

Reforming Teacher Certification in California:

Problems, Paradoxes, & Possibilities

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Agenda

- **My Background & Perspective**
- **What Do We Mean by “Social Justice”?**
- **What Do I Mean?**
- **My Experiences with New Standards & Requirements for Teacher Certification in California**
- **Problems & Possibilities**
- **What I’ve Learned Thus Far from Debates Over the New Requirements→**

The issue & the times are ripe for community organizing!

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What Do We Mean by *Social Justice*?

- **Ambiguous, Overused, Misused Term**
- **Social Justice vs. Economic Justice**
- **Social Justice as Liberal Construct**
- **Links to Activism and Mass Movements**
- **Schools as Reproducers of the Status Quo vs. Schools as Sites of Resistance & Transformation**
- **My Priority: Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice**

My Experiences with New Standards & Requirements

- **My Story in a Nutshell**
- **Checking Around with External Colleagues**
- **Problems:**
 - **Too Many Constraints → Deskillling**
 - **Little Explicit Emphasis on Social Justice and Multicultural Education**
 - **Off-Topic from Student Needs**
 - **Too Much Work**
- **Possibilities:**

- **Program Redesign Fully Integrating English Learners, Students of All Abilities, and Family Diversity**
- **Emphasis on Safety & Safe Schools**
- **Interpret New Standards Through the Lens of Social Justice Work**

What I've Learned

- 1. Activism for Social Justice must be determined, creative, and resilient**

- 2. Professors of education, deans, and administrators today—as a collectivity-- may share two characteristics with schoolteachers, characteristics that function as barriers to transforming education beyond reproducing the status quo:**
 - (a) An authentic conservatism—fear of change, of rocking the boat, of overtly confronting power and authority**

 - (b) A culture that supports & encourages individualized griping & sniping rather than confrontation, collective resistance, and social change activism**

3. Professors of education, deans, and administrators today may share two additional characteristics with schoolteachers, characteristics that may function as helpful tools to undermining, resisting, and occasionally overtly challenging power and authority:

(a) A rhetorical commitment to democracy, equality, and “teaching all children” that might be marshaled and organized for social justice causes

(b) Strategic experience with “loose coupling,” the ways in which the distance between policy makers and classroom practice presents possibilities for resistance and alternative practices behind closed doors

4. The issue & the times are ripe for community organizing!

1. Ambiguous, Overused, Misused Term

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