



The Education Trust-West

# BUILDING A MORE EQUITABLE AND PARTICIPATORY SCHOOL SYSTEM IN CALIFORNIA: THE LOCAL CONTROL FUNDING FORMULA'S FIRST YEAR



WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM:



"We have a golden opportunity between your leadership, parents, community, and schools all working together to erase inequities."

*— Dolores Huerta, speaking to California's State Board of Education on January 16, 2014*



# BUILDING A MORE EQUITABLE AND PARTICIPATORY SCHOOL SYSTEM IN CALIFORNIA: THE LOCAL CONTROL FUNDING FORMULA'S FIRST YEAR

California's landmark Local Control Funding Formula dramatically changed the way the state funds its school districts, directing greater resources to districts serving large numbers of low-income students, English learners, and students in foster care. Embracing the theory that social problems should be dealt with at the local level, LCFF also shifted substantially more control from Sacramento to school districts. No longer bound to the spending and reporting requirements of dozens of state programs, districts now decide how to use their funds. But here's the kicker: districts must make these decisions in a public way, engage community stakeholders in the process, and document their goals and plans in a "Local Control and Accountability Plan." In the years and months leading up to the passage of LCFF, debate largely centered on the weighted funding structure: How much money should high-need students generate? Could the state afford an adequate base funding level for all students? In the year since the law went into effect, however, the LCAPs have become the most catalyzing, dividing, and scrutinized component of LCFF's implementation.

In this report, we describe California's first-year implementation of LCFF. Although LCFF affects charter schools and county offices of education, we focus on

LCFF implementation in traditional school districts. California's roughly 950 school districts together serve about 5.7 million of the state's 6.2 million public school students.

Just one year into this massive reform, it is far too early to tell whether student outcomes have improved under LCFF. It's also too early — and frankly not possible — to trace how supplemental and concentration dollars generated by high-need students are being spent. Instead, we focus on two primary components of implementation. First, we describe in narrative the ways in which districts and community stakeholders engaged with one another to develop plans for their LCFF dollars. Second, we study first-year LCAPs with an eye toward how transparently and effectively they share these plans with the public, along with how they propose to invest in the success of low-income, English learner, and foster care students.

We draw upon interviews with more than 60 community and district leaders, a detailed analysis of 40 LCAPs, a shorter review of more than 100 LCAPs, and countless conversations with the dozens of partners with whom we worked in the effort to pass and implement a funding formula that could help provide California's low-income

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## LCFF should help us achieve greater equity, transparency, and participation in our schools.

students, students of color, English learners, and foster youth with the opportunities they need to succeed in school.

We find that LCFF has created an unprecedented level of engagement among school district leaders, community leaders, parents, teachers, and students. This has not been without tension in some communities; and to be sure, not all stakeholders experienced a deep level of engagement. But the overall trend is toward more participatory planning and budgeting in K-12 schooling.

We also find that district leaders have oriented themselves to the new law. Administrators responsible for instruction and budget are collaborating more than ever before in a real effort to align budgets with academic plans. Superintendents and assistant superintendents have invested significant energy in educating their teams and boards about the new law — including how it affects less public but critically important functions such as budget development, accounting, and state reporting.

In a number of districts, leaders have advanced spending plans that empower school sites to make more decisions. And in some districts, we see that administrators are using LCFF funds to expand parent engagement programs, add new services for foster youth, or improve school climate — as just a few examples. However, by and large, these new programs are funded by small budgets.

In general, districts offer only modest innovation in this first year. Instead, most districts are shoring up rising staffing costs, restoring programs and personnel cut during the Great Recession, preserving programs previously funded by categorical aid, and adding one or two new programs for high-need students.

Indeed, in the LCAPs we reviewed, it is difficult at best and impossible at worst to tell whether districts have complied with the law's requirement to "increase or

improve services" for low-income, English learner, and foster youth students. Though many advocates pushed for significant budget transparency, the reporting template that was adopted by the State Board of Education doesn't demand it, and most districts have not chosen to provide more detail than required. Further, most LCAPs present an incomplete picture of a district's programs and services, instead listing only the activities that align with the state priorities or accounting for just a portion of the district's total budget. In all, we are left with LCAPs that offer frustratingly little insight into how LCFF will help accelerate efforts to close our state's opportunity and achievement gaps.

The following pages explore these themes in more detail, highlighting both what worked in the first year of LCFF and what still needs to be improved. Some of our findings are consistent with those already shared by academic researchers,<sup>1</sup> but we believe they provide an important complement and a different view of what has occurred. Unashamedly focused on the belief that LCFF should help us achieve greater equity, transparency, and participation in our schools, we have focused on these topics.

LCFF could not have been accomplished without the collective advocacy of so many partners, including those representing the voices of California's many diverse community stakeholders. For this reason, we have engaged them in this research. In this report, we present our own analysis and also bring in the expertise and voices of advocates representing distinct stakeholders: community organizers, parents, students, foster youth, and English learners.

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Humphrey and Julia E. Koppich, "Toward a Grand Vision: Early Implementation of California's Local Control Funding Formula" (Menlo Park, CA: SRI International, 2014); Bruce Fuller and Laura Tobben, "Local Control Funding Formula in California: How to Monitor Progress and Learn from this Grand Experiment" (Berkeley, CA: The Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute at University of California, Berkeley, 2014).



**"Equal treatment for children in unequal situations is not justice."**

– Governor Jerry Brown's State of the State address, 2013



# MAIN COMPONENTS OF THE LOCAL CONTROL FUNDING FORMULA



## FUNDING FORMULA

After LCFF is fully funded, which could take about eight years, each district will receive a per-pupil base grant plus a supplemental grant for each student who is low-income, learning English, or in foster care. Districts with large concentrations of high-need students will also receive concentration grants.

**Base grants** vary by grade level and are adjusted annually for the cost of living. In 2013-14, base grants were set at \$7,675 for each student in grades K-3, \$7,046 for each student in grades 4-6, \$7,266 for each student in grades 7-8, and \$8,638 for each high school student. These base grants reflect a 10.4 percent incentive to reduce class sizes in the early grades and a 2.6 percent augmentation for high school career and technical education programs.

On top of this base, districts receive a 20 percent **supplemental grant** for each student who is low-income, learning English, or in foster care. In districts where at least 55 percent of students meet those criteria, each high-need student above the 55 percent threshold generates an extra 50 percent called a **concentration grant**. This means that in a district where every student is either low-income, learning English, or in foster care, the district's total supplement is 42.5 percent.

By full implementation of LCFF, all districts should receive at least as much as they did in the 2007-08 school year, when the economy was at its peak. On average, LCFF sent approximately \$7,035 per pupil to school districts in 2013-14.<sup>2</sup> On top of that, districts still receive some state categorical aid as well as federal funds and any dollars raised locally.

All LCFF funding goes to districts, not to school sites. So while LCFF sends more money to higher need districts, it does not necessarily address within-district disparities. To be sure, many advocates wanted a funding formula that would do just that. Instead, the governor and state Legislature gave districts substantial flexibility while asking the State Board to work out rules for how the supplemental and concentration dollars could be spent.

Supplemental and concentration grants must be “principally directed” toward meeting goals for low-income students, English learners, and students in foster care.



## SPENDING REGULATIONS

Regulations adopted by the State Board in November 2014 allow districts to phase in their spending on low-income students, English learners, and foster youth over time. Until LCFF is fully funded, districts get a break. They do not have to earmark as much money as “supplemental” during the phase-in years as they will upon full implementation. For instance, a mid-sized urban district serving 67 percent high-need students will ultimately have to spend about 16 percent of its LCFF budget on increased or improved services for low-income, English learner, and foster youth students. But in 2014-15, it only has to spend about 7 percent of its LCFF funds on those types of services. The balance is fully flexible. While districts can also choose how to use their supplemental and concentration grants, those dollars must be “principally directed” toward meeting goals for low-income students, English learners, and students in foster care.

