

2017

Policy and Programs Annual Review



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Governance Brief

Meeting California's Challenge:

Access, Opportunity, and Achievement: Key Ingredients for Student Success

by Manuel Buenrostro

Introduction

An adequately funded education system is one that provides the resources to ensure that all students graduate from high school prepared for college and career success. To achieve this, all students need robust educational opportunities and the necessary supports to take advantage of them. Unfortunately, significant opportunity gaps exist—principally between more affluent students and their peers from lower income families. These opportunity gaps are reflected in achievement gaps: only 31 percent of economically disadvantaged 4th graders scored proficient or advanced in English language arts/literacy, compared to 67 percent of their non-economically disadvantaged peers in the 2015-16 school year.¹

A recently released CSBA report, [Meeting California's Challenge: Access, Opportunity, and Achievement: Key Ingredients for Student Success](#), describes an adequately-funded education system that ensures the educational opportunities that support student success. This brief provides a summary of the research-supported ingredients highlighted in the report and suggests key questions that board members can ask as they consider how to invest local resources in support of students.

It is our intention that this report, along with an earlier CSBA publication, [California's Challenge: Adequately Funding Education in the 21st Century](#), make the case for the need to provide additional funding for California's education system. In addition, we hope that the information in the report provides evidence that helps county offices of education, districts, and schools make investments that are equity-focused and research-supported.

This brief will answer the following questions:

- » What are some research-proven strategies that could be provided for every student with adequate funding?
- » What are some of the opportunity gaps impacting economically disadvantaged students and students of color?
- » What are the questions that board members can ask to ensure that equitable investments are being made in their schools?

The Eight Ingredients and Equity

Multiple studies have shown that increases in school funding can result in improvements in student outcomes, particularly for low-income students.² In addition, how districts invest their resources is crucial. Districts should invest equitably—providing opportunities for students according to their needs—and effectively—dedicating resources to strategies for which there is evidence of a positive impact on students. To that end, the eight ingredients of an adequately funded education system described here and in the full report represent research-supported strategies to ensure that all students graduate college and career ready. They include:

1. A Rigorous, Well-Rounded, and Relevant Curriculum
2. Academic Support to Improve Achievement
3. Staff with the Skills, Competencies, and Knowledge to Promote Student Success

4. Early Support and Services
5. Education and Assistance for Families to Support and Guide Learning
6. Physical, Mental, and Environmental Health Supports
7. 21st-Century Infrastructure and Technology
8. Services for Students with Specific Needs

In order to close opportunity and achievement gaps, equity should be a key consideration in board decisions about how best to use local resources. An equity focus means holding all students to the same high expectations while providing the additional resources that some students might need in order to meet those expectations. Considering local and community factors is an important aspect of this equity lens. It will fall to the education system to provide opportunities to some students that others already have in their homes, communities, and schools.

1. A Rigorous, Well-Rounded, and Relevant Curriculum

All students need access to a rigorous, well-rounded, and relevant curriculum to graduate from high school, college and career ready. At a minimum, rigorous courses must meet A-G requirements in high school, while elementary and middle schools must prepare students for success in those courses. All students should have equal access to the Advanced Placement (AP), advanced math and science, and other rigorous courses that multiple studies have shown to provide academic and career benefits for students.³ Recent research indicates that STEM coursework can be particularly helpful for promoting both science and language learning for English learners.⁴

A focus on relevance is important, as many students drop out because they are unmotivated and uninterested in their coursework.⁵ Work-based learning opportunities can provide this relevance and have been associated with academic and career success past high school.⁶ A well-rounded education that is not focused solely on Math and English language arts benefits students as well. Multiple studies have shown improved outcomes for students who take a more expanded curriculum that includes arts and physical education.⁷

The Gaps in Opportunity

Students of color and economically disadvantaged students are less likely to attend schools that offer rigorous courses. Even when such courses are offered, these students are under-represented in advanced STEM and AP courses.⁸ They are also more likely to graduate from high school without meeting A-G requirements.⁹ This under-representation is due to multiple factors including few counselors who can advise students on courses and prerequisites, family experience that may not include knowledge of the courses necessary for college preparation, and lack of the necessary preparation in earlier grades for more advanced courses in high school.

2. Academic Support to Enable Achievement

It is not enough to offer students the opportunity to take rigorous and relevant coursework. Students also need a range of supports (e.g., counseling, expanded learning time, tutoring, mentoring, and personalized learning strategies, among others) to succeed in their coursework.

A variety of supports have been shown to have a positive impact on students' academic outcomes. These include, advisory programs, which provide students with academic and social support through a knowledgeable adult,¹⁰ personalized learning practices,¹¹ peer tutoring,¹² and expanded learning time through summer and after school (which can be particularly helpful for English learners).¹³ Enrichment activities such as field trips and other experiences also promote student success.

The Gaps in Opportunity

Compared to all other states, California has the highest number of students per teacher, the second highest number of students per counselor, and the third highest number of students to total staff.¹⁴ This means that access to an adult at school who can provide guidance and support for education decisions is lacking for many California students, a fact which disproportionately impacts students whose parents do not have experience that prepares them to provide this information and guidance. A gap also exists with regard to the other supports—such as enrichment activities—which are more available to wealthier students than their less economically advantaged peers.¹⁵

3. Staff with the Skills, Competencies, and Knowledge to Promote Student Success

Access to staff with the necessary qualifications and preparation to promote student learning is fundamental. Teachers are the most important in-school contributors to student achievement.¹⁶ The impact of quality teachers goes beyond academic achievement, with students of effective teachers more likely to attend college, attend higher-ranked colleges, earn higher salaries, and have lower rates of teen pregnancy.¹⁷

An expanded and more diverse teacher pool that mirrors the backgrounds of California's students is also important. Staff members who understand their students' backgrounds and view students' language, culture, and experience as an asset, are important contributors to a positive school environment and improved academic and non-academic outcomes.¹⁸ A successful strategy for closing opportunity and achievement gaps is to implement policies that place the best-prepared and experienced teachers with the highest-need students.

An effective education system also helps teachers build their capacity through professional development systems that provide them with time to collaborate, learn from each other, build instructional and cultural competencies, form connections with outside groups to bring relevance to their lessons, and receive mentorship and ongoing feedback to support improvement. Principals and other administrators also need preparation focused on building instructional leadership, creating a positive school climate, fostering student achievement, and supporting teachers and staff.

The Gaps in Opportunity

The students with the highest need are most often in classrooms with the least experienced and prepared teachers. Economically disadvantaged and students of color are more likely to attend schools with more teacher turnover, greater numbers of underprepared and underqualified teachers, and staff absenteeism.¹⁹

4. Early Support and Services

Providing support as early as possible, even before kindergarten can make a big difference in improving student achievement. The period before children enroll in kindergarten is one of dramatic brain growth and development. Therefore, appropriate and nurturing stimulation is essential to building the neural pathways, social skills, and self-confidence that will lead to future academic success.

Investing in early childhood education is one of the most cost-effective uses of resources, adding up to \$8 in savings for every \$1 invested.²⁰ These investments can address knowledge gaps early and prevent students from getting progressively further behind as they move through the grade levels.²¹ Children who attend high-quality preschool, pre-kindergarten, or transitional kindergarten programs develop greater language, literacy, mathematical, and social skills.²² These programs can also contribute to improved life outcomes, including a lower likelihood of becoming pregnant as a teen²³ or committing a crime²⁴ and a greater likelihood of graduating from high school,²⁵ reaching higher levels of educational attainment, and earning greater incomes.²⁶

The Gaps in Opportunity

By age three, children from high-income families have double the vocabulary of same-age children from low-income families.²⁷ Moreover, only two in five California students have access to quality early education programs,²⁸ with low-income families less likely to attend preschools that meet the state criteria for high quality.²⁹

5. Education and Assistance for Families to Support and Guide Learning

Parents are students' first and most important teachers. Therefore, the education system can improve student outcomes by helping parents and guardians to support their children's education at home, guide them through grade level and other transitions, and navigate important decisions (such as the college admissions process and career choices). Given California's diversity, family engagement can be more successful when staff understand the backgrounds of their students' families, including culture, socio-economic status, language status, and other factors. It is also important that parents and guardians have the chance to provide meaningful input into school decisions and to participate in learning opportunities, such as civics, leadership, English language, and GED courses.

Initiatives that support parent and guardian engagement have been shown to improve student outcomes.³⁰ These efforts are crucial because multiple studies indicate that students with parents who are engaged in their lives and in school are less likely to drop out of school³¹ and have higher academic outcomes.³²

The Gaps in Opportunity

All parents and guardians care about their children's education. Nonetheless, parents with extensive education understand the system better, know what needs to be done in preparation for college, and more often have professional jobs that allow them the time to visit and participate in school activities as well as the financial resources to invest in trips, learning experiences, and supports such as tutoring. All of this contributes to a positive association between student achievement and parents' level of education.³³ Gaps are also associated with income status (which is itself strongly associated with education level), neighborhood characteristics, and a whole range of opportunities that come with greater education and income.

6. Physical, Mental, and Environmental Health Supports

If children are hungry, traumatized, or in pain, they will not be able to learn, and are more often absent from school. Furthermore, if they cannot regulate their emotions, manage challenges productively, or cooperate with their peers and teachers, they will have difficulty benefitting from instruction. A safe and healthy school environment is also essential for learning. Within that environment, students need opportunities for physical activity and encouragement of healthy lifestyle habits.

Daily physical activity has been shown to improve students' classroom behavior and ability to focus on schoolwork.³⁴ Multiple studies have also shown a negative impact on academic achievement of trauma and bullying³⁵ as well as an unfortunate prevalence of bullying and stress in schools,³⁶ particularly for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students.³⁷ A number of studies have also highlighted that building students' social-emotional (SEL) skills has a positive effect on academic achievement.³⁸ One such study found a significant association between SEL skill development in kindergarten and positive outcomes years later in education, employment, criminal activity, substance use, and mental health.³⁹

The Gaps in Opportunity

Nearly one in three 10-17 year olds in California is overweight or obese,⁴⁰ contributing to greater absenteeism among other problems.⁴¹ Moreover, nearly two thirds of California students do not meet health and fitness standards in fifth, seventh, and ninth grades.⁴² Physical and mental health challenges are particularly prevalent among economically disadvantaged students, who are more often students of color. Children in poverty are more likely to suffer from asthma, heart conditions, hearing problems, digestive disorders, and elevated levels of lead in the blood.⁴³ These children are also more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, and stress, while at the same time having lower levels of health insurance coverage and more limited access to quality health services to address these issues.⁴⁴

7. Schools with 21st Century Infrastructure and Technology

All students should have access to schools with a 21st century infrastructure, including classrooms, lab spaces, fields, gardens, and food preparation facilities. These facilities are essential to students' learning as well as to their health and safety. State of the art technology platforms are also critical to 21st century schools—students and families should have access to the internet in and around school. A technology platform should also include a robust data infrastructure with quality hardware, software, and trained staff to support the analysis and storage of data, and deployment of high-quality assessments and pedagogy for appropriate use of technology. Finally, when schools are not close enough for easy access, transportation options should be provided.

According to a survey by the United States Department of Education, over half of America's public school facilities need to be repaired, renovated, or modernized.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the implementation of the California State Standards, including the implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and continued expansion of Career and Technical Education Programs, Career Academies, Career Pathways, Linked Learning, and other innovative approaches, will require quality lab spaces and equipment, beyond the basics covered in the report.

The Gaps in Opportunity

A higher percentage of public schools in poor areas are in need of repair than those in wealthier places.⁴⁶ There is also more limited access to the internet⁴⁷ and teachers report more obstacles to using technology in low-income areas.⁴⁸ Another important infrastructure issue that impacts the health of students in and outside of school is access to a healthy water supply. While adequate water consumption has been associated with a number of health benefits and stronger student achievement,⁴⁹ aging lead water pipes are more common in the lowest-income neighborhoods or cities.⁵⁰

8. Services for Students with Specific Needs

While every ingredient in this report is a critical component of serving all student groups, educators need to differentiate instruction and services in order to meet the specific needs of all students. Student groups—such as English learners, students identified for special education services, foster youth, homeless students, and others—need targeted support if we are to truly close opportunity gaps. For example, in the case of English learners and students identified for special education services, the district and school procedures for identification should result in proper placement of students in learning environments that can best meet their needs. Support systems should also meet the needs of foster youth, students experiencing homelessness, and others. Recruiting, training, and supporting staff who can identify students' needs and understand the most appropriate assessment and instructional strategies for specific student groups is highly important.

Despite the gaps and challenges, there is sufficient evidence that students with specific needs can achieve on par with their peers when the services they need are in place. For example:

- » English learners in programs that leverage their home language, provide rigorous courses, and integrate them into the school culture, show greater academic achievement than their peers in other programs.⁵¹
- » Special education students with early supports and interventions improve their school outcomes and such supports can reduce the number of students identified with learning disabilities.⁵²
- » Foster youth who are provided with social supports that improve their confidence and allow them to participate in community activities, have greater social and academic success.⁵³

Conclusion

A public education system that provides free, quality, and appropriate schooling to all students is essential to a strong democratic society. This system should have the necessary resources to ensure that all students can succeed and that these resources are distributed equitably in order to provide meaningful opportunity for all students.

The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) made important changes in support of education including an explicit focus on equity and greater flexibility for decision-making at the local level. However, LCFF by itself does not provide more funding for California schools. In addition, districts are facing mounting fixed costs, such as school district pension obligations. This gap in funding emphasizes the urgent need to invest in our most precious resource—the young people who represent our future. Until that fundamental deficit is addressed, many students and their families will not have access to the opportunities described in this brief, and closing achievement and opportunity gaps will be an uphill battle.

CSBA will continue to advocate for adequate funding that supports these opportunities. CSBA will also continue to provide information that supports making the best use of the resources available. Board members should consider the eight key ingredients as areas of potential investment. For a more detailed description of each ingredient, research, and examples of programs across the state, reference the full report, [Meeting California's Challenge: Access, Opportunity, and Achievement: Key Ingredients for Student Success](#).

Questions for Board Members

Board members can ask the following questions when considering investments that help to close opportunity and achievement gaps:

1. Do we have a common definition of student success in the district or county office of education? If we do, how many of our students are successful?
2. What are the highest areas of need? How do we know that these are the areas of need?
3. Which resources are available in the community that are providing opportunities for students? Are there gaps in the availability of opportunities to some students?
4. Which district or county office of education programs have been producing the greatest academic and non-academic outcomes for students? How can these existing programs be expanded or supported further?
5. Are we making investments equitably? Are we using resources in a way that closes opportunity gaps?

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FactSheet

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California's Education Funding

by Manuel Buenrostro

Introduction

Despite a growing economy, California trails behind nearly every other state in terms of the resources it devotes to education. This fact sheet explores California's current investment in education, the educational needs of its students, and how the support these students receive falls short when compared to the rest of the nation. These realities make the case for increasing investments in education to ensure a brighter future for our students and our state.

Board members might consider the following questions as they read this fact sheet:

- » How is inadequate funding affecting the students and schools in my community?
- » How much would it cost to fully implement programs across all schools that would prepare every student for college and career success?

Money Matters

Growing evidence points to a positive relationship between education funding and improved student outcomes, particularly for students from low-income households. Multiple studies have shown that economically disadvantaged students who attend well-resourced schools demonstrate greater academic achievement than similar students in schools with fewer resources.^{1,2,3} Yet California has not responded to this evidence with an adequate investment in education to meet the needs of its students. This lack of adequate funding means that district and county office of education leaders will continue to make difficult decisions about where to allocate resources.

Current Approach to Distributing Education Resources: Local Control Funding Formula

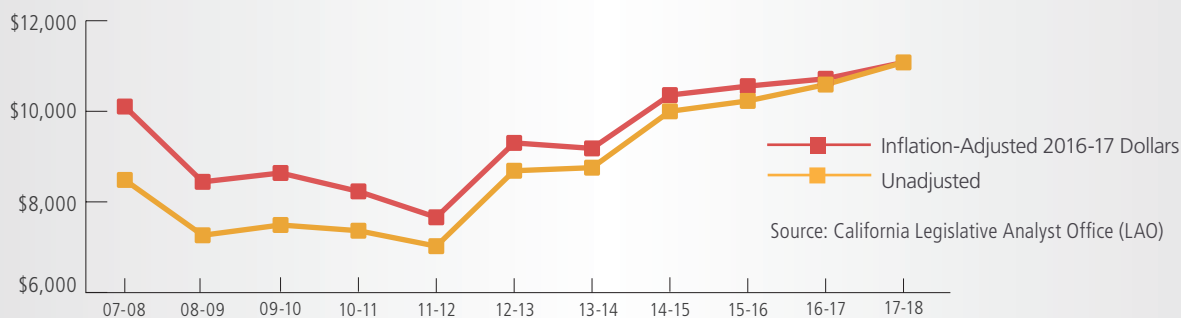
With the advent of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) in 2013, California took a new approach to funding education—one that redistributed education dollars, rather than providing new resources. LCFF aggregates general education funding along with resources that were previously allocated through categorical programs and distributes these to districts through a base grant for all students along with supplemental grants to support students with higher needs—those from low-income families, English learners, and foster youth. An additional increment is provided to districts in which more than 55% of students are among those with higher needs. County offices of education receive funding through LCFF for two purposes. One is through an operations grant to support their oversight role in approving district Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs). The other is through alternative education grants that support county office of education instructional services. Two major pillars of LCFF are equity (thus, the increments for higher-need students) and flexibility, based on the tenet that local districts can best determine how to allocate education resources for the students in their communities.

Challenges in Funding Outlook

While LCFF on its own did not add to the state's education funds, the increases in tax revenue from the growing economy meant more resources for education through Proposition 98 requirements. In 2012, voters also approved increases in sales and income taxes through Proposition 30, which brought additional resources for education and in 2016, the passage of Proposition 55 extended these income tax increases. Nonetheless, when adjusting for inflation, California's per-student funding remained below pre-recession (2007–08) levels until the 2014–15 school year.⁴

Figure 1. K-12 Proposition 98 Funding Per Pupil^a

^a Reflects actual rates through 2015-16 and Governor's proposed rates thereafter.



While increases in funding have allowed districts and county offices of education to rebuild programs and expand some services, many fiscal challenges remain. These include an increasing local burden to cover obligations for pensions, healthcare, and other mandated services, such as those for students identified for special education services. For example, while federal and state sources covered 68% of special education service costs in 2004–05, their combined share had dropped to just 40% by the 2014–15 school year.⁵ Additionally, the state plan to significantly increase district contributions to both STRS and PERS (the retirement systems for teachers and nonteaching staff, respectively) means an annual cost to schools of \$4 billion when fully implemented by 2020–21.⁶ More recent CSBA projections show PERS and STRS costing school employers \$9.7 billion by 2023–24, up from \$3.08 billion in 2013–14. For more information on these cost pressures, see [California's Challenge: Adequately Funding Education in the 21st Century](#).

California Has Many Students with Higher Needs

Compared to the national average, California has a larger proportion of students in need of additional resources to support their achievement. According to 2014–15 data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), California has a higher proportion of students who are:

- » **Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Eligible.** In 2014–15, 58.7% of California students were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL), well above the national average of 51.8% and higher than 42 other states.⁷ Moreover, this percentage continues to increase: according to the California Department of Education (CDE), 58.1% of students were FRL-eligible for the 2016–17 school year, compared to 51% in 2006–07.⁸

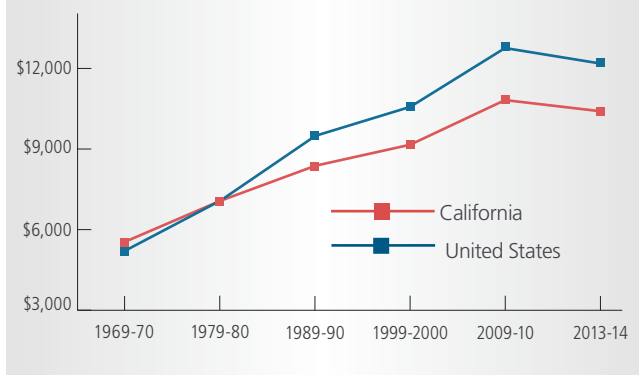
- » **English Learners.** In 2014–15, 22.4% of California students were English learners. This represents approximately one third of all English learners in the U.S., is more than double the national average of 9.4%, and is significantly higher than Nevada's 17%—the state with the second highest percentage of English learners.⁹
- » **Homeless.** California enrolls a higher proportion of homeless students (3.7%) than the national average (2.5%) and 44 other states.¹⁰

California has a slightly lower percentage of students identified for special education services than the national average—11.3% compared to 13% in 2014–15.¹¹ However, as in much of the nation, the number and percentage of students with special education needs is growing in California. According to the CDE, special education enrollment increased from 10.8% in 2006–07 to 12.1% in 2016–17.¹² Moreover, as previously noted, the federal and state funds earmarked for special education have not kept pace with the cost of meeting the needs of these students.¹³

California Lags Behind the Nation in Per-Student Investment

Despite overwhelming evidence that better-resourced schools can contribute to positive student outcomes, California invests far less than the national average in its students. During the 2013–14 school year, California public schools spent \$10,236 per student—\$1,762 below the \$11,998 national average. Comparing California to the 10 states that make the greatest per-pupil investment, California falls behind by approximately \$5,000 or more per student.¹⁴

Figure 2. United States and California Spending Per Student, Constant 2015-16 Dollars



According to Education Week’s 2017 Quality Counts Report on state education spending, California was ranked as one of the lowest in both per-student spending and effort (i.e., the share of a state’s total taxable resources devoted to education):¹⁵

- » **Per-Student Spending.** California ranked 45th among all states in spending per student, when adjusting for regional cost differences. It would take an additional \$22 billion to bring California’s per-student spending up to the national average.
- » **Effort.** California tied for 45th for the percentage of the state’s total taxable resources spent on education. In 2014, California invested 2.7% of these resources in education, compared to 3.3% nationally. An effort level of 3.3% would provide an additional \$12 billion to California schools.

Lack of Adequate Education Investment: Consequences for California’s Students

This shortage of financial support has a significant impact on what is arguably the most important education resource: the adults in schools and classrooms who are available to work with students and ensure that they have the best education possible. Despite research strongly indicating the importance of caring adults in schools to improving student outcomes, California students have more limited access to such professionals. According to data from NCES, in 2014, California had among the highest:¹⁶

- » **Student-to-Teacher Ratios.** California had the highest student–teacher ratio among all states: 23.6 students per teacher, compared to 16.1 nationally.
- » **Student-to-Counselor Ratios.** California had 760.3 students per guidance counselor, compared to 482.4 nationally. Students in all other states except Arizona had better access to a guidance counselor.

- » **Student-to-Total Staff Ratios.** California had 11 students per total staff, compared to 8 nationally. Only two states, Nevada and Utah, had a higher student–staff ratio than California. In their measure of total staff, NCES included school and district administrators, administrative support staff, instructional coordinators, teachers, instructional aides, counselors, librarians, and other student support staff.

Conclusion

As elected community leaders, school board members can have a powerful voice in setting statewide priorities for the essential additional resources needed to close opportunity and achievement gaps for California’s students. CSBA will continue to make the case for adequacy in education funding and support board members in their efforts to invest current resources equitably and effectively—providing resources according to need and implementing strategies that are more likely to produce positive student outcomes.

CSBA Resources

- » Behind the Numbers: The Cold, Hard Facts of California Public Funding
- » California Education: Funding Issues Survey
- » Meeting California’s Challenge: Access, Opportunity, and Achievement: Key Ingredients for Student Success
- » California’s Challenge: Adequately Funding Education in the 21st Century

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Governance Brief

Students with Disabilities: Their Education and the Law

by Mary Cichy Grady, Maureen O'Leary Burness, and Geri F. West

Introduction

More than 754,000 students with disabilities (from birth through age 21) received special education services in California during the 2016–17 school year.¹ These individuals have significant potential, and schools are providing a vital service to their communities and their country by ensuring that students receive a rigorous education and develop socially, emotionally, and intellectually to their fullest capacity.

School board members are responsible for ensuring that their districts and county offices of education (collectively known as local educational agencies or LEAs) provide appropriate educational opportunities for students with disabilities. This brief—excerpted from a comprehensive CSBA report (forthcoming)—is intended to give board members an overview of the history and requirements of special education to help guide their governance decisions related to special education issues.

This brief begins with a short history of special education in the United States. It then explains the laws that govern the provision of special education and related services for children and youth with disabilities, and the mandates and requirements included in those laws—in particular, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Given the complexity of the legal issues, the information included in this brief is not exhaustive and does not constitute legal advice. Board members should consult with legal counsel for specific guidance. The full report will include reference to laws guiding special education in addition to IDEA, which is the principal legal focus of this brief.

What You'll Find in this Brief:

- » The evolution of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- » The overall legal requirements that IDEA places on local educational agencies
- » Details and definitions under Parts B, C, and D of IDEA
- » What these requirements mean in the school context

Background

Early in United States history, there were no federal mandates or guidelines for how to educate children with disabilities. But there were always parents, teachers, and other professionals (such as physicians) who recognized that these children were capable of learning.

In the second half of the 1900s, parents of children with disabilities organized locally and advocated nationally for consistent and equal treatment for their children. At the same time, a growing interest in the rights of women and in racial equality provided a context, language, and momentum for these parents—and their advocacy efforts on behalf of children with disabilities were absorbed into the civil rights movement.²

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Two landmark district court rulings in 1972 guaranteed the rights of children with disabilities to an education: *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* and *Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia*. These cases secured important legal precedence for protecting the educational rights of children with disabilities.

Three years later, in 1975, President Gerald Ford signed into law the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, also known as Public Law 94-142. The law's original intent was (a) to ensure the rights of students with disabilities to a public education and (b) to provide resources to help states deliver on this right. The law's authors understood that it would cost more to educate children who are blind, for example, because they would need such accommodations as books in Braille, special instruction in learning to read Braille, and mobility support.

What the law fundamentally intended still stands: public schools must provide children with disabilities with the proper supports, services, and accommodations to ensure these students have the same access to education as their non-disabled peers.

Schools are also required to provide this education in the least restrictive environment (LRE), which means that a student who has a disability should have the opportunity to be educated with peers without disabilities to the greatest extent appropriate.

The Evolution of IDEA: From Access to Meaningful Benefit

PL 94-142 was amended in 1986 (PL 99-457), expanding the rights of children with disabilities by requiring states to provide programs and services to children from birth to age 3. It was again amended as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1997, and then once more as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.³

These two reauthorizations changed the focus of the law from a basic assurance of “access” to a more challenging insistence on “meaningful benefit” for students with disabilities, partly in response to persistently poor post-school outcomes. Teachers and school administrators now needed to “look to the general education curriculum as the standard for all; focus on improved outcomes for students with disabilities and not just on process; [and] support students with disabilities to obtain results in elementary and secondary school as well as access to postsecondary education and employment.”⁴

Four Principal Parts of the Law

The 1997 reauthorization and the 2004 expansion of IDEA maintained the law's original intent: that students with disabilities were guaranteed an individually designed educational program that would allow them to learn in the least restrictive environment possible. The fundamental principles and parts of that law still stand:

Part A establishes the purpose of IDEA: “to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free and appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living” (20 U.S.C 1400 § [d][1][A]). Part A also includes definitions of important terms.

Part B mandates certain activities in exchange for federal IDEA money. Any entity responsible for educating children and youth (e.g., school districts, county offices of education, direct-funded charter schools, and Special Education Local Plan Areas [SELPA]) must educate students with disabilities from ages 3 through 21 (or until they graduate from high school with a regular diploma, if that happens first). Part B also spells out the guidelines for that education (see details below).

Part C establishes guidelines for providing services to children from birth to 3 years of age and their families. These services—known as Early Start in California—include an evaluation for the presence of a disability and support for the child and the child's family through a variety of developmentally appropriate early intervention services in response to the disability or to a developmental delay. Parents are granted legal due process for these rights. Part C also charts steps to support children and families in transitioning into Part B services when the children who are receiving services turn 3 years old.

Part D describes grants, programs, and activities to improve educational outcomes for students with disabilities and their families. These include parent centers that offer training and resources that make it possible for parents and family members to better support the educational needs of their children in collaboration with educators. Other activities involve professional development grants and projects to support the ongoing education of administrators, teachers, and other school staff. Additional programs under Part D are designed to support students with disabilities to successfully transition to adult life and independent living.

The Major IDEA Requirements: Part B

Six major requirements in Part B of IDEA shape the “what” and “how” of special education in public schools:

1. Free, Appropriate Public Education

The requirement of a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) means that a child or youth with a disability will receive an education designed to meet his or her individual needs to the same extent that the educational needs of a student without a disability are met, through whatever special services, accommodations, or modifications the child needs to access that education. These supports are written into a plan that is executed through the child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP). They can include such things as adaptive hearing equipment, speech and language services, or carefully scaffolded learning plans⁵ if a child has a learning disability. FAPE may also include free transportation to and from school, which could require an LEA to provide a specially equipped bus that can load a wheelchair, for example (a more detailed discussion of special education finance will be addressed within CSBA’s forthcoming full report).

2. Assessment

A school must assess a child for the presence of a disability at the request of a parent who has a reasonable suspicion that a disability is keeping the child from making appropriate progress in school. Schools also have the responsibility to help parents make that request. A school also must assess a child if a teacher or school staff member has reason to believe that a child has an undiagnosed disability and the child’s parents give their permission. Only after this initial evaluation, which determines eligibility for special education, and only with parental consent, can any special education and related service be provided to the child.

This initial assessment also gathers information about the child’s strengths and any specific educational needs the child may have. When an assessment confirms a disability, this information is then used to design an IEP and guide the child’s placement (see next section).

As with all effective assessments, assessment for special education services is not a “one-and-done” event. Schools must assess and then reassess all students with a disability—those who enter school with a disability and those who are diagnosed after they have been in school—at least every 3 years. These assessments should answer two central questions: Have the child’s needs, abilities, or learning difficulties changed since the initial assessment? Are the educational supports and services appropriate for the child’s current needs?

3. Individualized Education Program (IEP)

An IEP starts with a formal plan that establishes reasonable learning goals for a child with a disability and specifies the services the school district will provide to help the child achieve these goals. Key people in a child’s school life make up the IEP team that creates this plan. These people include, at a minimum, the child’s parents; regular education teacher (if applicable); a special education teacher or service provider; an appropriately qualified representative of the LEA (school district or county); an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results; other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel as appropriate (at the discretion of the parent or the agency); and, whenever possible, the child with the disability.

After a formal plan is created, the team must meet annually and revise the IEP plan according to the progress the student is making toward the specified goals. Ideally, the student who is the subject of the plan will attend and participate in the IEP meeting. This participation helps to ensure that the IEP is student-centered,⁶ which is particularly important as the team begins planning for the student’s transition to adult living. Transition planning is a legal requirement, and formal transition plans must be in place by the time the student turns 16 years old.

4. Least Restrictive Environment

The requirement of educating a child in the “least restrictive environment” (LRE) means that students with disabilities should, to the maximum extent appropriate, be educated with children who are not disabled, and only removed from the general education environment when the nature or severity of the child’s disability is such that education in the general education classes with the use of additional services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. This allows students with disabilities, when appropriate, to be educated in the classroom or learning setting where they are most likely to thrive academically, emotionally, and socially. Determining LRE requires careful judgment, insight, and understanding on the part of the IEP team members. It is important for LEAs to make available a continuum of placements and services so that parents and educators can fully respond to the growth and progress of each student, and the IEP can serve as a living vehicle for delivering a truly individualized education.

5. Parental Involvement

The legislators who crafted IDEA understood that parents and family members know their children best and can give schools important information about their children’s strengths, weaknesses, and developmental background,

along with insight into family factors that may affect a child’s learning. As a result, the law mandates the meaningful involvement of parents and family members and their full participation in all decisions that affect their child’s education. The school must have the consent of students’ parents or guardians in order to assess their eligibility for special education services, as well as to provide these services.

6. Due Process

IDEA mandates that states safeguard—and schools follow—certain procedures when:

- » Assessing students with disabilities
- » Determining their eligibility for special education services
- » Ensuring appropriate educational placements, supports, and services for special education
- » Handling potential disputes

These legal protections are provided for parents, children and youth with disabilities, or anyone else who believes that a student’s special education rights have been violated; this is called their “due process”—essentially the processes that the law has put in place to address possible violations of a student’s rights to a public education and to special services and supports.

Due process includes complaint procedures, mediation, and other complaint-resolution strategies. IDEA established these mechanisms to help parents and school personnel find agreement when people—parents, teachers, school administrators, services providers, or other members of a student’s IEP team—disagree over the contents or implementation of the IEP.

Part C: Early Start and Child Find

Research has confirmed the value of early intervention to address the effects of disabilities. The Early Start intervention and Child Find mandates in Part C of IDEA reflect a commitment to this benefit.

The Child Find requirement involves maintaining “a system of notices, outreach efforts, staff training, and referral processes designed to ascertain when there are reasonable grounds to suspect disability and the potential need for special education services.”⁷ This obligation exists even if an LEA is not providing the special services for the child.⁸ The LEA is always responsible for ensuring that each child

California’s Story

Early in its history, California established schools and day classes for the deaf in 1867, for the blind in 1897, and speech and language programs in 1916. In some places, the state offered classes for children who needed “remedial” support (early efforts to address children with learning disabilities) and those with developmental disabilities (1921). In 1927, the state passed a law to reimburse participating schools for the costs of providing specialized education. These programs were considered “permissive” rather than required.

In the 1960s, parents, teachers, agencies, and interested citizens throughout the state were creating more schools and programs for children with disabilities. As the number of these efforts grew, the California Department of Education recognized the need to provide consistency and oversight to the expanding and disparate efforts. In 1947, the state established the Bureau of Special Education, now the Special Education Division.

California was among the earliest states to provide specialized supports for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with disabilities. The Handicapped Children’s Early Education Program was created in 1968, with a mandate to set up model demonstration projects for delivering special education to young children with disabilities from birth to third grade. California created a model statewide, research-based training program (Personnel Development for Infant-Preschool Programs), which guided several demonstration projects and influenced school districts across the state.

These early efforts set a standard of high quality and collaboration that continues to influence special education in California today.

with a disability within its jurisdiction is accurately identified and ultimately receives appropriate services and education.

Infants and toddlers change and develop rapidly. Thus, the evaluation, identification, and service-delivery mechanisms for very young children with a developmental delay or disability are different from those provided for older children. Early Start provides services that are primarily family focused, while Part B’s services are more child and

education focused and begin when the child turns 3 years old. Additionally, eligibility criteria are different for Part C and Part B. Before children who receive services turn 3 years old, they are reassessed to determine their continued eligibility for special education using the Part B criteria.

Because of these differences, IDEA encourages all people and organizations involved on either side of a child's transition from Part C to Part B services to carefully plan together so that the change in services is as seamless as possible. In California, the Department of Developmental Services (via regional center staff at the local level)⁹ and the California Department of Education (via public school staff) are responsible for ensuring the success of this transition, with the planning to begin no later than three months before a child's 3rd birthday.

The Requirements in Context

A child who enters school with a confirmed disability will most likely have been receiving services from Early Start (Part C) providers. Parents or guardians and educators will have developed a plan to transition the child from Early Start services to Part B (LEA) services at age 3. If the child has not been receiving Early Start services, parents will sign an assessment plan—and the process begins at step 3 (below).

Children and youth who are identified as having a disability enter the special education system through the following process:

1. When a child is struggling and not making educational progress, a teacher, parent, or legal guardian can request that the child be referred to the school's Child Study Team or Student Support Team¹⁰ to gather information and develop a plan of strategies for helping the child be more successful.
2. If the strategies do not result in the child's reasonable progress, the team may recommend a referral for an evaluation to determine if a disability is the cause. At any point, a parent can formally request this evaluation. IDEA gives the school district the unequivocal responsibility to recommend an evaluation if there is "a suspected disability."
3. When the parent consents to (or requests) this evaluation, the school staff develops an assessment plan, and an IEP meeting is scheduled. The timeline must adhere to legal guidelines outlined within the law.

4. If the evaluation confirms the presence of a disability *and* the child's need for specialized services or supports, an IEP plan is developed and the process of providing the child with special education begins. Once the IEP plan is developed and in parents' hands, parents have 30 days to respond—either approving it or requesting changes.
5. Once approved, the IEP plan is implemented and revisited at least yearly to evaluate the child's progress; adjust goals based on that progress and on any new or resolved needs; and ensure that supports, modifications, accommodations, and services (i.e., the special education) are appropriate, in place, and contributing to the child's learning and school progress.
6. Schools must report on the progress the child is making toward his or her goals at each of the reporting periods¹¹ in the general education calendar.

California Law and Federal Law

When federal laws are reauthorized, California's legislature commonly adjusts its statutes and regulations to align with any new or revised federal law and regulations. After the most recent reauthorization of IDEA, California introduced legislation to ensure that its Education Code aligned with the federal law, making such changes as removing the terms "functional analysis assessment" and "mental retardation" (replacing the latter with "intellectual disabilities") and updating the definition of "autism" and the regulations governing extended school year services.¹² California's legal requirements for educating students with disabilities are written into the state's statutes and Code of Regulations¹³ and support the requirements of IDEA.

Conclusion

The rights of children with disabilities to receive an education have evolved out of long-fought legal battles. Generations have struggled over what is the morally correct thing to do within the framework of a democracy. The purpose of the legislation that resulted from this struggle—IDEA—is to ensure not just access to instruction but educational *benefit* from that instruction.

Laws typically provide only the floor of rights and services. School board members can create a higher ceiling of opportunity so that these students enter adult life with experiences of success and a vision of themselves as capable, contributing citizens—agents of their lives and active in the world.

Guiding Questions for School Board Members

- » What does authentic parent involvement in an IEP look like? Do IEPs in our schools include the students with disabilities themselves? How well are the students with disabilities included in the meetings? Do any of our students with disabilities ever run their own IEP meetings?
- » What kinds of complaints related to special education does our district receive? What can we do to address them before they happen?
- » What are our plans for coordinating services and supports for toddlers with disabilities who are entering our preschool programs? Are they going from a least restrictive environment to one that is more restrictive? Do we have less restrictive options, such as providing speech therapy to a child in his or her classroom?
- » What are our responsibilities to students who have reading and other learning disabilities? Do we have a strong early reading curriculum that addresses the different ways individuals learn?
- » How do we include parents of children with disabilities in our LCAP development process?
- » How do we assess English learners with regard to special education and ensure the provision of language instruction in addition to other education programs and services? How well do we include a student's non-English speaking parents or guardians in the development, and understanding, of assessment plans and IEPs?

