# Communities and Schools

# for Career Success



*An Entrepreneurial Approach to Improving Schools: The CS² Initiative in California*

*Year 3 Evaluation Report (2002-2003) Executive Summary*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The California Communities and Schools for Career Success initiative, or CS², has entered its fourth year of implementation with support from the California Department of Education (CDE) and the California Workforce Investment Board (CalWIB). CS² currently includes four California communities: Sacramento, San Diego, Yolo County and Petaluma.[1] Using an approach first developed in Massachusetts, California has adapted the model to shape the network of sites. CS² is built on a foundation of school reform operating under the theory that students need a caring and supportive environment to succeed, and that bringing the resources of the community to schools and teachers in their classrooms is a critical support for improving student achievement.

The chief innovations in school reform of CS² are two-fold. First, CS² is centered on the use of change agents known as "School/Community Entrepreneurs" to spur local educational improvement and school and community connections. Second, implementation of the model at the site level is supported by a statewide capacity-building organization that provides implementation tools and materials, on-site coaching, planning retreats, evaluation support and other day-to-day and long-term assistance to sustain the initiative. In September 1999, CDE selected New Ways to Work (New Ways) as the statewide capacity-building organization following a competitive process.
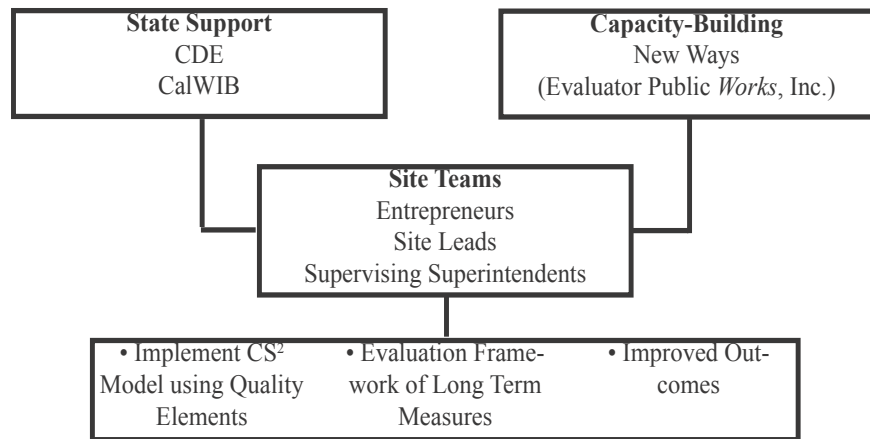
CS² uses a comprehensive focus on student learning that includes academic learning, career development and youth development with the ultimate goal of improving student achievement. Many aspects of the initiative distinguish it from other education reforms. Considering the following examples:

- Use of local teams and entrepreneurial change agents at the school and community levels to effect systemic change by prioritizing and launching initiatives.

- Commitment to a statewide capacity building organization, a model for systemic change and building a network of Entrepreneurs.

- Leveraging, linking and adapting existing initiatives to meet local community needs and goals.

- Commitment from a state-level team of officials from CDE, the CalWIB and superintendents or their designees from the four local communities to provide statewide direction and build a network of sites.

Public Works, Inc., a California-based non-profit consulting firm, was hired in the Fall 2002 to evaluate the third year of implementation adapting the existing evaluation system used in the first two years of implementation.[2] Following this executive summary and the introduction, the report is organized under the following analytical framework and evaluates: (1) site level implementation including a brief profile of each community's approach to CS², (2) CS² network

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support, and (3) long term outcomes. The report concludes with a summary and recommendations. The following graphic illustrates how state agency support and New Ways as the capacity-building organization support implementation of CS² at the local level:



| **State Support** | **Capacity-Building** |
|---|---|
| CDE | New Ways |
| CalWIB | (Evaluator Public *Works*, Inc.) |

**Site Teams**
Entrepreneurs
Site Leads
Supervising Superintendents

| • Implement CS² Model using Quality Elements | • Evaluation Framework of Long Term Measures | • Improved Outcomes |
|---|---|---|