<sup>2</sup> Based on an analysis of the LCFF Funding Snapshot data from 2013-14, as of the Second Principal Apportionment. Data obtained from the California Department of Education, <http://ias.cde.ca.gov/lcffsnapshot>. We divided the total funding received by Local Education Agencies by the total Average Daily Attendance.

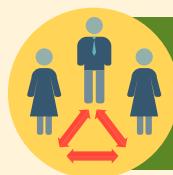


## LOCAL CONTROL AND ACCOUNTABILITY PLANS

The LCAP is the district's three-year plan for how it will serve all students, including low-income, English learner, and foster youth students. The LCAP requires districts to present their goals, metrics, actions, and expenditures and show how they support the state's eight priority areas (listed below). County offices of education have to address two additional priorities related to instruction for expelled students and services for foster youth. After the first LCAP year, districts have to report how their actions have helped improve outcomes for students.

### CALIFORNIA'S 8 PRIORITY AREAS

- 1. Basic services**
- 2. Implementation of standards**
- 3. Parental engagement**
- 4. Student achievement**
- 5. Student engagement**
- 6. School climate**
- 7. Access to courses**
- 8. Other student outcomes**



## STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Districts must engage a parent advisory committee that includes parents or guardians of high-need students and, if the district has at least 15 percent English learners, a separate committee that includes parents of English learners. In addition, districts must consult with students, teachers, principals, administrators, other school personnel, and collective bargaining units. They must offer the public an opportunity to offer written and public input on actions and expenditures for the LCAP. Finally, districts must ensure that LCAPs are consistent with the school site plans developed by school site councils.



## EVALUATION RUBRICS

District performance and improvement against the state priorities will be measured using "evaluation rubrics," which will be adopted by the State Board of Education by fall 2015. Since drafts have not yet been developed, it remains to be seen exactly what these rubrics will include. However, they must reflect a holistic assessment of district and school performance and must allow districts to evaluate strengths and weaknesses, allow county offices of education to determine districts' technical assistance needs, and assist the state in identifying districts in need of intervention.

# WE HAVE A NEW LAW: NOW WHAT?

Gov. Jerry Brown signed LCFF into law on July 1, 2013. A comprehensive budget bill rather than a typical legislative proposal, the changes went into effect immediately. This left district and community stakeholders scrambling to decipher the new law and its many components. **See Main Components of the Local Control Funding Formula on page 6.**

To understand the impact of this sudden change, it's important to know when and how California school districts typically develop their budgets. Most districts create drafts between January and March for the following school year because any staff layoff notices must be issued by March 15. When the governor releases his May revision to the state budget, districts make adjustments before presenting budgets to their boards for adoption. After a final state budget is in place July 1, districts typically have 45 days to make adjustments to reflect the state's final revenue projections and any policy surprises.

This budget cycle meant that as of July 2013, many districts had adopted budgets still reflective of the state's old "revenue limit" and categorical grant system. They had scant time to adjust their accounting and reporting to reflect the new verbiage or funding realities of LCFF. And because the Department of Education would take a full year to figure out the new allocations, districts weren't getting money under the new formula yet anyway. Even so, most districts experienced a small bump in revenues thanks to a recovering economy and Proposition 30, a sales and income tax increase approved by voters in 2012. Further, districts received advice from groups such as School Services of California and county offices of education to be conservative until spending regulations were finalized and funding allocations made. All this meant that in 2013-14, districts more or less

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proceeded with budgets that looked just as they did before LCFF, even as they sought to learn the new rules.

This troubled some community advocates who expected an immediate rush of dollars and programming for high-need students in 2013-14. They had advocated for LCFF because they believed it would bring these very things. The celebrations that followed LCFF's passage quickly gave way to a reality check for many community stakeholders, who were repeatedly told by their districts that there was no new money to spend.

Still, some district leaders recognized that an early start on community engagement under LCFF could make a difference for their bottom lines. Fresno Unified, for example, knew that undercounting its low-income students could cost the district thousands or even millions of dollars in supplemental and concentration grants. So the district began a swift and concerted effort in August 2013 to get families to complete the state-required survey asking families to disclose their incomes. They offered incentives like tickets to the County Fair, created competitions among schools, and alerted parents that they could help their schools get funding by participating. The result was that the district received the necessary forms from all but 200 of its 70,000 students.

In addition, some districts saw 2013-14 as a year of rare financial opportunity. It was a Wild West year – one of newfound flexibility, fuller coffers, and few rules to follow. Spending regulations had not yet been drafted, and LCAPs wouldn't be required until 2014-15. Some districts pushed as much funding as possible into what they called "structural deficits," the gap between their revenues and the cost of their ongoing programs. Others restored staff positions cut in prior years. Labor unions, too, saw opportunity. After several years of small or no increases in salaries, many unions locked in raises before spending regulations or advocates could demand that new monies go toward new programs and services for high-need students.



## UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – AND LESSONS LEARNED

Community influence on education policies and decisions is not something new, especially in urban centers like Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Oakland, which each boast a rich history of community participation and activism in schooling. Recall the 1967 East Los Angeles high school student walkouts to protest unequal school conditions for Latinos and the 2005 alliance formed between thousands of Los Angeles students, parents, and community members to demand that the district's high school graduation requirement include the 15 "A-G" classes students need in order to be eligible for admission to a four-year state university. Also recall the successful 1991 community-led effort in San Francisco to establish a tax set-aside, or "Children's Fund," for schoolchildren and youth, and Oakland's district/community partnerships in the early 2000s to address school overcrowding and underperformance by establishing autonomous small schools and a more equitable funding formula.

Further, districts have long been required to involve parents when making decisions about how to use dollars targeted toward low-income students and English learners, most notably Economic Impact Aid, Title I, and Title III funds. But compared with LCFF, these were more limited pots of dollars that came with stricter spending requirements. The primary role of parents sitting on district and site-level councils has been to review and offer advice on the school-level Single Plan for Student Achievement and the district-level Consolidated Application, documents that spell out how the school sites and districts will spend their categorical grants.

While there are many parallels between these plans and the newly required LCAP, the LCAP encourages broader, more substantial input and offers both parents and the district freedom to develop a plan that meets the unique needs of the community. This creates the opportunity for greater parent input and empowerment. LCFF also calls for districts to consult with a wide range of stakeholders, solicit written and in-person public input, and continue to coordinate with school site councils. In addition, districts are required to include goals and actions in their LCAPs that address parent engagement. Finally, the very spirit of LCFF calls for a more robust level of community engagement than existed in the past. All districts, regardless of their prior experience engaging communities, struggled mightily with these demands.

### COMPETITION AMONG FRIENDS

In communities packed with seasoned organizers and vocal activists, districts had more interests and demands than they could contend with. Often these stakeholders wanted money to be spent on particular programs or groups of students and collectively had a longer list of issues than the district could reasonably address. For instance, in Los Angeles Unified separate groups of advocates called for new spending on foster youth, substantial site-level discretionary funding, expanded restorative justice programs, more parent involvement opportunities, and financial aid counseling, to name just a few. These stakeholders, friends and partners in many ways, suddenly found themselves competing to influence a limited pot of LCFF dollars. The district,



**When parents have meaningful roles, they are more likely to be authentic partners. In some districts, parents leaders — rather than just district staff — led parent outreach efforts and hosted neighborhood forums about LCFF.**

overwhelmed, turned inward to weigh trade-offs and make tough spending decisions, and in the process incensed advocates who wanted those decisions debated publicly. In the end, districts weren't the only ones who had to make trade-offs: advocates from different circles also found themselves coming together to prioritize their demands. In Los Angeles, this resulted in a strong coalition that ultimately had tremendous influence on the district's spending decisions — a level of influence usually only enjoyed by teachers' unions.

## BUILDING PARENT PARTNERSHIPS

Many districts without established relationships with community-based organizations or parent groups fumbled to identify who to engage, and how. Small districts struggled to staff the newly required parent meetings, public hearings, and other outreach activities. Unlike larger districts, they didn't always have community engagement staff and sometimes found that the assistant superintendent for budget or instruction was suddenly also leading a wide array of community outreach activities.

