

## EDUCATION PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

The S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation envisions children and youth developing the knowledge, skills, and character to explore and understand the world around them, growing into caring, informed, and productive adults. This snapshot, prepared as the Foundation nears conclusion in 2020, documents essential aspects of the Education Program's math portfolio.



# Math portfolio

 S. D. BECHTEL, JR.  
FOUNDATION  
STEPHEN BECHTEL FUND

Recognizing teachers as the single most important contributor to student achievement, the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation invests in high-quality models of math teaching and learning in California's K–8 classrooms through full implementation of the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics (CCSS-M).

## Goal

**Advance high-quality math teaching and learning** in California's K–8 classrooms by supporting districts that are strongly committed to CCSS-M implementation, and by disseminating lessons learned across the state.

## Approach

- ▶ Support K–8 CCSS-M implementation in diverse districts to develop successful approaches.
- ▶ Capture and share promising practices statewide.
- ▶ Build the capacity of statewide networks and systems to support CCSS-M implementation.
- ▶ Invest in CCSS-M advocacy efforts that emphasize the need for high-quality professional development.
- ▶ Fund communications efforts to sustain support for CCSS-M among educators and all other education stakeholders.

## Progress

- ✓ **Ten school districts advanced standards implementation.** These Math in Common® districts used grant dollars to strengthen their approach to standards implementation. California Education Partners facilitated a community of practice helping districts learn from each other and from field experts.
- ✓ **New statewide infrastructure supported all districts.** County offices of education established the [California Partnership for Math and Science Education](#) to support districts implementing the new standards.
- ✓ **Many districts elevated their capacity, with a focus on ongoing instructional improvement.** WestEd provided technical assistance and evaluation services for Math in Common and the California Partnership for Math and Science Education.
- ✓ **High-need schools in the state's largest school district built teacher capacity.** Through the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, 13 schools devised a series of targeted math professional development opportunities to build teacher capacity focused on improved student outcomes.
- ✓ **Achievements were amplified through knowledge dissemination.** Participants in each of these initiatives and WestEd shared insights and research findings with professional peers, education advocates, and policymakers.



## Lessons Learned

- ▶ **Start small then scale up to effect district-wide change.** Implementing any new content standard requires massive change at every level of a district system. Districts should not try to tackle every facet, and involve all educators, simultaneously; instead, plan to address manageable elements of change with smaller groups, then scale up.
- ▶ **Use data to understand progress and inform improvement.** District and school leaders employed multiple sources of high-quality data to answer the question: “How will we know if this change works?” These sources included classroom artifacts, observations, and benchmark assessments.
- ▶ **Bring leaders along at each stage of change.** Getting the right level of information to county, district, and school leaders was essential to the uptake of new approaches aligned with the CCSS-M. Engaging leaders facilitated high-quality implementation – and these leaders applied math successes to enhance the instruction of other subjects.
- ▶ **Stay focused on the classroom as the place where learning happens.** Progress and challenges experienced by grantees implementing CCSS-M underscore the centrality of the classroom as the venue for learning. All aspects of implementation should be grounded in the dynamics of classroom instruction.
- ▶ **Design for students on the margins to improve outcomes for all.** Schools, districts, and counties improved their instruction for all students by focusing on the needs of English learners and students with disabilities.
- ▶ **Recognize the expertise present in districts and counties.** Coaches, other district-level instructional experts, and county-level coordinators hold a wealth of knowledge; bringing these people into the change process accelerates progress.
- ▶ **Engage and support teachers as a trusted source of knowledge for their peers.** Teachers value the knowledge held by colleagues. Provide designated time for instructors to share resources and support each others’ learning.

## Opportunities

### State policies and budgets increasingly emphasize improved teacher capacity.

Education policymakers, funders, and advocates can continue to elevate professional development and supports for instructors.

### The California Partnership for Math and Science Education holds continued promise to support capacity building and networking through county offices of education across the state.

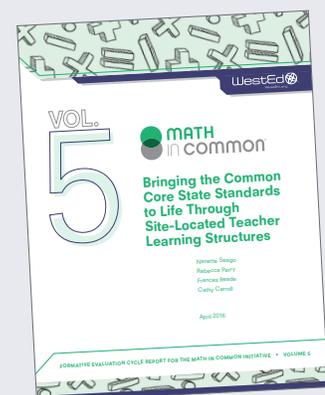
Increasing the capacity and sustainability of this field-generated partnership can amplify Common Core progress.

### Evaluations of Math in Common and the California Partnership for Math and Science Education have generated a body of relevant, useable information that is informing the approaches of educators at all levels in California.

Continued investments in targeted research and evaluation can point the way to ongoing improvements in instructional practice and student outcomes.

## Resources

- WestEd evaluated Math in Common, exploring how districts, schools, and teachers implemented CCSS-M and the effect on student learning. A total of 22 highly accessible [reports](#) document their findings.
- A separate [reflection](#) captures the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation’s perspective on Math in Common.
- WestEd also tracked the California Partnership for Math and Science Education, reporting on the communities of practice and on participants’ collaboration with geographically proximate colleagues outside of convenings. These materials can be found under “featured resources” on [the Partnership’s website](#).



The S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation invests in a productive, vibrant, and sustainable California through two program areas – Education and Environment. Learn more and access the series of program snapshots and reflections: [sdbjrfoundation.org](http://sdbjrfoundation.org).