## *The CS² Evaluation Framework and Status of Implementation*

In the first year of implementation, the CS² initiative in California adopted an evaluation framework incorporating two strategies. First, a framework to measure long-term results includes both a set of mandatory and optional statewide measures using data that is available from the CDE Web site and self-reported data from the sites. The second component of the evaluation system is an annual self-assessment where communities summarize activities and submit analysis of data they have collected to assess interim progress towards increasing capacity and putting CS² Quality Elements in place. The following chart summarizes these measures (note that measures 1-8 are mandatory and that measure 9-11 are voluntary for the sites):

| MEASURE 1: | All CS² schools will reach or exceed their API growth target. |
|---|---|
| MEASURE 2: | All CS² schools will rank higher on the "schools with similar characteristics" (as defined by API) than on the API. |
| MEASURE 3: | Increased number of students meeting the A-G requirements for qualification to the University of California and California State University systems. |
| MEASURE 4: | Passing rates on the California High School Exit Exam |
| MEASURE 5: | An increase in the number of Career Pathways offered and the number of students enrolled in them. |
| MEASURE 6: | An increase in student participation in Career Development activities. |
| MEASURE 7: | All or part of the Healthy Kids Survey, especially the resiliency module. |
| MEASURE 8: | An increase in dollars raised by CS² Entrepreneurs. |
| MEASURE 9: | Increased high school graduation rate (proportion of entering ninth graders who graduate 4 years later). |
| MEASURE 10 | All CS² schools will meet or exceed the District's attendance rate goals at each school. |
| MEASURE 11 | (a) Increase in hours of volunteers that are supporting the activities and system-change efforts that are carried out by CS² Entrepreneurs and (b) the total hours of volunteers in the schools, including members of advisory board, speakers and so forth. |

## Long-Term Outcomes

With respect to its student-outcome based evaluation framework, the CS² initiative has made steady progress with clarifying the purpose of long-term data collection, the collection of consistent information from site to site and streamlining the process for sites to submit data. Overall, CS² schools are demonstrating success with regard to a number of the long-term outcome measures, such as meeting API growth targets, raising similar schools rankings, offering career development and pathway opportunities to students, and leveraging funds. Sites expressed that improving school wide measures (such as the API, A-G percentages and the like) involves a variety of factors and that improvements or declines in one year to the next could not necessarily be tied solely to the efforts of Entrepreneurs, many of whom are assigned to multiple school sites and, in some schools, are working in a very targeted support role. Despite these overall concerns with the long-term measurement framework, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that for CS² to operate in the current education reform context and political climate, improving academic achievement continues to be the chief target, regardless of approach. The following provide some highlights of CS² with regard to the long-term measures.

- CS² schools have consistently performed as well or better than the state's secondary schools on meeting API growth targets. In the most recent year (2002-03), 79% of schools in the CS² initiative met their API growth target, up from 33% in the previous year (which was down from 74% in 2000-01, the first year of the initiative). As a point of comparison, 68% of all California secondary schools in 2002-03 met their growth target compared to 79% of CS² schools.

- Schools in the CS² initiative have shown a steady increase in the state's "similar schools" ranking, with over a third of schools (37%) having a higher similar schools rank than their statewide rank in 2003, up from 33% in 2002, 23% in 2001 and 14% in 2000.

- The percentage of students who are meeting the A-G requirements varies considerably from site to site, with some schools having steady improvements over time and others with both increases and decreases over time (ranging from 4% to 86% in 2001-02, the latest year for which data is available from CDE, across sites).

- The measures related to career development and career pathways show that Entrepreneurs and the CS² initiative have generated many opportunities for students, with over 30,000 career development activities counted by the sites in 2002-03. CS² sites reported offering 91 career pathways, academies and small learning communities in 2002-03.

- Sites reported nearly $5 million in new and leveraged funds from the inception of the initiative, representing five times the total $960,000 invested by CDE and CalWIB in the sites through 2002-03.