Additional Resources

- » **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.** <http://idea.ed.gov>
- » **Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education.** (2014). *IDEA Special Education. Due Process/ Complaints Hearing Requests.* <http://bit.ly/2glnwjx>
- » **Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF).** A national civil rights law and policy center directed by individuals with disabilities and families who have children with disabilities. <https://dredf.org>
- » **Overview of Special Education in California.** (2013). Legislative Analyst's Office. <http://bit.ly/1vuviAi>
- » **Parent Training and Information Centers in California** <http://bit.ly/2xwIXPM>
- » **Preparing for Transition from Early Intervention to an Individualized Education Program. PACER Center ACTION Information Sheets.** <http://www.pacer.org/parent/php/php-c158.pdf>
- » **Wright's Law.** A comprehensive website about special education law and advocacy that features thousands of articles, special education news, and free resources for educators and families. <http://www.wrightslaw.com>

Endnotes

- 1 Retrieved from California Department of Education Dataquest website in July, 2017 at <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/SpecEd/SpecEd1.asp?cChoice=SpecEd1&cYear=2016-17&cLevel=State&Topic=SpecEd&myTimeFrame=S&submit1=Submit&ReptCycle=December>
- 2 The *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* Supreme Court Case ruling in 1954 outlawed any categorical exclusion or separation of children in public schools.
- 3 For simplicity, this document will henceforth refer to all iterations of this law as IDEA.
- 4 Stodden, R. (2011). *Special education within the context of general education: Roles for all educators.* The Special Edge, 24(3), p. 1. California Department of Education.
- 5 For more about scaffolding, see "What is instructional scaffolding?" from the IRIS Center at <http://bit.ly/2w7vbOS>
- 6 For more about student-centered IEPs, see "Students Get Involved!" at <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/student-involvement/>
- 7 Martín, J. (n.d.). "Legal implications of response to intervention and special education identification." RTI Action Network. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1sRYuA1>
- 8 "Early intervention services are individually determined for each eligible infant or toddler and are provided, purchased, or arranged by a regional center or local education agency. Local education agencies are primarily responsible for services for infants with vision, hearing, and severe orthopedic impairments, including any combination of these solely low incidence disabilities. Regional centers are responsible for services for all other children eligible for Early Start. Family resource centers that receive Early Start funding provide parent-to-parent support, information, and referral for all families." From "Facts at a Glance: California Early Start," by the California Department of Developmental Services. Retrieved from http://www.dds.ca.gov/EarlyStart/docs/EarlyStart_InformationPacket.pdf
- 9 Regional centers are private, nonprofit corporations that provide or coordinate services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities through contracts the California Department of Developmental Services. Their offices are spread throughout the state so that they are available to help individuals and their family members find and access services. For more information, see <http://www.dds.ca.gov/RC/index.cfm>

- 10 Sacramento City Unified School District. (2015). Student study team best practices manual. (2015). Retrieved from http://www.scusd.edu/sites/main/files/file-attachments/sst_best_practices_manual.pdf
- 11 The language of IDEA reads: “concurrent with the issuance of report cards” [300.320(a)(3)].
- 12 See, for example, Assembly Committee on Judiciary, April 20, 2012, at <http://bit.ly/2xzjPYl>
- 13 The California Code of Regulations: Title 5, Division 1, Chapter 3, Individuals with Exceptional Needs, sections 3000–3100. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/1pw3X8Q>

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Governance Brief

English Learners in Focus

Expanding Bilingual Education in California after Proposition 58

by Manuel Buenrostro

Background

All public schools are required to provide English learners with instruction that promotes their fluency in the English language and provides access to the same subject matter content as their peers. An education that results in English language fluency and academic achievement in the full range of subjects that is on par with their fluent English peers, is particularly important in California, where nearly on quarter of K-12 public school students are English learners. California public schools serve 1.4 million English learners: one-third of the nation's total. For more information on California's English learners, see *English Learners in Focus, Issue 1: Updated Demographic and Achievement Profile of California's English Learners*.

How California schools can and should educate English learners has been a political football for many years. One result of this was the passage of Proposition 227 in 1998, which limited district options for the instruction of English learners. The passage of Proposition 58 on Nov. 8, 2016 by an overwhelming 73.5 percent of California voters, overturns Proposition 227 restrictions and places the decision of how to educate English learners back in the hands of county offices of education, school districts, schools, and communities.

Advantages of Dual Language Programs

Dual language or bilingual programs include all programs that use English and the home language of the English learner for instruction (see next page for a more detailed definition of types of dual language programs). Extensive research supports the advantages of dual language instruction. For example, a national study of bilingual education programs found that participating students outperformed their peers who were in English-only programs, in both English literacy and achievement in other academic subjects. In addition, participation in

This brief will answer the following questions:

- » What does the research say about dual language instruction?
- » What is the impact of Proposition 58?
- » How can boards leverage the new law to improve student achievement?
- » What additional resources are available from CSBA and other organizations?

dual language immersion programs — an instructional approach with the goal of bilingualism and biliteracy — was more strongly associated with achievement than was socioeconomic status, suggesting that these programs were able to overcome the negative academic effects associated with economic disadvantage.¹

Within California, two recent studies add to the already extensive research base. These two longitudinal analyses of English learners from a large, diverse, and urban school district found that students in dual language programs (transitional bilingual, developmental bilingual, and dual language immersion) have better long-term academic success than their peers in English immersion programs. The first analysis of about 5,500 Latino English learners from fall 2000 through spring 2012, found that while reclassification (meeting the criteria to be considered English language proficient) took longer for students enrolled in dual language programs, by the end of high school, these students had higher reclassification rates, greater English proficiency, and better academic success.² The second analysis of almost 14,000 English learners entering kindergarten between 2001-2002 and 2009-2010, found that students enrolled in dual language programs had equal or greater growth

through middle school in English language arts and math, than their peers in English-only immersion program.³

Impact of Proposition 58

Proposition 58 expands learning options for the state's English learners by removing current barriers to dual language programs. This change brings California law into greater alignment with a strong research base on the benefits of dual language programs for English learners and non-English learners alike. Moreover, in a globally connected world, the expansion of programs that allow all students to graduate from high school fluent in two or more languages is integral to the goal of preparing them for college, career, and civic life in the 21st century.

Proposition 58 takes effect on July 1, 2017, and includes the following key provisions (some quoted verbatim below):

Defines Dual Language Programs as "Language Acquisition Programs"

These programs must provide instruction on the California content and English Language Development (ELD) standards, be informed by research, and "lead to grade level proficiency and academic achievement in both English and another language." In addition, the new law defines the following three types of language acquisition programs, although others that meet the above requirements are allowed:

1. **Dual language immersion programs** "provide integrated language learning and academic instruction for native speakers of English and native speakers of another language, with the goals of high academic achievement, first and second language proficiency, and cross-cultural understanding." These programs are also known as two-way immersion programs. For more information see *English Learners in Focus, Issue 2: The Promise of Two-Way Immersion Programs*.
2. **Transitional or developmental programs** exclusively serve English learners and "provide instruction to pupils that utilizes English and a pupil's native language for literacy and academic instruction and enables an English learner to achieve English proficiency and academic mastery of subject matter content and higher order skills, including critical thinking, in order to meet state-adopted academic content areas." These programs are also known as transitional bilingual programs and can include developmental bilingual programs, which have the added goal of bilingualism and biliteracy.

Proposition 227 (1998)

This proposition mandated all English learners receive instruction in English-only programs, making it more difficult for schools to implement dual language programs. Exceptions could be made if adequate numbers of parents or guardians submitted waivers requesting a dual language program. However, before starting any dual language program, English learners had to spend at least 30 days in English-only immersion, and a new waiver had to be submitted every year. The net result of Proposition 227 was a steep decline in the numbers of English learners participating in dual language programs from approximately 30 percent in 1998 to only 5 percent by the 2010-11 school year.⁴

3. **Structured English immersion programs** provide "nearly all instruction...in English, but with the curriculum and a presentation designed for pupils who are learning English." While these programs will remain similar to those in place before Proposition 58, the use of the English learners' home language to check for understanding and provide clarification will now be allowed.

Empowers Parents or Guardians to Request Specific Language Acquisition Programs

When the parents or guardians of 30 or more students within a school or of 20 or more students within a grade request a specific language acquisition program, the school "shall be required to offer such a program to the extent possible." While the statute does not clarify what is meant by "to the extent possible," it is clear that the intent of the law is for schools to be responsive to the preferences of parents or guardians in their decision-making process. Additionally, the law mentions "all" parents or guardians, that is, the parents or guardians of English learners and non-English learners.

The law also removes the requirement that all parents or guardians sign an annual waiver for their children to participate in dual language programs, and that English learners begin their first year in school with 30 instructional days of structured English immersion.

Considerations for Board Members

The passage of Proposition 58 gives school districts and county offices of education an opportunity to implement new dual language programs or expand existing ones. As

evidenced by the research, when implemented effectively and with the support of the community, teachers, staff, and school district and county office of education leaders, these programs can produce better outcomes for English learners and expand opportunities for all students to become fluent and literate in two languages.

“With the overwhelming passage of Proposition 58, California voters have made it clear that they support opportunities for our students to learn more than one language. Multi-literacy is a valued skill in the increasingly global economy, and science makes clear the cognitive and health benefits of knowing more than one language. School boards across the state have a great opportunity to invest in quality dual language programs for all students through thoughtful planning and stakeholder engagement.”

Xilonin Cruz-Gonzalez, President of the California Latino School Boards Association, President of Californians Together, and Board Member at Azusa Unified School District

As with all programs, effective implementation is key to reaching their promised potential. Board members should focus on the following priorities to ensure that any expansion and implementation of new dual language programs is of the highest quality:

Engage Stakeholders

Under Proposition 58, school districts and county offices of education must “solicit input on...effective and appropriate instructional methods, including but not limited to, establishing language acquisition programs” as part of the parent and community engagement process for their Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) development. School districts and county offices of education should also consult with school personnel such as administrators and teachers to get additional feedback.

Engagement with stakeholders should also involve ongoing education and communication about county office of education and school district efforts to serve English learners. Board members can support the superintendent and staff in communicating the goals and purpose of programs. This includes communicating the benefits of dual language programs to the parents and guardians of both English learners and non-English learners.

Provide Adequate Planning Time and Resources

While staff will be responsible for the implementation and day-to-day operation of programs, board members can support them by providing ample time and resources to plan for and run these programs effectively. The California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) and Californians Together recommend at least one year of planning. This time can be used to collect more information on dual language programs, including visiting quality programs, engaging and communicating with stakeholders, and recruiting and training the necessary staff.

Request Data on Current Programs

Before any action is taken, board members should understand the types of language acquisition programs currently offered by their county office of education or school district and in each of their schools, the numbers of students served, and the academic success of students in each program. Academic indicators should focus on progress toward reclassification and reclassification rates as well as the achievement of English learners and reclassified fluent English proficient students (former English learners) in English language arts, math, and other subjects. This information will help to identify if there is a need to expand or implement new programs.

In addition, data on the resources required to expand or implement new programs will be critical. Resource information can include start-up and ongoing costs and the availability of credentialed bilingual teachers and other qualified staff required to support dual language programs. This information will help board members, along with county office of education and school district leaders, to determine the feasibility of any new expansion and a reasonable timeline for such an expansion.

Recruit and Develop Qualified Bilingual Teachers and Staff

Staff capacity is one of the most important factors in the expansion and implementation of any program that serves English learners. This includes the recruitment, training, and retention of teachers, school leaders, and support staff. According to a report by the Learning Policy Institute and CSBA, 83 percent of surveyed school districts with the highest concentration of English learners reported experiencing teacher shortages, compared to 64 percent of school districts with the lowest concentration.⁵

California will also need to specifically increase the pool of bilingual teachers. After the passage of Proposition 227, the number of bilingual teachers declined steadily, largely due to the decrease in demand. According to the Learn-

ing Policy Institute, California granted more than 1,800 bilingual authorizations in 1994-95, when bilingual education was at its peak. This number decreased dramatically by 2015-16, when fewer than 700 bilingual authorizations were granted.⁶ Adding to this challenge, only 31 of the 81 public and private institutions that offer single and multiple subject teacher preparation programs, also offer bilingual authorizations.⁷ With an upward trend in demand likely to continue due to the passage of Proposition 58 and the preferences of many parents or guardians and community members for these programs, finding ways to increase the numbers of highly trained bilingual teachers will need to be addressed both statewide and locally.

To address this challenge, county offices of education and school districts should consider efforts to recruit teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, reduce financial barriers to entry into the profession, provide teachers with quality professional development and collaboration time, and promote bilingualism for teachers and staff as a core competency that can lead to career advancement. Another consideration should be the predominant language spoken at home by students in each school, school district, or county office of education. For example, while 84 percent of English learners speak Spanish, there are 31 other languages spoken by at least 1,000 students in California, and these are often concentrated in certain areas.⁸

For more information on strategies and solutions for school districts and county offices of education to recruit and develop qualified bilingual teachers, see *English Learners in Focus, Issue 3: Ensuring High-Quality Staff for English Learners*.

Ask Questions

Board members are responsible for setting priorities and goals for their county offices of education or school districts. In determining how to best leverage the new law to improve instruction for English learners, we recommend that board members consider the following questions:

1. How many English learners are served in the school district or county office of education, and in what types of programs are they enrolled?
2. What are the results of the current language programs, including in:
 - » progress toward attainment of English language proficiency;
 - » reclassification rates;
 - » short- and long-term academic success for English learners; and

- » short- and long-term academic achievement for former English learners?
3. How many teachers with bilingual certification are employed by the school district or county office of education? Are staff levels sufficient for existing programs? How many teachers employed by the school district or county office of education are bilingual and would be interested in obtaining the appropriate credential?
 4. Are there effective programs that should be considered for expansion to serve more students? In expanding these programs, what are the personnel and financial requirements?
 5. Are there effective programs from other schools, school districts, or county offices of education that should be considered for implementation? If so, what arrangements can be made to visit these programs? What are the staff and financial requirements for implementation and ongoing operation of these programs?
 6. Are there any programs that parents, guardians, and community members are requesting to implement or expand in their schools?
 7. For any program expansion or implementation, what is the timeline? Is the timeline sufficient to build staff capacity and to engage parents and guardians?
 8. In the annual LCAP process, what is the engagement strategy for families of English learners? Does the school district or county office of education have clear goals to communicate with parents, guardians, and the community?

Conclusion

The freedom to expand existing or implement new dual language programs provides an opportunity that can benefit all public school students in California. The benefits of dual language programs to both English learners and non-English learners are well-supported by the research and extend beyond academic achievement: being bilingual and biliterate is a significant advantage in the 21st century workplace and life. As leaders in their communities, board members play an important role in determining the vision and effectiveness of instructional programs that can help ensure that these potential benefits are realized.

Resources

CSBA Resources

- » *English Learners in Focus, Issue 1: Updated Demographic and Achievement Profile of California's English Learners*
- » *English Learners in Focus, Issue 2: The Promise of Two-Way Immersion Programs*
- » *English Learners in Focus, Issue 3: Ensuring High-Quality Staff for English Learners*
- » Report by the Learning Policy Institute and CSBA. *California Teacher Shortages: A Persistent Problem*
- » Sample Policies and Administrative Regulations. GAMUT Online (Subscribers Only)
 - » AR 4112.22 – Staff Teaching English Language Learners
 - » BP/AR 6174 – Education for English Language Learners

External Resources

- » Fact sheet by the California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) and Californians Together. *Prop 58 Has Passed! Now What?*
- » Fact Sheet by the Learning Policy Institute. *Bilingual Teacher Shortages in California: A Problem Likely to Grow*
- » Report by Californians Together. *The California Campaign for Biliteracy*
- » *California Association for Bilingual Education (CABE) Resource Center*

Endnotes

- 1 Thomas, W., Collier, V. (2002). A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students' long-term academic achievement. Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2mmsckh>
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- 7 Analysis of data from: California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. Commission-approved educator preparation programs. Downloaded February 14, 2017 from <http://bit.ly/2mD8sF2>
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Governance Brief

English Learners in Focus

Ensuring High-Quality Staff for English Learners

by Julie Maxwell-Jolly, Manuel Buenrostro and Magaly Lavadenz

Introduction

This brief is part of CSBA's effort to shed light on the education needs of the diverse preK-12 students who attend California schools. It is the third in a series focused on English learners — students whose first language and the primary language they speak at home is not English. The series explores strategies for providing English learners with an equal opportunity to achieve their potential, and highlights schools, districts and programs that are successfully achieving that goal. The focus of this brief is on the importance of staff who are well-prepared to meet the needs of English learners, and on strategies for recruiting, supporting and retaining them, particularly in view of the current teacher shortage.

California's English Learner Population

Given that almost 25 percent of California's students are English learners, the state's strength and prosperity is closely tied to their success. California also has the largest share of the country's English learners: More than 30 percent of the 4.5 million English learners in the U.S. attend school here.¹

The nearly 1.4 million English learners in California are not a uniform group — they come to school with a wide range of backgrounds, experiences and needs. Nonetheless, the primary language of 84 percent of California's English learners is Spanish and the great majority (approximately 86 percent) are from low-income families.²

Highly Qualified Staff to Promote English Learners' Academic Success

The evidence is strong that well-prepared, experienced teachers are essential to student learning. While not all aspects of what makes a good teacher may be quantifiable, research does tell us that the quality of teachers' undergraduate and teacher preparation work has an impact on student learning. In addition, there is evidence that on average, students of teachers who have some years of classroom experience outperform students taught by beginning instructors.³

Advantage of Teachers with Cultural and Linguistic Background and Understanding of Students

Additional research provides evidence that a cultural and linguistic match between teachers and their students can contribute to greater student success. Studies have shown that African-American and Latino students have greater academic achievement in classrooms taught by teachers from similar backgrounds. This results from a number of factors, including how teachers from the same cultural background as their students serve as role models, make decisions about instruction that is culturally relevant, have a greater understanding of student behavior, are less likely to suspend or expel students, counteract negative expectations and reinforce higher expectations for their students.⁴

When it comes to teaching English learners, teachers who are from similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds as their students have another important advantage: They can more accurately diagnose whether or not students' challenges are primarily due to limitations in their English language proficiency or in their ability to grasp content concepts. This results in a lower likelihood of over or under diagnosing them for learning disabilities.

In addition, staff members who understand their students' backgrounds and view their language, culture and experience as an asset rather than a deficit, contribute to a positive school environment.⁵ Research has noted that students who feel connected to school, who have a sense of belonging, and who have supportive teachers, perform better on both academic and non-academic measures.⁶

An especially important advantage of teachers and other school staff who understand the culture and language of English learners is their ability to communicate with their families: A critical strategy for increasing parent/guardian engagement in their children's education. In California, 43 percent of students live in households where they primarily speak a language other than English at home.⁷ Therefore, recruiting and hiring teachers and staff who are bilingual and come from a similar cultural background to many of their students is a necessary aspect of an effective parent/guardian engagement strategy.

Need for English Learner Teachers Who Can Integrate Language and Content

Teachers skilled in integrating language and content for English language learners are especially critical as California implements new content standards that include a stronger focus on high-level language skills. This content and language integration is a central focus of the new English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework, adopted in 2014. The Framework links content and language in a way intended to prepare English learners, like their non-English learner peers, in the areas of critical thinking and problem solving along with collaboration and communication across the content areas. This work will require not only qualified teachers of English language development for English learners but also general education and subject-area teachers who have the skills to integrate English language development standards within core subjects. For example, while the Next Generation Science Standards provide an important opportunity to deliver instruction based on real-world applications — instruction that research has shown to particularly benefit English learners — proper implementation will require science teachers who understand how to ensure access to science instruction for English learners without diluting content.

The Current Statewide Teacher Shortage

With California experiencing a teacher shortage, there is a critical need for teachers — and particularly for teachers who are skilled at English language instruction. The current shortage is not due to an overall increase in students: The student population is relatively stable statewide — although this varies by region with some districts continuing to see increases while others are experiencing declining enrollment. Rather, the current shortage results from several factors. These include efforts to lower class size to pre-recession levels, large numbers of teachers retiring in recent years, a relatively high rate of attrition among new teachers and a diminished supply of new teachers. Enrollment in teacher preparation programs dropped sharply during the years of recession when many teachers were laid off and districts were not hiring new teachers. Meanwhile, those who remained experienced constant lay off warnings, salary freezes and diminished support due to budget cuts. All of these factors in turn resulted in unfavorable working conditions, which are likely to have contributed to attrition and decreasing interest in the teaching profession.⁸

The shortage is becoming drastic: Total enrollment in teacher preparation programs dropped by half from 2009-10 to 2013-14, from 36,577 to 18,984. If this trend continues, there will be far fewer teachers to fill the projected need for 21,483 new teachers during the 2015-16 school year.⁹

Unequal Impact on Highest Need Students of the 2000-01 Teacher Shortage

If the past is any indication, the current teacher shortage could have an unequal impact on students with the greatest need. During the significant teacher shortage of 2000-01, California experienced an increase in the disproportionate placement of low-income students of color and English learners in classrooms with the least prepared teachers.¹⁰ During those years, 15 percent of the state's teachers were underprepared, that is, they had not completed a credential program and/or were teaching out of their field (e.g., history majors teaching math), and most of these teachers were in schools with the highest proportion of students in poverty and students of color. For example, while 22 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools were underprepared, only 7 percent of these teachers were placed in low-poverty schools.¹¹ This disproportionality affected English learners, of whom nearly 84 percent are low-income.

Shortage of Highly Skilled English Learner Teachers

Not only is there a teacher shortage overall, but there is an even greater shortage of teachers who are well-prepared to work with English learners. Policy changes in 2002 that embedded an English learner authorization within the Multiple and Single Subject credentials, and in 2006 that did the same with regard to the Education Specialist Credential, have resulted in fewer teachers receiving a more robust and targeted preparation in the instruction of English learners. Therefore, while most teachers who receive a credential today have some level of preparation for working with English learners, far fewer new teachers have the deeper expertise in English learner instruction. While new teachers could choose to seek more advanced preparation for working with English learners, there is little incentive for them to do so since their credential already embeds an authorization for teaching English learners. Teachers prepared outside of California or those receiving their credential before 2002, must still obtain an English learner authorization, mainly earned through completion of California Teacher of English Learners (CTEL) coursework or passage of the CTEL examination.

In addition, the teacher shortage has resulted in a significant increase in certifications and permits that encompass less rigorous preparation overall. For example, the numbers of university and district intern credentials continue to rise: During the 2014-15 school year, 2,806 English learner intern authorizations were issued, while only 2,259 were issued three years before during the 2011-12 school year. The number of waivers of authorization to teach English learners is on the rise as well: There were 382 waivers for English learners issued during the 2014-15 school year compared to less than half as many, 181, during the 2011-12 school year.¹² While the numbers of these less rigorous credentials are small, their trend is significantly upward, reflecting the growing shortage of teachers statewide, and the need for districts to find ways to address this shortage in their local schools.

English Learner Authorizations Indicating Greater Expertise

Aside from the English learner authorization embedded within Multiple Subject, Single Subject, and Education Specialist credentials, there are other authorizations available for teaching English learners that require a higher level of coursework and training. One of these is a Bilingual Authorization, which can be earned alongside a Multiple Subject, Single Subject or Education Specialist Credential. After the 2009-10 school year, California implemented more rigorous preparation standards for Bilingual Authorizations, which can be met through coursework, commission-approved examinations, or a combination of the two. While the ways that teachers have earned

Bilingual Authorizations has varied over the past 10 years, the numbers have remained steady. During the 2014-15 school year, there were 369 Bilingual Authorizations issued, compared to 370 issued during the 2009-10 school year.¹³ However, this is well below the demand for these teachers. There is an estimated need for at least 513 new bilingual-credentialed teachers during the 2015-16 school year.¹⁴

The other, more advanced authorization is the Single Subject-World Language: ELD Authorization. The World Language: ELD content area may be added as a stand-alone authorization to a Single Subject Teaching Credential, and is earned through completing a program with approved coursework. This credential allows for departmentalized English language development instruction for secondary students.

Strategies and Solutions

Solutions to the Broader Teacher Shortage

The Learning Policy Institute's "Addressing California's Emerging Teacher Shortage," proposes several policy recommendations to address the emerging teacher shortage in California. Their recommendations focus on both recruiting new teachers to the field, and retaining those who are already teaching in California's schools.

They note that strategies related to retaining teachers are often overlooked but are as important as those to attract new teachers to the profession. A 2014 report by the Alliance for Excellence in Education highlighted that nearly 19,000 teachers left the profession in California during the 2007-08 school year. While this estimate included retirees and non-voluntary leavers, just reducing this number by a quarter would nearly eliminate the teacher shortage.¹⁵ According to the report, this would also save California schools \$82 million to \$178 million in attrition costs.¹⁶

The Learning Policy Institute discusses key strategies to attract and retain teachers, including mentoring, teaching conditions, support, preparation and compensation.¹⁷ Below are some of the recommendations from the report, which cover aspects of these strategies:

- » Provide all beginning teachers with high-quality support and mentoring, which can reduce early attrition and enhance competence, for example, through well-designed Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) programs.
- » Improve teaching conditions by ensuring that administrators have the training to help them create and support strong learning environments for teachers and students.

- » Offer urban and rural teacher residencies in hard-to-staff areas that include an apprenticeship, coursework and a living stipend in exchange for a commitment to teach three to five years in the district.
- » Create more avenues into teaching, including high school pathway programs, collaborations with local colleges to recruit community members into the profession and paraprofessional pipeline programs.

Solutions Specific to English Learners

While any solution to the broader teacher shortage will help English learners, in this section we offer specific recommendations for recruiting and retaining teachers and other school staff for English learners. While the recommendations presented here are not exhaustive, they are meant to ignite a conversation within counties and districts from which additional ideas can be developed.

- » **Recruit Diverse Teachers.** The teaching profession is not as ethnically or linguistically diverse as the student population in California. Yet, teachers with similar backgrounds and experiences to their students can be particularly effective. Strategies that successfully address the need for more diverse teachers include grow-your-own, teacher residency and other programs create pathways to a teaching career (such as the Teach Tomorrow in Oakland). What these initiatives have in common is that they actively recruit diverse candidates with a passion for teaching in high-need schools, and have a record of retaining these teachers longer. Ensuring that such programs continue to focus on recruiting diverse candidates and on supporting bilingual teaching candidates can help to expand the pipeline of highly skilled teachers for English learners. In addition, districts should encourage support staff, such as counselors and paraprofessionals, to become teachers and provide them with incentives for pursuing a career in education, especially if they are bilingual or come from a similar background of their students.

CSU Fresno Teacher Residency

This 15- to 18-month residency program is run through CSU Fresno and in partnership with the Fresno Unified School District. The program helps prepare new middle school teachers for the classroom with an emphasis on math and science instruction. It combines rigorous masters-level coursework, teacher-credentialing coursework and a yearlong apprenticeship in a classroom with a mentor teacher supported by a comprehensive

professional development curriculum. Residents also receive a stipend during the training period and make a commitment to teach in the Fresno Unified School District for a minimum of three years after completing the program. National statistics on teacher residency programs show an 84 percent three-year retention rate and an enrollment of significantly more teachers of color than traditional credentialing programs.¹⁸ Los Angeles, San Francisco and Chico also have similar teacher residency programs.

- » **Reduce Financial Barriers to Entry into the Profession.** Along with programs that recruit and attract diverse teachers, recognizing the financial limitations that affect entry into the profession is also critical. Entering the teaching profession means additional coursework, test fees and other preparation expenses that candidates with lower incomes can find challenging. As California considers incentives for recruiting and retaining teachers, it should target resources where they are needed most, focusing investments on teachers who make a commitment to serve the hardest to staff schools and hardest to fill subjects, including those serving a large number of English learners.
- » **Treat Teachers as Respected Professionals.** Research shows that it is highly important for teacher satisfaction and retention that they are treated as professionals. Related to this is providing them with appropriate time for planning and collaboration — time that is even more critical when considering the demands on all teachers to implement the more rigorous new standards that integrate content and language for English learners. Another way for districts to support teacher professionalism is to recognize and reward teachers who have particular skills and responsibilities for working with English learners.

The Promise of Learning Networks

There is emerging research on the promise of learning networks for improving student success.¹⁹ An example of within-school- or district learning networks is a coaching structure, which includes ongoing analysis to improve instruction, guided observation and reflection on practice. Building these networks for the entire teacher pipeline, from pre-service through induction and beyond, can help ensure that all teachers of English learners are of the highest quality possible.

- » **Promote Bilingualism for Teachers and Staff.** This strategy has three components: 1) recruit bilingual staff, 2) provide professional development to build the bilingual competence of existing staff and 3) support career ladders for staff who have such competence. With regard to the recruitment of staff, districts and counties can benefit from looking within their own ranks. For example, providing incentives for a proven bilingual teaching aide to become a teacher. In addition, school staff and teachers can develop their skills through professional development and collaboration with their bilingual colleagues, which can improve the practice of everyone in the school. Another important component to promoting bilingualism is ensuring that principals and other district and county leaders also receive training to build their bilingual competencies and that such competencies are valued when districts and counties search for new school leaders.

Lessons from Top Performing Districts

In “The Language of Reform: English Learners in California’s Shifting Education Landscape,” the Education Trust-West identified 11 top-performing districts for English learner achievement and found some common trends in their practice. For example, educators in these high-performing districts believe that English learners can achieve at high levels and that their home languages are an asset rather than a liability. These districts also ensure that teachers are skilled in meeting the needs of English learners and support this through professional learning opportunities and time to collaborate. For example, Hacienda La Puente Unified School District offers professional development to all administrators and teachers of English learners on the English language development standards and English learner instructional strategies. Los Alamitos Unified School District has implemented a five-year professional development and coaching plan, including training for K-12 teachers in strategies for teaching English learners, including reading aligned with the California State Standards.²⁰

What District and County Boards Can Do

Ask Questions

Governance teams have the responsibility and authority to make decisions that can significantly raise the achievement of all students and close gaps for English learners. Taking advantage of opportunities to look at data and advance promising strategies to recruit, support and retain highly skilled staff can go a long way toward achieving that goal. Asking the superintendent and staff

to answer following questions can help district and county boards in their efforts to increase the availability of highly skilled staff for English learners.

Knowledge of Current Staff

- » What are the languages, other than English, spoken at home by our students? Do we have materials and staff that promote effective communication with the families of these students?
- » Do we have the necessary well-trained staff with various roles and responsibilities to best support English learner educational success?
- » What training do we provide staff to support their understanding of and strategies for working with English learners and their families?

Recruitment of New Staff

- » Are there successful teacher or staff pipelines for recruiting and retaining diverse candidates that we can model? How might we support the expansion of these pipelines?
- » What incentives and strategies do we provide to attract new teachers? Are there incentives targeted particularly to attract teachers with English learner expertise?

Support and Retention of Current Staff

- » Are we investing adequately in professional development, mentorship and support for new teachers to work effectively with English learners?
- » Are there any programs to support and employ career advancement to staff with the cultural and linguistic competencies to effectively communicate with students and their families?

Advocate for Resources and Programs

Governance teams can also advocate for additional resources and programs that can support their efforts to recruit, support and retain highly skilled teachers. For example, one of the recommendations from the Learning Policy Institute is to advocate for reinvestment in scholarship and loan forgiveness programs at the state and federal level. These programs offer loan forgiveness to teachers in exchange for a commitment to teach in high-need areas and subjects for a defined period.

As bills to help counties, districts and schools better manage the teacher shortage move through the Legislature, governance teams can use CSBA’s advocacy resources, which include a list of positions, sponsored legislation and tips for effective advocacy. For more information visit www.csba.org/Advocacy/LegislativeAdvocacy.

Conclusion

Almost one-quarter of California’s K-12 students are English learners and 43 percent of the state’s students are from households where the primary language is other than English. Therefore, most schools can expect to serve at least one student who either is an English learner or comes from a family where another language is spoken at home. Based on this, and keeping in mind the importance of a quality instructor, the need to increase the pipeline of qualified teachers and staff with the competencies to help English learners achieve educational success is clear.

CSBA will continue to support boards in their efforts to improve outcomes for California’s diverse student population. It is our hope that this brief, along with our first two publications in this series will continue to provide valuable information for governance teams and spark important discussions about strategies in counties, districts and schools. Subsequent briefs will continue to focus on English learners and other issues of importance to our board members.

Resources for Board Members

CSBA’s “English Learners in Focus, Issue 1: Demographic and Achievement Profile of California’s English Learners”: www.csba.org/BriefEL1.

CSBA’s “English Learners in Focus, Issue 2: The Promise of Two-Way Immersion Programs”: www.csba.org/BriefEL2.

The Education Trust-West’s “The Language of Reform: English Learners in California’s Shifting Education Landscape”: <http://bit.ly/28SGdPp>.

Endnotes

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- 18 National Center for Teacher Residencies, “Impact & Results.” Accessed April 7, 2016, from <http://bit.ly/ImpactResults>
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Governance Brief

English Learners in Focus

The Promise of Two-Way Immersion Programs

Introduction

A fundamental goal of our education system is to prepare students for successful careers in an ever-changing world of work. As California businesses expand around the world, they will need personnel who can function effectively in multiple languages and cultures. To prepare our K-12 students for success we must be mindful of the global context into which they will emerge as a young workforce. Two-way immersion programs can utilize the strength of our diversity to ensure all students are well-prepared to thrive in an ever-more complex and globalized world.

California's ethnic and linguistic diversity

California is well situated to meet the challenge of preparing students for success in a world that is increasingly interconnected. It is the most culturally diverse state in the country and its student population mirrors this diversity. More than half, 53%, of the state's students are Latino and an additional 20% are from non-white subgroups, principally Asians, 9%, African Americans, 6% and students from a mix of other groups. Non-Hispanic white students represent about 25% of California's K-12 population.¹

The state is extremely linguistically diverse as well. California children come to school speaking an array of primary languages and almost one quarter, 23%, of the state's K-12 students are English learners (EL), students who are not yet proficient in English. Many of the world's languages are spoken by California's EL students: there are 30 languages in California schools that are spoken by 1,000 or more EL students each.² Nonetheless, the vast majority (84%), speak Spanish as their home language.

There are English learners in all grade levels but the greatest concentrations are in the early grades and EL students make up a large share of all students in these grades. Nearly 40% of all kindergarteners and 36% of all K-3 students in California schools are English learners. A significant proportion, 23%, of students in Grades 4-6 are English learners and 13% of those in Grades 7-12 are EL students.³

The need for effective strategies

Overall, our current practices and approaches are not meeting the mark when it comes to providing English learners with an effective education. One indicator of this is that nearly 60% of high school EL students have attended U.S. schools almost all of their schooling but have not attained sufficient levels of academic language and content skill to be reclassified as fluent English proficient (FEP).⁴ Achievement gaps between EL students and their English fluent peers surface in the elementary grades and widen as students move up in grade level.⁵ EL students also drop out at a rate that is twice that of their English fluent peers.⁶

These disappointing outcomes indicate how critical it is that we act early and effectively so that EL students do not begin to fall behind. From the moment English learners enter our schools, we must help them build a foundation of academic knowledge at the same time that they are learning communicative and academic language skills. Losing out on even a small increment of learning every year can quickly add up to a shortfall that is extremely challenging to overcome—both for students and teachers.

A promising approach: two-way immersion

All of these factors—the importance of helping all students to be competitive in a global economy that values multiple cultures and languages, the resource of cultural and linguistic diversity among California’s students, and the need to improve outcomes for the state’s more than 1.3 million English learners—argue in favor of the instructional approach called two-way or dual immersion. This approach provides well-documented advantages to both English learner and English fluent students.

Dual language (or bilingual) education is an overall term used to describe a range of programs that integrate English learner and native English-speaking students for academic instruction in both English and the home language of the English learners (Table 1). These programs differ from English-only programs in their approach and goals. Clearly, one difference is the use of two languages. Another is that although the models share the goal of English language fluency and literacy for EL students, bilingual models have the additional goal of developing and maintaining students’ oral fluency and literacy in another language.

Table 1: Dual Language Approaches⁷

	Two-way immersion (TWI)	Developmental bilingual (DBE)	Transitional bilingual (TBE)
Language goals	Bilingualism and biliteracy	Bilingualism and biliteracy	English fluency
Cultural goals	Integrate into mainstream U.S. culture & maintain/appreciate ELs’ home culture	Integrate into mainstream U.S. culture & maintain/appreciate ELs’ home culture	Integrate into mainstream U.S. culture
Language/s of instruction	Primary language of ELs and English	Primary language of ELs and English	Primary language of ELs and English
Students	Both native and non-native (with same primary language) speakers of English	Non-native speakers of English with same primary language	Non-native speakers of English with same primary language
Grades served	K-12	Mainly elementary	Mainly elementary
Typical length of participation	5-12 years	5-12 years	2-4 years

Two-way immersion programs are a particular form of dual language education in which the non-English language is used for a significant portion of instruction. The fundamental goal of two-way immersion is that both English learner and English fluent students gain high levels of bilingualism, biliteracy, academic achievement, and cross-cultural knowledge and understanding. In order to achieve this, students begin two-way immersion in kindergarten or first grade, and continue the approach throughout their elementary school careers.

There are two variations of two-way immersion: the 50:50 and the 90:10 models. In the 90:10 model, kindergarteners and first graders receive 90% of their instruction in the partner (non-English) language, with

the remaining 10% in English. At each successive grade level, the percentage of English instructional time increases until Grades 4-6, when instruction is equally balanced between English and the partner language. In the 50:50 model, students receive half of their instruction in English and the other half in the partner language throughout elementary school (K-6).

In both models of two-way immersion, teachers must be bilingual and biliterate. They must also be skilled in strategies and techniques for delivering instruction in content and language to students who are not familiar with the language of instruction: to both EL students who are not familiar with English and to English fluent students who are not familiar with the partner language.