To be sure, districts with a history of community engagement and activism had a leg up in some ways. With years of practice under their belts, they were more likely than other districts to communicate broadly about public meetings and opportunities for stakeholders to offer feedback. They were more cognizant of the need to reach out to diverse communities and families who speak languages other than English. They had learned that free food, childcare, and transportation could help draw in families, and they were more prepared than some districts to provide translation and interpretation services. Most critically, they knew from experience what other districts didn't: that even parents struggling with English or who had low levels of education could be valuable partners in this process with the right data and support. These districts were often more creative in how they engaged parents, knowing that when parents have meaningful roles they are more likely to be authentic partners. For example, parent leaders in San Francisco Unified initiated parent outreach efforts and hosted neighborhood forums about LCFF.

***For a perspective on family engagement, read [Creating Meaningful Parent Engagement Opportunities by Families In Schools on page 11.](#)***

# CREATING MEANINGFUL PARENT ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

***In the first year of LCFF, Families In Schools (FIS) provided LCFF training to 140 parent leaders from 10 school districts. We asked them to share what they experienced and learned.***

The emergence of parent engagement as a key component of the Local Control Funding Formula provides a powerful opportunity for renewed community empowerment. This is long overdue, as research continues to show that when schools engage parents effectively, student achievement improves. LCFF represents a transformative shift in the way districts and schools interact with parents on a day-to-day basis. This shift includes the opportunity for parents to meaningfully engage in local decisions about student learning. Echoing this message were the voices of hundreds of parents from around the state who testified during the LCFF hearings, demanding stronger accountability measures to ensure LCFF fulfills its promise to better engage parents and guardians.

In the first year of LCFF, many districts found new ways to solicit input from parents, from partnering with nonprofits to implementing community forums to conducting online surveys. We found that many district plans and budgets included significant parent engagement strategies. For example, San Bernardino City Unified increased its investment in parent engagement by over 3 million dollars. This money may be used to create Parent University centers, with the end goal of having a center in every school. Coachella Valley Unified committed \$100,000 to support a language assistance center to improve translation and interpreter services for school-to-home communication.



Despite these promising practices, much more remains to be done. Districts can eliminate policies and practices that restrict parent access to school campuses. They can offer teachers and administrators ongoing professional development on best practices, such as how to create a welcoming environment for all parents. They must also offer training to parents serving on district advisory committees tasked with reviewing LCAPs. And finally, districts need to ensure that the parent engagement programs included in the LCAPs are strategic, aligned to student outcomes, adequately funded, and properly implemented.

In the end, engaging parents is about relationships, not compliance. If LCFF is to deliver the results that everyone hopes for, then offering more qualitative opportunities and experiences will go far toward building mutual trust and stronger school-parent-community relationships that will ultimately benefit student achievement. As we move forward, we need to develop a clear and mutual understanding of what “authentic parent engagement” looks like and create the accountability systems that ensure districts are improving their policies and practices to achieve this goal.



*Families In Schools is a nonprofit founded in 2000 and involved in improving student outcomes by engaging parents and communities in their children’s education to achieve lifelong success.*

[www.familiesinschools.org](http://www.familiesinschools.org)



## IN SOME PARTS OF THE STATE, TENSIONS BETWEEN DISTRICTS AND COMMUNITIES EMERGED

In some districts, the LCAP process brought community tensions to the surface. Administrators in both West Contra Costa Unified and Stockton Unified weathered rebukes from stakeholder groups for some decisions and alleged missteps, while concurrently developing deeper and more collaborative relationships with community members in other ways. For example, some West Contra Costa community organizers pointedly questioned the district's decision to spend supplemental and concentration funding on armed campus police officers and criticized the district for not providing translations of the LCAP before hearings. In Stockton, legal advocacy organizations accused the district of violating public meeting rules and failing to translate the draft LCAP materials. Despite this, Stockton Unified leaders say they built strong relationships with parents during the LCAP process and even received an ovation from parents at the final LCAP hearing. In West Contra Costa Unified, stakeholders almost unanimously agree that the LCAP process strengthened relationships between the district and its community — or at least created a starting point for improved relationships going forward.

## STUDENT VOICE

Students of color emerged as some of the most vocal stakeholders during this first year. Youth leaders played an important role in both state and local advocacy, maintaining a strong presence at State Board of Education and district LCAP meetings. In districts like Oakland Unified, East Side Union High School District, and Emery Unified, high school student leaders urged administrators to ask for and listen to student opinions regarding school and district priorities. In response, but also often of their own accord, many districts surveyed students — along with parents and educators — to gather their opinions before drafting the LCAPs.

***For more about the experience of student advocates during this first LCAP year, read The Power of Student Voice in LCFF on page 13, written by Californians for Justice.***

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# THE POWER OF STUDENT VOICE IN LCFF

*In a powerful display of civic engagement, thousands of students demanded that they have a role in LCFF. Californians for Justice tells us about how these students achieved change.*

**"When students and parents are empowered to share their voices and their stories, they realize they can change things and pave the way for a better future. I think this year was a huge milestone for the future of education."**

— Tony Bui, *Californians for Justice student leader*

For more than a decade, Californians for Justice was a consistent advocate for a funding formula that would send more dollars to schools and districts with greater needs. When LCFF became law, CFJ immediately went to work in seven districts (Oakland Unified, East Side Union High, San Jose Unified, Alum Rock Elementary, Franklin-McKinley Elementary, Fresno Unified, and Long Beach Unified) to ensure that LCFF's promise of equity would become a reality for communities that had been under-resourced for decades.

With a presence both on the ground in local districts and in the state capitol, CFJ was well positioned to hold community-friendly trainings on LCFF and bring together local alliances to develop shared LCAP goals.

As LCAPs were developed, it became clear that students needed to have a stronger voice. In a survey of 10 districts conducted by CFJ, only one in five students involved in their district's LCAP process believed their district valued their opinions. Refusing to have students left out of LCFF, CFJ student leaders formed the Student Voice Campaign and got thousands of youth, parents, teachers, and other advocates to join them. In just seven months, they successfully urged the State Board of Education to give students a clear role in the district LCAP process, which will set the stage for more meaningful involvement of students in future years.

After district LCAPs were completed in summer 2014, CFJ held student-led LCAP Review Days attended by more than 200 parents, students, and community members from seven districts. Participants scored their



districts' first LCAPs. From those scores, CFJ created an LCAP Community Report Card, which highlighted three main areas for improvement:

- 1. Accessibility:** Districts need to create the conditions for meaningful stakeholder engagement by doing effective outreach, providing translation, and creating community-friendly documents. Districts can make meetings more accessible by offering childcare and diversifying meeting times and locations.
- 2. Accountability:** Districts need to strengthen the clarity and specificity of goals and metrics in order to accurately measure progress.
- 3. Equity:** Districts need to demonstrate a drive toward equity by more clearly connecting actions and expenditures to the impact they will have on improving education for high-need students.

Going forward, there are two concrete things districts can do to better engage students. First, they can introduce an innovative model of student and parent involvement such as Participatory Budgeting, looking to East Side Union High School District for one model. Second, they can create a Student Advisory Committee that includes high-need students, as Oakland Unified School District did this first LCAP year.

With students at the table as true stakeholders, districts are more likely to effectively identify and deliver the programs and services that address youth needs and close opportunity and achievement gaps in California schools.



*Californians for Justice (CFJ) is a statewide grassroots organization that brings the voices of students and parents into local and statewide policy to advocate for a more just and fair education system.*

[www.caljustice.org](http://www.caljustice.org)



## MAKING SENSE OF THE NEW CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Districts approached the requirements to “consult with” stakeholders and engage parent advisory committees, or PACs, and English learner PACs very differently.

Some created new committees, while others adapted or leveraged existing groups. Some districts set out to build diverse PACs, with parents representing high-need student subgroups, while others did not appear to aim for a specific kind of representation, even though the law required that PACs include parents of students who are low-income, learning English, and/or in foster care. Some districts were public and transparent about how

they selected parents, while others did this in a quieter way, such as asking school principals for nominations. Some districts provided training to parent committee members, though most did not. Depending on the community and context, stakeholders reacted to these decisions differently.