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## Local Implementation

As the initiative has evolved in California, four themes guide the work of the Entrepreneurs at the site level: (1) high school transformation (e.g., small learning communities, career pathways, senior projects); (2) transitions (e.g., middle to high school, high school to postsecondary education and training); (3) workforce connections (e.g., career development activities such as internships, job shadowing and career fairs); and (4) system development (e.g., community engagement, multi-agency connections, site team facilitation). While these themes guide site-level work, each site has taken a unique approach to implementing CS² that is adapted to local conditions and reform priorities:

- In Sacramento the initiative is strongly connected to the district's implementation of *Education for the 21st Century* (E21), a district wide school reform effort supported by Carnegie and Gates Foundation grants that is currently centered on implementing small learning communities with career themes in new and existing high schools.

- Likewise, San Diego Entrepreneurs have raised the profile of the district's career technical education by connecting its team to the transformation of comprehensive high schools into small learning communities through the district's *Blueprint for Success* initiative and support from the Gates Foundation. San Diego Entrepreneurs are beginning to see success through a variety of innovative programs including the *Learn and Work* summer school internship program and *Fresh Start*, a program for students failing four or more classes.

- Yolo County has used a county-wide approach to CS² to infuse its team within the overall services provided by its county office of education, including Regional Occupational Programs (ROP), professional development for teachers and counselors, and providing career and youth development services to middle and high school students. Yolo County Entrepreneurs have also made strong connections to the local Workforce Investment Board, building relationships, school and community partnerships, and adopting the use of a Work Ready Certificate to further these connections.

- Petaluma has instituted a variety of programs and approaches in individual schools, which have been replicated or used as foundations for district-wide reform. For instance, an after-school program developed for one middle school has served as a model for expansion to the district's other middle school and for summer school. Petaluma has connected its efforts to local community-based organizations, providing more access for students to support services they need to succeed in school.

Site teams have leveraged and generated a variety of sources of funding including Perkins, ROP, Gates Foundation and No Child Left Behind to support their initiatives and the Entrepreneurs' positions. Sites acknowledged the value they have received from developing an understanding of the potential role of Entrepreneurs in school reform, the high quality training, and the resources of the network of sites. Without at least partial state funding for the Entrepreneurs, sites expressed concern that while they will continue to operate under CS² principles, their involvement in the CS² statewide network will not be able to be sustained.

In fact, the success the initiative has had at the local level in blending, integrating and accelerating other site initiatives has meant that in some places, it has sacrificed the overall label of CS² for what is politically acceptable locally and to better support local needs and priorities. By successfully leveraging the local reform agenda, it has not always mattered what CS² has been called or how it has been identified. Therefore, CS² as a label has sometimes gotten lost in integrating, leveraging and pushing reforms. Despite this, flexibility in implementation has been crucial to the sites and New Ways is consistently complimented on its sensitive approach to local implementation.

## Network Support

As the statewide capacity-building organization, New Ways supports the initiative in a variety of ways. A few examples of this support include:

- Implementation in the initial start-up phase, which consisted of helping the communities to recruit and select Entrepreneurs and providing training, materials and other support necessary to build the team and the statewide network.

- Supporting CDE, the CalWIB and the state-level team by informing officials, securing funding and developing materials and systems to support strategic planning, project goals and site work plans.

- Organizing work groups, network meetings and an annual three-day planning retreat.

- Providing on-site coaching support.

- Coordinating evaluation activities between the evaluator and the sites.

Based on interviews with site superintendents, site leads and Entrepreneurs, the CS² initiative, the model of using Entrepreneurs to effect school change and New Ways as the statewide capacity building organization all received high marks as innovative and an essential aspect of the success of the initiative. However, many of those interviewed commented that they continue to be concerned about sustaining the successes of the initiative, in particular, the community connections that have been started by Entrepreneurs in each community. Entrepreneurs, site leads and site superintendents described the value of participating in CS², especially related to the early training they received and the ongoing support they receive about funding opportunities and other resources. They would like the network to continue but emphasized the importance of continued funding for the local site teams to keep the momentum going.