Instruction in two-way immersion programs

Teachers in two-way immersion programs use a variety of techniques to communicate content and build language skills for students who have varying degrees of proficiency in the two languages. Among these are:

- Social interactions in instruction that are equitable between the two languages
- Reciprocal (interactive) rather than transmission (lecture) approaches
- Cooperative learning strategies that are well-planned and monitored to ensure interactions that enhance language development
- Slower, simplified and repetitive speech when students are at the early stages of proficiency
- Techniques to check and confirm comprehension
- Contextual clues and visual aides
- Gestures and modeling⁸

Two-way immersion outcomes: bilingualism, biliteracy and gap-closing

Two-way immersion education has experienced a growth in interest over the last few years due largely to robust research findings that support its success in achieving bilingualism and biliteracy for all students and in helping EL students close achievement gaps. By the end of sixth grade, both English learner and English fluent students who participate in two-way immersion develop proficiency in English and the partner language, become biliterate in both languages, develop bicultural understanding, and achieve on par with or above their peers in other programs on standardized tests.

The emerging research on two-way immersion includes the gold standard of education research and analysis, large-scale longitudinal and comparative studies. Additional smaller scale studies of single or multiple classrooms also support positive outcomes of two-way immersion education. A number of earlier studies focused on French-English two-way immersion programs in Canada; more recent research is based on Spanish-English programs in California. All find similar strong student outcomes for two-way immersion.

A significant advantage of two-way immersion programs is that in addition to developing students' bilingual, biliteracy and bicultural skills, these programs

promote successful academic outcomes for both English learners and English fluent students. Moreover, English learner participants in two-way immersion programs achieve at higher levels than their English learner peers in other programs. A review of a number of U.S. studies concludes that in two-way immersion programs:⁹

- All students perform at or above grade level on standardized reading and math tests in English
- All students achieve at or above grade level in reading and math tests measured in the partner language
- EL students close the achievement gap with native-English speaking students by fifth grade

This same review of research finds that the success for students who participate in two-way immersion programs in elementary school persists through their secondary schooling: middle and high school students who participate in continuous dual language programs in K-6 have better outcomes than their peers in English mainstream programs. With regard to secondary education outcomes, these studies find that in two-way immersion:¹⁰

- All students were as or more likely to be enrolled in higher level math courses
- All students were as or more likely to pass the high school exit exam
- All students were less likely to drop out of school
- ELs were more likely to close achievement gaps with native-English speakers by the end of high school

Moreover, these positive outcomes are consistent for both models of two-way immersion (50:50 and 90:10). Although research indicates that in the early grades, English learners in 50:50 models exhibit higher scores in English than ELs in 90:10 models, these differences disappear by the upper elementary grades and students in both models have similarly positive and enduring achievement and English fluency outcomes.¹¹

Finally, it is of note, and somewhat counter-intuitive, that research on two-way immersion and other dual language approaches reveals that English learners who spend more school time studying English do not have

higher academic achievement or gain greater proficiency in English than their peers in dual language programs. Rather, the evidence is that EL students who spend more time developing advanced literacy skills in their first language, benefit in terms of developing greater proficiency in their second (English) and in improving their academic outcomes on English language achievement tests. In short, this research indicates that while all EL students need and benefit from English language development, those who also develop strong primary language skills through two-way immersion ultimately show greater proficiency in English and stronger academic achievement.

Potential contributors to improved outcomes

Research identifies several factors associated with bilingualism and biliteracy that are likely contributors to the improved outcomes for all students who participate in dual immersion programs—both those who are English fluent and English learners—and to closing achievement gaps for EL students. These additional benefits of bilingualism include cognitive benefits to the brain, the ability to transfer knowledge across languages, and the positive impact of integration within the classroom.

Neurocognitive advantages of bilingualism

Research suggests that advanced levels of bilingual competence have positive effects on cognition and brain activity. Such positive effects include advantages associated with problem-solving skills, memory skills, reading abilities, and the ability to think in science and math. Researchers surmise that the experience of controlling attention to two languages in order to keep them separate and use them appropriately is what enhances these abilities and skills in bilingual individuals. These advantages are most evident in bilingual people who acquire relatively advanced levels of proficiency in two languages and who use their two languages actively on a regular basis. Collectively, “these findings argue for bilingual education as cognitive enrichment, and, at the same time, argue for programs that provide substantive and continuous opportunities for students to develop bilingual competence in school so that they enjoy the cognitive advantages that high levels of bilingualism confer.”¹²

Transfer of knowledge and skills

A number of studies have found that academic language skills developed in the first language form the foundation for the development of literacy skills in the second.¹³ Therefore, one reason for the greater success of EL students in dual language immersion programs is likely associated with the opportunity it provides for students to build a strong foundation of first language skills. In addition, use of student’s primary language to convey difficult academic concepts before students have a level of proficiency to understand these concepts through instruction in English means that they can access complex information while their English skills are still emerging. This helps ensure that they do not fall behind in academic skills and understanding while they are building their English proficiency.

Benefits resulting from integration

Integration of English learners and English fluent students plays an important role in EL students’ success and two-way immersion programs are specifically designed to ensure such integration. These programs are founded on a principle that “children will learn from each other and learn to respect each other if they are exposed to learning situations in which they have sustained contact of a basically positive nature and their social status is equalized.”¹⁴ Another reason for the importance of this integration is that peers who provide strong English language models are an important contributor to EL students’ language development. Social interaction, not just on the playground but in learning contexts where students can use different types of language and be exposed to language that is beyond their current levels of language proficiency, is key to learning and to developing English language skills.¹⁵ In addition, particularly for EL students who are new to the US, sharing classrooms with non-EL peers helps them learn the social norms of mainstream society and schools. Moreover, the integration of students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in two-way immersion contributes to socializing young people toward a lifelong broader understanding and tolerance of California’s diverse population.

Characteristics of quality programs

Achieving such successful outcomes as those documented above depends on a number of factors. It requires a clear understanding of the two-way immersion approach and what it entails as well as faithful and full

implementation. Perhaps most critically, given that effective teachers remain the in-school factor most associated with student success, it requires high quality bilingual and biliterate teachers who are familiar with the dual immersion model, theory, and instructional strategies. Teachers with Bilingual Cross Cultural Language and Academic Development (BCLAD) certification have the strong skills and training needed to teach effectively in two-way immersion—or any program for students who are not proficient in English. BCLAD teachers bring unique skills to their instructional practice, including the ability to use English and the students' primary language in ways that foster student comprehension. Research has identified some of the reasons that BCLAD teachers are able to promote the success of EL students:¹⁶

- Educators who are familiar with their students' culture and fluent in their language teach in ways that build on these student assets, which creates supportive relationships that result in more effective instruction.
- Teachers who are bilingual feel more comfortable communicating with parents of English learners, and thus are more likely to build and maintain important home-school connections.
- Bilingual credentialed educators express more positive attitudes about language and about teaching diverse students and feel more confident about their capacity to teach EL students. Both of these factors are associated with more effective instruction.

Other factors critical to the success of two-way immersion programs include:¹⁷

- Cohesive school-wide vision and planning and clearly defined goals for student achievement in dual immersion programs
- Effective, standards-aligned curricula that provide meaningful and challenging material in both languages
- An environment that welcomes, informs, and values parents from all backgrounds

Challenges of two-way immersion programs

A significant challenge to two-way immersion programs is that philosophical differences and political controversy over the last decades have eclipsed research findings on the successful student outcomes of many programs that employ bilingual methods. In California, these differences led to a voter initiative, Proposition 227, which restricted the use of the primary language in the state's classrooms and made it much more difficult for parents of EL students to choose such programs for their children. Under Proposition 227, parents of English learners must petition if they wish to have their children in programs that include the primary language and if adequate numbers of EL parents do so, the school may decide to offer such programs.

The passage of Proposition 227 has led to a sharp decrease in the number of students in programs that include primary language instruction. In the 1997-98 school year, just before the Proposition was implemented, approximately 30% of EL students (409,879 out of 1,381,000) were in education programs that included some instruction in the students' primary language. After Proposition 227, that number continued to decrease. During the 2010-2011 school year (the most recent year for which data are available) just under 5% of EL students (71,809 out of 1,441,901) were in such programs.¹⁸ The decline in the number of students enrolled in dual language programs has resulted in a commensurate drop in the number of teachers pursuing BCLAD training, which has led to a shortage of such highly qualified teachers. The number of educators completing these credentials decreased 37% between 1998 and 2008.¹⁹

Conclusion

Well-implemented two-way immersion programs foster the academic success of English learners and their English fluent peers and help prepare students to compete in a globalized economy by providing them with bilingual, biliterate skills and cross-cultural understanding. As districts and schools look for ways to better prepare all students for the interconnected world of the twenty-first century, two-way immersion programs hold significant promise.

AB 215 (2011) created a State Seal of Biliteracy that recognizes high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in speaking, reading, and writing in one or more languages in addition to English. The award can go to a student whose native language is English and acquires proficiency in a foreign language or to an English learner who is fluent in another language—and becomes proficient in English. More than 165 school districts currently offer the award.²⁰

Questions for board members

1. Who are the district's EL students (e.g. what languages do they speak? How long have they been in U.S. schools? In which grade levels are they?)
2. What does the board know and believe about two-way immersion programs?
3. What are the programs currently employed for English learners?
4. How successful are these programs at promoting EL achievement?
5. Can two-way immersion programs fit into the district's plan for raising the achievement of EL and non-EL students in the district?

Endnotes

- 1 Data downloaded from CDE Dataquest May 6, 2014 <http://bit.ly/We1DMB>
- 2 Data downloaded from CDE Dataquest January 29, 2014 <http://bit.ly/1i6Tlap>
- 3 Percentages extrapolated from data on enrollment numbers downloaded from California Department of Education Dataquest January 29, 2014 at <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>
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- 10 Lindholm-Leary, K. (2012). (See endnote 9; pp. 257-258)
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- 17 Lindholm-Leary, K. (2005). The rich promise of two-way immersion. *Educational Leadership* (pp. 56-58).
- 18 Data downloaded on 5-23-14 from CDE Dataquest <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>
- 19 Gándara, P., & Orfield, G. (2010). Moving from failure to a new vision of language policy. In Gándara, P. & Hopkins, M. (Eds.), *Forbidden Language: English Learners and Restrictive Language Policy* (pp. 216-226). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- 20 For more information on the California State Seal of Biliteracy visit: www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/er/sealofbiliteracy.asp

Further reading

Improving Education for English Learners: Research-Based Approaches (2010). California Department of Education (Ed.). Sacramento: California Department of Education Press.

Goldenberg, C. and Coleman, R. (2010). *Promoting Academic Achievement among English Learners*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Research Spotlight

Report: Unlocking Learning: Science as a Lever for English Learner Equity
by Sarah Feldman and Verónica Flores Malagon, Education Trust–West

Research Spotlight written by Mary Briggs



New Ed Trust–West report

The report highlights how science instruction can improve opportunities and outcomes for English learners.

Our first **CSBA Research Spotlight** focuses on a comprehensive Education Trust–West report by Sarah Feldman and Verónica Flores Malagon that provides current data about English learners (ELs) and science instruction in California. The January 2017 report includes findings from a study of six districts that are using rigorous, engaging science instruction to improve ELs’ science achievement and development of their English language skills. The authors provide detailed examples of the work the exemplar districts are doing to obtain above-average EL science achievement, along with specific recommendations for districts interested in improving EL equity through science instruction.

Science opportunity gaps for English Learners

While research has long highlighted persistent achievement gaps for English learners, the Education Trust–West report provides important data about opportunity gaps in science access for many of California’s EL students. A few key facts:

- » Instructional time: ELs are less likely to attend elementary schools where teachers report having adequate time to teach science. Additionally, in many schools, legally mandated English Language Development

Welcome to the new CSBA Research Spotlight series

CSBA is committed to sharing current research with our members to inform effective governance and improve outcomes for all of California’s public school students. Unlike our traditional research and policy briefs, which summarize findings from a number of studies about specific topics, the CSBA Research Spotlight series will highlight individual new and notable studies to help board members stay current on research that can support the educational decisions they make in their districts and counties. Each CSBA Research Spotlight will include links to the full study and connect the study with potential implications for board members.

(ELD) instructional minutes inadvertently come at the expense of instruction in other subjects, including science (p.3).

- » Access to teachers with science expertise: In middle and high school science, ELs are less likely to be taught by teachers with a strong science background (p.3).
- » Access to rigorous high school science coursework: Only 58 percent of California high schools offer chemistry and 51 percent offer physics. ELs are less likely than their non-EL peers to have access to lab science classes that meet the A-G course requirements for California four-year public college admission. Even when they do, they are less likely to be enrolled in advanced science and math coursework. In fact, only 9 percent of ELs complete A-G requirements, as compared to 42 percent of all students (p. 4)

How can science be an effective strategy for improving outcomes for English learners?

Bottom line: When science and English language development are integrated effectively, districts can simultaneously boost EL achievement in reading, writing, and science.

First, schools must not wait until students obtain a minimum English proficiency level before including them in engaging, rigorous science content. Effective science programs allow **simultaneous development of science concepts, English language proficiency, and problem-solving skills** — and this report highlights examples of ways that several California school districts are doing just that. Second, the California Next Generation Science Standards (CA NGSS) encourage **instructional approaches that also provide rich opportunities for ELD through collaborative conversations with peers**. ELs need more opportunities to practice English in a variety of settings, and collaboration in academic courses such as science is essential. Third, science often relies on **hands-on learning, demonstrations, and visual representations of data (e.g., diagrams, charts, tables, and equations)**. These offer additional information and support students' understandings of science concepts. Finally, research from a sample of elementary schools shows that **projects that integrate ELD and science increase teachers' belief in the academic capacity of their EL students** (p. 5).

“Students do not need to wait until they learn English in order to engage in scientific thinking and complex scientific content.”¹

Recommendations for districts

Based on their study of the six exemplar districts, along with findings from recent research, Ed Trust-West provides concrete recommendations aimed at district leaders. Administrators and board members can review the recommendations and collaborate to use high-quality science instruction as a lever for EL equity. Key recommendations, outlined below, are described in detail in the full report (pp. 17-18).

1. Invest a portion of Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) funds in NGSS-aligned science instruction that will increase opportunities for EL students, and ensure Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) goals reflect this approach. Investments include materials, training, time for collaboration, and staffing to support CA NGSS and California ELD integration.

2. Request data to ensure the district provides equitable access to a rigorous science education for ELs, including instructional time and courses that lead to A-G completion. Verify that secondary schools are providing language supports to enable ELs to excel in college preparatory coursework. Use the data to develop specific goals to address any existing inequities and seek recommendations from district staff.
3. Ensure the district provides high-quality science instructional materials that are both aligned to CA NGSS and designed to support ELD.
4. Engage families in the district process of implementing ELD and science standards, including planning to expand multilingual learning opportunities. This includes ensuring that families, particularly of EL students, feel welcomed and have information about standards implementation and about the requirements of college preparatory science. Aim to offer access to multilingual learning opportunities when possible. If the community feels more multilingual opportunities would be beneficial but are currently beyond your district's capacity, explore options for what might make it feasible.
5. Invest in teacher capacity to support CA NGSS science learning for ELs and provide adequate time for high-quality professional learning for teachers and administrators. Ensure teachers have time for collaborative science instructional planning, as well as access to ELD and science education experts to support effective implementation.
6. Identify opportunities to develop district partnerships to support science education for EL students and training for teachers. These partnerships might include science education institutions, universities, and STEM-related businesses that can further support CA NGSS implementation.

California's English Learners at a Glance

About 4 in 10 public school students speak a language other than English in their homes.

- » More than 1 in 5 students are currently classified as ELs (grades K-12)
- » About 7 in 10 ELs are enrolled in grades K-6, with the remaining 3 in 10 ELs enrolled in grades 7-12.
- » More than 8 in 10 ELs are Spanish speakers

Source: California Department of Education (<http://bit.ly/19HDbU7>)

Board members who read the full report will find:

- » Detailed descriptions of how six California districts are implementing the practices recommended in the report
- » A compilation of questions to ask administrators about the district's current approach to science and ELs
- » Additional facts about science achievement and California's English learners

Access the full Ed Trust-West report, an annotated bibliography, and a link to the archived webinar at: <http://bit.ly/2jxfiLb>

Endnotes

- 1 Gomez-Zwiep, S., & Straits, W. J. (2013). Inquiry science: The gateway to English language proficiency. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, 24, 1315-1331.

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Governance Brief

African-American Students in Focus

Closing Opportunity and Achievement Gaps for African-American Students

Introduction

As California continues to target additional K-12 public school resources to meet the needs of low-income, English learner and foster youth students, it is crucial for school communities to focus on tackling achievement gaps. Education leaders must think strategically about building partnerships and making investments that best support these and other students to make equal opportunity for all a reality.

This governance brief is part of CSBA's effort to shed light on the education needs of California's diverse student population and is the second in a series focused on African-American students. The goal of the series is to describe challenges that must be addressed to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to achieve their potential. It highlights schools, districts, and programs that are successfully meeting these challenges and closing achievement gaps—and serve as guideposts for broader efforts. While CSBA's previous governance brief, *Demographics and Achievement of California's African-American Students*, focuses on the challenges faced by African-American students, this brief focuses on considerations for board members and state, county, and district leaders to help close gaps.

Shared Responsibility to Meet the Challenge

As was highlighted in *Demographics and Achievement of California's African-American Students*, the challenges faced by African-American students are significant and rooted in a myriad of factors, including the higher prevalence of childhood poverty, higher concentration in high-poverty and less diverse schools and lower access to resources, including rigorous courses, quality instructional materials, and

qualified teachers.^{1,2,3,4} Overcoming these challenges will require the efforts of many institutions, with the public school system playing an important role.

The state's Local Control Funding Formula framework supports local decision-making by those who best understand the needs of their community's students and families. School and county boards provide direction and approve the resources necessary to pursue that direction. While the roles are different for other county and district leaders and staff, they all have a responsibility to work collaboratively amongst themselves and community members to improve student outcomes and ensure equity.

This brief is organized in two parts. The first focuses on district strategies and programs. The second addresses how boards can exercise their governance responsibilities. While not exhaustive, these recommendations can be a starting point for districts, counties, and communities to think proactively about their role in ensuring that African-American students achieve their potential.

State, County, and District Strategies and Programs

State, county, and district leaders, including board members, superintendents, principals, and staff, can implement or support programs focused on serving the needs of African-American students. By using research and evidence, they should identify the most promising investments and practices that can close achievement gaps. The following recommendations are research-supported and are viable strategies for improving African-American student achievement. They center on seven areas:

1. Invest in Early Education
2. Provide Access to High-Quality Curriculum and Materials

3. Support Access to High-Quality Staff
4. Ensure Adequate Student Supports
5. Cultivate Cultural Respect and Relevance
6. Foster Collaboration
7. Support Family and Community Engagement

1. **Invest in Early Education.** As mentioned in the previous brief, the condition of African-American children is such that many are behind academically once they enroll in kindergarten, as a result of being less likely to have attended preschool or have access to high-quality programs.⁵ There is strong evidence that supports investing in early childhood education as one of the most effective means of improving outcomes for students. These investments can address knowledge gaps early and prevent students from getting progressively further behind as they move through the grade levels. Research shows that children who attend high-quality preschool enter kindergarten with significantly larger language, literacy, and mathematics skills.⁶

Transitional Kindergarten in California.

In 2010, through the Kindergarten Readiness Act, California added Transitional Kindergarten (TK) as the first year of a two-year district run program. TK is available to students who turn five years old between September 2 and December 2, of the program year, filling the gap that might exist between preschool and kindergarten. The program also uses a modified kindergarten curriculum that is age and developmentally appropriate and taught by an appropriately credentialed teacher and, unlike preschool or child development programs, is part of the K-12 public school system by statute.

A critical aspect of providing all students with the opportunity to attend preschool is accessibility in terms of location and hours. Options should be widely available within a community and not require extensive travel by parents/guardians and young children. The quality of early childhood education programs is another important consideration. There is a wide range of program quality, with African-

American students less likely to have access to the highest-quality options.⁷ Expanding and improving existing programs, while also investing in well-trained professionals and other staff, is critical for districts looking to provide equitable early childhood programs to all families.

Preschool for All Program, City of San Francisco.

The city of San Francisco has expanded its preschool program so that all four year olds are eligible for free enrollment. This program is a full year longer than the California TK program. Eligible preschool providers are located in many San Francisco neighborhoods. Many of these neighborhoods have been previously underserved and have been home to a large proportion of African-American and Latino students. According to the Education Trust-West's 2015 *Black Minds Matter* report, the program serves three fourths of all four year olds in Bayview-Hunters Point, the neighborhood with the highest proportion of African-American students in the city.⁸

2. **Provide Access to High-Quality Curriculum and Materials.**

High-quality instruction means providing students with access to rigorous coursework and materials. This access is essential to prepare students for college and career and to ensure that they can make post-high school choices based on their wishes and interests, not on the limitations of their high school preparation. In addition, rigorous, challenging, and relevant curriculum and instruction that motivates students is crucial to their engagement in school. Many students do not drop out because they are unable to keep up with their peers, but rather because they are unmotivated or do not see the connection between their education and their lives.⁹ All students should also have equal access to rigorous courses, including A-G coursework, Advanced Placement classes, and other opportunities to enroll in college-level coursework while in high school. Programs that can deliver rigorous and relevant coursework for African-American students can include Linked Learning, career academies, career and technical education, and partnerships with community colleges and universities that allow for dual enrollment.

Fair and Transparent Policies to Counteract Math Misplacement.

Math misplacement is a practice where students are held back in mathematics despite earning good grades and test scores. Research has shown that African-American and Latino students are disproportionately affected by this practice. For example, a 2010 report by the Noyce Foundation found that only about one third of African-American and Latino eighth-grade students who earned good grades and test scores in Algebra I were promoted to Geometry in ninth grade.¹⁰ Districts and counties must implement fair and objective placement policies (such as CSBA Sample Policy BP 6152.1 – Placement in Mathematics Courses) to close this gap. At least 22 districts in California have already taken steps to adopt fair mathematics placement policies. They report that such policies have helped eliminate the potential bias in mathematics placement decisions and ensure fairness and accuracy throughout the mathematics placement process. For more information, see CSBA's joint governance brief with the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, *Math Misplacement*: www.csba.org/mathmisplacement.

Advanced Placement Initiative, Corona-Norco Unified School District.

Corona-Norco USD collaborated with Equal Opportunity Schools to close the race and income participation gaps in AP courses, raise AP performance, and develop systems and structures to sustain and improve upon results in the future. During the 2014-15 school year, students who were underrepresented in AP courses were recruited, placed into an AP course for the 2015-16 school year, and provided with supports including summer institutes, before- and after-school tutoring, and review sessions. In just one year, the enrollment of African-American students in AP courses grew by nearly 60 percent.

3. **Support Access to High-Quality Staff.** Finding ways to ensure that all African-American students have equal access to experienced and qualified teachers is essential, especially considering that such access is currently not a reality.¹¹ With the ongoing teacher shortage crisis, strategies that expand the teacher pipeline and ensure that new teachers with the skills, competencies, and attitudes to teach in the highest-need areas are brought into the profession and are provided with the support that keeps

them there, are more important than ever. Staffing policies that equitably allocate teachers are also an important and effective strategy to ensure that the highest-need students receive instruction from the most qualified teachers. Incentives to place the most qualified and experienced teachers in the highest-need areas can include salary increases, bonuses, extra support, or housing subsidies.

California State University, Chico Rural Teacher Residency (RTR).

The RTR is a comprehensive partnership between the CSU Chico's School of Education and four high-need, rural school districts in northern California designed to improve the preparation of new teachers, address the needs of rural schools, and improve the achievement of all students. The program provides residents with classroom experience alongside trained mentor teachers, with graduate coursework at CSU Chico and a support system of university faculty, school administrators, and other teacher candidates. Both general and special education residents participate together to cultivate professional learning communities, collaboration, and promote school change. An induction program gives support for the first two years of teaching. Upon completion, residents receive a dual masters degree and teaching credential, and are placed in cohorts, facilitating collaboration and online professional development communities to provide continued support. National statistics on teacher residency programs show an 84 percent, three-year retention rate and an enrollment of significantly more teachers of color than traditional credentialing programs.¹³ Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Fresno also have similar teacher residency programs.

Diversity and cultural competencies are also part of the definition of quality. Teachers and administrators with an understanding of the cultures and backgrounds of diverse students and a predisposition to work with diverse populations, including African-American students, have been shown to have higher expectations as well as being more adept at communicating with and involving parents—all of which is associated with greater student success.¹² Cultural sensitivity training during pre-service and throughout teachers' careers are essential strategies for closing achievement gaps for African-American students. Recruiting efforts should also seek out diverse

candidates for teaching, leadership roles, and other school staff positions. Teachers and leaders who are from similar backgrounds can be powerful role models for students.

Teach Tomorrow in Oakland (TTO). This initiative within the Oakland Unified School District recruits and retains local teachers. The program does not wait for colleges to graduate teachers; it operates in partnership with community organizations, undergraduate unions, churches, and other groups that are already working with people of color towards developing a pipeline of community candidates. The program provides support that removes barriers to becoming a teacher, including providing reimbursements for teacher test, credential, and fingerprinting fees and provides tutoring for teacher tests (e.g. CBEST and CSET) at no charge. The program does not require a specific credentialing program, but strongly recommends that candidates attend partner universities as a cohort. Once teachers are placed in the classroom, the program also provides materials and supplies, helps to decorate teachers' classrooms, and offers monthly professional development sessions led by TTO teacher-leaders. The professional development uses a critical race theoretical lens, which helps participants to understand the impact of race, poverty, and other factors on the lives of their students. Currently, TTO has a 78 percent retention rate, and more than half of its teachers are on track to complete their five-year commitment to teach in Oakland.¹⁴

4. **Ensure Adequate Student Supports.** As districts and counties provide greater access to rigorous coursework, they must also provide students with the supports and school time that they need to succeed. These supports can take various forms, including additional staff who can provide students with mentoring and tutoring to ensure that they are meeting grade-level standards. Another important strategy for helping students increase their learning at a more rapid pace is providing them with extra learning time. Extended learning time can include before-school, after-school programs, and summer learning opportunities. Finally, in many of the districts and schools

with a large number or proportion of African-American students, supports can include having healthcare workers and mental health professionals on site to ensure that the needs of the whole child are met. These strategies can include the important element of collaboration between a district and one or more community organizations.

Fresno Summer Learning Programs. The Fresno County Office of Education provides funding for most of the after-school programs in the county and works closely with the California Teaching Fellows Foundation (CTFF), a local non-profit organization that hires and provides professional development for college students who work in more than 200 after-school programs in Fresno and Madera counties. Working with local school districts, the two organizations leverage this structure to provide summer learning programs. Reading, leadership, nutrition, and science have been central learning goals in the programs, largely depending on district priorities. Several districts have allocated a portion of their LCFF funds to underwrite facility and transportation costs and to cover the per-pupil fee that the CTFF charges in order to pay program staff. For more information on how to implement summer learning programs, read CSBA's *Summer Learning Resource Guide*: www.csba.org/summerlearning.

Riverside Unified School District's Heritage Plan. The Heritage Plan program is focused on improving academic outcomes and college-going rates for African-American students attending Riverside USD. Mentor teachers at each high school recruit students in grades 10-12 and work closely with counselors, who review the student transcripts. Through this review, the counselors and teachers identify A-G courses still needed for college eligibility, monitor grade progress, and help students plan for college. Building college awareness is a large component as students visit nearby colleges and universities, and receive help in completing applications for college, applying for financial aid, drafting personal statements, and transitioning to college through partnerships with California State University, San Bernardino and University of California, Riverside's Early Academic Outreach Program.

5. **Cultivate Cultural Respect and Relevance.** Students need to see the relevance of their educational experience to their lives, cultures, and future aspirations. The curriculum, textbooks, and other content materials should include the stories, achievements, and perspectives of peoples from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including those of African Americans. Investing in materials and programs that support instruction in which diverse cultures are represented in a balanced light, recognizes their challenges, and highlights their contributions to society, is an important strategy for closing achievement gaps. As the state develops new instructional frameworks aligned with the California Common Core State Standards and approves new instructional materials for adoption, it should consider cultural relevance and diversity as critical factors.

Oakland’s African-American Male Achievement Initiative (AAMAI). This initiative from Oakland USD, in partnership with the Urban Strategies Council and the East Bay Community Foundation, coordinates efforts and develops strategies and programs tailored to support the potential of African-American students. The initiative’s main component, the Manhood Development Program (MDP), is an elective course that enrolls more than 400 African-American male students across 16 schools. The course is designed to address and counteract the negative narrative about African-American males and develop a strong sense of self. The curriculum is uniquely rooted in African-American history and culture, while infusing a strong focus on college and career preparation. In addition, the initiative matches elementary students with middle and high school student mentors. To date, suspension rates for MDP students have decreased by one third, while both GPA and graduation rates have increased. Oakland USD has continued to support the initiative through community partnerships and funding through the Local Control and Accountability Plan process. In addition, other California districts have started to explore similar initiatives. For example, Antioch Unified School District implemented an initiative in 2013.

Cultural respect and relevance can also improve through policies related to staff recruitment and training. As mentioned previously, students need

teachers with the knowledge, skills, and predispositions to teach children from diverse backgrounds. Such teachers are often those who come from the same backgrounds as their students, and these teachers provide the crucial advantage of serving as positive role models and examples of success. Teachers and staff should receive cultural sensitivity training that helps them to be aware of implicit bias and understand how to mitigate its impact on students. State efforts promoting diversity in the teacher pipeline, along with investing in training that leads to a better understanding of students’ backgrounds and needs, are effective strategies for improving outcomes for African-American students.

Youth Leadership Summit, ABC Unified School District. The Youth Leadership Summit program primarily focuses on developing African-American and Latino student leaders. These individuals positively affect the climate at their high schools by using their knowledge of the consequences associated with high-risk behaviors (e.g. bullying, smoking, poor choices in relationships, etc.) to influence the behaviors and attitudes of their peers. A noticeable decrease in the number of student disciplinary referrals, and an increase in student attendance and participation in leadership opportunities, is an indicator of the impact of the Youth Leadership Summit program. This program received CSBA’s Golden Bell Award in 2015.

6. **Foster Collaboration.** Collaboration is an essential strategy for ensuring that programs and strategies achieve desired results. This includes collaboration across district departments and programs and across various stakeholders, community organizations, and non-district agencies to leverage the resources available in a community. For example, several city and county agencies can help schools provide supports for homeless and foster youth, while partnerships with healthcare providers can ensure that students remain healthy and ready to learn. Collaboration to provide enrichment opportunities such as internships and other work-related experiences is also critical. These opportunities are often provided in cooperation between schools and employers through programs such as career academies, Linked Learning and career and technical education.

School-Based Health Centers. School-based health centers bring vital primary care services into low-income neighborhoods. These programs have more than doubled over the past decade, serving nearly 250,000 K-12 students and their families. There are currently 243 school-based health centers located in schools from Del Norte County to San Diego County, with large concentrations in Los Angeles and the Bay Area. Most centers are in schools with low-income Latino and African-American students—ethnic groups that are more likely to suffer health disparities. They also have lower rates of health insurance and less access to health and mental health services. Amongst the many positive outcomes, school-based health centers have improved school attendance, reduced dropout rates, and improved academic achievement.¹⁶ The California School-Based Health Alliance provides a list of funding opportunities and other resources on their website at <http://bit.ly/GrantsWithDeadlines>.

Linked Learning. The Linked Learning approach integrates rigorous academics that meet college-ready standards with sequenced, high-quality career and technical education, work-based learning, and supports to help students stay on track. Linked Learning pathways are organized around industry-sector themes. These programs require collaboration amongst teachers across subject areas, industry professionals, and industry leaders that can support programs by facilitating work-based learning experiences and mentorship opportunities. Given that Linked Learning aims to increase equity by graduating college and career-ready students, it is of particular importance that this initiative serve African-American students, who face the lowest high school graduation and highest unemployment rates of any racial or ethnic group.¹⁷ African-American students in certified pathways earn more credits through 9th and 10th grade than their similar peers in traditional high school programs.¹⁸ There are currently nine districts participating in the ConnectEd Linked Learning initiative, including Antioch, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Oakland, Pasadena, Sacramento, and West Contra Costa Unified School Districts, all of which enroll an African-American student population that is above the state average.

7. **Support Family and Community Engagement.**

Meaningful and ongoing collaboration with families and the community should be a key component of any strategy to close achievement gaps. Research has shown that family and community engagement is associated with higher student achievement outcomes.¹⁹ State, county, and district leaders should create welcoming environments in school sites and district and county offices so that parents/guardians are encouraged to attend meetings and participate in school activities. In addition, engagement should be meaningful so that parents/guardians are true partners in the education of their children. For example, activities that simply inform parents of district decisions are not as powerful as continuous engagement that allows them to help shape such decisions.

Staff and parent/guardian training is also critical. Staff training can better help them to understand the culture and background of their students' families. Parent/guardian education can help them learn how to be proactive in their child's education and ask questions to understand what is happening in school.

The Parent Teacher Home Visit Project. This initiative, started in Sacramento City Unified School District, has brought school staff and parents together to build trust, instill cultural competency, and increase capacity to support students. The program involves teachers conducting home visits to meet with parents, reinforce their importance as their child's first and most important teacher, and share information about their student's school program. Initial visits are followed by the establishment of Academic Parent Teacher Teams, which bring parents to their child's classroom once every other month to learn activities that are adapted to their child's specific needs, practice how to use these activities at home, and review student data on how their child is progressing. During the 2012-13 school year, the program had over 3,300 home visits conducted by over 400 teachers. Students with participating parents also saw increases in their academic achievement.²⁰

PTA National Partnership Standards. The PTA has collaborated with education leaders to develop National Standards for Family-School Partnerships. These research-based blueprints make it easy and effective for families, educators,

and community members to work toward shared goals. The standards include:

1. Welcoming all Families Into the School Community
2. Communicating Effectively
3. Supporting Student Success
4. Speaking Up for Every Child
5. Sharing Power
6. Collaborating with Community

These standards can provide a blueprint from which counties and districts can build their family engagement efforts. In addition, CDE has developed a family engagement framework available at <http://bit.ly/EngagementFramework>.

Governance Recommendations for Board Members

Board members can work with their superintendents to set direction for their districts and counties and ensure that there is a continual focus on closing achievement gaps for African-American and all students. The following are strategies for board members to consider as they carry out their governance responsibilities:

- » **Request, Consider, and Understand Data.** Boards need information about the conditions of students, communities, and schools, as well as student achievement. Through careful consideration of data, board members can better understand the outcomes of the students in their schools and the factors contributing to those outcomes. To gain a full picture of student progress, boards should request a combination of data on academic assessment, school climate and access to resources, to inform further actions.

When considering data, it is important to identify achievement gaps by considering disaggregated and school-level data. While the overall achievement of a school might be high, district leaders must look further into that school's data to ensure that all students, including African-American students, are achieving.

- » **Set Ambitious Goals to Close Gaps.** Board members have the responsibility to ensure that the goals of their districts are appropriately ambitious and resonate with the community. Goals must be differentiated by significant subgroups of students. To close gaps, the bar for progress must be set higher for the students who are currently trailing behind their peers. For example, a goal of raising achievement for all students by 5 percentage points is not acceptable when African-American students trail behind their white peers by 20 percentage points. Goals for African-American student achievement must display a commitment for faster growth.
- » **Align Investments to Close Gaps through the LCAP.** Once districts and counties have a clear picture of the challenges faced by their students and have set appropriately ambitious goals for moving them forward, the LCAP can be a vehicle for investing in improvement and aligning resources to produce the desired results. Moreover, as data are collected and priorities are set, district and county leaders should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their investments and consider expanding successful strategies and abandoning those that are not having the desired effect on student conditions or academic achievement.

Equity with regard to resource allocation means that all students receive the resources they need to succeed. When data show gaps in student outcomes, additional supports and resources should be targeted to accelerate achievement and close gaps. District and county leaders should consider adequacy in terms of the amount invested per child, the quality of those investments, and their impact. For example, equal spending on instructional materials is not equal when African-American students have more limited access to culturally relevant textbooks.

These strategies are interconnected, and when taken together, will help board members to better understand the challenges faced by African-American students in their districts and individual schools, and help boards to set ambitious goals and effectively assign resources to meet those goals. Continuous improvement and reflection must also be the norm. After resources are assigned through the LCAP process, data collection efforts should measure the impact of new strategies, which will inform whether such strategies should be adapted or expanded.

Conclusion

There is much work ahead to close the historic achievement gap that has denied opportunity to many generations of African-American students. California is at a crossroads with its new funding system that has shifted resources and responsibility to local districts. In addition, a new accountability system is being developed. This shift has made it more critical than ever for district leaders to understand how to ask the right questions, consider the right data to answer those questions, and allocate resources adequately to address student needs.

CSBA will continue to support boards in their efforts to improve outcomes for California's diverse student population. Ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to achieve their full potential must continue to be one of the top priorities for all governance teams.

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Governance Brief

African-American Students in Focus

Supporting African-American Teacher Retention

By Dr. Malika Hollinside

Introduction

California schools are experiencing a serious teacher shortage.¹ While recruitment is an important aspect of this challenge, the California Teachers Association (CTA) affirms that retention continues to have a major impact on the shortage. This issue is particularly acute in certain school districts—about half of new teachers in California’s urban, low-income, and high-minority districts leave the field within five years.²

While teacher attrition is a problem in general, African-American teachers depart the profession at higher rates than teachers of any other ethnic group.³ This leaves California schools with a less diverse teaching force and deprives many students of the opportunity to interact with professionals who can enhance their educational experiences. In addition, there is growing evidence of positive outcomes for students whose teachers reflect their culture and language backgrounds, particularly for African-American students. Therefore, finding ways to retain teachers from diverse backgrounds is an important strategy, both for addressing the teacher shortage overall and for closing opportunity and achievement gaps.

This brief is informed by findings from a review of existing research and by a new 2017 survey of 100 African-American teachers in California. Together they shed light on the importance of African-American teachers to all students—and their particular importance to African-American students. The brief also provides information on the reasons that California’s African-American teachers leave the profession; factors that contribute to their retention; and strategies that county offices of education, school districts, and schools can employ to increase retention rates. The African-American teacher perspectives shared in this research can help governing boards, school administrations, teacher preparation programs, and other organizations develop workplace conditions that support African-American teachers, as well as their non-African-American peers.