The exact committee format seemed to have little to do with whether community members felt “heard.” For example, Los Angeles Unified was among the most transparent and deliberate districts when it came to assembling its PAC, which included 40 elected and seven appointed members representing a careful demographic and geographic mix. But this didn’t stop the PAC members from complaining publicly that the district failed to meaningfully engage them in the LCAP process. San Bernardino City Unified, on the other hand, used a combination of new and pre-existing committees comprised of volunteers. Even though many of these members had previously served in similar roles, most stakeholders say the district provided frequent opportunities to share input as the LCAP was developed, and that the district was genuinely interested in what they had to say.

*For more about community engagement during this first LCAP year, read **Making Real the Promise of LCFF for Communities** on page 15, written by PICO California.*

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# MAKING REAL THE PROMISE OF LCFF FOR COMMUNITIES

***We asked PICO California to tell us more about the community engagement that occurred during this first LCAP year. Here's what they shared.***

For Guadalupe Valdez, the Local Control Funding Formula is not a remote policy crafted by Sacramento officials and implemented by her local school district. It's the key to her children's future. Like parents, students, and community members throughout the state, Guadalupe — the mother of three students in the Santa Ana Unified School District — embraced the opportunity of LCFF during the 2013-14 school year. She worked with her principal and district to inform and invite other parents into the process, with the goal of creating a Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) that reflected the needs and priorities of the Santa Ana community. She participated in local trainings, attended State Board of Education meetings, and was a strong and consistent voice for the needs of low-income students, English learners, and foster youth.

During the 2013-14 school year, PICO California worked with parents, students, and community members in 12 school districts to "make real" the promise of LCFF. PICO leaders organized trainings on the new law, held meetings with school and district officials, and advocated for the programs, services, and structures needed to improve opportunities and outcomes for all students, especially those who have not been well served by the current system. In Guadalupe and in community leaders throughout the state, we saw the potential of LCFF to tap into the knowledge, commitment, and leadership capacity of parents and students who have historically been marginalized by the decision-making processes and structures in many districts.

Although LCFF implementation looked different in every district, some common themes emerged that give us hope for the future of this historic reform and also point to opportunities to improve the process.

One of the most promising aspects of first-year implementation was the sheer number of parents and students who participated in listening sessions, commented on an LCAP, or joined advisory committees, many engaging for the first time in a school or district process. In many cases, this input contributed to new and expanded investments to improve school climate, deepen parent engagement, or increase supports for specific student populations, such as English learners or African American boys.



The challenge — and the opportunity — as we head into the second year is to build on these experiences and investments by committing time and resources to capacity building and to nurturing the partnerships that will be critical to ensuring that LCAPs are living documents that are understood and owned by the communities whose support will be critical to their implementation.

What does that mean? It means providing translation of meetings and materials so English learners and their parents can be full participants in the process. It means providing parents and students with access to budget information, as well as achievement and other data to better understand who is — and isn't — being served by current policies and practices. It means partnering with parents and students to create trainings that are accessible and that connect to their experiences. And it means being intentional about aligning school site and district plans, rather than engaging in separate and disconnected planning processes.

Unfortunately, these practices were not standard in many districts across the state. Ultimately, a commitment to capacity building and partnership means shifting the culture in districts from one of compliance to one that recognizes the wisdom and expertise of parents and students and embraces the opportunity to bring the voice of those directly impacted into the local planning and decision-making process.



*PICO California is a grassroots, faith-based organizing network engaging 450,000 families and 480 congregations throughout the state to shift public policy and create a new vision for California rooted in democratic principles and a commitment to racial and economic justice.*

[www.picocalifornia.org](http://www.picocalifornia.org)

# TRANSPARENCY, CLARITY, AND COMPLIANCE IN FIRST-YEAR LOCAL CONTROL AND ACCOUNTABILITY PLANS

The idea behind the LCAP was deceptively simple: a plan that would show, in a single place, how districts intend to serve students and spend state money on their needs, particularly the needs of low-income students, English learners, and foster youth. What emerged in this first year was anything but simple.

## PLANS PRESENT AN INCOMPLETE PICTURE

Ranging in length from about two dozen to 200 pages, these plans contain a dizzying number of columns, cells, and bits of information—often clouded by jargon and acronyms. Some read as though the district started with a comprehensible plan and then, in an effort to comply, cut it up and reassembled it into the obfuscating LCAP template. The template itself worked against the idea of ensuring effective and clear communication. With multiple disconnected tables, confusing cross-references, obscure Education Code citations, and a compliance orientation, the template discouraged a clear narrative or community-accessible style.

Some districts worked around this by presenting a separate user-friendly version of their LCAPs (for example, Bear Valley Unified) or including an executive summary. Perplexingly, some county offices of education rejected clearly presented LCAPs and asked districts to rearrange content to better match the template. Berkeley Unified

is an example of a district asked to do just this; district leaders ended up moving the plan's most helpful content to appendices. The State Board, well aware of the confusion and frustration introduced by the draft template, has retooled it for the years ahead – but not enough to reassure advocates and community groups that future plans will be much easier to read.

The actual plans often paint an incomplete picture of a district's programs and services. Civil rights advocates and many community members had expected a comprehensive, readable document that would connect a district's academic plan to its budget, but instead have been frustrated with a document that falls far short of this vision. Often, the LCAP includes only a portion of the district's budget. This portion is often the set of activities the district considers to be supportive of the eight state priorities, or it is only the portion used to increase or improve services for high-need students. Often, districts leave out large swaths of their budgets such as their general operations (including facilities, maintenance, custodial, food services) or their core instructional costs (including the enormous line item that represents teacher compensation).

Among the 40 LCAPs we analyzed, all but one include numeric expenditures, although some actions are not associated with expenditure data.<sup>4</sup> In 75 percent of the plans we studied, the LCAP includes LCFF funding sources in addition to other funding sources, such as Title 1. In 20 percent of the LCAPs, funding sources are not ever specified. Only half specify whether an action is funded with LCFF base funds or with supplemental and concentration dollars. As a result, it is very difficult to make sense of these expenditures relative to other spending by the district and impossible to compare across districts. Even a parent with considerable financial expertise would be befuddled. **See Table 1 for more details on funding transparency in the 40 LCAPs we analyzed.**

<sup>3</sup> This calculation is based on Average Daily Attendance from the 2013-14 school year.

<sup>4</sup> This is supported by forthcoming analysis from the American Civil Liberties Union of California. In its own sample of 40 LCAPs, the ACLU finds that about 30 percent of those districts provide incomplete expenditure information. Further, the ACLU estimates that only about 40 percent of LCFF dollars are accounted for by the LCAPs they examined.

## ABOUT OUR LCAP ANALYSIS

We analyzed LCAPs from 40 school districts, which we selected for geographic and size diversity, with the majority serving high percentages of low-income, English learner, or foster youth students. Together, these districts serve 1.3 million students, representing 22 percent of students in the state.<sup>3</sup> While 40 districts is a small fraction of the roughly 950 districts served by the state, the size and diversity of these districts offer us a sample representative of California's higher need school districts. Further, we have confirmed through informal scans of over 100 additional LCAPs that the themes we share here are consistently seen across the state and beyond our sample of 40. **For a list of the LCAPs reviewed, see Appendix A on page 27.**

## TABLE 1: FUNDING TRANSPARENCY IN THE 40 LCAPS ANALYZED BY THE EDUCATION TRUST-WEST

LCAP includes actual expenditures, expressed as dollars:	
Yes	39 (98%)
No	1 (2%)
Funding sources included:	
LCFF alone	2 (5%)
LCFF and other sources	30 (75%)
Funding sources not specified	8 (20%)
Source attribution for LCFF expenditures:	
LCFF general	11 (28%)
LCFF base and supplemental/concentration grants disaggregated	20 (50%)
Neither	9 (23%)

### IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW SUPPLEMENTAL AND CONCENTRATION GRANTS WILL “INCREASE OR IMPROVE” SERVICES FOR HIGH-NEED STUDENTS

Advocates for low-income students, English learners, and foster youth are particularly alarmed by how difficult it is to tell what services will be increased or improved for high-need students, either compared with prior years or compared with the core program offered to all students. In many cases, it is downright impossible to know. Districts are not required to disclose prior-year spending on high-need students or describe the base program that all students receive. Some districts offer hints with language such as “hire an additional social worker to assist existing foster youth staff in developing a comprehensive foster youth program” (San Juan Unified), but many others simply write “social workers” without further clarification. Despite this trend, some districts have embraced the notion that the LCFF and LCAP can help advance their efforts to support their highest need learners. Berkeley Unified, for example, wrote an LCAP that clearly shows its plan and spending for high-need students, including how it is using supplemental and concentration grants.