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# Recommendations

As the CS² initiative begins its fourth year of implementation in 2003-04 in California, it is in a transitional stage. The three original sites (Petaluma, Yolo County and Sacramento) have completed their initial three-year grant ($265,000 for each community). Each received a grant of $50,000 from the State in the Fall 2003 to continue their work. According to the sites, this continuing funding has been critical at the local level to leverage other initiatives that will sustain the work of the Entrepreneurs and keep sites connected to the network. San Diego is implementing the second year of its three-year grant in the 2003-04 school year ($430,000 over three years).[3] New Ways continues to negotiate a contract with CDE to continue its work as the statewide capacity-building organization and to support the sites in their work. Because of these transitions and uncertainty about continued funding for the initiative, Public *Works*, Inc. makes the following three recommendations to New Ways, CDE and the CalWIB:

- **Implementation**: *Work together to decide on any adjustments to the model that may be necessary to identify continued funding given the current economic status of the state and its priorities for school reform and support of workforce development.* After agreeing on priorities at the state level, work with sites to incorporate any adjustments and to collaboratively seek funding for the network. In order to sustain the initiative, it will be important to consider how to both continue the important aspects of the network and the success of the Entrepreneurs (for example, information sharing and professional development) in conjunction with site financial support. Some discussion with regard to if and how to expand the network will also be necessary.

- **Support**: *Because of both time constraints at the site level and the current funding context, streamline the network's structure and offer the kinds of services that are the most valuable for sites.* For example, on site coaching, retreats and team planning time are highly valued. Occasional face-to-face contact is also important to the sites. However, sites feel it is critical that the purposes and outcomes of the meetings are clearly outlined and that Entrepreneurs be involved in the planning process, particularly in the use of their expertise as content for the meetings. Sites were positive about their participation. In particular, sites appreciate how New Ways has connected them to resources and made personal connections where they have been helpful. In the discussions about implementation, it will be important to examine how to structure network meetings and use other technologies to accomplish the goals of the network.

- **Outcomes:** *Continue to focus on long-term outcome measures.* Using broad, student-outcome based measures as its evaluation framework, CS² has sent an important message to those both within and outside the network. The message is that monitoring student progress on academic achievement in statewide measures is important to their work. The student outcome measures in the CS² framework are the measures that continue to be at the forefront of educational reform and educational policy making. In order to maintain its visibility and to continue their work in the areas that "matter" to schools, this framework is critical. This framework also provides an important barometer across sites that is consistent from site to site, allowing for the measurement of progress over time and to build a track record for the initiative.

The full report draws on three primary methodologies including: (1) information collected in the Fall 2002 for the Year 1/Year 2 Summary Report which included a review of relevant documents, a site visit to each community and telephone interviews with New Ways staff and CDE and CalWIB officials involved in the initiative; (2) data and information collected during the data team process in the Spring and Summer 2003 including the results of an on-line survey conducted by New Ways with the support of the sites in Spring 2002 and again in Spring 2003; and (3) telephone interviews of Entrepreneurs, Site Leads, Site Superintendents and Coaches conducted in the Fall 2003. Documents reviewed for the report include quarterly and year-end reports submitted by the sites, site work plans and evaluation reports from the first and second years of implementation. The report is organized into the following parts:

- **Part I** provides a context for California education reform and the background of the CS² initiative, including descriptions of the CS² framework, Entrepreneur roles, and evaluative system.

- **Part II** provides an analysis of the implementation of the initiative at the local level by including a brief profile of each CS² community that provides demographic data about the schools in the community, the team's approach to CS², data team activities and a description of a selection of strategies undertaken by each community.

- **Part III** details the CS² statewide network and the role of the support provided by New Ways as the statewide capacity-building organization.

- **Part IV** is an analysis of long-term term outcomes using the long-term progress measures framework that forms the heart of the CS² evaluation system.

- **Part V** concludes the report, providing a summary and recommendations for next steps for CS² in California.

## Full Evaluation

To view or download a copy of the CS² Year Three Evaluation Report, go to www.nww.org/toolchest.html or email info@nww.org to request a hard copy.

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