This brief will answer the following questions:

- » What is the impact of African-American teachers on student outcomes?
- » What does data show about African-American teacher attrition?
- » What factors contribute to the retention/attrition of African-American teachers?
- » What are some strategies for school boards to support the retention of African-American teachers?

Impact of African-American Teachers on African-American Student Outcomes

There is strong and growing evidence that African-American students benefit in a number of ways from learning in classrooms with African-American teachers. They serve as role models, uphold high expectations, implement culturally responsive teaching, share understanding of students’ backgrounds and cultural experiences, and form strong connections with families and communities. In addition to delivering high-quality academic instruction, African-American teachers can help students learn how to navigate racial inequity and injustice in ways that can influence their experiences and improve their life outcomes.⁴

Evidence indicates that African-American teachers have a positive impact on African-American students’ outcomes. For example, a 2017 study found that male African-American students who experienced at least one African-American teacher in their third- to fifth-grade years had lower probabilities of dropping out of high school and higher intentions of attending college.⁵ Some of this impact is attributed to the

role of expectations. A 2014 study found that 10th-grade students whose teachers had higher expectations were three times more likely to graduate from college than those with teachers who had lower expectations,⁶ and a 2015 study found that African-American teachers have significantly higher expectations of African-American students than teachers who are not African-American.⁷

With the largest gap in the nation between the proportion of students of color and teachers of color, California students have fewer opportunities than their peers across the country to experience teachers who reflect their diversity.⁸ In California's K-12 public schools, approximately 68% of teachers are white⁹ but only 24% of students are white.¹⁰ A predominantly white teaching force presents conflicting messages to all students about professional opportunities and roles for people of color. Students of all ages and backgrounds need to see examples of people of color in professional realms in order to counteract harmful stereotypes. Education stakeholders in California can help by prioritizing support for African-American teachers and acknowledging that, as highly skilled educators, they are not only important to African-American students, but to all students.

Decline in the U.S. and California African-American Teacher Pool

Across the country, attrition (teachers who leave the profession) has been a major factor in the shrinking African-American teaching force over the past two decades.¹¹ Nationally, the attrition rate is higher for African-American teachers than for white or Latino teachers. In 2012–13, 10% of African-American teachers left the profession, compared to 8% of Latino teachers and 7.5% of white teachers.¹²

California's African-American teacher pool has declined as well, decreasing significantly in the last 15 years from 15,640 during the 2001–02 school year to just over 12,000 during the 2015–16 school year. And while the total number of teachers fluctuated during this period, the proportion of African-American teachers in California gradually declined from 5.1% to 4%.¹³

New Research Study Sheds Light on Attrition

While African-American teachers have diverse backgrounds and experiences, research identifies recurring themes related to their decision to stop teaching. African-American teachers cite lack of voice, autonomy, trust, and career-growth opportunities in schools as influencing their desire to leave the field.¹⁴ Numerous studies have also pointed to workplace conditions and high levels of job dissatisfaction as reasons why African-American teachers abandon teaching for other careers.^{15,16}

A 2017 survey of 100 African-American teachers and administrators in California expands the understanding of why African-American teachers stay or leave the profession.¹⁷ The survey analysis revealed that negative workplace factors were key reasons why African-American teachers are more likely to leave the field. The analysis also illuminated practical considerations that can help California's education stakeholders, school administrations, and board members improve the retention rates of African-American teachers. See the full survey analysis at <http://bit.ly/2vaMTVe>.

School Workplace Factors that Impact African-American Teacher Retention

School Administration: The degree of support from, relationships with, and management styles of school administrators.

Decision-Making Influence: The amount and type of influence that teachers have over curriculum, pedagogy, discipline, and other decisions in the school.

Autonomy: The amount of freedom that teachers have to choose and implement curriculum, pedagogy, discipline, etc.

Career Advancement: The availability of opportunities for upward mobility such as promotion, specialist positions, professional development, etc.

Cultural Responsiveness: The ways that administration and faculty confront and address racial issues, e.g., through dialogue and professional training, etc.

School Climate: The norms, values, processes, and overall characteristics of the school.

Cultural and Racial Bias: The ways that teachers feel they are discriminated against or treated differently because of race, ethnicity, and/or culture.

Cultural Incongruity: The misunderstandings that can occur when the overall school culture is not aligned with the racial and cultural needs of the students and teachers.

While all of these workplace factors can affect the retention of teachers overall, several seem to have greater impact on African-American teacher retention and attrition. For example, research has shown that the retention of all teachers improves when school leadership establishes a supportive and safe school culture and climate. However, evidence

points to the particular importance of several of these factors for African-American teachers: inclusion, recognition, trust, autonomy, cultural sensitivity, and upward mobility.¹⁸

The Significant Influence of School Administration

Among the identified workplace factors, the 2017 survey analysis cited school administration as the most significant factor in predicting African-American teachers' desire to remain at their schools. This is logical given that school administrators make decisions every day that are vital to creating a supportive school culture where communication, inclusion, equity, and respect are central. Some of these findings apply to all teachers, while others may have a stronger impact on African-American teachers.

According to the teachers surveyed, African-American teachers are more likely to remain in schools when administrators:

1. **Are supportive.** African-American teachers often work in the most challenging school environments with the highest-need students. These teachers need support, flexibility, and empathy from administrators. New teachers in these environments need the particular support of induction programs, teacher mentors, and additional training. Unfortunately, many of the African-American teachers surveyed did not have such supportive administrators, reporting negative experiences with administrators who exhibited oppressive, unsupportive, untrusting, exclusionary, and disrespectful characteristics.
2. **Accept the existence of covert and overt racism.** Many African-American teachers felt that administrators and colleagues did not accept or understand the ways that racism impacts teachers and students of color, and were disappointed that administrations did not address these issues. Several teachers reported experiencing both overt and covert racism on a daily basis in their schools, including the racist attitudes of their teaching colleagues toward African-American students. Teachers also expressed that schools rarely provided effective professional development in cultural competency and responsiveness, and they often reported that their administrators were ill-prepared to confront and resolve racial tensions at school.
3. **Appreciate expertise, efforts, and successes.** All teachers need to be acknowledged and valued for their experience, innovation, and intellect. Many African-American teachers reported feeling overlooked and underappreciated and commonly reported isolation and disenchantment as a result of not feeling appreciated in their schools. They reported that rather than being valued for their work and expertise, they felt valued only to the

"In some schools I felt that I had a voice in not only my class, but the school policies and decision-making...but I've had more times when that's not the case over the years...The key I find is with conscious leadership...and those leaders have to have the 'power to lead'...that's when I see growth, that's when I see like mindedness, that's when I see real school happening"

—Study Participant

extent that they were able to "control" or monitor the discipline of African-American students or contribute to multicultural events and activities.

4. **Value teacher inclusion and input in decision-making.** African-American teachers reported being excluded from school decisions about curriculum, policy, professional development, and pedagogy. Even African-American teachers with graduate school degrees felt that they had little voice. Teachers were especially frustrated when schools failed to utilize information from African-American educational theory and practice. Several teachers were also disillusioned at how little attention was paid in the curriculum to the contributions of African-Americans and other people of color.
5. **Provide autonomy and trust.** Many African-American teachers said their administrators did not trust them to create and implement the curriculum, pedagogy, and policy that they believed was in the best interests of their students. Even veteran teachers reported often being asked to prove their professional qualifications. Some teachers felt that they were deterred by administrators who were afraid that they might challenge common school culture and tradition and change the status quo.
6. **Support the cultural needs of faculty, students, and parents.** African-American teachers often mentioned the tendency of administrators and faculty to 'not see color' and avoid issues of race, culture, and ethnicity in schools. Teachers also reported a lack of sufficient contemporary or accurate portrayals of African-Americans and other people of color in the curriculum. Participants also mentioned their frustration with administrators and faculty who did not understand the history and culture of African-Americans and insulted the cultural characteristics of their students and parents.
7. **Provide opportunities for upward mobility.** Career advancement is highly important to teachers. Although African-American teachers in general rate salary low as a factor in their intention to enter and remain in the

field, several of the male teachers who took the survey mentioned salary as the driving force behind their desire to obtain positions in administration or other better paid specialist positions in education. However, very few participants said that they had extensive opportunities to obtain a specialist position in the profession.

8. **Establish and uphold strong connections with students, families, and communities.** The most positive and common idea that African-American teachers expressed was the importance of the relationships that they form with their students, particularly with African-American students. Most of the teachers said that their connection with students, parents, and the community was the most important factor in their love for teaching. Many teachers said, however, that school administrators both intentionally and unintentionally avoided parents and did not engage with students, families, and/or the community.

Considerations for Board Members

Understanding how school conditions and administrator attitudes and actions impact the retention of teachers is very important for board members as they set the vision and establish standards for professional development in their schools. As community leaders, board members can work with their superintendents and other staff to ensure that all schools have supportive workplace conditions and that administrators receive the necessary support to be strong instructional leaders to ensure that more teachers remain in the profession. Exploring answers to the following questions can help board members better understand and support the recruitment and retention of African-American teachers.

Questions about Current and Pre-Service Teacher Demographics

- » What are the ethnic/racial demographics of teachers in our county, district, and schools?
- » Are the numbers of African-American teachers reflective of our student population?
- » What are the attrition and retention rates of African-American teachers in our schools?
- » What are the ethnic/racial demographics of candidates in the teacher-preparation programs that send teachers to our schools?

District or County Office of Education

Strategies. Board members should ensure that their district or county office of education **collects and analyzes data annually**. This should include data on teacher and student diversity, an assessment of teacher retention and attrition rates, turnover costs, and diversity data from credentialing programs.

Questions about Retention of Current African-American Teachers

- » What are the needs and concerns of African-American teachers in our schools?
- » Are we investing adequately in professional development, mentorship, and support for new and veteran African-American teachers?
- » What training do we provide administration and staff to support their understanding of and strategies for working with African-American students and families?
- » What opportunities for career advancement do we provide to our teachers? Have African-American teachers moved into positions through career advancement in our schools?

District or County Office of Education Strategies.

Board members should ensure that their district or county office of education invests in teacher support, career ladders, and cultural competency training.

- » **Teacher support** can include induction programs, professional development based on teacher feedback and needs, development of African-American teacher networking groups, and mentors for new teachers.
- » **Career ladders** can include career pathway programs and the promotion of strong African-American teachers to higher levels and salaries.
- » **Cultural competency training** can include professional development for school staff to address and resolve teacher and student experience of overt and covert racism.

Questions about Recruitment of New African-American Teachers

- » Are there successful pipelines for recruiting and retaining African-American teachers? How might we support the expansion of these pipelines?
- » What incentives and strategies do we provide to attract African-American teachers to our schools?
- » What incentives and support do we provide for current African-American non-teaching staff to get the training and education required to teach in our schools?
- » Are there teacher-preparation programs that have a good record of recruiting candidates who are diverse and who remain in the classroom that our schools should partner with?

District or County Office of Education Strategies.

Board members should ensure that their district or county office of education invests in teacher recruitment and credentialing. This can include annual recruitment events, college visits, and paying for credentialing expenses. Surveyed teachers reported that the financial burden and required testing of credentialing programs were deterrents to entering and remaining in the classroom and advancing professionally. Investing in recruitment can also include building “grow-your-own” programs, which encourage and support high school students, college students, and professionals from other careers to pursue a teaching career in their communities.

Conclusion

The retention of African-American teachers in California’s K-12 public schools is critical for many reasons: they improve the performance of African-American students; serve as role models; and bridge the relationship between students, families, communities, and schools. Moreover, African-American teachers are essential in their role as activists who acknowledge and combat the widespread effects of oppression and racism in the lives of students of color.

Governance teams have the responsibility and authority to make decisions that can support diversity in schools—a change that is good for staff and students. If stakeholders and administrators gain better understanding of the conditions that impact the ability of African-American teachers to thrive and remain in the profession, then they have an opportunity

to improve those conditions in their schools. These changes can lead to more African-American teachers entering and remaining in the profession, resulting in a more diverse and effective teaching force and better overall student outcomes, particularly for African-American students.

CSBA Resources

African-American Students in Focus, Issue 1: Demographic and Achievement Profile of California’s African-American Students (April 2016)

African-American Students in Focus, Issue 2: Closing Opportunity and Achievement Gaps for African-American Students (April 2016)

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Local Control Funding Formula and Accountability

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November 2017

Governance Brief

2016–17 CAASPP Results for English Language Arts and Mathematics

by Manuel Buenrostro

Introduction

In September, the California Department of Education (CDE) released the results of the 2016–17 Smarter Balanced (SBAC) English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics assessments. Compared to the previous year’s results, scores remained relatively flat across all grade levels and student groups, while troubling achievement gaps persist.

This brief examines California’s overall student performance in the third year of SBAC testing for ELA and mathematics. The achievement data included can help governance teams consider their scores and progress in view of statewide results. This brief also includes questions that board members might ask to help them understand what local data indicates about the progress of students in their schools, as well as resources they can share with constituents.

Third Year of Smarter Balanced Assessments

In 2015, California transitioned from the paper-based, multiple-choice Standardized Testing and Assessment tests to the computer-adaptive SBAC for ELA and mathematics. The SBAC tests are based on the Common Core State Standards, which represent a significant change to teaching and learning in California’s classrooms. The SBAC tests are part of the broader California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) system, which also consists of California Science Tests (which will be field tested in 2017–18), Standards-based Tests in Spanish, and the California Alternate Assessments (in ELA, mathematics, and science) for students who have the most significant cognitive disabilities.

SBAC results are a critical component of the new California School Dashboard. Specifically, ELA and mathematics

This brief will answer the following questions:

- » What are the statewide 2016–17 ELA and mathematics test results?
- » How do the 2016–17 results compare to those from 2015–16?
- » What are the results by student group, and what do they say about achievement gaps?
- » What do the results say about college-readiness for 11th-grade students?
- » What are questions to consider when analyzing local results?
- » What resources are available to communicate results with parents and teachers?

results for grades 3-8 are used as indicators of academic achievement within the Dashboard. In addition, California State Universities and many community colleges use 11th-grade SBAC performance to signify readiness for college-level coursework, and these scores will be one of the measures used to calculate school and district performance for the College/Career Indicator that is being developed by the state.

California Student Performance in ELA and Mathematics

In spring 2017, nearly 3.2 million California students took the SBAC assessments for ELA and mathematics. As in the previous three years, less than 1% of eligible students did not participate due to parental exemptions. This reflects the efforts of district, county office of education, and state leaders in

communicating with and engaging parents and stakeholders about the importance of the tests.

Overall, 48.6% of California students in grades 3-8 and 11 met or exceeded grade-level standards in ELA. Performance was considerably lower in mathematics—37.6% of students met or exceeded grade-level standards.

Figure 1: 2016-17 percentage of all students who met or exceeded standards in **ELA**, by grade

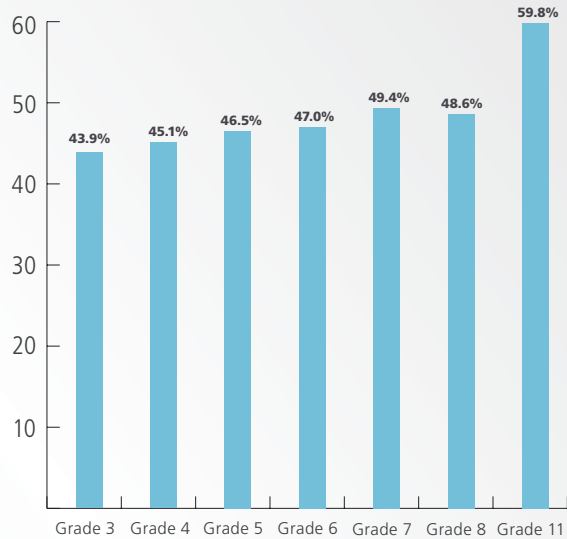
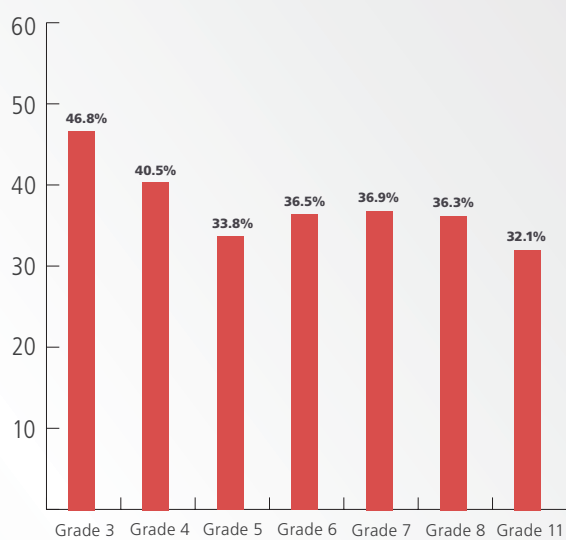


Figure 2: 2016-17 percentage of all students who met or exceeded standards in **mathematics**, by grade



Comparing Performance from the Previous Two Years

This is just the third year of implementation of the SBAC tests, and the Common Core State Standards on which they are based have only recently been fully implemented. Thus, comparisons to previous years' results should be made with caution. Moreover, these results represent just one indicator of student progress for districts and county offices of education to consider. Change takes time, but change with thoughtful monitoring and community engagement can help districts and county offices of education stay focused on their priorities and refine strategies as necessary. Board members have an important role to play in the improvement process by articulating a clear vision and goals for student success, and supporting investments in strategies for closing opportunity and achievement gaps that will help realize these goals.

Across the three years of data, we see that despite the modest gains in performance from 2014–15 to 2015–16, the 2016–17 scores remained flat for most student groups and across most grades. In both ELA and mathematics, the percentage of students who met or exceeded grade-level standards increased by less than one percentage point. ELA had the largest increase in 3rd grade (nearly two percentage points) and the largest drop in 5th grade (two percentage points). Meanwhile, mathematics had the largest increase in 4th grade (two percentage points) and no decreases in the other grades.

Scores also remained flat for most of the reported student groups. However, there were slight improvements, specifically in mathematics where:

- » African-American, Latino, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students improved by approximately one percentage point.
- » Economically disadvantaged students improved by nearly two percentage points (non-economically disadvantaged students also improved by approximately one percentage point).

Performance by Student Group and Achievement Gaps

The state’s achievement gaps—the result of long-standing disparities in educational opportunities—remain troubling. With 2016–17 scores for most student groups remaining flat, there was no significant gap closure. In fact, in both ELA and mathematics the gap widened for English learners (ELs), a troubling development given the state’s emphasis on these students in the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) system.

California can use this data to inform strategies to increase support for historically underserved students. To reduce performance gaps, lower-performing student groups need to improve at a faster rate. The LCFF places particular emphasis on equity for ELs, economically disadvantaged students, and foster youth by providing supplemental and concentration funding to offset the cost of providing additional support for these students. Persistent achievement gaps suggest that districts and county offices of education will need to invest in strategies that result in faster growth for student groups for which there are significant gaps.

Ethnic Groups

In ELA, 75.5% of Asian students, 70.2% of Filipino students, and 64.3% of white students met or exceeded grade-level standards. In contrast, only 37.3% of Latino, 36.1% of American Indian or Alaska Native, and 31.2% of African-American students met or exceeded grade-level standards. There is a staggering 27 percentage-point achievement gap between Latino and white students, and a 33.1 percentage-point achievement gap between African-American and white students.

Students did not perform as well in mathematics, where the gaps are even starker. While 72.7% of Asian, 57.1% of Filipino, and 52.9% of white students met or exceeded grade-level standards in mathematics, only 25.2% of Latino, 25.4% of American Indian or Alaska Native, and 19% of African-American students did the same. These results represent a 27.7 percentage-point achievement gap between Latino and white students, and a 33.8 percentage-point gap between African-American and white students.

Figure 3: 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 percentage of students who met or exceeded 3rd-8th or 11th-grade standards in **ELA** by ethnicity

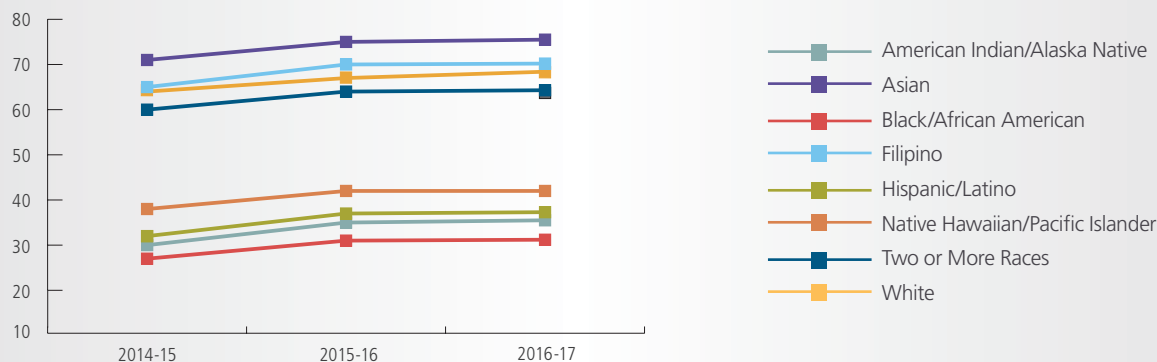
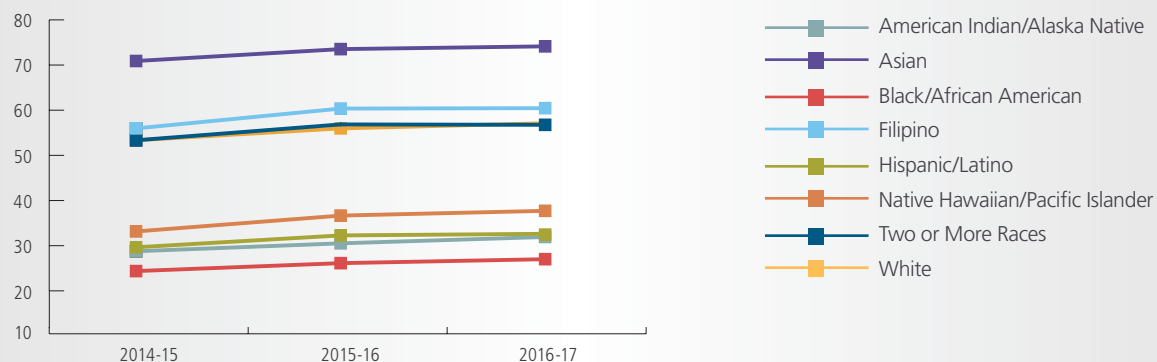


Figure 4: 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 percentage of students who met or exceeded 3rd-8th or 11th-grade standards in **mathematics** by ethnicity



English Learners

The academic achievement of California’s 1.3 million ELs is identified as a policy priority within the LCFF. Therefore, boards should have a clear understanding of how ELs are progressing in their schools. Unlike other student groups, the EL group is not static, with students moving out of the EL category once they have been determined to have achieved English proficiency. Moreover, while the English learner academic indicator in the Dashboard combines ELs and students who were reclassified (RFEPs) within the past four years, boards should consider the achievement of ELs and RFEPs separately in order to more accurately monitor the progress of each group, and to ensure that the progress of RFEPs does not fall off once they are reclassified. When compared to most other student groups, a lower proportion of ELs met or exceeded grade-level standards in both ELA and mathematics.

ELs who have been in U.S. schools for 12 or more months are required to take the ELA test. By definition, ELs are not proficient in English; thus it is not surprising that only 12.1% met or exceeded grade-level standards, compared to 54.5%

of English-only students, and 57.7% of RFEP students. This represents a 42.4 percentage-point gap between EL and English-only students—a significant increase compared to the 2015–16 gap.

All ELs—including those who have been in U.S. schools for less than 12 months—are required to take the mathematics test. Only 12.3% of ELs met or exceeded standards in mathematics compared to 42.6% of English-only students. This represents a 30.3 percentage-point gap between EL and English only students. RFEP students did almost as well as their English-only peers: 40.8% met or exceeded standards.

Of note is the performance of students who come from a household where a language other than English is spoken and who demonstrated English proficiency upon entering school. These are students who have grown up bilingually, and have some level of proficiency—and are often fluent—in a language in addition to English. In both ELA and mathematics, a significantly larger proportion of these initially fluent English proficient (IFEP) students met or exceeded grade-level standards than their English-only peers.

Figure 5. 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 percentage of students who met or exceeded 3rd-8th or 11th-grade standards in **ELA**, by English language status

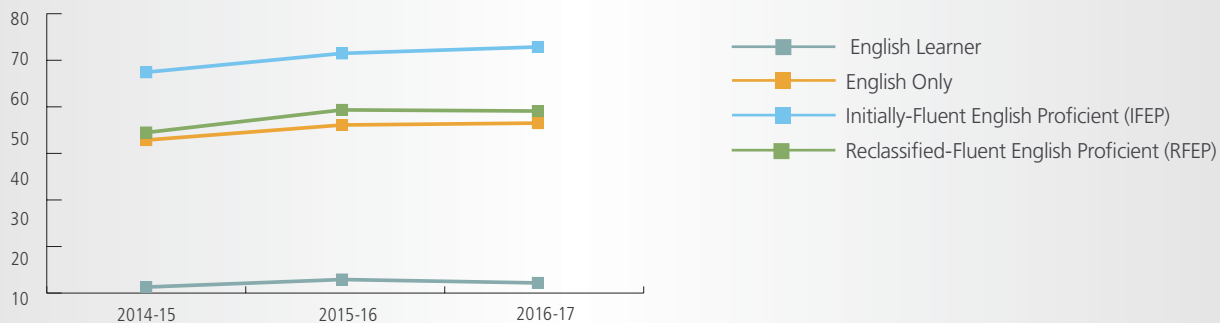
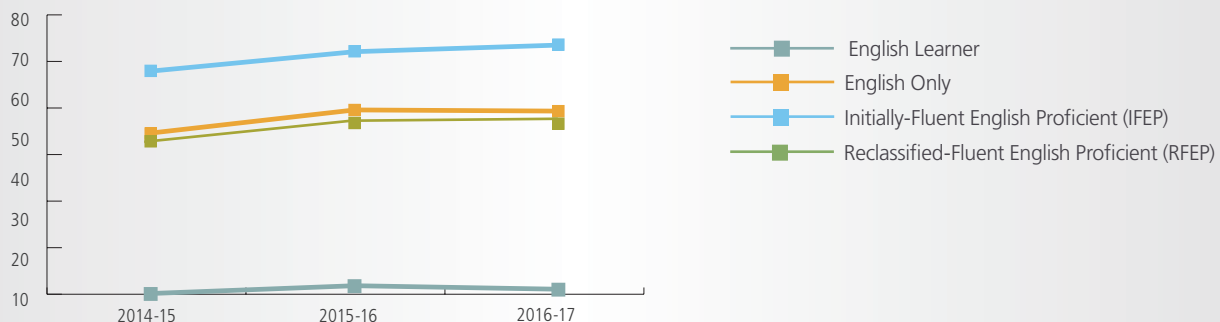


Figure 6. 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 percentage of students who met or exceeded 3rd-8th or 11th-grade standards in **mathematics**, by English language status



Economically Disadvantaged Students

Also prioritized under LCFF are the state’s 3.6 million economically disadvantaged students, defined as students who are eligible for the free and reduced-price meal program. Unfortunately, only about half as many economically disadvantaged students met or exceeded grade-level standards as their non-economically disadvantaged peers.

In ELA, 35.5% of economically disadvantaged students met or exceeded grade-level standards, compared to 68.4% of non-economically disadvantaged students (a 32.9 percentage-point gap).

In mathematics, 24.6% of economically disadvantaged students met or exceeded grade-level standards, compared to 57.4% of non-economically disadvantaged students (a 32.8 percentage-point gap).

Students with Disabilities

During the 2016–17 school year, California served over 754,000 children and youth with identified disabilities (birth to age 22). While LCFF does not provide additional funding specific to students who receive special education services, many of these students are also economically disadvantaged, ELs, or foster youth. Moreover, the new Dashboard is designed to hold schools and districts accountable for improving outcomes for all students, including those with disabilities.

In ELA, only 13.9% of students with disabilities met or exceeded grade-level standards, compared to 52.8% of students with no reported disability (a 39 percentage-point gap).

In mathematics, only 11.1% of students with disabilities met or exceeded grade-level standards, compared to 40.8% of students with no reported disability (a 29.7 percentage-point gap).

Figure 7. 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 percentage of students who met or exceeded 3rd-8th or 11th-grade standards in **ELA**, by economic status

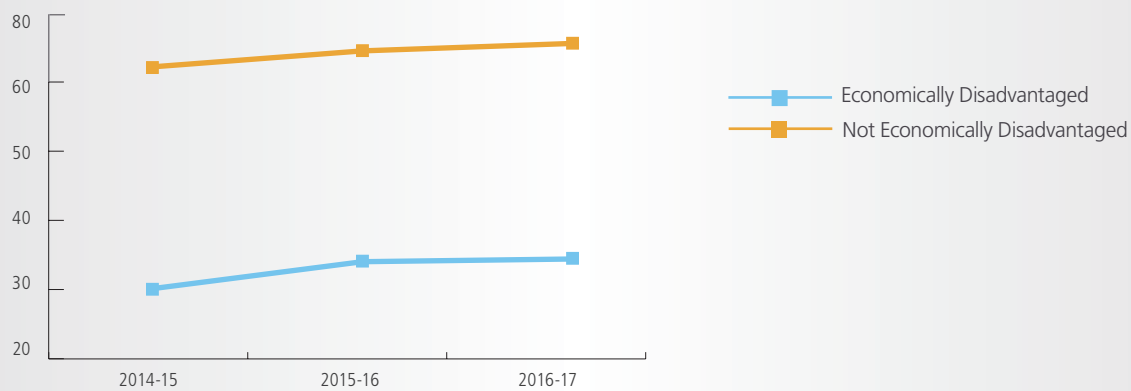


Figure 8. 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 percentage of students who met or exceeded 3rd-8th or 11th-grade standards in **mathematics**, by economic status

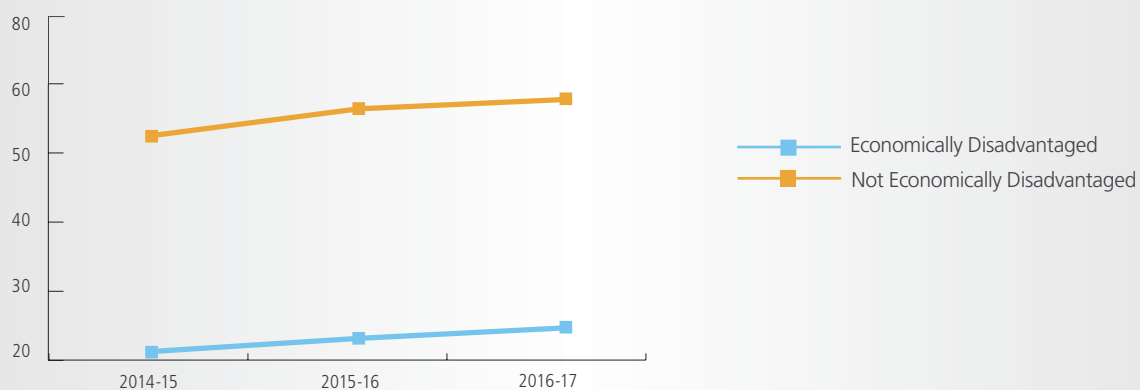


Figure 9. 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 percentage of students who met or exceeded 3rd-8th or 11th-grade standards in **ELA**, by disability status

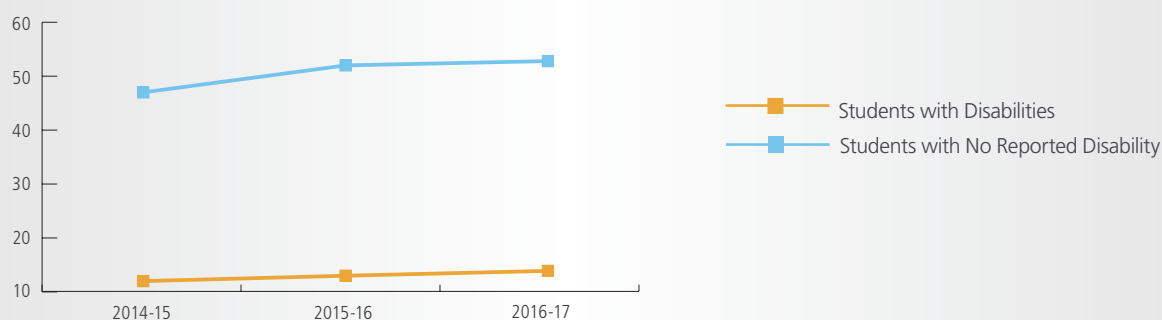
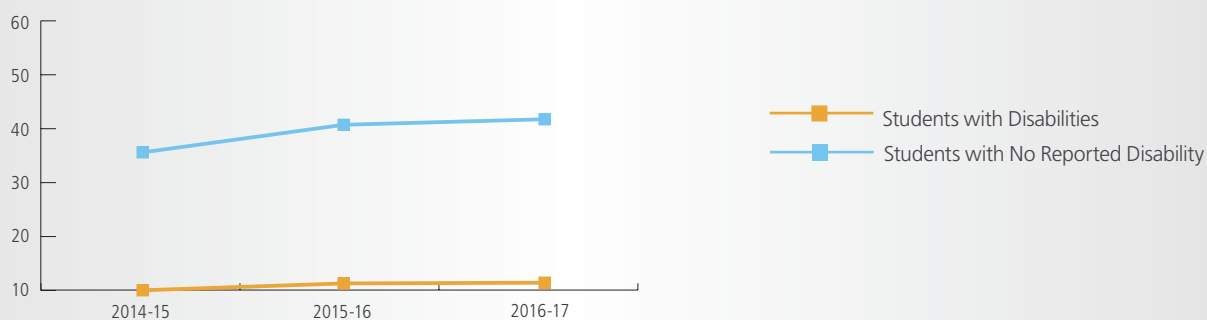


Figure 10. 2014–15, 2015–16, and 2016–17 percentage of students who met or exceeded 3rd-8th or 11th-grade standards in **mathematics**, by disability status



College Readiness

As mentioned earlier, California State Universities and many community colleges use 11th-grade SBAC performance to signify readiness for college-level coursework, and these scores will be one of the measures used to calculate school and district performance for the College/Career Indicator being developed by the state. Therefore, it is particularly important that districts and schools monitor how all student groups perform on this measure.

In ELA, 11th-grade scores indicate that approximately three out of five students met or exceeded grade-level standards, and thus are deemed to be ready or conditionally ready for college-level coursework, while two in five are not ready (see Figure 1). Results for some student groups show significant gaps between their scores and those of the highest-scoring groups. For example, approximately half of 11th-grade Latino, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian/Alaska Native students and only 41.2% of African-American students met or exceeded standards (see Figure 11).

In mathematics, 11th-grade scores are significantly lower—approximately one in three students met or exceeded grade-level standards, and thus are deemed ready or conditionally ready for college-level coursework, while two in three are not ready (see Figure 2). Again, we see significant gaps between Asian, Filipino, and white students and other student groups. While 70.3% of Asian students, 49% of Filipino students, and 44.5% of white students met grade-level standards—only 19.6% of Latino, 23.9% of American Indian/Alaska Native students, and 14.6% of African-American students met these standards. Far fewer students with disabilities or ELs meet standards, approximately 5% and 6% respectively (see Figure 12).

Figure 11. 2016–17 percentage of students who met or exceeded 11th-grade standards in **ELA**, by ethnicity, English learner, and students with disabilities

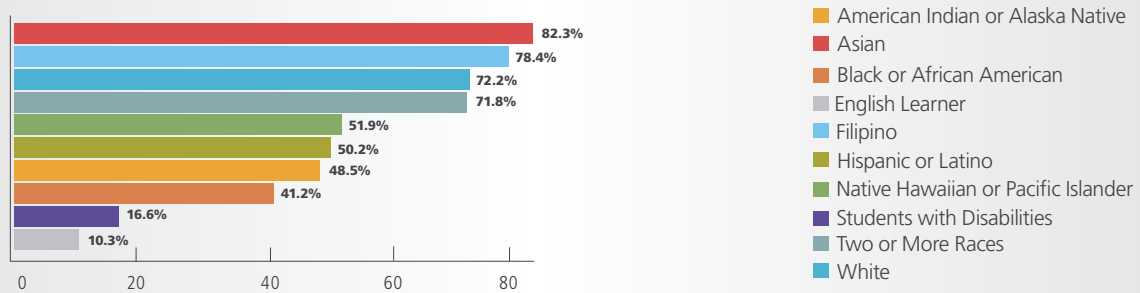
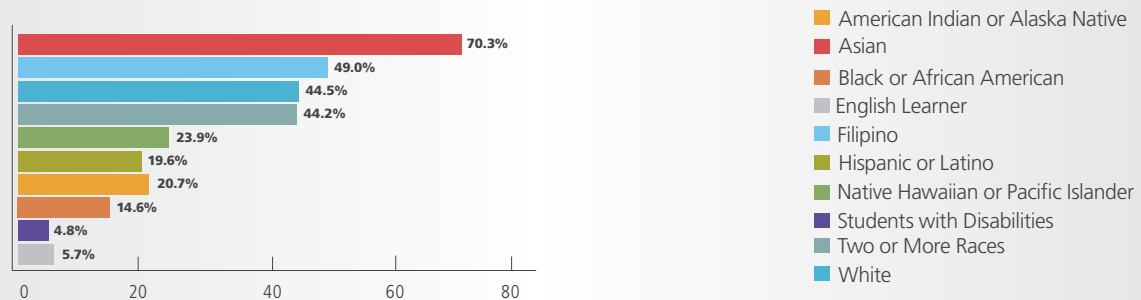


Figure 12. 2016–17 percentage of students who met or exceeded 11th-grade standards in **mathematics**, by ethnicity, English learner, and students with disabilities



Questions for Board Members

This brief focuses on statewide data, but when looking at local results, boards might want to ask a series of important questions about results in their own districts:

Comparisons

- » How do our 2016–17 results compare with our performance in 2014–15 and 2015–16?
- » What patterns do we observe when looking at performance at the district’s individual school sites?
- » How does our performance compare to the performance of similar districts and similar schools?