Many local and statewide advocates for traditionally underserved students have also been dismayed by how loosely districts have interpreted the requirements regarding supplemental and concentration grants. We have seen examples of districts proposing to use these funds for special education services, even though all qualified students with individualized education plans are entitled to these services. We have also seen examples of districts using these funds to increase salaries and retirement payments for all teachers, without regard for whether those teachers are focused on the particular

needs of low-income, English learner, and foster youth students. Unfortunately, in most LCAPs it’s simply not possible to trace how supplemental and concentration grants are being used — much less how they fit with federal dollars intended to serve these same students — because the state does not require districts to disaggregate base expenditures from supplemental and concentration expenditures.

### THE STATE’S PRIORITY AREAS AND REQUIRED METRICS ARE NOT FULLY ADDRESSED

Districts’ LCAPs do not always address each of the eight state priorities. Under these priorities, state law also lists roughly 20 required metrics such as chronic absence rates, suspension rates, and a measure of safety and school connectedness. District LCAPs rarely address all of these. When they are included in LCAPs, the extent to which they are substantively addressed varies considerably, with some districts simply listing these metrics as things they plan to review, others developing actual measurable outcomes, and a small percentage developing specific goals by student subgroup. In fact, although the law asks districts to develop goals and specific actions for each state-recognized student group, including ethnic subgroups and students with disabilities, few districts do so.

Further, LCAPs often tell the reader that a goal addresses many or even all of the state priority areas. For instance, one district’s LCAP says that its goal to “improve conditions of learning in a fiscally solvent and operationally efficient manner” supports seven of the eight priorities, including implementation of standards, access to courses, and parental engagement. It’s a problem that this goal is vaguely defined. But it is also a problem that districts like this one are interpreting the state priorities so broadly. It means that LCAPs often lack a clear, direct link between a state priority and the district’s goals for addressing it.

In most LCAPs, it’s not possible to trace how supplemental and concentration grants are being used, much less how they fit with federal dollars intended to serve these same students.

It is even more problematic that so many LCAPs fail to link a district’s goals to its actions. So while a district might address the state priority of school climate by including a goal or metric related to decreasing suspensions, it may not propose actions or expenditures focused on behavior management practices or policies.

# PROGRAMS AND SERVICES PROPOSED BY DISTRICTS IN FIRST-YEAR LCAPS

## RESTORATION AND CONTINUATION, BUT LITTLE INNOVATION

One of LCFF's great promises is that it might transform the way districts choose to serve students. Yet despite more flexibility and modest funding increases compared with the last several years, few districts appear to have made substantial changes to their strategic or academic plans in this first year. Instead, the LCAPs more often document what the district is already doing or was planning to do. Districts are also restoring programs and positions cut during the recession years.

However, we do see a handful of instances where LCFF is giving a boost to existing reforms, pilots, or innovations. For example:

- **Lucia Mar Unified is using approximately \$600,000 in supplemental dollars to expand its teacher evaluation and support program.** Started as a pilot with federal Teacher Incentive Funds four years ago, LCFF is allowing the district to add additional teacher support positions to each of the schools that had not previously benefited from that federal grant.
- **Oakland Unified is funding a similar program with approximately \$2.5 million in LCFF funds, along with other federal funding sources.** The district will expand its "Teacher Growth and Development System" from a two-school pilot to 16 schools in 2014-15. Oakland Unified is also using a small portion of its supplemental and concentration funding to pilot accelerated language development courses for English learners at two school sites and to incubate best practices for teaching newcomer English learners at one high school.

Despite more flexibility and modest funding increases, few districts have made substantial changes to their strategic or academic plans in this first year.

- **San Jose Unified is using \$1.2 million in LCFF funding to support school redesign efforts, which includes reimagining the use of time and space in pilot schools.** It is using LCFF as an opportunity to alter its school staffing formulas to both empower principals and provide greater supports and lower adult-to-student ratios in higher need schools.

## EMPOWERING SCHOOL SITES TO MAKE DECISIONS

While LCFF may not yet be inspiring innovation across the board, it has already made a significant impact on who is making the decisions. Districts have embraced the idea of local control and are often taking this a step further by divesting more decision-making power to school sites. Indeed, many districts are passing a portion of their LCFF funds to schools; often, these pass-through grants come from supplemental and concentration funds, as is the case in Oakland Unified, Sacramento City Unified, Torrance Unified, Antioch Unified, and Los Angeles Unified. In many cases, this is in response to community demand for truly local control; in others, it is a strategy for equitably allocating dollars; and in many, it is both.

In Oakland Unified, LCFF presented an opportunity to realign the district's student-based budgeting model with the state's new funding formula, while also addressing what wasn't working with the decade-old system. Having already embraced the principles of equitable school funding and principal empowerment, LCFF became a helpful vehicle for renewing the district's funding model — even though the timing was awkward since the district had already begun to retool its budget when LCFF hit. As part of this work, Oakland Unified published a table showing how much supplemental and concentration funding each school site was to receive, with these allocations driven by both the number of high-need students at each school and the environmental risk factors affecting each school's neighborhood. In a community like Oakland where there are very wealthy and very poor neighborhoods, it was incredibly important to some advocates that the district be transparent about how neighborhood-level needs translated into school-level funding.

In some districts, these pass-through dollars are truly flexible, while in many they are to be used for particular types of programs and services. For those districts with a hands-off approach, it will be important to ensure that locally controlled supplemental and concentration funds are being used to increase and improve services for low-income, English learner, and foster youth students. Some districts, like Torrance Unified, are addressing this by asking schools to create site-level LCAPs showing how those dollars will be spent and how those services align with district-level goals.

## INVESTMENTS IN ACADEMIC PROGRAMS AND WRAP-AROUND SERVICES

Most of the actions and expenditures in LCAPs can be categorized as either academic services and supports, wrap-around services and supports, or operating costs. In this next section, we explore some of the common themes and investments from those first two categories, drawing upon our analysis of LCAPs from 40 districts. While we were able to catalog the services proposed in these plans, we were not able to evaluate these programs for quality or their likely effectiveness. In the coming years, it will be important for districts and researchers alike to monitor implementation of LCAP plans to see which programs have a positive impact on student outcomes.

## ACADEMIC SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

### **New standards and assessments**

Nearly every district proposes to support educators to teach and students to learn the new Common Core standards, with 38 of the 40 districts in our sample mentioning the Common Core in some way. This is to be expected because “Implementation of Standards” is one of the state priority areas, and the Common Core is one of the biggest changes to sweep through California schools in a decade or more. However, the plans we see are rarely fleshed out and are typically general in nature, perhaps partly due to the fact that many districts are not using LCFF funds to pay for Common Core activities, but rather the \$200 per pupil in Common Core implementation grants the state provided in 2013.

The most common actions and expenditures related to Common Core are in the areas of professional development. Most often, we read very general mentions of teacher development, which may suggest anything from a one-day workshop to full-year, job-embedded professional development. However, in many cases we also see more specific investments in things

such as coaching, professional learning communities, summer institutes, peer observation, beginning teacher supports, and collaborative time for planning and curriculum development. LCAPs do not often provide detail about the professional development offered in each content area. One-third (33%) of districts say they will provide some sort of professional development on the Common Core English language arts standards, and 30 percent say they will do so in math.

