners. These are among the reasons that California has moved forward with a new testing system known as Smarter Balanced Assessments.

The many players in California's education system agreed that it was important to pilot these new tests in a low-stakes environment, especially since they required effectively harmonized technology and training. By taking a temporary break from using student test scores for accountability purposes, we allowed all concerned the time necessary to get used to the new system, spot unexpected problems, and figure out possibilities for solutions.

Come this spring, we will once again start using the data on student learning to determine how effectively our schools are serving our students and the public good. And so, in the meantime, it is important that we provide educators with all the resources they need to do their best work. It's critically important that we reflect our support of this initiative in our state and local budgets – which, after all, are the reflection of our shared priorities. The current proposal to [XYZ] is one example of an initiative that would smooth the transition.

In addition, to support educators as they make difficult changes in the best interests of our children, Californians need to be prepared to maintain a levelheaded attitude during this time of change. A new kitchen takes awhile to get used to. Cooks have to learn the features, and how to use them to maximum effect. Similarly with these tests, there is bound to be a period where the difficulties of a statewide upgrade are on display. These “under construction” signs might be district scores that seem to be lower than in the past – but are better viewed as early attempts at reaching new goals. Or, they might be glitches in implementing computer-based testing in a wide diversity of school settings. Remodeling of any sort creates a bit of dust, noise, and inconvenience while it's happening – but these temporary inconveniences are well worth it in the end.

As we've worked with district leaders, classroom teachers, literacy specialists, mathematics instructors, and many others in education across the state, we've seen remarkable cooperation and coordination in the pursuit of a vision of schooling that meets the unique needs of all of California's children. We're confidently looking forward to the “big reveal” that is the payoff of any home makeover – and that will be a generation of learners who are ready to take on whatever tomorrow may bring.