Closing Gaps

- » Which student groups have the largest achievement gaps in our district? How does the performance of

these student groups in our district compare to their performance in the state, county, and similar districts and schools?

- » How are LCFF funds being used to support our lowest performing student groups? Given these results, are adjustments to our goals or budget appropriate?
- » When looking at performance across different grade levels and student groups, are there areas that the board should study further? What additional data would be useful?
- » If gaps narrowed or widened within our district, what additional information would help our governance team better understand why?
- » Are there schools within our district—or our peer schools or districts—that achieved better performance for similar student groups? How can we learn from what these schools and districts have achieved?

Planning and Communication

- » How can we use our SBAC results to inform our 2018 LCAP update? To use this data to make strategic decisions, what additional information would we need?
- » How can we share these results with the community in a way that will increase stakeholder engagement, involvement, and support for student achievement efforts?
- » In communicating results, what are the areas of most concern to the community that might warrant further analysis? What are some areas that should be highlighted and celebrated?

Conclusion

Board members should understand the performance of all of the students in their schools, note where achievement gaps exist, and clearly communicate with their communities about achievements, challenges, and strategies for improving outcomes. Statewide results can help in these efforts by adding context to the performance of students locally. In making such comparisons, we recommend gaining an understanding of district demographics and finding similar peer schools or districts. Ultimately, the goal of using education data should be to support a culture of trust and continuous improvement where challenges are openly acknowledged and responsibility for progress is shared among the board, superintendent, staff, and the community.

Additional Resources

[Official CAASPP Site with Results for English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics](#). Allows users to compare test scores across counties, districts, school, or the state on a single screen. It also allows users to view results for 2015–16 alone or alongside 2014–15 results. <http://bit.ly/2iPSmLD>

[EdSource's 2017 Smarter Balanced Test Results Page](#). Provides a searchable resource for exploring 2017 CAASPP results. <http://bit.ly/2lEmVVF>

[Assessment Fact Sheet](#). A one-page fact sheet about the SBAC summative assessments, developed by the CDE for families. <http://bit.ly/2z54m2m>

[Online Practice Tests](#). Provides teachers and students access to online practice tests. <http://bit.ly/2z6ZVSs>

[Smarter Balanced Digital Library](#). Offers educators subject- and grade-specific resources for formative assessment during daily instruction. The site also allows users to rate materials and collaborate with their peers across the country. It is available to all local educational agencies serving grades K-12. <http://bit.ly/2xKJ7iG>

[CDE Smarter Balanced Resources](#). Includes information about accessibility and accommodations, and resources such as presentations, frequently asked questions, and fact sheets. <http://bit.ly/2inyknV>

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November 2017

Governance Brief

The California Dashboard

What Boards Need to Know for 2017–18

by Mary Briggs

Introduction

California has been working for several years to redesign its education accountability system to reflect the state’s current standards, assessments, and approach to school finance, and to align it with the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements. As part of this system, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) requires all districts, county offices of education, and charter schools to develop Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) that describe how they align their goals with student needs, services, and spending, along with a report of student outcomes related to those goals.

Although the school funding formula and LCAP have been in place since 2013, the accountability component of the LCFF has only recently been developed. The State Board of Education (SBE) adopted the first version of the California School Dashboard in 2016 and submitted the state’s ESSA plan in September 2017.

This brief is intended to provide guidance and assistance to governing board members when working with the current version of the Dashboard. CSBA will continue to advocate for improvements to the Dashboard to increase its effectiveness as a communication and accountability tool that supports local educational agencies (LEAs), informs local communities and advances efforts to improve student achievement, including closing opportunity and achievement gaps.

What is the California School Dashboard?

The California School Dashboard is an interactive website that displays LEA and school performance on several measures aligned with California’s educational priorities

What’s in this Brief?

- » An update on the Dashboard prior to its anticipated December release
- » An overview of the proposed indicators and data sources
- » Next steps for school boards
- » Links to additional Dashboard resources

(see below). Before 2014, the Academic Performance Index rated the state’s schools and districts using a single number that focused primarily on standardized test scores and graduation rates. Rather than reporting a single number, the current Dashboard communicates information about county, district, and school performance on the state’s educational priorities outlined in the LCFF:

1. Basic services
2. Implementation of state standards
3. Parental involvement
4. Pupil achievement (including the English language development progress of English learners)
5. Pupil engagement
6. School climate
7. Access to a broad course of study
8. Pupil outcomes within a broad course of study

County offices of education are responsible for two additional priority areas: coordination of instruction for expelled students and coordination of services for foster youth.

The Dashboard reports an LEA's or school's most recent reported performance in these areas and tracks changes over time. The state refers to these as *Status* and *Change* indicators, respectively. Together (current performance coupled with performance growth or decline), they are used to calculate an overall performance level for several indicators.

The SBE is working to align the Dashboard with federal ESSA requirements in order to provide a coordinated accountability system. Some state and federal regulations are not yet fully compatible, and the U.S. Department of Education is reviewing California's proposed ESSA plan, submitted in September 2017. Therefore, the extent to which the state and federal systems will be consistent remains to be seen.

Starting in 2017, the SBE will update the data reflected in the Dashboard every fall to help LEAs develop their LCAP strategies for the following academic year. The public can access the California School Dashboard online, and search by school name, district name, or county office of education.

Technical Guidance from the California Department of Education

Several of the indicators for measuring student progress and LEA performance are still evolving. In addition, details about the data included in the Dashboard, how Dashboard results are calculated, and what Dashboard colors and graphics mean can be complicated. To help stakeholders understand and use the Dashboard, the CDE has developed a Technical Guide and a series of webinars that are referenced in the Resources section at the end of this brief.

Preparing for the Dashboard's Release

School and county boards play a central role in goal setting and allocating resources. Once LEAs have their data, governance teams should review local student performance and discuss strategies for making improvements. Ideally, these conversations would occur during the preview period, before their LEA and school performance data are available to the public online.

School and county boards also play a central role in explaining the Dashboard to their communities. Governance teams can collaborate with central office staff to develop

Status and Change Indicators

For most state indicators on the Dashboard, the CDE will provide two reports: status and change.

- » **Status:** Each LEA or school will be rated on their overall performance using the most recent data available (see Table 1 for a description of data used to calculate the ratings for the Fall 2017 Dashboard). This is known as the *Status* indicator, and it provides a snapshot of all students' performance within each area for a single year on a scale of: very high, high, intermediate, low, and very low.
- » **Change:** Because the LCFF accountability system emphasizes continuous improvement, the Dashboard also reports changes in performance from earlier years: improved significantly, improved, maintained, declined, or declined significantly.

a communications strategy for sharing school and LEA results, including ongoing progress on the factors reflected in the Dashboard data. For example, LEAs can report information about absenteeism at the mid-year point. They might also share data on their current 12th-grade cohort and their progress toward graduation. School board members can work with their district staff to discuss progress on Dashboard indicators and decide on key messages they intend to convey to their communities, including how the district will strengthen and target services to improve outcomes for all students and student groups.

What Will the Fall 2017 Dashboard Include?

In March 2017, the CDE released data on the pilot version of the Dashboard. A more complete version of the Dashboard, scheduled to be posted in December 2017, will include indicators for all eight LCFF priority areas (10 for county offices). The Dashboard will continue to evolve as the SBE approves additional measures. The following sections describe the current Dashboard components.

State Indicators

The CDE will populate the Dashboard with both state and local indicators. State indicators measure progress on LCFF priorities using data that the state collects. These include English Language Arts and Mathematics Smarter Balanced

Table 1: State Indicators and Data Sources for Fall 2017 Dashboard

LCFF Priorities	Indicators & Grade Spans	Status Report Data	Change Report Data
Student Achievement	ELA Assessment (3-8)	2017 ELA Smarter Balanced Assessments	2016 and 2017 ELA Smarter Balanced Assessment Scores
	Math Assessment (3-8)	2017 Math Smarter Balanced Assessments	2016 and 2017 Math Smarter Balanced Assessment Scores
	EL Progress (K-12)	2016 and 2017 CELDT scores and 2016 reclassification data	2015, 2016, and 2017 CELDT scores and 2015 reclassification data
Pupil Engagement	Graduation Rates (9-12)	2015–16 four-year cohort graduation rate (Class of 2016)	Three-year weighted average (2014–15, 2013–14, and 2012–13) and 2016 cohort data
	Chronic Absenteeism (K-12)	Percentage of students who were absent (excused or unexcused) for more than 10% of the days they were enrolled	No change indicator for 2017 (Recommendations to SBE about the calculation of this indicator expected in Nov. 2017)
School Climate	Suspension Rates	2016–17 suspension rate (includes in-school and out-of-school suspensions)	2015–16 and 2016–17 suspension rates (includes in-school and out-of-school suspensions)
Access to a Broad Course of Study	College & Career Readiness (9-12)	2016–17 graduating class: Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathway completion with C or better in capstone course ¹ ; CTE articulated course completion; 11th-grade SBAC performance in ELA and math; dual enrollment (number of semesters earning college credit with a C- or better); Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate passing scores; and A-G completion with a C or better in all courses.	No change indicator for 2017 ²
Outcomes from a Broad Course of Study			

Assessment scores, English learner progress, graduation rates, chronic absenteeism rates, suspension rates, and college and career readiness (known as the “College and Career Indicator”). Table 1 lists what measures the SBE will include to indicate progress in each of the LCFF priority areas. Information on how performance levels will be calculated can be found within the Technical Guide listed in the Resources section.

Changes to State Indicator Calculations

At the September 2017 meeting, the SBE revised the formula for calculating the English Learner Progress Indicator (ELPI), giving greater credit to LEAs for the progress of students classified as long-term English Learners (LTELs), defined as English learner students who have been in U.S.

schools for six or more years but have not met reclassification criteria. The board will add an additional 100% weight for every LTEL who improved one or more levels on the California English Language Development Test (CELDT).³

Valid Sample Size

The Dashboard will report on the overall performance of the following student groups identified with a valid sample size in the school or LEA: socioeconomically disadvantaged students, English learners, foster youth, homeless youth, students with disabilities, and racial/ethnic student groups.

When considering outcomes for student groups, the state considers 30 or more students (15 or more, in the case of foster or homeless youth) to be a valid sample size for making statistical calculations.

However, making calculations based on small numbers of students is less accurate. Just a few (or even one) very high or very low score can move the average significantly up or down when the sample size is small. When the sample for a group ranges from 11 to 29 students, the group will not receive a performance level or color rating, but their numerical Status/Change information will be displayed on the Dashboard. To protect the anonymity of students, no data will be displayed on the Dashboard when a student group has fewer than 11 students.

Local Indicators

The Dashboard will also include data uploaded by LEAs in the following LCFF priority areas: basic conditions at school, school climate, implementation of academic standards, and parent engagement. County offices will report on two additional priorities related to services for foster youth and expelled students. For local indicators, LEAs and schools will upload reports about whether each indicator's standards were "met," "not met for one year," or "not met for two or more years." Meeting or not meeting the standard on local indicators is not related to LEA performance in those areas, but indicates only that they have completed the following required activities:

1. Measuring progress using local indicators,
2. Reporting the results at a regularly scheduled public school board meeting, and
3. Uploading and reporting the results to the Dashboard by December 1, 2017.⁴

If the local indicators are not uploaded by the December 1 deadline, the Dashboard will report that the standards were "not met" by default.

The local indicators are:

1. **Basics (LCFF Priority 1).** Measures the availability of textbooks, adequate facilities, and correctly assigned teachers.
2. **Implementation of State Academic Standards (LCFF Priority 2).** Indicates the current level of implementation based on local data (including data included in the Student Accountability Report Card), using the narrative summary option OR the self-reflection tool provided by the CDE.
3. **Parent Engagement (LCFF Priority 3).** The narrative summary of the LEA's progress in seeking input from parents/guardians in school/LEA decision making and promoting parental participation in programs can be

New "Safety Net Methodology" for Small N-Size

Although sample sizes greater than 30 (15 for foster or homeless youth) for a state indicator are considered valid, CDE analysis determined that LEAs and schools with small student populations were over-represented in the lowest (red) and highest (blue) categories on several indicators. To address this, the SBE approved a Safety Net Methodology for the 2017 Dashboard.

When a valid group or LEA sample size is less than 150 students, a 3x5 performance grid will be used in place of the 5x5 grid to determine the LEA or school's performance rating. The Status indicator will still be evaluated using five possible ratings, ranging from "very low" to "very high." The Change indicator, however, will only be rated in one of three ways: increased, maintained, or declined. "Declined significantly" and "increased significantly" would be omitted from the grid.

This method is based on the available sample for any given state indicator with fewer than 150 eligible students, *not* the enrollment size of the LEA or school. For example, every student in a K-12 district that serves 500 students is included in calculating the suspension rate. Thus, the 5x5 grid would be used to determine the suspension performance level. That same district, however, would likely have less than 150 students in their most recent graduation cohort and would be evaluated using a 3x5 grid for its graduation indicator.

developed using information collected through a survey of at least one grade span served by the LEA (e.g., K-5, 6-8, 9-12) or other local measures.

4. **School Climate (LCFF Priority 6).** LEAs will provide a narrative summary of the local administration and analysis of a climate survey that addresses student perceptions of school safety and connectedness in at least one grade within each grade span served by the LEA (e.g., K-5, 6-8, 9-12).

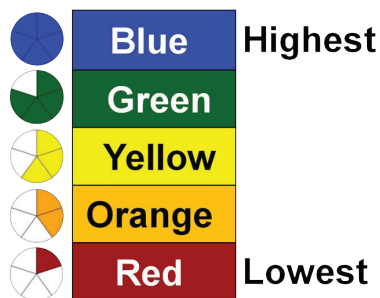
5. **Coordination of Services for Expelled Students and Foster Youth (LCFF Priorities 9 and 10, County Offices of Education Only).** Annual survey that measures progress in coordinating services.

There is also an optional narrative section on the Dashboard that allows LEAs to explain relevant circumstances and local activities related to performance across any local and LCFF priorities. The additional summary includes results of self-assessments for local indicators. **Because the Dashboard will go public in December, CSBA recommends that governance teams prepare and upload their narrative text by December 1, 2017.**

The Status and Change Reports

As described earlier, LEAs will be evaluated on state indicators using both their most recent performance results (status) and how performance has improved or declined over time (change). The Dashboard uses five colors to represent an LEA’s or school’s combined performance on the Status and Change Reports for each of the five state indicators. The colors range from high to low as follows: blue, green, yellow, orange, and red. Each rating is associated with a circular icon that allows performance-level identification if the Dashboard is not viewed in color. These reports are only generated for each state indicator with a sufficient sample size. Therefore, some LEAs will have fewer indicators on their Dashboards than others.

Figure 1. Performance Levels for California Dashboard



Source: California Department of Education

The Status and Change Report for each indicator is calculated using a 5x5 performance grid including rows associated with the five possible *status* levels and columns associated with each of the five *change* levels.⁵ In December 2017, LEAs and schools will receive ratings on the Dashboard in the following areas: ELA assessment (3-8), Math assessment (3-8), EL progress (K-12), graduation rates (9-12), and suspension rates (K-12).

Figure 2. Sample 5x5 Performance Grid

Level	Declined Significantly (Change)	Declined (Change)	Maintained (Change)	Increased (Change)	Increased Significantly (Change)
Very High (Status)	Yellow	Green	Blue	Blue	Blue
High (Status)	Orange	Yellow	Green	Green	Blue
Medium (Status)	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Green	Green
Low (Status)	Red	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Yellow
Very Low (Status)	Red	Red	Red	Orange	Yellow

Source: California Department of Education

While Chronic Absenteeism and Career and College are both state indicators, the Dashboard will not report a Change indicator in the Fall 2017 release, so LEAs and schools will not receive a color-coded performance level. The Status Report, however, will be included.

The performance level and color are determined by locating where the column and row intersect. For example, in the sample grid above, if a district’s status is reported as “High” and is identified as having “increased” on the indicator, then the column and row would intersect in a green box. Thus, that district’s performance rating would be green for that indicator.

A hyperlink in the Status and Change Reports will also locate each school name or student group in the appropriate location on the grid for a quick visual snapshot of school or student group performance on the indicator for the district or school as a whole.

The Equity Report

The Equity Report is the first page of the Dashboard. On this page, viewers see the indicators (Table 1), followed by three columns:

- » **All Students’ Performance:** Overall performance rating for the indicator
- » **Total Student Groups:** How many student groups (socioeconomically disadvantaged students, English learners, foster youth, homeless youth, students with disabilities, and racial/ethnic student groups) have a valid sample size for that indicator
- » **Student Groups in Red or Orange:** The number of student groups with a valid sample size that have a performance rating of red or orange for that indicator

The List of Schools Report (Added October 2017)

For the Fall 2017 Dashboard, the state is developing a district report for LEAs that displays all schools in the district on a single page. This page will post the school's overall performance levels on state indicators so that viewers can compare schools within the district.

California's System of Support

LCFF was designed to incorporate a statewide System of Support that provides differentiated assistance to LEAs. There are several pathways to this support. The LCFF law stipulates that LEAs are eligible for differentiated support if any student group meets the criteria approved by the SBE in September 2016 for two or more LCFF priorities. LEAs can also voluntarily request support. Additionally, a county office can deny approval of an LCAP and provide the LEA assistance.⁶ To determine eligibility for the statewide system of support, COEs will use performance indicators from the Fall 2017 Dashboard. At the time of this brief's development, the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence and county offices of education are continuing to develop concrete protocols for how differentiated support will be provided.

Ongoing Development

The U.S. Department of Education has received but not responded to California's ESSA plan. Therefore, additional work may be necessary to update the Dashboard to align with ESSA requirements. The CDE intends to present an update about the Dashboard development at the March 2018 SBE meeting. In addition, some indicators require further development. The College/Career Indicator (CCI) Work Group and CDE staff, for example, have proposed a three-year timeline for additional measures to be incorporated into this indicator.

What is the Timeline for Implementation?

The SBE has been working with the CDE to refine the content and format for reporting district performance in the Dashboard. A broad overview of the process is listed to the right.

What Should School Boards Be Doing Right Now?

Boards should begin conversations with district staff about the proposed Dashboard. Districts currently have access to the relevant data likely to be included in the final Dashboard displays. While some standards for performance (i.e., what

Table 2: Timeline for Fall 2017 Dashboard and Differentiated Assistance (Subject to Change)

Time Frame	Activity
October 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Webinars for LEA staff and stakeholders begin (and continue through 12/2017) » Preview toolkit to support communication about the Dashboard and system of support » Content for Dashboard and agency websites finalized prior to the Dashboard release
November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » LEAs will be able to review the Dashboard and engage with key stakeholders prior to the public release » State Board of Education meeting will consider Academic and Chronic Absenteeism indicators for potential action » County superintendents and cross-agency groups will contact districts eligible for differentiated assistance » CDE will release final toolkit for use by communication staff, LEA leaders, and Dashboard coordinators
December 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Tentative public launch of the Dashboard (projected for December 1) » County superintendents and districts identified for differentiated assistance begin their needs-identification process
Spring 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Districts continue LCAP development process » CDE provides SBE update on Dashboard development at March 2018 meeting

scores are associated with each “level” of performance) have yet to be finalized, governance teams can use the data to estimate the district’s performance in broad terms. Some fundamental questions include:

1. What do we believe the Dashboard will identify as our district’s strengths? These areas are important to celebrate with your district personnel and the public.
2. What areas likely require improvement? What are we already doing to address any areas of concern? If this is an ongoing challenge, what are the trends in our performance? If this is a new area of concern, what initial steps might we take to make improvements?
3. Are there contextual factors that can help us understand our performance (e.g., new initiatives, an unanticipated demographic shift, new discipline policies, etc.)?
4. How can we be proactive in communicating the Dashboard and our performance when they become available to our stakeholders?

The governing board should collaborate with the central office to ensure your district has planned a coherent and consistent response when the Dashboard is published. This includes a unified approach to sharing results with the community and developing appropriate supports to strengthen services and outcomes for all students. To assist our members, CSBA has developed a tip sheet with recommendations for developing an effective communications strategy.

Additional Resources

California School Dashboard Technical Guide (2016–17) <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm/documents/dashboardguidespring17.pdf>

How to Prioritize Equity in the New California Dashboard (Education Trust-West) <https://west.edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2015/11/ETW-Equity-Alert-Dashboards-April-28-2017-FINAL-PDF.pdf>

CDE Dashboard Webinar Series

Six webinars scheduled between October and December 2017. Topics include an overview of the Dashboard and local indicators, the CCI and graduation rate indicators, suspension and ELPI indicators, the state system of support, academic and chronic absenteeism indicators, and using the Dashboard in the LCAP process. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm/fall2017webinars.asp>

California Department of Education California School Dashboard Communication Toolkit <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm/>

CDE Dashboard Flyer

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm/documents/dashboard-flyer.pdf>

CDE Dashboard Key Points

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm/dashboardkeypoints.asp>

CDE Dashboard Fast Start Guide

<https://www.caschooldashboard.org/Content/fast-start-guide.pdf>

Update on Local Approval of the Recommended Revisions to the Calculations of the State Indicators for the Fall 2017 Dashboard Release; Update on the Local Indicators; and Update on the California School Dashboard: SBE September 2017 Agenda Item 02 <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr17/documents/sep17item02.doc>

Update on the Development of California’s System of Support for Local Education Agencies and Schools: SBE September 2017 Agenda Item 03 <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr17/documents/sep17item03.doc>

Endnotes

- 1 The CDE’s Career Technical Education Framework defines a capstone course as “the final course in a planned sequence of courses for a CTE program that provides a rigorous and intensive culmination of a course of study. Capstone courses are typically offered through regional occupational centers and programs (ROCPs)” (p. 447). Retrieved from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/ct/sf/documents/cteframework.pdf>.
- 2 For a detailed timeline and overview of the CCI calculation, please refer to the Technical Guide and the September 2017 SBE memo listed within the Resources section.
- 3 Refer to the Technical Guide and the September 2017 SBE memo listed in the Resources section.
- 4 The CDE has provided self-assessment tools that the SBE approved for measuring performance on the local indicators in the Technical Guide (referenced in the Resources section).
- 5 As described in the text box on page four, a 3x5 grid will be used for valid sample sizes under 150 students. Valid sample sizes are 30 students, except in the case of foster and homeless youth, in which case a valid sample is 15 or more students.
- 6 For more information on the state’s system of support, refer to SBE Agenda Item 03 in the Resources section. Additionally, the CDE has scheduled a webinar for November 2017 (see Resources), and an archived copy will be available for the public.

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FactSheet

September 2017

Local Control and Accountability Plans

A Survey of School Board Member Involvement

by Mary Briggs, Manuel Buenrostro, and Julie Maxwell-Jolly

Introduction

Local school boards have long been the American model of school governance, but in recent decades, centralization has steadily increased at the state and federal levels. By 2009, California channeled over \$4.5 billion in school funding through more than 40 separate state categorical programs, limiting the ability of school boards to make decisions about educational programs that aligned with local needs and priorities.

In 2013, the state replaced most categorical programs with the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). The core principles of the current school finance model are local flexibility, accountability, and equity. District Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) specify how the needs of all numerically significant student groups will be met, including ethnic subgroups, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, English learners, students identified for special education services, foster youth, and homeless youth. They are intended to be developed in consultation with a wide array of stakeholders, and are revisited annually to measure progress. In 2017, the state introduced the California School Dashboard, which helps education leaders and others understand how well districts and schools are performing in terms of student outcomes on multiple measures for the eight state priorities.

The LCFF statute (Education Code 52060) refers explicitly to governing boards in developing and adopting their district LCAPs, but does not specifically define their role. Exploratory case studies about LCFF and LCAPs highlight the need for a closer examination of what board members perceive to be their role in the LCAP development process, their reported levels of involvement, and what assistance they might need in order to understand and carry out their role as part of a governance team.

To address some of the questions raised, CSBA conducted a survey of nearly 200 board members serving in the Association's Delegate Assembly (DA). The DA provides a geographically representative sample of districts throughout the state, and the student demographics and enrollment size of those included generally reflect the characteristics of the full range of California school districts. Given their leadership roles within CSBA, it is possible that Delegates' overall engagement differs from their peers. However, the sample size—approximately one fifth of California districts—and array of district characteristics boost our confidence that these survey responses accurately represent board member experience across the state.

Board Member Involvement in the LCAP Process

In contrast to the findings from recent case study research, the majority of board members described contributing to key aspects of the LCAP development and review process. More than three quarters indicated that they were actively involved in establishing the LCAP vision and goals:

- » 78 percent reported being very or somewhat involved in developing the vision and goals associated with the LCAP.

One fundamental role of boards is to align and approve resources, and participating board members fulfilled this role in relation to the LCAP as well:

- » Almost all, 91 percent, reported being either very or somewhat involved in aligning and approving resources to support their district's LCAP goals.

More than two thirds also reported that they recommended changes to their district’s LCAP drafts, indicating that they played a more active role in its development than simply approving the recommendations of the district administration:

- » 68 percent reported being very or somewhat involved in recommending modifications to the draft LCAP.

In addition, almost two thirds of these board members played a role in engaging the community with respect to the LCAP:

- » 63 percent reported being very or somewhat involved in engaging with the community around the LCAP.

Both of these findings further indicate that many school boards are engaged beyond mere approval of staff proposals.

To a large extent the involvement in the LCAP process that board members reported in this survey was consistent with the research on the role of effective school boards. This research has found that effective school boards—defined as those in districts that successfully implement policies that lead to improving student outcomes—set the district vision and goals and allocate the resources necessary for achieving those goals. Moreover, effective boards empower the district staff to determine and implement strategies that advance these goals, while monitoring these strategies for appropriateness and effectiveness. In practice, the board might delegate drafting the LCAP to central office staff, in consultation with the school board and broader community, but their role includes two key elements of LCAP development: goal-setting and resource allocation (see link to the school board research report at the end of this document).

Board Members Would Like More Guidance about Their Role in LCAP Development

The advent of the LCFF shifted responsibility for determining how education funds are used away from a centralized, top-down approach from state policy makers to one that is more locally focused. Approximately three quarters of board members surveyed indicated an interest in information and guidance with respect to clarifying their role in the LCAP process that could support their work on behalf of the students in their communities:

- » 73 percent reported that a clear definition of the board role in the LCAP process would help them be more involved in the LCAP.

In the absence of clearly defined roles, superintendents and central office administrators appear to hold a wide range of interpretations about how board members should engage in each step of the process.

In fact, survey responses indicated that not all board members have been encouraged by their superintendents to be involved in the LCAP process, despite language within the LCFF statute that refers specifically to governing boards:

- » Only 39 percent said they were strongly encouraged by their superintendent to participate in the LCAP process, while 20 percent said they were not encouraged at all.

This underscores that both superintendents and boards are continuing to negotiate their roles in collaborating on the implementation of the LCFF approach and need guidance in this area.

Nonetheless, for the roles that board members currently play, they described district staff as helpful:

- » 77 percent reported that they were receiving enough information from local staff to fulfill their current roles; 49 percent to a great extent and an additional 28 percent to some extent.

This finding speaks well of the staff–board relationship in the majority of these districts and is in keeping with the traditional delegation of administrative tasks to staff rather than board members.

In order to help them engage more effectively, board members indicated that it would be useful to learn how districts similar to their own successfully engage in the LCAP process:

- » 78 percent reported that more resources on best practices for districts like theirs would help them fulfill their LCAP roles.

With greater guidance about their roles, more encouragement from superintendents, and examples of other districts’ approaches, our findings suggest that boards and staff could readily improve the collaborative development of effective LCAPs.

California School Dashboard: A New Area of Need

The California School Dashboard is designed to help districts and schools track data on the effectiveness of their LCAP plans on a number of measures. The still-evolving Dashboard provides data intended to inform decisions that will lead to improved student outcomes for each of the eight state priorities. Although it was piloted in 2017, additional changes will be implemented over the next several years.

Reflecting these factors, many participants indicated that they need help understanding and using the Dashboard:

- » 49 percent reported needing some or much more help in understanding the Dashboard data to fulfill their LCAP roles.

In particular, their responses indicated that they are not sure how to communicate the Dashboard to their communities and would welcome tools to help them do this:

- » 65 percent reported needing some or many more tools from CSBA for communicating with their community about the Dashboard and how it informs the LCAP.

Given that this survey was administered less than two months after Dashboard data became available to districts, our findings likely reflect the newness of the instrument. It is reasonable to believe that board members have developed greater familiarity with the Dashboard but still need assistance. Furthermore, given that additional changes will be introduced in the 2017–18 school year, board members will need ongoing updates.

Conclusion

These responses add important information about board members' engagement in the implementation of LCFF and LCAPs. The vast majority of board members surveyed described being engaged in key stages of the LCAP development process. At the same time, board members clearly indicated that they would welcome information and guidance that could help them better understand and carry out this role more effectively. CSBA will continue to offer professional learning opportunities for board members, and guidance related to the LCAP development process to

support decisions that lead to the statute's ultimate goal: ensuring that all California students have the opportunities and supports they need to succeed.

CSBA Resources

- » [California School Dashboard](#) (coming Fall 2017)
- » [The School Board Role in Creating the Conditions for Student Achievement: A Review of the Research](#) (May 2017)
- » [Promising Practices for Developing and Implementing LCAPs](#) (November 2016)
- » [Strengthening the LCAP: Recommendations for Improving the Template, Process and State Supports](#) (June 2016)
- » [Increasing LCAP Transparency and Reaffirming California's Commitment to Local Control: Experiences of District and County Leaders](#) (June 2016)

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The survey was conducted during the May 2017 CSBA Delegate Assembly meeting, attended by 235 board members (possible respondents). Responses ranged from 185 to 197, depending on the question. While possible respondents included 20 county office of education board members, we can assume that the overwhelming majority of respondents were district board members and therefore refer to them as such throughout the fact sheet.

Governance Brief

The Coherence Framework in Action

Promising Practices for Developing and Implementing LCAPs

by Michael Fullan and Susan Lovenburg with David DeLuz and Kathy Armstrong

Introduction

The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) was signed into law in California in July 2013 to give school districts and county offices of education (local educational agencies or LEAs)¹ greater discretion in how they allocate funds and to more effectively direct resources to the state's most vulnerable student populations. The LCFF also changed how LEAs are held accountable for improvement. All LEAs are now required to create a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), in consultation with their communities, which details how they will use funds to improve outcomes for students and indicates progress made toward existing goals.

The governance implications of these changes are significant, reflecting an understanding that public agencies need to work differently to deliver better results, and the recognition that excellence has not been achieved through compliance-oriented structures and systems. The LCFF presents a renewed opportunity to focus on improving student outcomes, to increase the level of communication between schools and communities, and to close achievement gaps. To achieve this potential, governance teams and educators must transform the way they make decisions and learn from each other, and must interact more collaboratively with the state.

The State of Reform

Among the findings described by Michael Fullan and his team in a recent 'taking stock' assessment of the state of LCFF/LCAP reform,² two stand out:

1. Policies are becoming better aligned and people at all levels of the California education system appreciate this approach (or recognize its potential).
2. The LCFF and LCAP were based on the assumption that most districts would have the capacity to proceed with implementation when given local autonomy and resources. However, the model underestimated how much additional capacity would be needed to make the reform successful at the local level, evident in the fact that many districts are struggling with the question of how to effectively implement LCFF and LCAPs.

Background of CSBA's LCFF Collaborative Working Group

Understanding this need to build local capacity, CSBA³ launched the LCFF Collaborative Working Group (CWG) in 2014, in partnership with California Forward,⁴ to provide the collaborative space and technical support needed by governance teams to successfully navigate the LCFF/LCAP transformation. During the three-year project, board members and superintendents from 20 school districts and four county offices of education convened quarterly for facilitated sessions focused on improving LCFF implementation, informing LCAP development, and sharing peer practices.

The CWG identified some early challenges such as the complexity of the LCAP template provided by the state and the need for tools to better communicate an LEA's vision for student success to stakeholders.⁵ CWG members thought about how to reorient the work of teaching and learning,

and how to use data to inform a culture of continuous improvement. This governance brief describes a model the group constructed utilizing Michael Fullan’s “Coherence Framework” to drive a district’s effort to improve student outcomes.

The Coherence Framework

Fullan first met with the CWG in June 2015 to present the Coherence Framework,⁶ a model for developing skills and competencies within a group with the long-term goal of building internal capacity and responsibility to improve student achievement (Figure 1).

The elements of the Framework include four strategies, with leadership essential to each component:

- » **Focusing Direction:** LEAs set a small number of ambitious goals directly related to student achievement and mobilize the whole organization to support a central moral purpose: improving society through improving educational systems.
- » **Cultivating Collaborative Cultures:** LEAs foster interconnected and supportive cultures focused on instructional improvement within and across schools, as well as between schools and the larger LEA.
- » **Deepening Learning:** LEAs improve teaching at all levels of the system through a deeper understanding of the learning process and how to influence it.
- » **Securing Accountability:** LEAs develop conditions that maximize internal accountability and promote understanding of the value of external accountability measures.

While the Framework calls for the development of leadership at all levels, its foundation requires building a commonly owned approach for improving student success. Governing boards play a vital leadership role in focusing direction based upon the shared values and beliefs of the LEA and community. Specifically, governing boards create the conditions to build and support a collaborative approach to continuous improvement as well as maximize conditions for effective internal accountability.

Achieving coherence within a system is not easily accomplished. Fullan and his colleagues stress that coherence is not simply “alignment.” Rather, “coherence consists of the shared depth of understanding about the purpose and nature of the work” LEAs are undertaking to transform their districts in ways that will lead to improved student success.⁷ Thus, coherence can only be achieved through focused and purposeful interaction among LEA members,

and it must be continuously attended to because people come and go and environments change.

Figure 1: The Coherence Framework



Model Practice: The Coherence Framework in Action

Understanding this capacity challenge, members of the CWG embraced the Coherence Framework as an effective, promising model for guiding the development and implementation of plans to achieve their goals for student success. Consistent with the state’s philosophy in implementing the LCFF, the Framework was also seen as an effective communication tool for creating a user-friendly version of the LCAP. For these reasons, the CWG collaborated with Fullan to further develop the Framework as a guide to design and implement LCAP and related plans.

Following a work session with Fullan, the CWG tasked a working group of school board members and superintendents with developing a model for:

- » Using the Coherence Framework to guide efforts within an LEA to improve student success, and
- » Clearly communicating to the public an LEA’s goals and strategies for student success, the resources aligned in support of those goals, and the metrics established to gauge progress.

The “Coherence Framework in Action” described in the following pages is the product of the CWG, developed in collaboration with Fullan. It is one example of how LEAs can use the Framework to guide their school improvement

efforts; allocate resources consistent with their goals; and clearly communicate vision, strategies, and progress to their communities.

The format and examples provided are illustrations only, intended to convey how the model may be applied. In this case, the focus is on English Learners, but the model could be applied with reference to goals for all student groups included in the LCAP. LEAs should adapt this model in ways that best support local efforts and meet the communications needs of their own communities.

The Coherence Framework in Action

In this section, we provide a model of how an LEA might use the Coherence Framework. This example is intended to be used in conjunction with Fullan's book *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems* and its companion *Taking Action Guide*.

Short and long protocols are offered in Fullan's publications to assist LEAs in implementing the model. The short version (Appendix A) is designed to give individuals a faster immersion into the Framework and may be suitable for districts that have already done considerable work on their LCAP and its related coherence. The long version (Appendix B) contains the processes for a full immersion into developing a solid Coherence Framework. Since achieving coherence requires a highly and continuously interactive process, Fullan recommends the longer version, though it may be appropriate to skip some of the steps depending on what aspects of the Framework require an LEA's attention.

In the example below, the model district's goal of increasing the number of English Learners reaching proficiency is considered through each of the four lenses of the Coherence Framework: focusing direction, cultivating collaborative cultures, deepening learning, and securing accountability. While the goal remains the same, the approach in each section is slightly different.

Example of Our District's Vision

This section outlines an example of how all four elements of the Coherence Framework can be applied to achieving a single goal.

Our district's goal: We will annually increase the number of English Learners reaching proficiency, including those currently identified as Long-Term English Learners.

Focusing Direction

Our district will set a small number of ambitious goals directly related to student achievement, mobilizing the whole organization to support our central moral purpose: improving society through improving educational systems.

Key strategies to achieve our goal of improving outcomes for English Learners and Long-Term English Learners:

- » Implement curriculum for Long-Term English Learners.
- » Extend learning opportunities for English Learners, including high school tutoring services and Bridge Program support at elementary and junior high schools.
- » Improve student connectedness and well-being through the provision of elementary and secondary counseling services, increased nursing and mental health services, and home-to-school liaisons.

How we will measure success:

- » 100% of Long-Term English Learners will access new curriculum supported with adequate technology, instructional materials, and assessments.
- » 5% annual increase in English Learner language proficiency.
- » 3% annual increase in English Learner A-G completion.
- » 50% increase in Long-Term English Learner students reporting they feel positively connected to the school environment and experience success.

Progress in 2015–16:

- » Long-Term English Learner curriculum purchased. Seventy-eight students identified for services. Staff teams assembled and outreach to families underway.
- » Established baseline: 50% of Long-Term English Learner students made progress in English proficiency.
- » Established baseline: 30% of Long-Term English Learner students met A-G completion requirements.
- » Established baseline: 25% of Long-Term English Learner students report they feel positively connected to the school environment and experience success.

Resources allocated in 2016–17:

- » \$1,000,000 of \$10,000,000 LCAP funds (10%)

Cultivating Collaborative Cultures

Our district will foster interconnected and supportive cultures focused on instructional improvement within and across schools, as well as between schools and the district.

Key strategies to achieve our goal of improving outcomes for English Learners and Long-Term English Learners:

- » Create and maintain a culture of collaborative professionalism, informed by data, in which staff systematically cooperate to improve the learning experiences and achievement of all students. Educator teams will research, create, pilot, and evaluate effective classroom strategies and share successful practices with peers across the district.
- » Increase parent engagement through effective two-way communication with families about school programs and student progress, foster family involvement at school, support academic learning at home, and include families as knowledgeable participants in school decisions.