Even though the state has clarified that LCAPs should address all standards, not just the Common Core, few districts in our sample address the English Language Development and Next Generation Science Standards with much specificity. However, 73 percent of districts do at least mention the ELD standards, and 60 percent mention NGSS. A few districts make reference to integration of Common Core with science, leaving us to wonder whether they are referring to NGSS or the old science standards.

### ***Academic interventions***

Often presented as strategies for addressing the needs of low-income students (and therefore drawing upon supplemental and concentration funding), academic supports like Response to Intervention, intervention specialists, and tutoring appear in many LCAPs. Across our 40 LCAPs, 50 percent included tutoring and 68 percent included RTI or a tiered academic intervention model. In some districts, tutoring is specifically targeted toward English learners or foster youth. The majority of LCAPs also propose to expand learning time through afterschool programs (73%) or summer school (67%), though it is unclear how directly these opportunities connect with students’ regular-day instruction. A smaller number of LCAPs include small-group instruction and individualized education plans for students other than those receiving special education services.

### ***College-going supports***

Most LCAPs in our sample (70%) propose to offer or increase academic and college counseling. Many, but not all, include metrics related to college readiness such as the percent of graduates completing the “A-G” courses required for eligibility for the UC/CSU systems, Early Assessment Program (EAP) results, and Advanced Placement exam results. However, despite being required by law to include a metric for “A-G,” only 73 percent of districts in our sample do. A few districts propose to support student and family access to college-preparatory opportunities. These investments include tracking financial aid applications and providing

financial aid workshops and parent outreach. Finally, a considerable number of districts are expanding career-preparation options. Of the 40 districts, 45 percent are developing or offering career pathways in specific fields such as business, health, or the arts, and 30 percent are providing hands-on, work-based learning programs or internships. Linked Learning, which combines rigorous academics with career-preparatory activities, is included in 10 of the 40 LCAPs we reviewed.

## WRAP-AROUND SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

### *Socio-emotional supports and school climate*

With a state priority area devoted to school climate, it's hardly surprising that many LCAPs address socio-emotional services and school climate issues. Many districts present these investments as strategies that can help students struggling with behavior in place of reliance on punitive discipline like suspension. In most cases, these types of services are partially or wholly funded with supplemental or concentration grants, since the districts posit that these services will chiefly benefit low-income students, English learners, and foster youth. In our sample of LCAPs, 28 percent include social workers and/or behavioral aids or specialists, 43 percent include restorative justice programs, and 70 percent include Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

### *Health, wellness, and safety*

Frequently drawing upon supplemental and concentration grants, investments in health, wellness, and safety make a relatively strong showing in LCAPs. Among our 40 LCAPs, 40 percent include psychologists or other mental health professionals, 23 percent include nurses or other medical professionals, 38 percent include investments in physical education (including sports, coaches, and exercise), and 48 percent include school safety/resource officers. In a few cases — and stirring mixed and sometimes heated opinions among community advocates — districts allocate LCFF funds for campus police (5 of 40) and drug-detection canine services (2 of 40).

### *Community engagement*

Most LCAPs include a strong focus on community engagement. We can probably attribute this to both the LCAP's stakeholder engagement process and that "Parent Engagement" resides on the list of the state's eight priorities. Nearly every LCAP we reviewed includes goals, metrics, actions, and expenditures related to community engagement. The most frequent actions

include parent engagement opportunities (including parent nights and workshops on how parents can be involved in their child's education), parent/adult education (including English as a Second Language), translation services, parent and student surveys, outreach materials, and outreach staff — including those who can speak with parents in their primary languages.

## SUPPORTING HIGH-NEED STUDENT GROUPS

The LCAP calls for districts to not only address the eight state priorities, but also to demonstrate how their actions and expenditures will help achieve goals for low-income students, English learners, and foster youth.

### LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

For the most part, districts address the needs of low-income students by proposing actions and services for students who are generally at risk, either because of poverty, low academic achievement, or other disadvantages. We described the most common types of investments for these students in the academic and wrap-around services sections, above. We found that the larger the low-income population within a district, the more likely it was that the district would describe these services as being offered to all students.

### ENGLISH LEARNERS

Nearly all districts propose services unique to English learners, although some English learner advocates find these plans sorely lacking. The most common types of English learner services included: outreach to parents of English learners, translation of documents, the administration and monitoring of language assessments, professional development for teachers of English learners, tutoring services, and hiring of bilingual aids, paraprofessionals, and front-office staff. Bilingual education programs are less common but still occur. Conspicuously absent in most LCAPs is discussion of how districts intend to implement the state's new English Language Development standards.

***For more perspective on how the needs of English learners were addressed in this first year, read Has LCFF Increased and Improved Services to English Learners? on page 21, written by Californians Together. Also read The Education Trust-West's 2014 report, The Language of Reform: English Learners in California's Shifting Education Landscape.***

# HAS LCFF INCREASED AND IMPROVED SERVICES TO ENGLISH LEARNERS?

**Californians Together has long advocated for the rights of English learners. We asked for their perspective on how English learners have been served by LCFF in this first year.**

Californians Together was founded in 1998 after voters passed Proposition 227, which outlawed most bilingual education in California schools. We joined with other organizations to advocate for quality education for children from underserved communities. With these partners, we have called for English learners to receive the resources and supports they need to succeed in school — and to which they are legally entitled. With LCFF, many of the categorical programs that provided these resources were eliminated and replaced with additional funding for increased and improved services for English learners.

To determine whether the promise of LCFF for English learners is realized in the Local Control and Accountability Plans set forth by districts, Californians Together, the California Association for Bilingual Education, and California Rural Legal Assistance are reviewing first-year LCAPs. Our sample includes districts with high numbers of English learners, high percentages of English learners, and those with a history of providing quality English learner programs.

Our review focuses on English language development services, parent engagement, professional development, access to courses and programs, the use of English learner data to inform goals, and expenditures (including the state-required “proportionality” calculation and districtwide and schoolwide uses of supplemental and concentration grants).

A few promising trends are emerging. In their LCAPs, a number of districts address the unique language and academic needs of their significant numbers of Long Term English Learners (LTELs), providing specific services for these students, such as accelerated language courses. In addition, several districts plan to begin or expand their dual language immersion programs for English learners and native English speakers.

## At the same time, we find areas for concern:

- It is very difficult to get a sense of any comprehensive approach to programs and services for English learners.



- There is very little evidence of whether programs and services are increased or improved over what the district offered previously.
- The LCAP does not require that districts designate which funds (base, supplemental, or concentration grants) are being spent on services for English learners.
- Although the implementation of the English Language Development standards are included, along with the Common Core State Standards, among the eight LCFF priorities, the template did not require that districts describe what they are doing for implementation. As a result, many districts do not reference the ELD standards.
- The District English Learner Advisory Committee is expected to make recommendations for English learner services that will be included in the LCAP. Very few LCAPs list any of the recommendations from the DELAC, nor do they describe which recommendations were included in the plan.
- Several districts are distributing significant funding to individual school sites. But in the plans, the language is very general on how the sites will use the funds and for what services.
- Districts make minimal reference to data on English learners' language development, achievement, or demographics, and these data are rarely used to inform goals.

Early in 2015, we will publish a formal report. We hope our findings and recommendations will provide valuable information to administrators, teachers, parents, and school board members as they revise and improve their initial LCAPs with an eye toward effective services for English learners.



*Californians Together is a statewide coalition of parent, professional, and civil rights groups committed to securing equal access to quality education for all English Learners.*

[www.californianstogether.org](http://www.californianstogether.org)



## FOSTER YOUTH

LCFF directed districts to consider, many for the first time, the unique educational needs of foster youth. Even so, most districts do not directly and distinctly address the needs of foster youth in their first-year LCAPs, apart from saying they will receive the same services as all students. There are some standout exceptions. For example, Los Angeles Unified and the Santa Cruz County Office of Education both serve large foster youth populations and make specific investments in foster youth that draw upon proven effective practices.

***For more perspective on how the needs of foster youth were addressed in this first year, read LCFF and the Foster Youth Achievement Gap on page 23, written by FosterEd.***

Because districts were not necessarily required to propose actions for student groups beyond low-income students, English learners, and foster youth, few did so — even when other student groups might have specific and significant needs.

