PARTICIPANTS

Niu Gao is a research fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California, specializing in K–12 education. Her areas of interest include math and science education, digital learning in K–12 schools, and teacher workforce. Prior to joining PPIC, she worked as a quantitative policy analyst at Stanford. She holds a PhD in educational policy and an MS in economics from Florida State University.

Deborah Gonzalez is director of government affairs at PPIC. She and her staff work to connect PPIC research with policymakers and community leaders. A longtime Capitol staffer, she served as policy and fiscal director for six legislative leaders and worked on a wide variety of issues—including the state budget, education reform, infrastructure funding, and public safety. She holds a law degree from the McGeorge School of Law, University of the Pacific, and a BA from Claremont McKenna College, where she majored in international relations.

Stacey Lerma is a professional development specialist in science for Moreno Valley Unified School District, which serves about 33,500 students in grades K–12 at 40 schools. She supports teachers in the transition to the Next Generation Science Standards through training, in-class demonstrations, and coaching. She has co-presented at multiple state rollouts of the new standards and been invited to present at conferences about science education and STEM topics. Previously, she taught science for fifteen years.

Patrick Murphy is director of research and a senior fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California, where he holds the Thomas C. Sutton Chair in Policy Research. As research director, he coordinates and directs the policy work of more than 25 researchers. His own research focuses on financing and management in both K–12 and higher education. He is an adjunct professor of politics at the University of San Francisco. His work has been published by PPIC, the Center for American Progress, the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, the Center on Reinventing Public Education, the Berkeley Center for Studies in Higher Education, and RAND. Previously, he worked for RAND and at the Office of Management and Budget in Washington, DC. He holds a PhD from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and a master's of public affairs from the University of Texas–Austin.

Jessica L. Sawko is the executive director of the California Science Teachers Association (CSTA). CSTA is a nonprofit professional membership organization dedicated to helping science educators implement the California Next Generation Science Standards (CA NGSS) through state-level representation, professional development, and connections to resources. She represents CSTA as co-chair of the executive committee of California Alliance for NGSS (CA4NGSS); as a member of the Science Collaboration Committee; and as a participant in the Science Community of Practice, among several other state-level activities. She is chair of her local elementary school's School Site Council. She was a community economic development volunteer in Peace Corps–Panama and holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Hollins University.

Trish Williams is a member of the California State Board of Education. She was appointed by Governor Brown in 2011. In 2016, the California Science Teachers Association presented her with their inaugural Bertrand Advocacy Award for her work with NGSS. Previously, she was executive director of EdSource for two decades. She expanded EdSource's audience as well as its K14 work; she also served as project lead for two large-scale survey research studies—Similar Students, Different Results and Gaining Ground in the Middle Grades—teaming with Stanford professors Michael Kirst and Edward Haertel as well as researchers from WestEd and AIR. She holds a master's of public policy from the University of Tulsa and started her career as a Presidential Management Fellow in Washington, DC.