How we will measure success:

- » 50% increase in teachers reporting that collaboration improved their classroom practice.
- » 10% increase in parent participation in school/district activities that support student success.
- » 50% increase in parents reporting they have the information and skills needed to support their student's success.

Progress in 2015–16:

- » Established baseline: 60% of teachers report that collaboration improved their classroom practice.
- » Established baseline: 326 parents participated in school/district activities.
- » Established baseline: 30% of parents report they have the information and skills needed to support their student's success.

Resources allocated in 2016–17:

- » \$2,000,000 of \$10,000,000 LCAP funds (20%)

Deepening Learning

Our district will improve teaching and learning at all levels of the system through a deeper understanding of the learning process and how we influence it.

Key strategies to achieve our goal of improving outcomes for English Learners and Long-Term English Learners:

- » Integrate English Language Development teaching strategies in all classrooms to provide deeper, richer, and more relevant instruction for students.
- » Through districtwide collaboration, develop and implement assessments that allow educators to effectively analyze student performance at frequent intervals to inform improved instruction.

How we will measure success:

75% increase in principals and teachers reporting they have the information and skills needed to increase the success of Long-Term English Learners.

Progress in 2015–16:

- » Established baseline: 50% of teachers report they have the information and skills needed to support the success of Long-Term English Learners.

Resources allocated in 2016–17:

- » \$5,000,000 of \$10,000,000 LCAP funds (50%)

Securing Accountability

Our district will develop conditions that maximize internal accountability and promote understanding of the value of external accountability measures.

Key strategies to achieve our goal of improving outcomes for English Learners and Long-Term English Learners:

- » Assess student success at regular intervals throughout the school year, and adapt instructional practices accordingly.

- » Assess student performance annually with California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) assessments and report results for student groups.

How we will measure success:

- » 10% increase in the academic performance of all students and 15% increase in the academic performance of Long-Term English Learners on the CAASPP.
- » 20% decrease in the number of students with a semester grade of D or F.

Progress in 2015–16:

- » Student success teams established for each Long-Term English Learner collaborate to develop common formative assessments and review protocol.
- » Baseline CAASPP scores established at each grade level tested: 3-8, and 11.
- » Baseline established: 60 Long-Term English Learners have a semester grade of D or F.

Resources allocated in 2016–17:

- » \$2,000,000 of \$10,000,000 LCAP funds (20%)

Supporting a Process of Continuous Improvement

When using the Coherence Framework, an LEA continually evaluates the teaching and learning that is needed to meet each of their goals, determines what resources will be allocated in support, and establishes how success will be measured—activities consistent with the development of the LCAP.

In annually reassessing direction and goals, LEAs can use the Coherence Framework model to evaluate whether they are successfully implementing the right strategies to cultivate collaboration and deepen learning, and have allocated resources effectively. For example, are parents, students, and community members integrated as partners? Is student achievement improving and, if so, are external accountability structures reflecting that success? If not, what more must be done? The resulting work may then serve as an “executive summary” of the annual LCAP.

Conclusion

The LCFF advances public interest by allowing education leadership teams to focus their decision-making on local community needs. This promotes student gains at the local—and by extension, the state—level. Civic involvement and public support are both critical to improvement efforts and best incorporated at the community level. The Coherence Framework is one tool that governance teams can use to help integrate these interests and improve the success of California’s students and schools.

Resources

Fullan, M., Quinn, J. & Adam, E. (2016) *The Taking Action Guide to Building Coherence in Schools, Districts, and Systems*. Thousand Oaks, California, Corwin.

Fullan, M. and California Forward (2015). *A Golden Opportunity: The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence as a Force for Positive Change*. <http://bit.ly/2h8nVvR>

Krausen, K. (2016). *Promising Practices for Developing and Implementing LCAPs*. California School Boards Association <http://bit.ly/2x8rv2g>

For additional resources, please see endnotes.

Appendix A

Coherence Framework Plan: Short Protocol

Preliminary: Assemble the Group

Group membership is dependent upon the needs of the organization. Two possible approaches to developing the group are Role-Alike, e.g., all district administrators, all principals, etc., and Vertical Coherence, i.e., a cross-role group representing all levels of the LEA. A Lead Learner is designated to facilitate the group's interactions.

The role of group members is to:

- » Represent a range of perspectives
- » Communicate with stakeholders
- » Share expertise
- » Be transparent
- » Participate fully
- » Develop a plan for coherence

Step 1: Ground the Group in Common Understanding of the Work Ahead

Group members assess and discuss *Coherence* and the *Taking Action Guide* and/or other approaches to systems reform that are appropriate for their district.

Step 2: Assess the Current Environment

Group members assess the degree to which coherence already exists within the district, identifying evidence for how well the system currently focuses direction, cultivates collaborative cultures, deepens learning, and secures accountability. As one example, the *Taking Action Guide* offers a *Coherence Framework Assessment Guide* to walk members through this process.

Step 3: Master the Framework

Group members develop a plan for coherence and use the model plan in the *Coherence Framework in Action* section as an example for tracking goals, strategies, resources, and progress. The *Taking Action Guide* offers additional strategies and activities to support the group's work to improve teaching and learning.

Appendix B

Coherence Framework Plan: Long Protocol (Four-Day Workshop Format)

Preliminary: Assemble the Group

Group membership is dependent upon the needs of the organization. Two possible approaches to developing the group are Role-Alike, e.g., all district administrators, all principals, etc., and Vertical Coherence, i.e., a cross-role group representing all levels of the LEA. A Lead Learner is designated to facilitate the group's interactions.

The role of group members is to:

- » Represent a range of perspectives
- » Communicate with stakeholders
- » Share expertise
- » Be transparent
- » Participate fully
- » Develop a plan for coherence

(For guidance, see *Taking Action Guide*, pp. xiii–x.)

Workshop Format

Day 1: Introduction and Steps 1 and 2

Day 2: Step 3

Day 3: Steps 4 and 5

Day 4: Steps 6 and 7

Step 1: Coherence Making

Group members build understanding of key concepts of coherence and assess the degree to which coherence already exists within the district, identifying evidence for how well the system currently focuses direction, cultivates collaborative cultures, deepens learning, and secures accountability. (For guidance, see *Taking Action Guide*, pp.1–9.)

Step 2: Focus Direction

Group members develop shared purpose and assess change strategies. (For guidance, see *Taking Action Guide*, pp.10–25.)

Step 3: Cultivate Collaborative Cultures

Group members deepen their understanding of the growth mindset and assess their own learning leadership. (For guidance, see *Taking Action Guide*, pp. 26–37.)

Step 4: Deepen Learning

Group members clarify their goals and develop common language and understanding of the deep learning competencies: communication, critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, citizenship, and character. (For guidance, see *Taking Action Guide*, pp. 38–48.)

Step 5: Secure Accountability

Group members develop understanding of the power of internal and external accountability to improve student success. (For guidance, see *Taking Action Guide*, pp. 49–53.)

Step 6: Lead for Coherence

Group members improve their understanding of how to develop leadership at all levels. (For guidance, see *Taking Action Guide*, pp. 54–59.)

Step 7: Master the Framework

Group members develop a plan for coherence and use the model plan in the Coherence Framework in Action section as an example for tracking goals, strategies, resources, and progress. (For guidance, see *Taking Action Guide*, pp. 60–74.)

For resources associated with both the short and long protocols, please see Resources 2–5 on this page.

Endnotes

- 1 The California Department of Education also classifies direct-funded charter schools as LEAs.
- 2 Fullan, M., et al. *California's Golden Opportunity: Taking Stock: Leadership from the Middle*. https://michaelfullan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/17_Californias-Golden-Opportunity-Taking-Stock-FinalAug31.pdf
- 3 CSBA (www.CSBA.org) is the nonprofit education association representing the elected officials who govern public school districts and county offices of education. With a membership of nearly 1,000 educational agencies statewide, CSBA brings together school governing boards and administrators from districts and county offices of education to advocate for effective policies that advance the education and well-being of the state's more than six million school-age children.
- 4 California Forward (www.CAFwd.org) is a bipartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates for moving government closer to the people, and encourages integration of efforts and data-informed decision-making to improve results. CA Fwd supports the enactment and implementation of significant efforts to create cost-effective public services at the state and regional levels.
- 5 Krausen, K. (2016). *Increasing LCAP Transparency and Reaffirming California's Commitment to Local Control*. California School Boards Association. <http://bit.ly/2dhCOI5>
- 6 Fullan, M. and Quinn, J. (2016) *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems* Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin.
- 7 See endnote 5.

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FactSheet

November 2017

The Power of Networks:

Accelerating Collaborative Learning to Improve Student Success

by Susan Lovenburg and Kathy Armstrong

“The LCFF presents school boards and school districts a renewed opportunity to focus on improving student outcomes, closing achievement gaps, and increasing the level of communication between our schools and communities.”

—CSBA CEO & Executive Director
Vernon M. Billy

“In the public sector, the competitive advantage that we have is the opportunity to share secrets since we are not competing for market share. The opportunity to collaborate is the competitive advantage of the public sector.”

—CA Fwd President & CEO
Jim Mayer

Introduction

The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) was signed into law in California in July 2013 to give school districts and county offices of education (collectively known as local educational agencies or LEAs) greater discretion in how they allocate funds to more effectively direct resources to the state’s most vulnerable student populations. LCFF also changed how LEAs are held accountable for improvement. All LEAs are now required to create a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), in consultation with their communities, which details how they will use funds to improve outcomes for students.

The governance implications of these changes are significant, reflecting the recognition that excellence has not been achieved through compliance-oriented structures and systems, and an understanding that public agencies need to work differently to deliver better results. LCFF presents a renewed opportunity to focus on improving student outcomes, to increase the level of communication between schools and communities, and to close opportunity and achievement gaps. Keys to achieving this potential are for governance teams and educators to transform the way they

make decisions, listen and learn from each other, and interact more collaboratively with the state.

In their paper *None of Us Are as Good as All of Us: Early Lessons From the CORE Districts*, researchers Joel Knudson and Mark Garibaldi note the growing importance of purposeful cross-district collaboration as an approach to improvement: “The literature on organizational learning has long recognized the power of communities of practice for stewarding knowledge. These social structures bring members together around a sense of joint enterprise, facilitate regular interactions that enhance members’ abilities to do their jobs better, and produce a shared repertoire of communal resources through their joint work.”¹

The CSBA/CA Fwd Collaborative Working Group

Understanding this potential, the California School Boards Association (CSBA) launched the LCFF Collaborative Working Group (CWG) in 2014 in partnership with California Forward (CA Fwd)² to provide the collaborative space and technical

support needed by governance teams to successfully navigate this transformation. Over the project's three years, board members and superintendents from 20 school districts and four county offices of education convened quarterly to participate in facilitated sessions focused on improving LCFF implementation, informing LCAP development, and sharing peer practices.

The project's specific objectives, underwritten by a grant from the Stuart Foundation, included:

- » Developing an in-depth understanding of the opportunities and challenges of designing, implementing, managing, evaluating, and governing under the LCFF approach to funding and accountability
- » Providing timely access to data, trends, and analysis
- » Working with recognized experts to assist in identifying and addressing challenges
- » Sharing best practices and strategizing together how to solve systemic challenges
- » Increasing transparency of LCAP processes and strategies to promote civic engagement and public trust

The objectives of the project were achieved through the following activities:

- » Collaborative group discussion sessions
- » Subgroup deeper-dive discussions and collaboration
- » Presentations from subject matter experts
- » Documentation and sharing of promising practices
- » Engaging policymakers on LCFF implementation
- » Engaging equity groups on LCFF transparency and student outcomes

One result of these activities was the development of tools and materials to provide board members with foundational resources. These include a brief written by Dr. Michael Fullan on designing effective LCAPs based on his Coherence Framework; a report and a brief sharing promising practices used in the LCAP process based on an analysis of participants' LCAPs and interviews about their LCAP experiences; a document with CSBA recommendations for strengthening the LCAP template that was shared with the State Board of Education; and a soon-to-be released archive of peer practices related both to the LCAP process and to programs that promote student achievement that can be included in

LCAP strategies. (For links to these materials, please see the CSBA Resources section at the end of this factsheet.)

The CWG was purposefully diverse, including both district and county office of education superintendents and board members from LEAs of different sizes, demographics, and geographic regions throughout the state. In pre-selection interviews, members were asked to make a long-term commitment to regular and meaningful participation.

In the summer of 2017, at the conclusion of the group's three years of work together, a final assessment was conducted to evaluate achievement of the original goals for the CWG: to contribute to the body of knowledge about collaborative learning and problem-solving, and to inform the design of future CSBA and CA Fwd activities. The assessment included a web-based survey of all current and former CWG members, telephone interviews with 11 of the most active members, and a focused discussion during the final meeting of the CWG. Key learning is distilled below, intended both to convey what worked effectively for this group and to encourage and accelerate the success of future networks. The full evaluation report includes greater detail.³

Effective Collaboration: What We Learned About What Works

Participants must own and drive the agenda from the beginning. The CWG was intended to serve as a "living laboratory" for participants to share their challenges, opportunities, and ideas in the governance, management, and implementation of LCFF. From the start, the conveners believed that this goal could only be achieved if the members fully owned and drove the agenda. This expectation of member leadership was clearly communicated when original members were selected in 2014, and sustained through regular surveys of and communication with the group. Periodically discussing how that theory worked in practice helped keep the approach fresh and assisted in acclimating new members.

Engaging together on shared challenges builds bridges. The CWG met over the course of three years during which LEAs, the state, and stakeholder groups were all struggling to understand and implement this monumental policy change in California. Initially, perceptions of differing priorities created tense relations between some of these groups. The CWG provided the opportunity for these groups to come together in extended dialogue around shared implementation challenges, such as the redesign of the LCAP template and the roll out of the California School

Dashboard. The members, especially those who were most engaged, came to appreciate more deeply that all of the stakeholders shared a common goal of achieving the best outcomes for California's children, and they came to see the particular challenges experienced by other groups from a more constructive vantage point. Thus, facilitating dialogue among state policy leaders, equity advocates, and other education experts and stakeholders during CWG meetings provided an important avenue for LEAs to inform the work of these individuals and organizations and vice versa—resulting in increased coherence across the entire system.

Similarly, the CWG was purposefully designed to include a diversity of district experiences, including those of large versus small districts, rural versus urban districts, and districts with large versus small underserved populations. The inclusion of both school board members and superintendents also brought different viewpoints into the group. Participants indicated that hearing a breadth of perspectives opened up their thinking in a way that a more homogeneous group composition could not have.

The convener role is critical to help participants build trust, clarify their needs and priorities, and take ownership of their learning. While an important design element of the CWG was the commitment to having both a designated board member and superintendent from each LEA consistently in attendance, this proved challenging for some LEAs, given that many board members have other jobs, and superintendents have many demands on their time. Therefore, a key role for conveners is to help participants quickly begin to experience a strong return on their investment of time in the group, making it as easy as possible for members to participate and actively engage. The following are suggestions offered by CWG members on some of the ways that conveners can best support the group in “getting to value”:

- » As one participant expressed, learning and growth happen “at the speed of trust.” Conveners can help participants build trust as quickly as possible through intentional design of interactive activities that offer opportunities to gain deeper mutual understanding.
- » A regular practice of soliciting feedback and input after each meeting helps the conveners monitor the collective pulse of the group, anticipate needs, and build this understanding into agendas for future meetings.
- » Conveners must invest staff time to coordinate communications with the group and help ensure that

group members come to meetings fully informed and with the information they need to participate actively. While participants must be encouraged to own the direction of the group and drive the group outcomes, conveners help enable participant leadership by providing strong project management, organization, and administrative support. This includes the heavy lifting associated with drafting deliverables when the group wishes to produce a product.

Conclusion

Professional learning networks can be an effective way to improve understanding and capacity. In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, these networks offer superintendents and board members the opportunity to grow stronger together. The CWG experience offers valuable lessons to accelerate and deepen future collaborative efforts, which in turn can accelerate realizing the promise of LCFF—to better serve the students of California.

CSBA Resources

The Coherence Framework in Action <https://www.csba.org/GovernanceAndPolicyResources/~media/CSBA/Files/GovernanceResources/GovernanceBriefs/201710CoherenceFramework-PromisingPracticesLCAPs.ashx>

Increasing LCAP Transparency and Reaffirming California's Commitment to Local Control Experiences of District and County Leaders https://www.csba.org/~media/CSBA/Files/GovernanceResources/Researchpapers/061406LCAP-Year3_Analysis.ashx

Promising Practices for Developing and Implementing LCAPs <https://www.csba.org/GovernanceAndPolicyResources/~media/CSBA/Files/GovernanceResources/GovernanceBriefs/201611GBLCAPPromisingPractices.ashx>

Strengthening the LCAP: Recommendations for improving the template, process and state supports https://www.csba.org/GovernanceAndPolicyResources/~media/CSBA/Files/GovernanceResources/EducationIssues/FairFunding/061416Strengthening_LCAP_CSBA_Recommendations.ashx

Endnotes

- 1 Knudson, J. and Garibaldi, M. (2015). *None of us are as good as all of us: Early lessons from the CORE districts*. American Research Institute. San Mateo, CA
- 2 California Forward (www.CAFwd.org) is a bipartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates for moving government closer to the people, and encourages integration of efforts and data-informed decision making to improve results. CA Fwd supports the enactment and implementation of significant efforts to create cost-effective public services at the state and regional levels.

Susan Lovenburg is the director of economic prosperity at California Forward, and served as a staff lead on the CSBA/CA Fwd Local Control Funding Formula Collaborative Working Group. Susan also served as a school board member in the Davis Joint Unified School District from 2007-2016 and a member of CSBA's Delegate Assembly from 2010-2016.

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Governance Brief

The School Board Role in Creating the Conditions for Student Achievement: A Review of the Research (Summary)

by Mary Briggs and Manuel Buenrostro

Introduction

This brief sheds light on how boards can carry out the essential responsibility of governance to help their school districts and county offices of education improve learning outcomes for the students in their communities. It is a summary of a CSBA report *The School Board Role in Creating the Conditions for Student Achievement: A Review of the Research*.

In studies of district improvement, research has focused on central offices and schools, paying limited attention to the role of school district boards, and virtually none to county boards. To address these oversights, the first sections of this brief focus on how school districts impact student outcomes, identifying six factors that support district improvement and noting implications for how school boards can affect each area. The final two sections explore research that focuses explicitly on school board professional development and roles and relationships. While research on the county board role is virtually non-existent, many of the research conclusions on the impact of school boards on student outcomes are also relevant for county boards.

The Six Factors Supporting District Improvement

The full report explores the six interdependent factors that appeared most often in our extensive review of the literature on districtwide improvement in student achievement. We paid particular attention to what scholars had to say about school districts that have made or are making progress toward improving outcomes for historically underserved student groups. The six factors include:

This brief will answer the following questions:

- » What are six research-based factors that support district improvement?
- » How can board members support each of these factors?
- » What does the research say about board member professional development?
- » What does the research say about board member roles and relationships?

1. Setting a vision and goals with a primary focus on student achievement, and aligning resources to realize those goals.
2. Establishing and maintaining a coherent, districtwide system that still offers a degree of autonomy at the school site.
3. Using data to inform and support continuous improvement, especially for student achievement.
4. Creating a district culture that supports student achievement, including establishing strong community partnerships.
5. Investing in staff capacity at all levels.
6. Maintaining stable and effective leadership while ensuring a shared vision and responsibility for meeting goals that can withstand leadership transitions.

Factor 1: Setting a Vision and Goals

Multiple studies have found a positive relationship between student achievement and boards that share a common vision and goals.^{1,2} With this strong foundation, distractions can be reduced, nonessential initiatives can be filtered out, and people are more likely to work together effectively on a common agenda.^{3,4} In setting a vision and aligning goals that improve student outcomes, boards should consider the following factors:

Focus on learning outcomes. Research has shown that goals focused on learning outcomes have the greatest impact on student achievement.^{5,6,7} In a district comparison study, the boards from low-achieving districts reported focusing primarily on keeping costs low, while boards in high-achieving districts identified academic achievement as their main responsibility.⁸ Studies also suggest that boards in high-achieving districts spend more time discussing student achievement and policy development than discussing administrative details.^{9,10}

Engage stakeholders in the process. By gathering and sharing input from a range of stakeholders in a timely and effective manner, districts can encourage buy-in and establish a vision and goals that reflect the priorities of the whole system. This is supported by a study indicating a statistically significant correlation between the inclusion of relevant stakeholders in the goal-setting process and student achievement.¹¹

Place equity front and center. Research indicates that boards in high-performing districts and those that close achievement gaps demonstrate a shared commitment to ensuring a high-quality education for every student,¹² set goals and policies that foster learning for all students, and develop goals for faster growth for high-need students (coupled with equitable investments).

Communicate. Researchers report that successful boards use the district vision as the basis for policy initiatives and monitoring. They also engage in a wide range of activities throughout the district, allowing them to communicate and reinforce the vision and goals more widely.¹³

Align resources. Research describes a positive relationship between student achievement and leaders' use of resources to support goals,¹⁴ including an achievement boost in urban districts that funneled extra resources to the lowest-performing schools.¹⁵

Factor 2: A Coherent System That Also Provides Site-Level Flexibility

School and county boards are tasked with governance but not administration. They can support coherence by monitoring how the different components of the system interact in service of key goals, while leaving the details of strategy implementation and management to district staff. In establishing a coherent system, board members should consider the following:

Everything is connected. A focus on systems thinking recognizes that what is done in one part of the system affects every other part of the system. At the same time, changes in a single area are not likely to lead to system-wide change. A partial list of the systems operating within a district includes hiring and teacher assignment practices, evaluation systems, professional development, facilities use, scheduling, and instructional materials adoption processes. In a coherent system, these components complement rather than compete with one another.

"Islands of Excellence" are not enough. Having individual high-achieving schools, grade levels, or classrooms within a district while other students are left behind is not enough. School districts should be organized to support a coherent system of services that facilitates excellent teaching and learning in every school and classroom.¹⁶

What is Coherence?

Recent education research has argued for district coherence, but what does that mean? Researchers who study coherence emphasize that it extends beyond well-aligned structures. Coherence is a dynamic process that involves schools and central offices working together to continually negotiate the needs of each school within the broader demands placed on the district.¹⁷ In other words, the ongoing work within the district is coordinated to support a district's progress toward its goals.

Ideas for new initiatives should be carefully filtered. Governing boards can guide administrators at both the central office and school level to filter new ideas so that "initiative fatigue" does not occur. As education consultants and authors Michael Fullan and Joanne Quinn noted, the problem is "the presence of too many [goals] that are ad hoc, unconnected, and ever changing."¹⁸ Likewise, policy researcher and expert Jonathan Supovitz advises leaders such as board members to use their vision and goals to

exercise discipline in considering whether new initiatives that are not expressly mandated are consistent with district goals—or divert critical resources, including time and energy.¹⁹

Centralization versus decentralization is not the issue. Many district reform efforts focus on increased or decreased centralization at the district level. However, research has shown that it is districts’ ability to effectively implement their selected strategies, not their level of centralization that is most important to district improvement.²⁰

District authority and site-level flexibility should be balanced. Research on district improvement consistently points to an approach that balances district authority with site-level flexibility.^{21,22,23} The district’s role is to establish a shared vision and goals, and measure progress. How schools meet goals, however, should allow for professional judgment and reflect the school context.^{24,25,26} Research supports the need for district goals that are non-negotiable and strongly emphasized, while allowing school leaders—including teachers—to determine the approach to achieve those goals.²⁷

Factor 3: Using Data to Inform and Support Continuous Improvement

Leaders at both the district and school level need reliable data to inform decisions about how to improve student outcomes and facilitate continuous improvement. Effective use of data depends on the capacity of users to interpret and act on it. To support continuous improvement, board members should consider how data is used by district leadership and within each school—particularly to advance equity.

District leadership for data use. A culture in which data informs decisions starts with district leaders, including the board, superintendent, and central office staff. District leadership can support continuous improvement by using data at the central office to monitor how fiscal and human resource investments contribute to meeting goals. In a study of how Sanger Unified School District achieved significant gains in the past decade, researchers identified decisions grounded in evidence as a key principle for improvement—this included looking at different types of data to test and improve approaches, as well as to gain community support.²⁸

School use of data. District leaders are key to ensuring that schools have the appropriate infrastructure, guidance, and training to use data effectively, and that they understand the importance of effective use of data. A nationally representative survey of district leaders found nearly all superintendents and three fourths of board members

regarded the frequent use of assessment data as an important instructional strategy.²⁹ The most common approaches to building school capacity for data use according to a nationwide survey are professional development, providing staff for data system setup and support, and developing tools for generating and acting on data.³⁰

Given that teachers are the most important in-school factor contributing to student achievement, teachers’ use of data is critical.^{31,32} School boards can make it a priority for the district to make relevant and timely data available to teachers, along with providing them the flexibility to adapt lessons and curriculum in response to student, classroom, and school learning needs.³³ Principals also influence how teachers use data by implementing data examination activities, establishing a climate in which data is used as a resource for learning and improving practice, and setting an example through their own use of data to inform site-level decisions.

Data to support equity. Data analysis with a focus on equity can help district leaders identify opportunity and achievement gaps, and determine which resources can be used to close these gaps. Data can also help district leaders communicate with parents and other stakeholders about how and why resources are being used to address challenges. Using data for equity at the classroom level means looking at multiple factors to address individual student needs.³⁴ Research has shown that teachers in schools that are narrowing achievement gaps are more likely to receive professional development on understanding data, linking it to instructional strategies, and applying what they learn to address the instructional needs of low-achieving students.³⁵

Factor 4: Culture of Support

District culture consists of the predominant norms, values, and attitudes that drive the behavior of the board, administrators, educators, other personnel, students, and families.³⁶ Boards can model and communicate norms and values for professional behavior that foster effective teaching and learning. Moreover, boards can work with central office administrators to develop policies that support collaboration and professional learning. In our review of the research, the following themes are essential to a culture that contributes to student achievement:

Trust is important. Successful implementation of strategies cannot happen without trust—including trust between principals and their staff; peers, parents and schools; and the central office and schools.^{37,38,39,40} Board members can support a culture of trust by engaging with the community, modeling positive and professional relationships,

making decisions with transparency, and fostering mutual accountability.

Attitudes and beliefs shape culture. District culture is influenced by the attitudes and beliefs of staff at all levels—three beliefs that shape a positive culture and appear throughout the research are highlighted below:

1. **All students can learn.** Boards in high-achieving districts report significantly more positive opinions about their students' potential than in low-achieving districts with similar students.⁴¹
2. **Teachers and schools make a difference.** Effective boards—those in districts that successfully implement policies that lead to improved student achievement—believe in their districts' collective ability to improve student achievement, while less-effective boards are more likely to blame external factors and students.⁴²
3. **Everyone is responsible for student learning.** Shared responsibility ensures that staff at all levels support each other to improve student outcomes.⁴³ In successful districts, educators: 1) take responsibility for their contributions to improving teaching and 2) receive support from boards, superintendents, central office staff, principals, and others.⁴⁴

Community engagement is essential for success. Research identifies strong community connections as a characteristic of high-achieving districts.⁴⁵ Therefore, leaders can enhance the success of district initiatives by investing in meaningful community engagement.

Partnerships enhance impact. One of the frequently cited characteristics of effective boards is a positive relationship with external agencies, local and state government, and the general public.^{46,47} Partnerships with external agencies can often bring additional resources and capacity to schools.⁴⁸

Factor 5: Investing in Capacity at All Levels

Districts and schools need qualified staff to deliver educational programs that meet the learning needs of all students. Furthermore, as districts seek to improve student achievement through new initiatives, outcomes depend on highly skilled staff, including district leaders and school personnel.

District leaders play an important role in developing staff capacity. Evidence indicates that districts that invest in professional learning for teachers, school leaders, and district leaders can achieve improvements in student outcomes. Board members and superintendents understand

this: They identify professional learning as the most important approach to improving student learning.⁴⁹

Research indicates that boards that are successful at implementing and sustaining initiatives invest in extensive professional development, even in tough financial times, while boards that dramatically cut professional development have proven less successful in seeing their initiatives to completion.⁵⁰ In addition, researchers have found that training for board members can strengthen their beliefs that adults can have a positive impact on student achievement and that professional learning is essential to improving teaching and learning.⁵¹

School staff capacity is critical to site coherence and autonomy. The capacity of school staff is essential to maintaining a balance between districtwide coherence and site autonomy. While site autonomy is part of an effective system, staff—teachers and principals, in particular—need appropriate training and support to meet goals established by district leaders.

- » **Teacher capacity.** Research has shown that teachers are the most important in-school contributors to a range of student outcomes⁵² and that the quality of teachers' subject matter knowledge and pedagogical understanding have an impact on student learning.⁵³ Teacher professional development on the implementation of a rigorous curriculum, differentiation for diverse students, using assessment data, and making time for collaboration are all associated with improvements in teaching and learning.⁵⁴ Effectively structured collaboration, in particular, can help teachers improve their instructional skills and improve student academic achievement.⁵⁵
- » **Principal capacity.** Principals have a substantial impact on the support provided to school staff and in how instructional time is invested, with research indicating positive connections between student learning and specific principal behaviors; teachers' understanding of what to do to improve teaching and learning;⁵⁶ and the conditions that attract and retain skilled teachers.^{57,58,59,60}

Factor 6: Planning for Leadership Turnover

Since ambitious reforms operate on timelines that often outlast board terms and superintendent tenure, experts observe that districts should explicitly plan for evolving teams and implement systems to uphold major initiatives through transitions.⁶¹

Boards can support successful transitions. Strong support throughout the system makes longevity of initiatives more likely. As previously mentioned, board members play a key role in community engagement, establishing partnerships, and creating a shared vision and goals.⁶² Together these form a foundation that helps boards incorporate new leaders into ongoing improvement efforts.

- » **Superintendents.** A shared vision and goals guide boards as they fulfill one of their major responsibilities—hiring and supervising a superintendent. The board and community can set the expectation for a superintendent to maintain district initiatives to achieve a district’s vision and goals.
- » **New board members.** Boards can ensure a careful onboarding process that shortens the learning curve for new members and fosters ongoing productive collaboration. This training can focus on key areas, such as the appropriate board role.⁶³ Boards can also schedule study sessions that address the vision and goals established by the board, and a summary of prior work and progress.

Superintendent turnover. Superintendents are crucial to implementing board priorities, yet turnover can challenge the sustainability of initiatives. Understanding why superintendents leave can help boards address recruitment and retention effectively.

There is a common misconception that superintendents often leave their districts due to poor relations with their boards—research in California found this to be one of the less common reasons for superintendent attrition. Retirement was the most common reason and moving to a district that was larger or that offered better compensation was a close second. While poor board relations were a more prevalent impetus for turnover decisions in large and low-income districts in both California and nationwide, most board members and superintendents in the California study said that their districts had high-functioning boards and positive board–superintendent relationships.^{64,65}

Board member turnover. Though more predictable given the nature of election cycles, very little research has addressed factors related to board turnover. However, there is some evidence of the impact of board member turnover on student achievement. For example, a study of board turnover in Washington state found a statistically significant relationship between increasing board turnover and declining achievement scores, especially in cases in which turnover was motivated by personal circumstances as opposed to electoral defeat.⁶⁶

The Impact of Board Relationships and Roles

Districts and county offices of education are complex organizations. To be effective, they require clearly defined responsibilities and positive relationships between leadership and staff. In these organizations, board members and the superintendent form the leadership team and entrust central office and school staff with carrying out their shared vision. Understanding the parameters of each district role is central to maintaining effective working relationships.

CSBA Outlines Five Board Responsibilities:

1. Set direction for the district or county office of education.
2. Establish structure through policy.
3. Provide support for implementation.
4. Ensure accountability through oversight and monitoring.
5. Act as community leaders.

These functions are so fundamental to a system’s accountability to the public that only an elected board can fulfill them.

Research identifies the following board roles as having a positive impact on student outcomes:

Establishing a shared vision and goals. As stated earlier, evidence points to boards and district leaders working together to establish and share common goals as a condition for district success.⁶⁷ Research also indicates that when the board and superintendent share common goals, principals feel more supported in their work.⁶⁸

Working collaboratively. The importance of collaboration extends beyond the board and superintendent—it includes collaboration between the board and other district staff, as well as among individual board members. A National School Boards Association report found that “effective boards lead as a united team, with the superintendent, each from their respective roles, with strong collaboration and mutual trust.”⁶⁹ This is supported by observations of over 100 board meetings, where researchers found that board members in low-performing districts focused on advancing their own agendas more often than those in high-performing districts.⁷⁰

Engaging the community. Positive community relations are essential to sustainable improvement, and research supports that board members have an important role in fostering this relationship.⁷¹ There is also evidence that board members from high-performing districts engage more with government and community agencies.⁷²

Empowering staff. Understanding the role of boards as vision-setters and policymakers, and of superintendents and other staff as implementers, is important. This is supported by the Council of the Great City Schools, which identified the board’s ability to focus on “policy level decisions” and not “the day-to-day operations” as a precondition for success.⁷³ Successful boards set higher expectations for superintendents, but they also empower their superintendents as leaders that contribute guidance and expertise.⁷⁴

Training and Professional Learning for Board Members

Professional learning for board members can enhance their ability to support the factors associated with improving student achievement. Research on effective boards and district leadership supports the conclusion that professional learning is essential.⁷⁵ Evidence suggests that boards benefit from training in the following areas:

1. **The basics of the job.** Bringing board members up to speed on policies and regulations that help them meet their fiduciary responsibilities.
2. **Effective governance practices.** Ensuring that meetings are run efficiently and that effective protocols are in place, so that meetings can focus on student achievement.⁷⁶
3. **The role of the board and that of the superintendent and staff.** Ensuring that the board supports district efforts effectively and focuses on working collaboratively to set policies and direction.⁷⁷
4. **Ways to improve student outcomes and close achievement gaps.** Ensuring that board members are champions of student learning and equity in how they set goals and policies, and that they make investments that support effective teaching and learning.
5. **Community engagement and public leadership.** Ensuring that board members can communicate effectively with and advocate for the needs of their schools and communities.

As champions of public education, board members can model the value of lifelong learning for their county offices of education, school districts, schools, and communities. In addition to the professional development topics covered in this section, board training on each of the six factors linked to school district improvement explored in this report can also support student achievement. For this reason, boards may wish to incorporate periodic self-assessments to identify areas that warrant additional attention.

With the changing education landscape in California, there will always be a need for board professional development about evolving standards, assessments, regulations, and legislation that can affect the operations of their school districts and county offices of education. Informed board members are better stewards of public education—more effectively communicating with the community about the importance of public education and the challenges and opportunities faced by public schools.

CSBA is strongly committed to providing quality professional learning, research, and information on important topics, and to ensuring that board members continue to advocate for equity and closing achievement gaps. As one of the 26 states where board training is not currently mandated,⁷⁸ we will continue to fill the important role of ensuring that board members can be among the most effective supporters of public education.

Conclusion

This brief is a summary of the CSBA report *The School Board Role in Creating the Conditions for Student Achievement*. For more about the research that serves as the foundation for each of the six factors that support student achievement, an annotated bibliography of board-specific research, and a detailed list of professional development opportunities for board members, the full report is available at <http://bit.ly/2ilfZb3>.

Endnotes

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FactSheet

November 2017

Board Self-Evaluation: Results and Recommendations from an Analysis of CSBA's Board Survey Tool

by Michael S. Hill and Mary Briggs

Introduction

School boards support improved student outcomes by creating and sustaining the conditions that support effective and equitable teaching and learning.¹ Governance teams bring together community members with a broad range of backgrounds, educational experience, and goals. Board training can improve the likelihood that boards will be able to coordinate their efforts on behalf of students.

Board self-evaluation is one powerful way to support effective governance. Since 2011, CSBA's Governance Consulting Services Department has offered boards a tool and access to consultants to help them evaluate their local practices. The tool includes a survey designed to be completed by each member of a participating board. Once the survey responses are collected, CSBA generates a report that serves as the foundation for a facilitated conversation on how to build on strengths and address areas for improvement.

Overview: The CSBA Board Survey Tool

The CSBA Board Survey Tool aligns with the Association's Professional Governance Standards, research, and good governance practice, and is divided into two areas: (1) Conditions of Effective Governance and (2) Board Responsibilities. Questions are divided into subcategories within each section. Participants rank their district or county board performance on a four-point scale: Almost Always (4), Often (3), Less Often (2), Rarely (1), or Not Sure (not weighted).

CSBA's Governance Consulting Services Department provides two options for conducting the self-evaluation. Following completion of the electronic survey, participating districts either review the results on their own, using written guidance provided by CSBA, or with in-person facilitation by a CSBA consultant.

In this fact sheet, you'll find:

- » A description of CSBA's Board Self-Evaluation Tool
- » Key findings from prior participants in the Board Self-Evaluation process
- » Planned modifications to the survey

Recent Analysis of the Survey Tool

CSBA Member Services recently evaluated the survey tool to ensure it provides meaningful, accurate information to participating boards. Michael S. Hill, a consultant from the University of California, Davis, analyzed the existing data to ensure that the survey reliably measures what it is intended to measure. The analysis revealed opportunities for improvements and offered insight into board member perspectives about governance within their districts or county offices of education.

Our sample included 478 surveys completed by 351 board members. Because some districts conduct regular self-evaluation, approximately one-fifth of the districts completed the survey more than once. When districts took the survey more than once, only the results from the first administration were included in the analysis to avoid skewing the data.

Excerpted Findings

Data from boards that have taken the survey in the past offer insights into what participants perceive to be their governance team's strengths and areas for growth. The results

could inform future professional learning opportunities that CSBA offers our members. Importantly, each district voluntarily opted to participate in the self-evaluation, so the findings might not be broadly representative of all CSBA members. Despite that caveat, the perceptions of 70 different boards point to common themes that can inform the professional development that CSBA offers and can prompt rich dialogue within local governance teams.

In general, average responses suggest members have confidence in board operations and support for the district priorities and superintendent. Yet they also noted room for improvement in the areas of community leadership and regular review of board performance and actions.