## OTHER STUDENT SUBGROUPS

Because districts were not necessarily required to propose actions for student groups beyond low-income students, English learners, and foster youth, few did so — even when other student groups might have specific and significant needs. Nevertheless, a few districts do address the needs of students with disabilities, migrant and homeless students, or African American youth. For example, in its LCAP, Ceres Unified describes specialized interventions and supports for migrant students.

In its LCAP, San Bernardino City Unified includes African American students as a targeted subgroup and is collaborating with stakeholders representing the local African American community to develop these priorities and services. Antioch Unified and Oakland Unified are two other districts that are using LCFF funds to support initiatives focused on African American male achievement. Because San Bernardino City Unified, Antioch Unified, and Oakland Unified are outliers, some advocates for African American youth have expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of focus on African American students in both the funding formula and in local plans.

# LCFF AND THE FOSTER YOUTH ACHIEVEMENT GAP

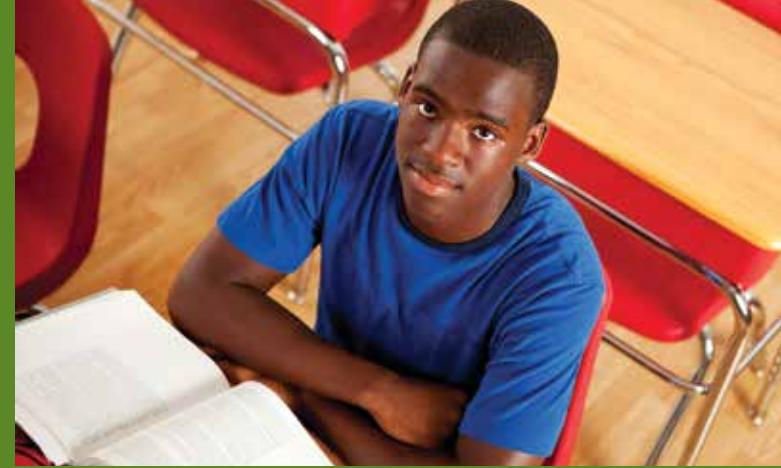
***FosterEd has been supporting and studying the implementation of LCFF for foster youth. Here, they share what they have learned in this first year.***

Foster youth are children who have been removed, through no fault of their own, by the state from their home due to abuse or neglect. The state is responsible for their safety, health, and well-being, which includes their educational success. Unfortunately, students in foster care have extremely poor educational outcomes, even when compared with their low-income peers. LCFF proposes to address this.

During the first year of LCFF implementation, we have collaborated with the State Board of Education, California Department of Education, California School Boards Association, various county offices of education, and school districts to provide expertise on the education needs of children in care. We have also offered recommendations for how LCFF can be implemented to close the foster youth achievement gap. We actively participate in the California Foster Youth Education Task Force, a statewide coalition of practitioners, advocates, and youth, developing resources on the education needs, services, and rights of students in foster care.

To understand how districts plan to improve the educational outcomes of foster youth, we analyzed the LCAPs of the 10 California school districts that enroll the most foster youth; these districts account for a quarter of the state's foster youth. We found high variability in these plans. The vast majority of district LCAPs do not include the unique interventions and infrastructure elements critical to help foster youth. However, a few districts — both large and small — have well-developed and promising plans for closing the foster youth achievement gap. LAUSD's plan is particularly noteworthy for the large district investment in foster youth. LAUSD has allocated \$9.9 million to hire 75 foster youth counselors and school social workers specifically responsible for identifying the student's educational strengths and needs in addition to monitoring educational progress.

We also surveyed our collaborative partners, including the Foster Youth Services programs in county offices of education. We learned that districts need considerable support, as many of them have little experience developing systemwide plans for foster youth.



We believe the following three things must occur:

1. Districts and counties must have access to the tools, resources, and assistance necessary to understand the unique educational challenges facing foster youth, implement the federal and state laws providing protections and rights to students in foster care, and develop research-based data-sharing policies, communications practices, and interventions for foster youth.
2. County office of education foster youth services programs need funding to serve all students in foster care, not just a subset of them, so that all students in foster care benefit from LCFF.
3. In their LCAPs, school districts and county offices of education should include the concrete steps they will take to collaborate with other education agencies, child welfare agencies, probation departments, and courts to ensure that services are coordinated and resources maximally leveraged for students in foster care.

A number of California school districts and counties are already effectively supporting the education needs of children in care. The work to fulfill the promise of LCFF will move one big step forward when all communities across the state have a meaningful plan, the infrastructure and designated staff to support each youth, and a clear, collaborative, interagency plan that will help foster youth reach their college and career goals.



*FosterEd, an initiative of the National Center for Youth Law, improves the educational outcomes of foster children by supporting a student-centered, data-informed, integrated systems approach.*

<http://foster-ed.org>

# LOOKING AHEAD TO YEAR TWO AND BEYOND

The first year of the Local Control Funding Formula was a learning year for all involved. District leaders, community members, and state education leaders all tangled with the tough details of what it takes to create a more participatory, fairer school system. In most communities, good progress was made toward these goals, and across the state, the groundwork has been laid for bigger gains in the years ahead.

Realizing the goals of engagement and equity will demand increased investments in school district and county office of education capacity as well as vigilant state and public oversight of district spending, district plans, and student outcomes. We offer the following recommendations.

## WHAT STATE POLICYMAKERS AND EDUCATION LEADERS CAN DO

### BUILD DISTRICT CAPACITY

Not all districts have the experience, capacity, or knowledge to meaningfully engage community stakeholders. Many could also use support as they develop new ways of planning and budgeting, and still others could benefit from resources related to effective services for high-need students, especially English learners and foster youth. For example, districts may benefit from descriptions and examples of programs for serving newcomer English learner students or approaches to pairing foster youth with case workers. To support this capacity building, county offices of education, the California Department of Education,

**Realizing the goals of engagement and equity will demand increased investments in school district and county office of education capacity as well as vigilant state and public oversight of district spending, district plans, and student outcomes.**

the California Collaborative for Education Excellence (newly formed by the Legislature to assist districts), and other state and regional entities should offer districts increased support, technical assistance, access to best practices, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities.

### CREATE MORE FUNDING TRANSPARENCY

The state should make it easier for the public to see how much supplemental and concentration funding each district is receiving and how those dollars are being spent. It can do this in a number of ways:

- The California Department of Education can require districts to use common accounting codes that track base grants separately from supplemental and concentration grants and incorporate these codes into required state budgetary reporting. This will allow the public to see how districts are spending their supplemental and concentration grants.
- The State Board of Education could revise LCAP templates to require districts to disaggregate LCFF expenditures by base versus supplemental and concentration grant sources, or it could create an electronic template that guides (but does not require) districts to do this.
- The California Department of Education could report how much supplemental funding each district is receiving, in addition to the total LCFF funding snapshot it already makes available.

### STRENGTHEN COUNTY OVERSIGHT

The state should ensure that when county offices of education review district LCAPs, they are consistent with one another and sufficiently rigorous. This did not always happen in the first year. Many counties worked closely with their districts to strengthen their LCAPs both before and after the July 1 deadline for approval by local governing boards.<sup>5</sup> However, some other counties provided little feedback and approved plans

<sup>5</sup> An August 2014 EdSource article ([http://edsource.org/2014/counties-approve-high-number-of-lcaps](http://edssource.org/2014/counties-approve-high-number-of-lcaps)) cites Orange, Sacramento, and Kern counties as examples of offices that provided more intensive review and feedback.



with noticeable errors. For example, when we looked at approved LCAPs in one Northern California county, we found that of the five districts and one charter school in this county, three failed to report their total amount of supplemental and concentration funding, even though the template and spending regulations require this information. One of the districts disclosed a combined supplemental and concentration grant figure one-fifth as large as the amount we estimated using data obtained from the California Department of Education.

The county office of education's role is particularly important when it comes to enforcement of LCFF's spending regulations because these rules play such a critical part in determining how funding is used to support high-need students. Further, the state and counties could consider local and informal processes — separate from the formal Uniform Complaint Process — by which community members can elevate concerns to their county offices of education if they cannot be resolved at the district level.