Board Strengths

- » Board members generally reported their superintendents were met with respect (78%) and their board demonstrated support for the superintendent in carrying out board directives (75%).
- » On most boards, participants reported that the role of the board president was clear (80%).
- » Most participants reported their board meeting agendas reflected district priorities (77%).
- » Respondents rated their board's fiscal planning responsibilities highly (75% for budget adoptions aligned with district goals and 79% for monitoring).
- » Items related to board support of district goals were also rated highly:
 - › 78% of participants reported their boards as a whole were focused on achievement for all students *always* or *often*.
 - › 76% also reported their boards *always* or *often* demonstrated commitment to district priorities and goals.

Areas for Growth

- » Half of the participants reported that individual members attempt to influence superintendents *often* or *always*.
- » Nearly half of participants reported that the effective orientation of new members and the review of governance procedures are conducted *less often* or *rarely*.

- » Board members reported that they do not frequently engage in self-evaluation; nearly 60% of board members indicated board self-evaluation is done *less often* or *rarely*.
- » Board members indicated that their governance teams could strengthen their community leadership:
 - › 51% reported their boards *always* or *often* advocate on behalf of students and public education at the local state and federal level.
 - › 55% reported they *always* or *often* inform the community about district priorities, progress, needs, and opportunities for involvement.

Upcoming Changes to the Survey

While the statistical analysis indicated that the existing Board Self-Evaluation Tool is a valid and meaningful survey, the consultant's report recommended several small modifications that CSBA could make to improve the survey, primarily through reorganization and shortening of the sections. These adjustments will maintain the overall validity of the tool while reducing the time it will take for participants to complete the survey.

Conclusion

Self-evaluation allows boards to pause and reflect on how well they are meeting their responsibilities, as well as potential changes to positively impact governance on behalf of students. CSBA's analysis of existing board self-evaluation results shows how these boards learned about their strengths as well as areas for improvement. Districts that are interested in conducting a board self-evaluation can reach out to CSBA's [Governance Consulting Services](#).

Endnotes

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California Teacher Shortages: A Persistent Problem

NOVEMBER 2016

By Anne Podolsky and Leib Sutcher

Abstract

A highly competent teacher workforce is a necessary foundation for improving children’s educational outcomes, especially for those who rely most on schools for their success. Yet a survey of over 200 California school districts reveals that three out of four districts report having a shortage of qualified teachers and that this shortage has gotten worse in the past two years. Districts report having to hire untrained teachers and substitutes, assign teachers out of field, cancel courses, and increase class sizes. They also report efforts to respond to shortages with a variety of policies to strengthen teacher preparation partnerships and pathways into the district, increase compensation, improve hiring and management, and enhance working conditions. To better address shortages, particularly in high-need fields and schools, the state and districts will need to develop a variety of evidence-based strategies targeted to communities’ different needs.

This research was supported by grants from the Stuart Foundation and the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation. Core operating support for the Learning Policy Institute is provided by the Sandler Foundation.

Introduction

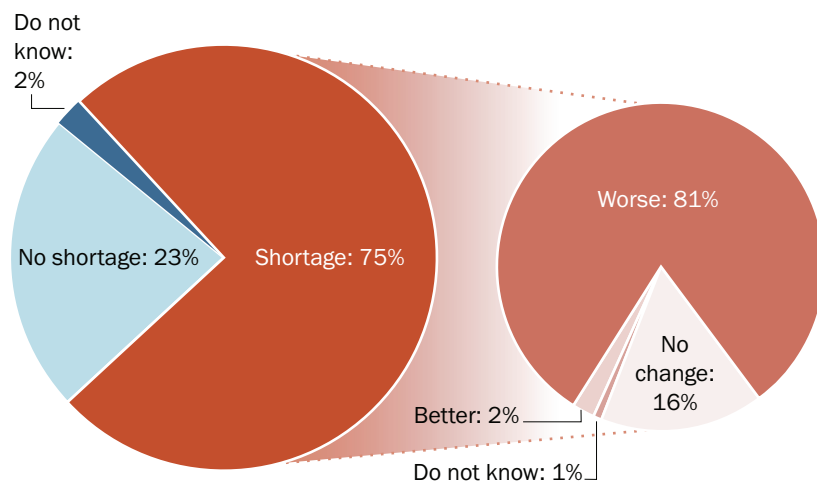
In the fall of 2016, a survey of 211 school districts in the California School Boards Association’s Delegate Assembly¹—a sample that generally reflects the demographics of California’s districts—revealed that they are experiencing alarming rates of teacher shortages.² Approximately 75% of districts report having a shortage of qualified teachers for the 2016–17 school year. Over 80% of these districts say that shortages have gotten worse since the 2013–14 school year (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Teacher Shortages Are Getting Worse

Percent of Districts Reporting Shortages

Percent of Districts with Shortages Reporting Change in Shortages



Shortages Impact California Students, Especially High-Need Students

While teacher shortages are concentrated in districts serving California’s most vulnerable student populations, large majorities of all kinds of districts are experiencing shortages:

- 83% of districts serving the largest concentrations of low-income students³ report having shortages, compared to 55% of districts with the fewest.
- 83% of districts with the largest concentrations of English learners report having shortages, compared to 64% of districts with the fewest.
- 83% of districts with the largest concentrations of students of color report having shortages, compared to 57% of districts with the fewest.

Teacher shortages are reported more frequently in cities (87% of districts in cities report shortages) and rural areas (82%) than in towns (72%) and suburbs (69%).

Of districts that report shortages, most districts report not having enough middle and high school teachers—especially in math and science, and nine out of 10 report shortages in special education (see Figures 2 and 3). More than one out of three reported shortages of elementary teachers.

Figure 2

Teacher Shortages by School Level

Percent of districts with shortages reporting the school level(s) with shortages

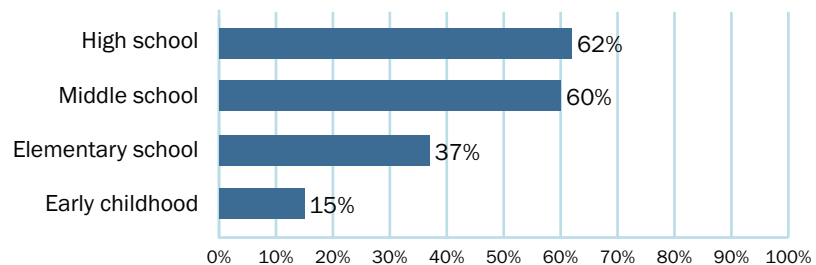
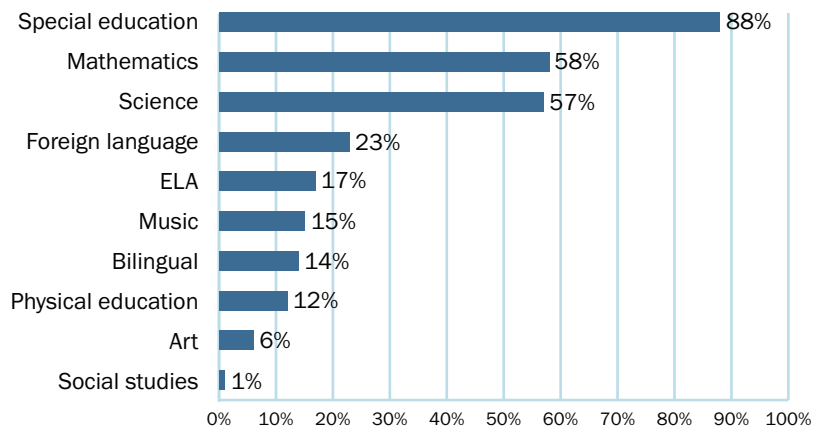


Figure 3

Teacher Shortages by Subject Area

Percent of districts with shortages reporting the subject area(s) with shortages



Fourteen percent of districts with shortages report not having enough bilingual education teachers. This shortage will likely increase because of the recent passage of Proposition 58, which once again allows bilingual education within California public schools.

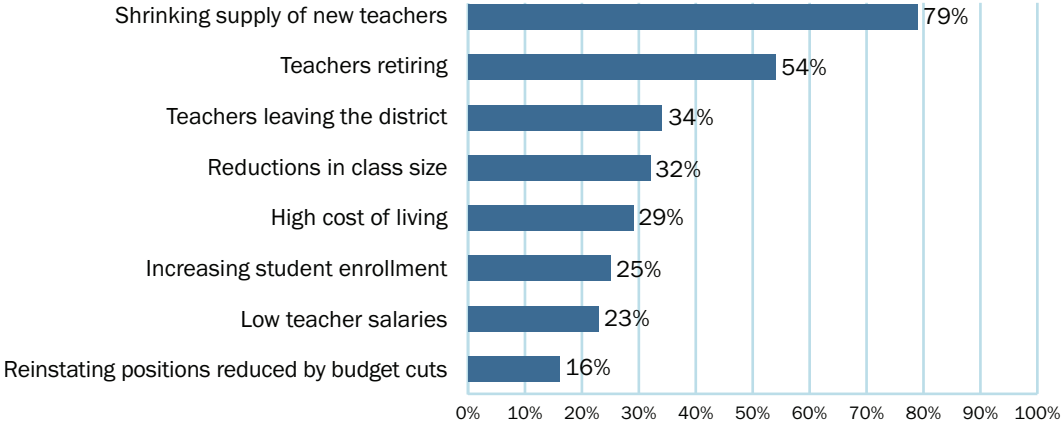
Districts are experiencing shortages for a variety of reasons. Seventy-nine percent of the districts that reported shortages said that they are experiencing shortages because of the shrinking supply of newly credentialed teachers. In fact, one respondent commented:

After nine years in my position, I see the decline each year in fully credentialed teachers completing their university programs.

Other frequently cited explanations for shortages include teachers retiring, teachers leaving the district, reductions in class size, and the high cost of living (see Figure 4). Not surprisingly, city and suburban districts attribute teacher shortages to a high cost of living more frequently than districts located in rural and town settings. Additionally, high-poverty districts report teacher turnover as a reason why their district is facing shortages twice as often as low-poverty districts.

Figure 4
Why Are Districts Experiencing Teacher Shortages?

Percent of districts with shortages citing each factor as a reason for the shortage



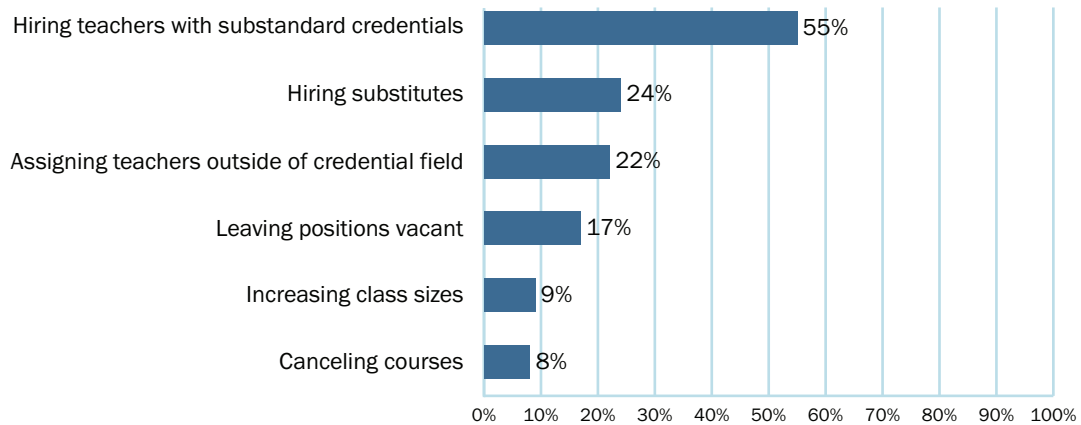
Of the districts that reported having trouble filling their vacancies, nearly two-thirds were unable to staff all positions with individuals who had full credentials in the appropriate subject or grade level. As a result, districts are finding teachers to fill classrooms through a variety of less than ideal practices, ranging from hiring teachers with substandard credentials to hiring substitutes, assigning teachers to teach out of their credential field, or leaving positions vacant (see Figure 5).

High-poverty districts report filling their vacancies with teachers who have substandard credentials more than twice as often as low-poverty districts (71% vs. 30%). They also report filling vacancies more often with substitute teachers (29% vs. 13%). In addition, over three-quarters of districts noted that they hired teachers late into the summer or after the school year began, with close to 60% of districts saying they hired late because they could not find enough qualified teachers. High-poverty (68%) and rural districts (80%) more frequently report hiring teachers late compared to low-poverty (41%) and more urban districts (64%). Some research suggests that, on average, teachers hired after the start of the school year are generally less effective and more likely to leave the teaching workforce than other newly hired teachers.⁴

Figure 5

How Are Districts Filling Vacant Teaching Positions?

Percent of districts with shortages that used the staffing solution to fill vacant positions



Administrator Shortages

While teacher shortages are most severe, some districts (about 7%) are also beginning to experience shortages of principals and district-level administrators. These shortages are mostly identified in districts with the highest concentrations of low-income students, English learner students, and students of color. In addition, rural districts report principal shortages more frequently than city districts (27% rural vs. 4% city). Of the districts reporting administrator shortages, over half say that the shortage of principals and district-level administrators is getting worse. One respondent commented:

We are finding the pool of folks wanting to be high school administrators to not be as robust as past years. We hear the hours and challenges are not attractive to everyone.

California District Policy Responses

Districts report adopting a variety of strategies to recruit and retain qualified teachers. These strategies include policies and practices that affect teachers’ preparation and pathway into the profession, compensation, hiring and management, and working conditions. Many districts are working on recruitment and retention simultaneously. For example, one district respondent noted:

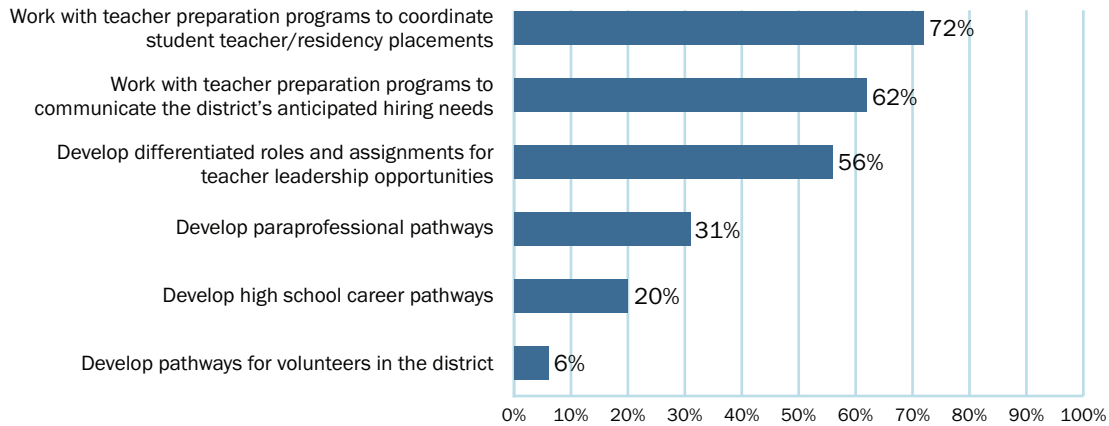
We are planning to work on ... developing high school career pathways. ... [And] in partnership with our teachers’ union, we are beginning purposeful initiatives to retain new teachers that are hired, including a school site support system, avoiding overwhelming first-year teaching assignments, limiting out-of-class time for professional development, and providing a take-home notebook computer for professional use.

Teacher Preparation and Pathway Strategies (93% of districts): Almost all districts—both urban and rural alike—report adopting one or more teacher preparation strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers (see Figure 6). Most work with higher education to coordinate student teaching or residency programs and communicate hiring needs. Urban and rural teacher residencies have been successful in recruiting talented candidates into high-need fields to work as paid apprentices to skilled expert teachers as part of their

preparation.⁵ A smaller percentage of districts—mostly urban—report creating pathways into the teaching profession for high school students, paraprofessionals, and district volunteers. These programs, sometimes referred to as Grow Your Own teacher preparation models, recruit talented individuals from the community into a career in education and help them along the pathway into the profession.⁶

Figure 6
District Preparation and Pathway Strategies to Recruit and Retain Teachers

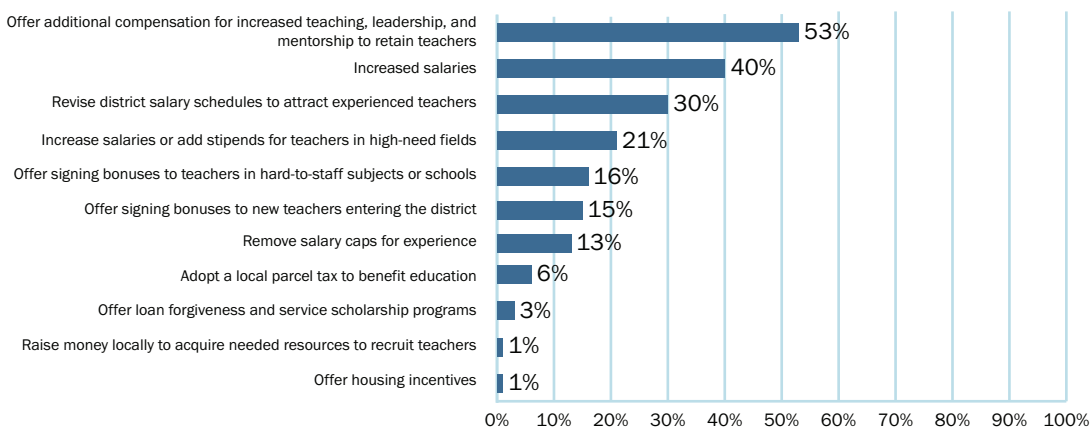
Percent of districts that report adopting the strategy to recruit and/or retain teachers



Financial Strategies (74% of districts): Many districts report adopting financial strategies to recruit and retain teachers (see Figure 7). Several studies show that teachers’ compensation can affect the supply of teachers, including the distribution of teachers across districts, and the quality and quantity of individuals preparing to be teachers.⁷ Districts most frequently report providing additional compensation for teachers who assume leadership roles. Multiple studies indicate that teachers who have opportunities to share their expertise through leadership roles are less likely to leave the profession and more effective at raising student achievement.⁸

Figure 7
District Financial Strategies to Recruit and Retain Teachers

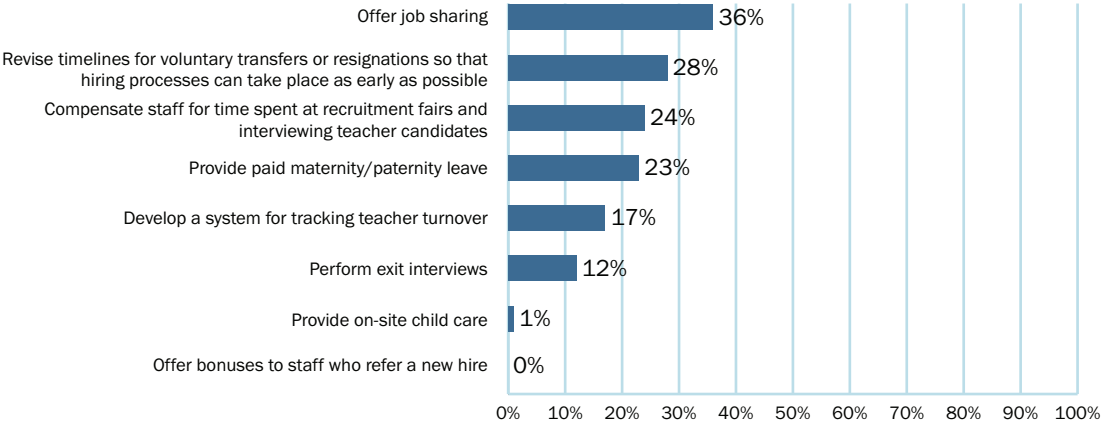
Percent of districts that report adopting the strategy to recruit and/or retain teachers



In addition to raising salaries, some districts are adding stipends for teachers in high-need fields, offering signing bonuses to new teachers, or removing salary caps for experience. A few districts offer loan forgiveness or service scholarship programs, which can be promising strategies to recruit and retain high-quality teachers into the fields and communities where they are most needed, especially when the financial benefit meaningfully offsets the cost of preparation.⁹ In general, financial strategies were more frequently used in shortage districts located in rural and town settings (77%) than in districts located in cities (63%) or suburbs (45%).

Personnel Management Strategies (55% of districts): Over half of districts report adopting personnel management strategies to facilitate recruiting and retaining teachers. Schools and districts that adopt effective hiring practices are, unsurprisingly, generally more successful at attracting and hiring effective teachers, leading to greater rates of schoolwide achievement.¹⁰ Some of these strategies aim to make teaching more compatible with raising a family, such as offering job sharing and paid maternity/paternity leave (see Figure 8). Others support recruitment by moving up hiring timelines or supporting staff to participate in recruitment fairs. Very few districts have adopted personnel strategies to specifically recruit teachers into shortage areas.

Figure 8
District Personnel Management Strategies to Recruit and Retain Teachers
Percent of districts that report adopting the strategy to recruit and/or retain teachers



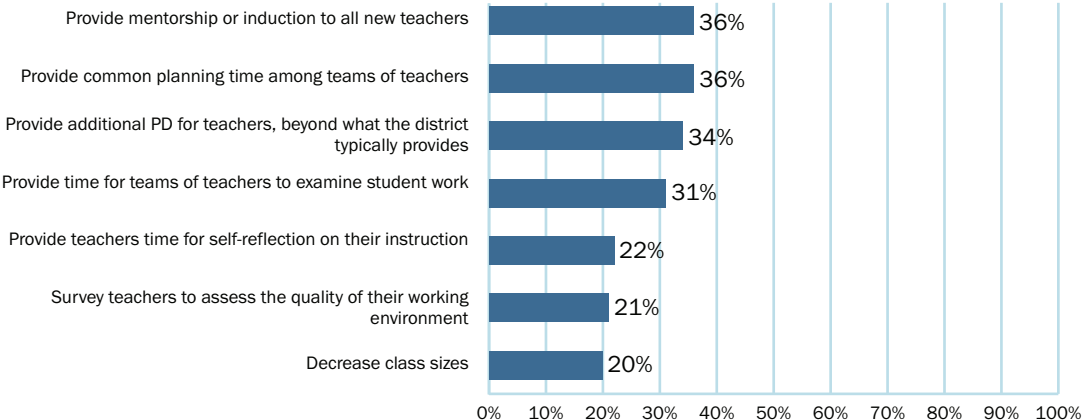
Working Conditions Strategies (40% of districts): Many districts—especially in cities and towns—report adopting working conditions strategies to recruit and retain teachers—a wise approach given the influence of working conditions on teacher retention¹¹ (see Figure 9). More than one-third provide mentoring for new teachers, additional professional development for all teachers, and common planning time for teacher teams as retention strategies.

Many of the working conditions strategies involve teachers spending more time together collaborating. More collaborative work environments, where professional learning and collective responsibility are emphasized, can have a positive effect on teacher retention.¹² Collaboration generally requires adequate time for planning and adequate teaching and learning resources.¹³ Districts that provide time for teachers to collaborate most frequently do so by organizing time in longer blocks so that teachers have longer time periods to plan and collaborate

together (28%) and by providing additional compensation for teachers for the time they spend collaborating (24%). One district noted how its supportive working conditions influence the district’s recruitment:

Fortunately, our district enjoys a wonderful reputation throughout the state; and, as a result, we are able to attract teachers, principals, and district-level administrators. We have in-house staff development and leadership training at all levels to continue to develop our own.

Figure 9
District Working Conditions Strategies to Recruit and Retain Teachers
Percent of districts that report adopting the strategy to recruit and/or retain teachers



Conclusion

Three-quarters of the California districts surveyed by CSBA and LPI are struggling to find qualified teachers. And their struggle is getting worse. As one district administrator noted, “I believe the worst is still to come. ... [I]n the end, the students lose.” Districts say these shortages are driven by a declining supply of teachers, combined with high turnover, ongoing retirements, and a growing number of positions to be filled. In response, many districts, especially districts with higher concentrations of low-income and English learner students, are hiring teachers with substandard credentials at best or leaving positions vacant at worst. Not only does some research indicate that teachers with substandard credentials are generally worse for student outcomes,¹⁴ but they also leave at two to three times the rate of fully prepared teachers.¹⁵

Districts have responded to their shortages with a variety of policies to strengthen teachers’ preparation and pathway into the district, increase their compensation, improve their hiring and management, and enhance their working conditions. However, these policies have generally not been targeted to shortage fields. To address shortages, particularly persistent shortages in high-need fields and schools, and improve California students’ educational opportunities, the state and districts will need to consider expanding the range of evidence-based teacher recruitment and retention strategies that can meet each district’s unique context.

Endnotes

1. The California School Boards Association's (CSBA) Delegate Assembly represents 244 unique California school districts out of California's roughly 1,025 total school districts. The Delegate Assembly provides a regionally representative governance structure for CSBA. Our sample includes 211 unique districts that fully completed the survey—representing a response rate of over 84%. Partial respondents (i.e., districts that answered less than 20% of the survey) and duplicate respondents (districts that had multiple people complete the survey) were removed, using random selection when appropriate. The demographic characteristics of the school districts included in this sample generally reflect the demographics of the approximately 1,025 districts throughout California. However, this sample may differ from the population of all California districts because, for example, it includes a larger percentage of districts from cities and suburbs.
2. The CSBA and the Learning Policy Institute partnered in summer 2016 to create and administer a survey of district-level leaders to learn about the extent to which they were experiencing shortages of qualified teachers, principals, and school leaders, and to learn about the various policies and practices districts use to attract and retain educators. The survey was sent to school board members who participate in CSBA's Delegate Assembly. Board members typically sent the survey to the person in the district who they thought would know the most about the district's personnel practices. Individuals in the following positions completed the survey: 37% Assistant Superintendents; 33% Human Resource Directors; 9% Superintendents; 21% Other (e.g., Board Member, Human Resource Analyst, Personnel Manager).
3. "High-poverty" or "the largest concentrations of low-income students" refers to districts in the top quintile of free and reduced-price lunch eligible student enrollment. "Low-poverty" refers to districts in the bottom quintile. "The largest concentrations of students of color" refers to districts in the top quintile of non-white student enrollment. "The largest concentrations of English learners" refers to districts in the top quintile of English learner enrollment.
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Governance Brief

Charter Schools in Focus

Managing the Petition Review Process

by Manuel Buenrostro

Introduction

This brief is the first in a series aimed at supporting governing boards to provide effective charter school oversight. School districts and county offices of education are charged with delivering a high-quality educational program for all students that prepares them for college, career, and civic life. Locally elected school boards and county boards of education play a major role in holding the system accountable. When students attend a public charter school that may have a separate governance structure and significant flexibility in the delivery of an educational program, the school board or county board of education that approved the charter maintains ultimate accountability to the community.

This brief focuses on the steps and strategies for governing boards to consider upon receiving a charter petition (i.e., a formal plan to establish and operate a charter school). Many of the processes and criteria for the review of charter petitions are delineated in law. Regardless, there is still considerable discretion for boards to determine whether a proposed charter school meets the legal criteria for approval. By requiring petitioners to engage in careful and comprehensive planning, governing boards can increase the likelihood of a charter school's success in providing a high-quality education.

Charter Schools in California

According to data from the California Department of Education, there were more than 1,200 active charter schools during the 2015-16 school year, serving 572,752 students statewide — or approximately 9% of all K-12 students in California. There are charter schools operating in 53 of California's 58 counties.¹ Since California began to approve charter schools in 1992, growth has been steady. However, the number of charter school approvals

has increased more rapidly over the last few years, growing by more than 400 schools from the 2009-10 to 2015-16 school years. During that same period, enrollment in charter schools has grown by nearly 250,000 students.²

Research has shown mixed academic results for charter schools in California and nationwide. The second brief in this series will provide detailed information on various outcomes for a range of student groups in California.

Governing Board Responsibilities and Recommendations

Governing boards along with the support of the superintendent and staff, have three major oversight responsibilities as charter school authorizers:

1. **To review the charter school petition**, prior to making a decision, to determine compliance with statutory requirements and feasibility of the proposed operations.
2. **To oversee the performance of the charter school**, including that it meets student achievement targets, demonstrates fiscal stability, and complies with state and federal laws — including submission to the authorizer of the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and other documents.
3. **To determine whether a charter school should be renewed** or, if needed, revoked in accordance with the law.

Principal among these responsibilities is ensuring that a robust review process is conducted prior to making a decision on a charter petition. This is critical so that only charter schools that are the most likely to be successful are authorized, and that the parameters of their relationship with the school district or county office of education are established ahead of time.

Recommendations in Anticipation of a Charter School Petition

After receiving a complete and properly submitted petition to establish a charter school, a governing board has 60 days to grant or deny the charter contract. This period can be extended an additional 30 days with mutual agreement between the board and the petitioners. The review process is relatively short and moves fast, therefore, it is imperative for governing boards to have their policies, procedures, and key staff in place to meet their obligations and make the best decision for their students and community. The following are recommendations for governing boards to manage charter school petitions more effectively:

- 1. Establish a Charter School Petition Review Team.** To assist the governing board, a team of staff members and if necessary, consultants, should be established to review charter petitions. The team will review petitions and supporting documentation before board action is required. The team should include individuals with expertise including human resources, business, finance, facilities, education services, special education, and curriculum, along with legal counsel. The team will want to provide an explanation for each of its findings on a petition for the board to review. While the superintendent is responsible for establishing this review team, governing boards can ensure sufficient resources for the review process and provide direction on how information should be prepared.
- 2. Establish and Refine Policies Regarding Charter Schools.** Every board should consider establishing a policy outlining requirements for submission and review of charter school petitions. This policy should specify any information that the board will need to evaluate the potential success of a charter. In addition, policies addressing charter school oversight, renewal, and revocation, should be available to petitioners so that they are aware of any requirements if their charter is granted. Subscribers to CSBA's policy services have access to sample board policies, administrative regulations, and exhibits: BP/AR 0420.4–Charter School Authorization, BP/E 0420.41–Charter School Oversight, BP 0420.42–Charter School Renewal, BP 0420.43–Charter School Revocation, and BP/AR 7160–Charter School Facilities.
- 3. Define any Authorizer Preferences.** In accordance with Education Code 47605(h), "the governing board shall give preference to petitions that demonstrate the capability to provide comprehensive learning experiences to pupils identified by the petitioner or petitioners as academically low achieving." Governing boards should address this preference in their policies

or guidance documents. For instance, the board may want to encourage petitioners to focus on specific needs, such as targeting English language learners. While petitions do not need to conform to any of the preferences, outlining them in advance might shape potential petitions.

- 4. Determine Support Available to Petitioners.** Some school districts and county offices of education have staff look at petitions prior to submission to allow time to fix deficiencies. Some interact with petitioners during the review period to negotiate changes. Others strongly believe that thorough and complete charter petitions should be submitted without assistance, allowing the board and staff to judge them on their own merits and determine the petitioner's ability to operate a school successfully. However, there could also be issues, such as services to be provided by the school district or county office of education, which can require additional guidance. While the extent of staff support is based on local preferences, the review process should be discussed and approved by governing boards ahead of time.
- 5. Engage the Public and Petitioners.** School districts and county offices of education should make available information regarding charter school applications to any interested party. This information can include school district or county office of education policies related to charter schools, authorizer preferences, additional materials for submission, and the format for submitting that information. This is also an opportunity for the governing board and staff to engage community members, families, and other stakeholders so that there is a common understanding of school district or county office of education goals and vision for charter schools.

Importance of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)

Governing boards will want to determine any MOU components it may want to complete with petitioners during the review process. An MOU is a legally binding agreement between the charter school and the school district or county office of education. While charter law does not reference MOUs, they are recommended to establish and clarify operational details when necessary. However, efforts should be made to add any critical details in an original petition where appropriate. Any MOU should be incorporated in a petition as an attachment so that it becomes part of the final charter. Since some of the items may be lengthy, a separate MOU for business operations, facilities, administrative and support services, special education, assessment, and athletics are common. *CSBA's Charter Schools: A Guide for Governance Teams* discusses these items in more detail and is a helpful resource for further guidance.

Key Steps of the Charter School Petition Review Process

Within 60 days of receiving a charter school petition, review teams must provide a robust review of the petition, identify challenges early on, and provide timely information to allow the governing board to make an informed decision. While some school districts and county offices of education will have dedicated staff to do this work, others will need to be creative about staffing during the review process, which might include hiring consultants. The following are key steps that governing boards should keep in mind during the review period.

Day 1: Governing Board Officially Receives and Date Stamps the Petition

Staff should officially submit and date stamp a complete and properly submitted petition at the first board meeting following receipt. This will start the 60-day timeline for review.

By Day 30: Board Holds Public Hearing

Within 30 days of official receipt, the governing board must hold a public hearing. This is an important opportunity for the board to hear from the petitioners, their staff, and the public. The board may choose to hold multiple hearings, provided that they meet all required timelines and public notice requirements. Board members should also seek public

input from relevant participants, including families, unions, and teachers, to identify areas of support and any concerns.

Ongoing: Staff Conducts Internal Review

The internal review of a charter petition is conducted by the petition review team and should begin as soon as the petition is received. During this process, the review team should compile relevant information and report its findings to the board in advance of the public hearing. In some school districts or county offices of education, a checklist or rubric is used to ensure that reviews are consistent and provide adequate information for the board to make a sound decision.

As part of the internal review, legal review of the petition is also critical. For all charter petitions, governing boards should ensure that legal counsel:

- » Confirms that the petition complies with applicable Education Code provisions regarding petition review and all other applicable state and federal laws.
- » Reviews the adequacy of the petitioner's insurance and liability terms.
- » Confirms that the petition addresses any services that will be provided by the school district or county office of education (e.g., testing administration, food, and accounting services).

By Day 60: Take Action

Within 60 days of officially receiving the petition, the board must complete the review process and determine whether to grant or deny the charter. After analyzing the petition, ensuring it complies with the Education Code, and reviewing staff recommendations, the board may take one of the following actions:

- » **Grant the charter for a term of up to five years.** This can include any MOUs detailing operational agreements during the review process, including on special education and facilities.
- » **Grant the charter with conditions to operate.** Conditions can be established in an MOU and require that, within a designated period of time, the petitioners resolve issues raised by the governing board or provide materials not available during the review process (e.g., insurance, leases, corporate filing, human resources manuals, etc.). Failure to comply with established conditions is a violation of the charter and can lead to its rescission or revocation. School districts or county offices of education should consult with legal counsel when determining how to handle these violations.

- » **Ask the petitioners to withdraw the petition** until they can correct deficiencies.
- » **Deny the petition** based on grounds established in Education Code.
- » **Seek the allowed 30-day extension** through written agreement from petitioners, in order to have additional time for consideration.

Components of a Complete Charter School Petition

There are certain requirements for complete charter school petitions delineated in law. Governing boards can establish their own policies for submitting charter school petitions that include these requirements in addition to other information. CSBA recommends that governing boards establish a process for the review of charter school petitions that includes the following information:

- » A petition application letter.
- » A signature page.
- » The petition’s 16 required elements.
- » Statutorily required information and affirmations.
- » Locally recommended additional information that may help the board determine whether the petition meets requirements.

The 16 required elements include information ranging from a description of the charter school’s educational program, admission requirements, and closure procedures. Additional information at the local level can include the school calendar or board member biographies. For additional information, see Education Code 47605 and *CSBA’s Charter Schools: A Guide for Governance Teams*.

What Should Boards Consider in Making their Decision?

When evaluating a petition, governing boards must grant approval unless written factual findings are made that certain, specified requirements have not been met. The board may not deny a petition based on the potential impact of a charter school on the school district’s or county office of education’s other educational programs, fiscal health, or facilities.

Any one of the following conditions must exist for a petition to be denied, as delineated in Education Code 47605(b):

- » The charter presents an unsound educational program.
- » The petitioners are demonstrably unlikely to successfully implement the program set forth in the petition.
- » The petition does not contain the number of signatures required.
- » The petition does not contain an affirmation of each of the conditions described in Education Code 47605(d).
- » The petition does not contain reasonably comprehensive descriptions of the 16 required elements as described in Education Code 47605(b).

Except for the signature requirement, most criteria for denial require a more rigorous evaluation by the review team. The governing board can be proactive by establishing criteria for an “unsound educational program,” the conditions under which a petitioner might be “unlikely to successfully implement the program”, and the level of detail required for the affirmations and the 16 required elements.

The State Board of Education (SBE) has approved regulations (5 CCR 11967.5.1) pertaining to original and renewal charter petitions that come before it on appeal. Specifically, these regulations define “unsound educational program” and the terms to measure “unlikely to successfully implement the program.” These regulations are not binding for school districts or county offices of education, but may be helpful for reviewing charter petitions and establishing criteria for success. The SBE regulations can be found at <http://bit.ly/2dfEgR>

Grade-Level Restrictions

A petition to establish a charter school may not be approved to serve students in a grade level that is not served by the school district or county office of education considering the petition, unless it proposes to serve all grade levels served by the school district or county office of education. In other words, elementary school districts would be prohibited from approving petitions for charter schools serving only high school students. However, an elementary school district serving K-6 students can approve a petition for a K-12 charter school since the school would be serving students in all of the grade levels served by the school district, plus the additional grade levels of 7-12.

Appeal Considerations

Charter petitions denied by a school board can appeal first to the county board of education and then if necessary, to the SBE.

Appeal to the County Board of Education

Petitioners may submit an appeal to the county board of education within 180 days of denial by the school board. The county board of education has 60 days (plus a possible 30-day extension by mutual agreement) to approve or deny the appeal. Unlike most expulsion appeals, the county board of education reviews the petition anew (i.e., “de novo”) and must make its own factual findings if it decides to deny the petition on appeal. If the county board of education approves the petition on appeal, it becomes the authorizer and is responsible for oversight.

Appeal to the State Board of Education

Petitioners may also submit an appeal to the SBE if the county board of education denies the petition. Just as with an appeal to the county board of education, the SBE also reviews the petition anew. If the SBE approves the petition, then the California Department of Education becomes the oversight agency. By mutual agreement, the SBE may designate the board that originally denied the petition or any local education agency in the county in which the charter school is located as the oversight agency. However, the SBE would retain the authority to revoke the charter.

Note that petitioners have the option to seek a judicial review of the school board’s original decision if the county board of education or SBE fail to act on a petition within 120 days of receipt.