## HOLD DISTRICTS ACCOUNTABLE FOR RESULTS

Although we are operating in an era of local control, the state role is as important as ever. In the end, what really matters is whether high-need students are achieving better results — not just whether expenditure patterns change and whether the community feels more involved. The state must therefore hold all stakeholders responsible for improving student and school outcomes, while also putting in place the supports districts need. After they are developed by the State Board, the evaluation rubrics will be a key part of this accountability function. The rubrics must include clear statewide goals for performance, make these data easily accessible to the public, and prompt meaningful dialogue about areas of success and challenge.

## WHAT DISTRICT LEADERS CAN DO

### MAKE LCAPS EASY TO READ

Many districts could make LCAPs more accessible to the public. Strategies we saw in districts this year that proved helpful include:

- *Create an executive summary*
- *Create community-friendly materials that summarize the plan, including infographics, slide presentations, videos, and flyers*
- *Reduce the use of jargon and acronyms*

The Education Trust-West provides some examples of LCAP executive summaries and community-friendly tools on the website LCAP Watch (<http://lcapwatch.org>), which also includes LCAPs for hundreds of school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools.

### SHOW HOW SUPPLEMENTAL AND CONCENTRATION FUNDING IS BEING SPENT

Districts can increase budget transparency even if the state does not demand it. Many districts are already showing the public how and where supplemental and concentration grants are being used, but about half are not. Disaggregating base from supplemental and concentration expenditures could greatly increase the transparency of many LCAPs and could build collaboration and trust among parents and community leaders who want to see how funds generated by high-need students are being spent. Some district LCAPs also include appendices showing how much supplemental and concentration money is being directed to each school (for example, Alameda Unified) or by each programmatic line item (for example, Downey Unified). This clarity builds understanding and trust between community groups and districts.



## ENGAGE STAKEHOLDERS EARLY AND OFTEN

Planning should be ongoing and iterative, rather than confined to the spring budget development months. Districts that are embracing the idea of participatory planning are engaging stakeholders throughout the year and are building the capacity of PAC members to serve as leaders, community ambassadors, and true partners. They are also helping PAC members become familiar with school performance data and the district's programs and policies. Some districts are holding additional meetings with stakeholders to help implement different parts of the LCAP.

## INNOVATE

With newly flexible dollars and modest funding increases, districts have the opportunity to do things differently. The opportunity and achievement gaps among students that are still present in our schools suggest that we should both be replicating effective

practices and experimenting with new ways of serving high-need students. Districts should consider pilots, incentive programs, or innovation zones that allow schools to scale particularly promising practices or try new approaches. This may include using time, staffing, technology, and space differently than in the past. It may also mean allowing educators to experiment with new strategies for teaching the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards because these new standards require students to think critically, solve problems, and connect ideas across disciplines. This opens the door to strategies such as collaborative teaching models, blended learning, project-based learning, Linked Learning, interdisciplinary courses, and more.

## MONITOR FOR IMPACT

Districts should monitor the impact of their programs and be willing to modify or discard ideas that aren't working. This may mean designing program evaluations, collecting detailed data on student outcomes, assigning staff to monitor implementation, and sharing progress reports with the public. Some districts have already identified staff to do this evaluation work. For example, Berkeley Unified plans to have a half-time teacher on special assignment, a director of research and evaluation, and a director of special projects monitor the district's goals and programs supported by supplemental funding. Other districts may wish to partner with external evaluators or engage community partners who can help monitor the immediate and long-term success of programs.

## CONCLUSION

We have been heartened by the commitment and energy of all engaged in this work. Stakeholders of every stripe have been participating in this visionary effort to make our schools better and more just. Consider the governor's urgent call for justice, the state Legislature's serious debates on policy details, the State Board of Education's tireless efforts to gather and consider diverse perspectives, the thousands of parents who convened in school cafeterias and community centers, the student organizers who rallied their peers in awe-inspiring demonstrations of youth civic engagement,

and the district leaders and staff who, on top of their already full loads, took up the challenge of learning new laws and dramatically shifting their budgeting, planning, and outreach strategies in a few short months. Out of the efforts of all these stakeholders, the promise of new opportunities for California schoolchildren has emerged. As California enters its second year of this bold reform, we look forward to monitoring and supporting LCFF so that students and communities realize the benefits of a more flexible, equitable, participatory, and transparent school funding system.



## APPENDIX A: LCAP ANALYSIS DISTRICTS

DISTRICT	COUNTY	AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE	% LOW-INCOME, ENGLISH LEARNER, OR FOSTER YOUTH STUDENTS
Alisal Union	Monterey County	8,489	91%
Amador County Unified	Amador County	4,126	44%
Bakersfield City Elementary	Kern County	28,140	88%
Berkeley Unified	Alameda County	9,133	42%
Calexico Unified	Imperial County	8,850	91%
Chico Unified	Butte County	11,442	51%
Coachella Valley Unified	Riverside County	17,943	92%
Del Norte County Unified	Del Norte County	3,359	68%
Desert Sands Unified	Riverside County	25,603	70%
Dinuba Unified	Tulare County	6,241	84%
East Side Union High	Santa Clara County	22,771	55%
Eureka City Unified	Humboldt County	3,587	64%
Fairfield-Suisun Unified	Solano County	20,675	61%
Fresno Unified	Fresno County	66,126	87%
Glendale Unified	Los Angeles County	25,275	56%
Kern Union High	Kern County	34,412	64%
Konocti Unified	Lake County	2,801	88%
Live Oak Unified	Sutter County	1,710	80%
Los Angeles Unified	Los Angeles County	492,663	85%
Merced City Elementary	Merced County	9,953	82%
Mt. Diablo Unified	Contra Costa County	30,534	50%
Oakland Unified	Alameda County	35,145	78%
Pajaro Valley Unified	Santa Cruz County	17,538	80%
Ravenswood City Elementary	San Mateo County	3,390	98%
Redondo Beach Unified	Los Angeles County	8,848	24%
Sacramento City Unified	Sacramento County	40,502	75%
Salinas Union High	Monterey County	13,198	72%
San Bernardino City Unified	San Bernardino County	47,197	95%
San Diego Unified	San Diego County	106,066	62%
San Francisco Unified	San Francisco County	51,143	67%
San Jose Unified	Santa Clara County	30,789	50%
Sanger Unified	Fresno County	9,284	82%
Santa Ana Unified	Orange County	52,088	93%
Santa Rosa High	Sonoma County	10,461	46%
Stockton Unified	San Joaquin County	32,565	90%
Trinity Alps Unified	Trinity County	686	58%
Ukiah Unified	Mendocino County	5,407	75%
West Contra Costa Unified	Contra Costa County	28,148	75%
Woodland Joint Unified	Yolo County	9,455	72%
Yreka Union Elementary	Siskiyou County	976.47	64.8%

As California enters its second year of bold reform, we will be monitoring and supporting LCFF so that students and communities realize the benefits of a more flexible, equitable, participatory, and transparent school funding system.

## PHOTO CREDITS

**Families in Schools:** pg. 1 left, pg. 4, pg. 10 left and right, pg. 11

**Glauz Diego, Community Coalition:** pg. 1 top, pg. 5 bottom, pg. 8, pg. 22 left

**Weingart East Los Angeles YMCA:** pg. 1 bottom middle, pg. 1 bottom right, pg. 2 top, pg. 15, pg. 27

**Terri Brindisi:** pg. 2 bottom, pg. 7, pg. 12 left and right, pg. 13, pg. 25

**Berkeley Unified School District:** pg. 5 top left, pg. 14, pg. 26

**Healthy Richmond:** pg. 5 top right, pg. 21

**Educators 4 Excellence:** pg. 9 left and right, pg. 22 right



## OUR MISSION

The Education Trust-West works for the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, pre-k through college. We expose opportunity and achievement gaps that separate students of color and low-income students from other youth, and we identify and advocate for the strategies that will forever close those gaps.



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