Charter School Petitions Submitted Directly to a County Board of Education

Charter school petitions can be directly submitted to a county board of education under the following circumstances:

Authorization of Charter Schools Serving a Student Population Normally Served by the County Office of Education.

County boards of education may approve a charter petition directly when the county office of education would otherwise be responsible for providing direct education and related services to the students served in the proposal. Denial of these petitions may be appealed to the SBE.

Authorization of Countywide Charter Schools.

A countywide charter school operates at one or more sites within the geographic boundaries of a county and provides instructional services not generally provided by a county office of education. If making a decision to approve such a charter, the county board of education must find (in addition to the other legal requirements) that the charter school will offer educational services to a student population that cannot be served as well by a charter operating in only one school district in the county.

County offices of education should establish a separate process for countywide charter petitions to prevent confusion and legal challenge. The timeline for consideration of countywide charter petitions is 90 days with a possible 30-day mutually agreed extension. The county board of education’s decision to deny a countywide charter petition is final — there is no appeal to the SBE.

Questions for Board Members

Board members can ask the following questions to gain a better understanding of the process for reviewing charter school petitions by their school district or county office of education.

Before a Petition

1. Who are the staff in charge of reviewing charter school petitions? Do they have sufficient time and expertise? Are consultants needed to bring in additional expertise?
2. Who is conducting the legal review? What will be their role in the review process?
3. Has the board approved any policies for establishing charter schools? Are the policies up to date with current law and best practices?
4. What information pertaining to a charter school petition is provided to the board before the public hearing? In what format is this information provided, and is it sufficient to make an informed decision?

During Petition Review

5. What experience do the petitioners have operating a school? Do they have the resources or experience to implement what is proposed in the petition?
6. Does the proposed educational program meet the board's definition of a "sound educational program," and is the program research-based and aligned with the California State Standards?
7. What is the governance structure of the proposed charter? Do the members of the charter governing board have the necessary expertise to successfully support the school and understand the needs of the community?
8. Is the petition (including individual charter board members) affiliated with any other charter school or Charter Management Organization? What are those connections and how do they effect the operation of the proposed school? What have been the student outcomes of the affiliated charter schools?
9. Does the petition include a realistic, balanced budget? How realistic are the enrollment projections?
10. Does the petition clarify the expected role of the governing board, community, and other stakeholders in the LCAP process?

11. Are there clear goals for student achievement for which the charter school will be accountable? Are the goals and indicators for progress measurable and commonly understood by board members, school district staff, community members, and the petitioners?
12. What are the services and other operational aspects of the charter school that should be in the petition or an MOU before approval?

After Petition Review

13. What types of reports and information will staff need to provide for the board to monitor the performance and progress of charter schools? What additional training can be provided to improve how staff monitors the performance and progress of charter schools?
14. How should the school district or county office of education communicate concerns to its charter schools?
15. How can the charter petition review process and charter school policies be improved?

Conclusion

Governing boards have the responsibility to make decisions that provide students with access to a quality education that prepares them for college, career, and civic life. As part of this responsibility, school districts and county offices of education need to carefully review charter school petitions and approve only those with a sound educational program and adequate evidence that points to its successful implementation.

CSBA is committed to supporting the role of governing boards in maintaining and overseeing accountability and improving the quality of education in California schools. This brief, along with subsequent briefs in the series, our sample policies, and *Charter Schools: A Guide for Governance Teams*, are powerful resources to support board members in carrying out their governance responsibilities.

CSBA Resources

Charter Schools: A Guide for Governance Teams (February 2016). CSBA's nuts-and-bolts explanation of charter law and regulations to help school boards and county boards of education negotiate charter petitions, renewals, facility requests, and other topics related to charter school oversight. Available for purchase at www.csba.org/store

Education Insights: Legal Update Webcast, Season 3, Ep.3 (March 2016). This webcast focuses on charter schools and board member responsibilities. Watch as legal and policy experts discuss each governing board's oversight responsibilities and other issues such as facility requests and the petition and appeals process. View the webcast at www.csba.org/EdInsights

Gamut Online. Subscribers to CSBA's policy services have access to the following charter school-specific sample policies and regulations:

- » BP/AR 0420.4 - Charter School Authorization
- » BP/E 0420.41 - Charter School Oversight
- » BP 0420.42 - Charter School Renewal
- » BP 0420.43 - Charter School Revocation
- » BP/AR 7160 - Charter School Facilities

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Endnotes

- 1 California Department of Education. Public schools and districts data files. Downloaded June 20, 2016 from <http://bit.ly/2eicB0C>
- 2 California Department of Education. Enrollment in California public charter schools by ethnic designation, 2009-10 and 2015-16. Downloaded August 3, 2016 from <http://bit.ly/2e991rR>

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Governance Brief

Charter Schools in Focus

Ensuring Effective Oversight

by Manuel Buenrostro

Introduction

School districts and county offices of education are charged with providing all students with high-quality educational programs that prepare them for college, career, and civic life. Locally elected school boards and county boards of education play a major role in ensuring that the school options available to students—including charter schools—offer a rigorous educational program, provide equal access, and are safe places to learn.

This brief is the second in a series aimed at supporting governing boards to ensure that the charter schools they oversee meet the conditions of quality, equity, and access. It follows *Charter Schools in Focus, Issue 1: Managing the Petition Review Process*, and focuses on effective monitoring practices that can help authorizers ensure that their charter schools are meeting the goals and obligations agreed upon through the charter petition process. Throughout the brief, the terms “authorizers” refers to school districts and county offices of education, while “authorizing boards” and “authorizer staff” refer to their governing board and staff, respectively. Ultimately, if a charter school is authorized by a board (of either a school district or county office of education), then that board becomes responsible for its performance and impact on students.

Guidelines for Effective Oversight

As the granting authorities of charter schools, school districts and county offices of education should have guidelines in place for monitoring their charter schools’ performance in relation to the goals in the charter agreement. The Charter Schools Act allows authorizers to require that the record keeping, financial reporting, and programmatic review procedures be enumerated in the

This brief will answer the following questions:

- » What are the requirements and some recommended practices for effective oversight of charter schools?
- » What are some important questions that authorizers should ask as part of effective oversight for:
 - › Equity and access?
 - › Student outcomes?
 - › Governance and transparency?
 - › Fiscal soundness?
- » What are some of the capacity and expertise concerns for authorizers to consider with respect to meeting oversight responsibilities?
- » What is the role of county offices of education in charter oversight?
- » What is the role of the State Board of Education in charter oversight?

charter agreement and the memoranda of understanding (MOUs) included within it.

Specifically, the Charter Schools Act requires authorizers to do the following for every charter school under their authority:¹

- » Identify at least one staff member as a contact person for the charter school
- » Visit the charter school at least annually

- » Ensure that the charter school complies with the submission of all reports required by law, including the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and annual update to the LCAP
- » Monitor the fiscal condition of the charter school
- » Provide timely notice to the California Department of Education if a renewal of the charter is granted or denied, the charter is revoked, or if the school will close for any reason

These guidelines set the minimum conditions for oversight, which can be complemented with additional requirements. For all of these practices, assigning staff with the appropriate experience and training is critical. Incorporating the following, more specific, practices can ensure that all charter schools in the district or county are held to high standards.

Site Visits

While authorizers are only required to visit each charter school annually, they may inspect or observe any part of a charter school at any time. It is recommended that authorizer staff visit their charter schools at least two to three times during the year. Charter schools should have procedures in place for inquiries and visits from both the public and their authorizers. Authorizer staff may want to develop a protocol for visits that is congruent with site visits to other district or county office of education schools. These protocols may include a document review, scheduled interviews (with administrators, charter school board, staff, parents and guardians, and students), classroom observations, and a facility walk-through. As part of the agenda, a document review checklist should be provided to charter schools beforehand that outlines all of the Education Code requirements for oversight. While authorizer staff should schedule most of their visits with their charters, they may also consider making unannounced visits.

Requirement to Respond to Reasonable Inquiries

While the reporting of specific information by charter schools to their authorizers is required by law, authorizers can require additional information. Charter schools are required to promptly respond to all reasonable inquiries from their authorizing boards, from the county office of education that has jurisdiction over the authorizing board, or from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, who has the authority to request information at any time. Charter schools can consult with their authorizing board, their county office of education, or the State Superintendent of Public Instruction regarding any inquiries.²

Yearly Review and Documentation

CSBA encourages reviews by authorizer staff of all charter schools within their jurisdiction at least once a year and recommends that these reviews address each of the areas covered in this brief. Where feasible, authorizing boards should review the performance of each of their charter schools in a public meeting to ensure that there is alignment with community expectations and transparency in the process. This review helps ensure that there are no surprises during the petition renewal process, or if the board moves to revoke the charter.

Authorizer staff should maintain a file for each charter school, documenting completed reviews and any letters of concern or praise issued to their charters. These documents create a record that can be used when considering renewal, material revisions, or revocation.

Process for Accountability

The decision of authorizing boards to renew, not renew, or even revoke a charter should reflect a transparent process based on clear expectations. The exception might be a decision to revoke a charter in extreme circumstances. There are many intermediate actions that authorizing boards can take, including notifying charter schools of unacceptable performance or conditions that could lead to closure. Expectations and concerns should be clearly communicated and include timelines for improvement. For more information on the renewal process, revocations, and closure, see [Charter Schools: A Guide for Governance Teams](#).

The following sections cover three areas of charter school oversight for authorizers to consider: 1) access and equity; 2) student outcomes; and 3) governance and transparency, and fiscal soundness.

Monitoring for Access and Equity

All public schools, including charter schools, are accountable for being accessible to and serving all students. According to the Education Code, charter schools must admit all students who wish to attend and cannot charge tuition or discriminate on the basis of race, gender, socioeconomic status, special education status, sexual orientation, or immigration status.³ In addition, all students enrolled in charter schools, just like any public school, should have essential supports to meet their needs, and have equal opportunity to participate in all of the courses and services that each

school has to offer. Authorizers should keep these guidelines in mind when reviewing practices and policies related to enrollment, suspensions, and expulsions.

To effectively monitor for access and equity, authorizers should conduct a review of relevant data, policies and practices, and programs. In addition, authorizers should consider their charter schools' responsiveness to the needs of the communities they hope to serve.

Review of Data on Enrollment, Suspensions, and Expulsions

Authorizing boards can request student enrollment spreadsheets (which may include each student's address or attendance zone) at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. This data allows authorizers to evaluate whether each of their charter schools serves a student population that is comparable to that of district schools, county office of education schools, or the community in which each charter is located. In determining if their charter schools enroll a comparable student population, authorizers should consider multiple factors including students' socioeconomic status, ethnicity, English learner status, identification for special education services, and academic achievement at time of enrollment. In addition, authorizers should review data related to student suspensions and expulsions, aggregated by student group. Enrollment data should also be analyzed multiple times during the school year to ensure that their charter schools maintain steady attendance and do not "counsel out" students at any time during the school year. For example, if authorizer staff find a significant number of students leaving a school (whether or not tagged as a suspension or expulsion), they should consider the demographics of those students and the timing of their departure to ensure equitable treatment of all students.

Report on Discriminatory Practices

According to a 2016 report by the ACLU and Public Advocates, over 20 percent of California's charter schools were found to have exclusionary practices. These practices included denying enrollment based on academic achievement, expelling students based on academic achievement, denying enrollment based on English proficiency, requiring student or parent essays as part of enrollment, requesting social security numbers or citizenship information prior to enrollment, or requiring students or parents to volunteer or donate money. All of these practices are discriminatory and illegal under the Charter Schools Act. View the report at <http://bit.ly/2t7Pez8>.

Review of Policies and Practices Related to Enrollment, Suspensions, and Expulsions

While a review of data can uncover what is happening in each charter school, a review of policies and practices can help determine why. During the petition process, each charter school must provide, as part of the petition's 15 required elements,⁴ a reasonably comprehensive description of the following practices that can impact which students attend the school:

- » "The means by which the school will achieve a racial and ethnic balance among its pupils that is reflective of the general population residing within the territorial jurisdiction of the school district to which the charter petition is submitted."⁵
- » "Admission requirements, if applicable."⁶
- » "The process by which pupils can be suspended or expelled."⁷

In reviewing these descriptions, authorizing boards should ensure that charter schools make clear commitments related to their recruitment practices, admission requirements, and suspension and expulsion practices. It is the responsibility of charter schools to follow the policies and practices that are legally required and in their charter agreement, and to notify their authorizing boards if policies and practices are changed. Within each charter agreement, authorizers can consider the following:

- » Under "the means by which the school will achieve a racial and ethnic balance," authorizers can consider the methods by which their charter schools recruit students. For example, does each charter school provide information about their programs in a manner that is accessible to all parents in the community, including to parents who do not speak English?
- » Authorizers should determine reasonable expectations for student enrollment "that is reflective of the general population residing within the territorial jurisdiction of the school district to which the charter petition is submitted." While these expectations might differ based on the nature of each school, board members can ensure that reasonable expectations are established for all charters, including those that are countywide.
- » While a recent court decision held that charter schools did not need to comply with the expulsion procedures of the Education Code,⁸ they can still be required to comply with these procedures if included as part of the charter agreement.

Authorizers should also ensure that appropriate practices are consistently followed, and when necessary, intervene when something illegal or inappropriate is happening. For example, periodic reviews of the charter school’s website can help uncover inappropriate practices that the charter school may be able to easily correct. Interventions can range from a formal request for a charter school to correct an inappropriate practice to potential revocation or non-renewal in the most egregious cases.

Review of Programs and Services Impacting Equity

In reviewing the responsibility of each charter school to provide equal access to all students who wish to attend, authorizers should ask questions about school programs that may impact the ability of some students to fully participate in the curriculum and culture of the school. While charter schools have the flexibility to opt out of certain requirements, given their importance for many students, authorizers can request that charter schools participate in designated programs or have a robust plan for serving students in their absence. To facilitate this, authorizers and charter schools may establish agreements to use district or county office of education programs on a contract basis. For example, a charter school can provide meals to students through a contract with their district’s food services department or allow students to participate in the district’s athletic programs.

Course Access and Placement

A review of data related to course access and placement, broken down by student groups, should also be considered by an authorizer. This analysis can uncover gaps in programs and services that can disproportionately hurt students of color, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, English learners, students identified for special education services, and others. Recent issues related to unequal access to advanced coursework and even electives for students within the same school highlight the importance of this data for all public schools, including charters.

Some examples of programs that can impact equity and access in charter schools include, but are not limited to:

- » **Free and Reduced Price Meals.** The absence of these programs can have a negative impact on the health and academic achievement of economically disadvantaged students. Moreover, many low-income families depend

on these programs for much of their child’s daily food. These factors can discourage families from enrolling or lead to their dropping out of a charter school.

- » **Coursework.** Authorizers should consider how the course offerings of their charter schools can impact student progress from middle school to high school and college. For example, a charter school serving grades 7–8 should provide students with the courses required to seamlessly transfer to the high school of their choice in the district. For high school students, charter schools should provide all students with the opportunity to meet University of California, California State University, and California Community College entrance requirements.
- » **Skilled Staff.** Highly skilled staff at all levels (principals, teachers, counselors, etc.) is critical to ensuring that students receive a quality education. Considerations for hiring staff should include their knowledge of content, experience, education, and cultural competence. Staff should also have the skills and preparation to meet the needs of English learners, students identified for special education services, and other students that wish to attend. In cases where charter schools do not require staff certification, the charter agreement should indicate what skills and knowledge they will require and how they will determine if staff are adequately prepared. Charter schools should also have a professional development and support plan for staff at all levels.
- » **Transportation.** Students’ ability to access schools of choice, including charter schools, is extremely important, especially when considering the location of charters in relation to the students they wish to serve. Unequal access to charter schools may arise when only children whose parents can drive them to school or pay for transportation can attend. Therefore, the authorizing boards should maintain reasonable expectations regarding the transportation provided by charter schools—expectations comparable to those of district-run schools.
- » **Special Education Services.** Authorizers should ensure that charter schools have a plan for providing special education services that are of equal or greater quality to those provided by the school district or county office of education. While charter schools have the flexibility to enroll in the Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) of their choice, authorizers should understand the reasoning for that choice and ensure that the services available are appropriate and accessible to students, especially when the selected SELPA is not in the district or county in which the charter school is located.

In providing oversight for access and equity, board members should seek answers to the following questions:

1. Do the demographics of the charter school match those of the school district, county, or surrounding community?
2. What are the demographics of students being suspended, expelled, or leaving the charter school? How does this compare with discipline data from district or county office of education schools?
3. What are the reasons for the rates of suspension, expulsion, or student transfer of any kind?
4. What are the enrollment practices of the charter school? Do these practices provide equal access to all families that wish to enroll their children?
5. Are there any programs that the charter school does not provide that may discourage certain student groups from participating in the school? Does the charter school have a plan to address the needs of all students in the absence of these services?

Monitoring for Student Outcomes

Charter school petitions must provide, as part of the petition's 15 required elements, a comprehensive description of their annual goals for all numerically significant student groups—both identified in the LCAP and the charter agreement—as well as specific annual actions to achieve those goals.⁹ These goals should be set for each of the required state priorities identified by the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) statute, and can also include additional school-specific goals. Charter schools must also describe the method by which progress in meeting these student outcomes will be measured.

Authorizing boards should ensure that staff conduct an annual review of their charter schools' progress toward meeting the goals established in their petition and that student outcome goals are being met for all student groups. In conducting this review of student outcomes, authorizers can use the LCAP for each charter as a starting point. Charter schools are required to submit, by July 1 of each year, their LCAP and annual update to the school district board and county superintendent of schools.¹⁰ The LCAP and annual update, along with any other information provided by charter schools, should include a review of the progress toward the goals included in their charter agreement, an assessment of the effectiveness of the specific actions described in the agreement, and a description of changes that will be made as a result of the review. While there is no legal requirement for authorizing boards to provide input to or approve their charters' LCAPs or annual updates, their level of involvement can be clarified in the charter agreement (or through a charter amendment for an already-established charter).

Authorizer staff can also perform their own review of student outcomes in each of their charter schools as compared to similar students' outcomes in district or county office of education schools. California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) results and the measures in the California School Dashboard can be used in this analysis (each charter school will receive a yearly Dashboard report). Staff can also use other student outcome measures important to the district or county office of education, such as graduation rates, suspension rates, school climate, or access to a well-rounded education. Student groups considered in this analysis should include all numerically significant student groups in the district or county and not be limited to only those that generate supplemental and concentration funding under the LCFF.

In addition, when monitoring for student outcomes and for access and equity (discussed in the previous section), authorizers should consider the academic achievement of students at the time of enrollment. This will allow them to determine if there are any major differences between the achievement profile of students in each charter school and similar students in district or county schools. For example, a 2017 analysis found that while Oakland charter schools and district-run schools enrolled similar numbers of economically disadvantaged and English learner students, the charter schools enrolled a lower proportion of students with higher academic need.¹¹

In providing oversight for student outcomes, board members should seek answers to the following questions:

1. What are the student outcome goals in the charter agreement?
2. Is the charter school meeting student outcome goals for each student group?
3. Is student performance in the charter school better, worse, or on par with the performance of district or county office of education school students overall? How does this performance compare with that of students from each student group in schools in the surrounding community or similar schools?
4. If student goals are not being met, is performance improving? Does the charter school have a coherent plan for improvement that addresses any of the student outcome goals not being met?

Monitoring Governance and Transparency, and Fiscal Soundness

Like any effective school district or county office of education, charter schools must have strong governance and transparency and be fiscally sound. Monitoring for these factors is critical to ensuring that public funds are being invested effectively and that charter schools operate without any harm or disruption of services to students throughout the school year.

Governance and Transparency Review

Monitoring the governance of a charter school starts with an evaluation of the governing board of each charter school, including its composition and meetings. Authorizers should annually request a list of current charter school board members, including names, titles, and qualifications or expertise. This will allow authorizers to monitor the stability of each charter board and ensure that they are meeting the commitments for representation delineated in their charter agreement. For example, authorizers can ensure that parents or community members are represented on the boards of their charter schools if this is included in their agreement.

To further increase transparency, authorizers can ensure that meetings of the charter board are open, take place at a site and time accessible to the public, and have publicly available minutes and agendas. The location and time of board meetings should take into consideration its accessibility to students and families. While charters that are part of a larger network of schools (such as a Charter Management Organization) can bring about unique challenges regarding the proposed composition of the board and location of meetings; having clear expectations that all charters must comply with can be beneficial to authorizing boards and charter schools, making both more responsive to community needs.

Authorizing boards can also direct staff to attend charter board meetings and review the minutes from such meetings. In cases where an authorizing board member also sits on the board of a charter school, this monitoring may be more seamless. However, it is strongly recommended that authorizers consult with their legal counsel before allowing a member of the board or staff to sit as a voting member on the charter board, since the situation raises conflict of interest concerns (e.g., should a member of the district authorizing board vote on issues to which they will eventually hold themselves accountable?).

Authorizers should also ensure that their charter schools are meeting all transparency guidelines required by law, as well as any guidelines that were established in their charter agreement. For example, although there are good reasons to believe that the Brown Act, the Public Records Act, the Political Reform Act, and Government Code 1090 all apply to charter schools, not everyone is in agreement. CSBA's opinion is that these laws do apply to charter schools and recommends that compliance with them is referenced in the charter agreement. Ultimately, charter schools must abide by any provision delineated in their charter agreement.

Fiscal Review

Authorizer staff should conduct a fiscal review of their charter schools annually and regularly report findings to authorizing boards. Accordingly, "the chartering authority shall use any financial information it obtains from the charter school, including, but not limited to, the reports required by this section, to assess the fiscal condition of the charter school."¹² Charter schools are required to submit the following financial documents to their authorizer and county superintendent of schools:¹³

- » **LCAP and annual update to the LCAP on or before July 1.** Along with goals and student outcome data, these documents include information on programs and priorities for the charter school and how resources are being used to support these.
- » **Preliminary budget on or before July 1.** This will have already been submitted in the petition for a charter school prior to its first year of operation.
- » **Financial reports.** These reports should include a breakdown of revenues identified by source and details regarding the amounts spent for certain expenditure categories, such as employee salaries and benefits, books, supplies, equipment, contracted services, other operating expenses, and capital outlay. Charter schools should be prepared to provide additional financial information about beginning and ending balances, amounts set aside for reserves, amounts spent for debt service, and amounts spent from certain state and federal funding sources.
 - › **On or before December 15:** Interim report reflecting changes through October 31.
 - › **On or before March 15:** Interim report reflecting changes through January 31.
 - › **On or before September 15:** Final audited report for the prior year.

Moreover, as one of the petition’s 15 required elements, independent financial audits must be conducted annually and made public.¹⁴ It is recommended that these audits include a description of any contracts for services into which the charter school has entered. Ultimately, authorizers should be aware of any of their charter schools’ major business decisions and contracts to ensure that all proper procedures are being followed.

In providing oversight for governance and transparency, and fiscal soundness, board members should seek answers to the following questions:

1. Who sits on the governing board of the charter school? Do the charter board members provide the representation and expertise delineated in the charter agreement?
2. Are the board meetings of the charter school open to the public, in a location and at a time accessible to the public? Are minutes and agendas posted in a timely manner?

3. What are the transparency and conflict of interest requirements delineated in the charter agreement? Is the charter school abiding by these requirements?
4. Is the charter school making investments in programs and services that align with its goals and challenges (both in the LCAP and charter agreement)?
5. Are the finances of the charter school adequate to guarantee stability in operations and student services?

Considering Capacity and Expertise in Charter School Oversight

Authorizing boards should ensure that their district or county office of education has clear guidelines and expectations, and the staff capacity and expertise to effectively conduct oversight. Having the right staff with the appropriate experience and training is critical. When creating the guidelines and expectations, the board should consider the resource limitations of the school district or county office of education.

To cover oversight costs, authorizing boards may charge up to one percent of the revenue of their charter schools. Authorizers that provide a charter school with substantial rent-free facilities may charge up to three percent of that charter school’s revenue.¹⁵ Note that facilities are not considered substantially rent-free if an authorizer charges a charter school for facility costs pursuant to Proposition 39 regulations. Proposition 39 requires districts to make reasonable efforts to provide facilities for charter schools that have a projected average daily attendance (ADA) of at least 80 in-district students—and these facilities must be reasonably equivalent to those of in-district schools (for more information on Proposition 39, see *Charter Schools: A Guide for Governance Teams*).

Funding can have an impact on the scope and depth of oversight activities. For example, authorizers that oversee a single charter school may feel a greater capacity strain than those that oversee 10, given economies of scale. This should be an important consideration for board members as they set oversight expectations in their district or county office of education.

In setting the expectations for charter school oversight, board members should seek answers to the following questions

1. What are the total funds available to the school district or county office of education from oversight fees? Do these funds adequately cover effective oversight?
2. Are there clear expectations for an annual review of charter schools, including reports to the board and appropriate notices and discussion items at board meetings when problems are found?
3. Does the staff responsible for charter school oversight have the appropriate capacity and expertise to effectively meet the expectations of the board?
4. Are there other organizations, districts, or county offices of education from which best practices and experience can be leveraged?

The County Office of Education Role in Oversight

When charter schools are authorized by their county board of education, either through an appeal or directly (for charters serving a student population that is normally served by the county or as countywide charters), then the county board maintains the same oversight responsibilities as school district boards.

Additionally, many county offices of education provide support to school districts by performing tasks that may be done more efficiently and economically at the county level. Parents, school districts, and the community at large may request that the county superintendent review a charter school's operations through a written complaint.¹⁶ The county superintendent, based on these complaints or other information, may monitor or conduct an investigation into the operations of charter schools located within that county. The liability of a county superintendent of schools when conducting these activities is limited to the cost of the investigation. If the county superintendent of schools believes that fraud, misappropriation of funds, or illegal fiscal practices have occurred at a charter school operating within its jurisdiction, it may request an audit by the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT) of expenditures and internal controls.

The State Board of Education Role in Oversight

The State Board of Education (SBE) is responsible for the oversight of SBE-approved charter schools (which can result from statewide-benefit charter schools or through an appeal of a charter that was denied at the county level). However, the SBE may, by mutual agreement, designate oversight responsibilities for a charter school to any local

educational agency in the county in which the school is located or to the governing board of the school district that first denied the petition.

According to the Charter Schools Act, the SBE may also "take appropriate action, including, but not limited to, revocation" for all charter schools, whether or not it is the authorizer. This action must be based on the recommendation of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and occur when the SBE finds one of the following:¹⁷

- » Gross financial mismanagement that jeopardizes the financial stability of the school
- » Illegal or substantially improper use of funds for the personal benefit of any officer, director, or fiduciary of the charter
- » Substantial and sustained departure from measurably successful practices that jeopardize the educational development of students
- » Failure to improve student outcomes across multiple state and school priorities identified in the charter

Conclusion

Given the mixed results of charter school educational outcomes and the high stakes involved when considering the impact on students, effective oversight of charter schools is one of the most important responsibilities of school boards and county boards of education. While the Education Code establishes some guidelines and requirements for authorizers, board members can ask questions, set guidelines, and allocate resources to ensure that their school district or county office of education provides effective oversight, and to ensure that charter schools are meeting the commitments set forth in the charter agreement. Board members

aspire to a public education system of high-quality schools where all students have equal access to opportunity and receive the services that they need to achieve their fullest potential. When schools are not meeting these standards, then it is incumbent on board members to call attention to these deficiencies and take action.

CSBA is committed to supporting governing boards in carrying out their governance responsibilities with regard to charter schools. This brief, along with subsequent briefs in the series, our sample policies, and our manual *Charter Schools: A Guide for Governance Teams*, provide important tools to help boards fulfill this role.

CSBA Resources

Charter Schools in Focus, Issue 1: Managing the Petition Review Process (November 2016). Focuses on steps and strategies for governing boards to consider upon receiving a charter petition.

Charter Schools: A Guide for Governance Teams (February 2016). CSBA's nuts-and-bolts explanation of charter law and regulations to help school boards and county boards of education negotiate charter petitions, renewals, facility requests, and other topics related to charter school oversight.

Education Insights: Legal Update Webcast, Season 3, Ep. 3 (March 2016). Legal and policy experts discuss the charter school oversight responsibilities of governing boards and other issues such as facility requests and the petition and appeals process.

Gamut Online. Subscribers to CSBA's policy services have access to the following charter school-specific sample policies and regulations for school districts:

- » BP/AR 0420.4 - Charter School Authorization
- » BP/E 0420.41 - Charter School Oversight
- » BP 0420.42 - Charter School Renewal
- » BP 0420.43 - Charter School Revocation
- » BP/AR 7160 - Charter School Facilities

Endnotes

- 1 Education Code 47604.32
- 2 Education Code 47604.3
- 3 Education Code 47605(d)
- 4 For a list of a petition's 15 required elements, see Education Code 47605(b)(5)
- 5 Education Code 47605(b)(5)(G)
- 6 Education Code 47605(b)(5)(H)
- 7 Education Code 47605(b)(5)(J)
- 8 Scott B. v. Orange County High School (2013)
- 9 Education Code 47605(b)(5)(A) and Education Code 47605(b)(5)(B)
- 10 Education Code 47604.33(a)(2) and Education Code 47606.5
- 11 Education Resource Strategies. (2017). Informing equity: Student need, spending, and resource use in Oakland's public schools. Watertown, MA. Retrieved from <http://bit.ly/2xN52Fv>
- 12 Education Code 47604.33
- 13 Education Code 47604.33
- 14 Education Code 47605(b)(5)(I)
- 15 Education Code 47613
- 16 Education Code 47604.4
- 17 Education Code 47604.5

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FactSheet July 2017

Competition Cheer as Sport: AB 949

by Mary Briggs

Bill Summary

In 2015, California passed Assembly Bill 949, which required that the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) take steps to classify Competition Cheer as an interscholastic sport. The new law tasked the CIF with creating guidelines, procedures, and safety standards for Competitive Cheerleading.

Unlike traditional Sideline Cheer, in which cheerleaders support sports teams from the sidelines at athletic events, Competition Cheer teams compete directly against one another using an objective scoring system. Beginning in the 2017-18 school year, any cheerleading team that enters a competition is subject to CIF Bylaws. Among those regulations, all competitive cheer coaches—paid or unpaid—must complete the safety education program required of all CIF coaches, plus an additional training outlined in the CIF Bylaws (updated April 2017). Participants must meet the same eligibility requirements as all other interscholastic athletes.

Purpose

Without CIF recognition, districts' standards for coaching competence, safety resources, and regulations have been inconsistent. The growing popularity of cheerleading and cheerleading competitions, along with increasing skill and athletic demands, have led to more reported cheer-related injuries such as fractures, concussions, spinal damage, and paralysis. Cheerleading injuries account for 65 percent of all major injuries in girls' high school athletics. Moreover, the Consumer Product Safety Commission reported almost 37,000 emergency room visits for cheer-related injuries in 2012.

By making Competitive Cheer a sport, the state Legislature seeks to ensure that cheerleaders and coaches

Questions for Boards to Consider

The CIF now recognizes Competitive Cheer as an interscholastic sport and, has developed a set of guidelines, procedures, and safety standards for this new designation. Districts that currently offer any form of cheerleading should review their programs, because many Sideline Cheer teams will also be affected by the new regulations.

School boards should ask the following questions:

- » Who in the district oversees athletic programs?
- » Do our existing cheer teams currently participate in any competitions?
 - » If so, do the teams currently have coaches who meet the safety guidelines and certification requirements mandated by the new law? How will the district ensure that they are certified prior to competition?
- » Is there interest in offering Competitive Cheer in the future?
 - » If so, how will the district facilitate funding to comply with Title IX requirement (see p. 2) for parity in terms of the quality of resources, opportunities, and scholarships available to male and female athletes?

receive the same resources and are held to the same safety standards as other interscholastic sports. Under the new law, Competitive Cheerleading coaches are required to complete the same training as other interscholastic coaches.

In places that have instituted additional safety requirements, catastrophic injuries have declined. As an added benefit, Competitive Cheer participants are eligible for the same exemption from physical education courses that other interscholastic athletes receive. A few colleges and cheer organizations offer cheer scholarships, though cheerleading is not currently recognized as a sport by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

What does this mean?

Effective July 1, two forms of Competitive Cheer have been designated as interscholastic sports by the CIF: Traditional Competitive Cheer (TCC) and Competitive Sport Cheer (CSC). There are several distinctions between the two sports, outlined within CIF Bylaws, Article 170 (see CIF Competitive Cheer link in the Resources section).

According to Roger Blake, CIF Executive Director, about one third of Sideline Cheer teams have entered competitions in the past. Unless they meet CIF standards, however, this is no longer allowed. The moment a Sideline Cheer team enters a competition, it becomes subject to CIF regulations.

Title IX Compliance

AB 949 tasked the CIF with obtaining a Title IX compliance designation for Competition Cheer, meaning that the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) would rule that competition cheer meets its definition as a sport.

While the OCR has yet to recognize any form of Competition Cheer as a sport, the agency does not approve individual sports at the time a program is initiated. Instead, the OCR only determines compliance on a case-by-case basis during investigations of complaints about potential Title IX violations. Furthermore, the OCR reviews programs as a whole—not by individual sport—considering factors such as the program structure and administration; team preparation; and

opportunities for practice and competition. About 30 states are currently moving to adopt Competition Cheer as an interscholastic sport.

Importantly, for a district or school to be compliant with Title IX, the district must provide male and female students with the same quality of resources, opportunities, and scholarships. If the school funds certain sports, such as football, through the budget but requires that predominantly female teams operate solely through fundraising, the school will likely be found out of compliance with Title IX.

What about Sideline Cheer?

While Sideline Cheer is not recognized by CIF as a sport (and thus, it cannot fulfill Title IX requirements), the organization recommends that Sideline Cheer coaches also receive safety certification to reduce the risks to student athletes.

Where can coaches receive training?

LEAs can operate their own safety certification program, provided it meets the requirements outlined within CIF Bylaws (Article 170). Districts may also support online certification through the American Association of Cheerleading Coaches and Administrators (AACCA), which makes district-to-district transfers easier and features a searchable database of all certified coaches.

Resources:

CIF Competitive Cheer Information
http://cifstate.org/sports/competitive_cheer/index

AACCA Spirit Safety Certification
<https://nfhslearn.com/courses/10000/aacca-spirit-safety-certification>

Title IX Regulations Related to Athletics
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/rights/reg/ocr/edlite-34cfr106.html#S41>

U.S. Department of Education – Office of Civil Rights
Dear Colleague Letter, September 17, 2008
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-20080917.pdf>

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CREATING A FACILITIES MASTER PLAN PART I

Comprehensive Demographic Studies and Enrollment Projections

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Creating a facilities master plan is essential for a district to be prepared for the future and to continue to serve the needs of its changing student population. This fact sheet is the first in a series that will provide essential information for board members about the main components of facilities master plans, and important considerations for governance teams as they review and approve such plans. While district and county office staff develop these components, board members have the critical role of reviewing the plans to ensure that they contain the information needed for making critical decisions about facilities.

The preparation of a Facilities Master Plan includes two key components: 1) comprehensive demographic studies and enrollment projections and 2) a facilities needs assessment. This brief addresses comprehensive demographic studies and enrollment projections. These are studies and projections that inform the district of who and how many students are coming — and what sort of new and additional facilities, buildings, classrooms, core and support facilities will be needed to adequately house and educate those students five to ten years into the future.

DEMOGRAPHIC STUDIES AND ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS

Planning for a school district's future — anticipating how many students you will serve five or ten years hence, and where you will need facilities to house them — is never easy. An essential building block of any school district's comprehensive facilities master plan is a demographic study that produces accurate enrollment projections.

A demographic study should consider all of the pertinent factors that influence a school district's future enrollments. Factors to consider (at a minimum) include:

- » Historical enrollment trends

- » The district's historical and planned residential development (including local birth trends)
- » Local charter schools, private schools, and the number of transfer students coming into (or leaving) the school district

There are three timeframes for these enrollment projections — short-range, mid-range and long-range. Each timeframe has its own particular purpose and boards should designate staff to consider and create projections for all three.

Short-Range Enrollment Projections (1-3 Years).

Typically, short-range enrollment projections are the most accurate — and these short-range projections are essential when a district is making critical decisions about housing students in the short term. A 1-to-3-year timeline is generally too short to allow for the planning and building of permanent facilities, so these short-range facilities planning decisions may include adding portables, making school attendance area changes, or assigning student overloads from a crowded school to other schools (not always nearby) that have available capacity. It is important to keep in mind community views about some of these choices for short-term housing of students.

Mid-Range Enrollment Projections (5-10 Years).

Mid-range, grade-by-grade projections — for all schools in a school district — form the central building block of any comprehensive facilities master plan. Based on these mid-range projections, many decisions can be made regarding the housing of students over a longer period. Mid-range projections are not easy — a 5-to-10-year timeline is generally considered the limit within which reasonably accurate enrollment projections can be made. But with a 5-to-10-year perspective, the need for additional classroom space at existing schools, as well as the need for new schools (where, when and for what grades?) can be determined with a reasonable degree of certainty. With the help of accurate projections, as the school district's future unfolds

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over several years, and new-and-updated enrollment projections are prepared, adjustments to the district's facilities plans can generally be made well in advance of the need for these new facilities.

Long-Range Enrollment Projections (10 Years to Residential Build-out). While detailed long-range district projections cannot be made with an assured high degree of reliability, a long-range perspective on future enrollment can provide information regarding the potential need to acquire new school sites and build new schools. The need for a longer-range perspective differs from one school district to another — for instance, a district that includes a lot of undeveloped land already designated for future residential projects has a greater need for a possible residential build-out projection (sometimes known as the “saturation” projection).

Following these short-term, mid-term and long-term strategies will put your school district in a better position to respond to communities in a world where enrollment can go up (or down), depending on birth rates and economic trends (as many school districts discovered to their chagrin during the Great Recession). However, in each case, an accurate assessment of enrollment projections for coming years is a critical factor in preparing a school district's facilities master plan — a critical document that helps the school district prepare for years to come.

QUESTIONS FOR BOARD MEMBERS TO ASK

- » Do we have a facilities master plan? Is it up to date?
- » Who knows about the facilities master plan? Do the right district staff know?
- » How has the facilities master plan affected district investments?

RESOURCES FOR BOARD MEMBERS

- » Link to more detailed information on demographic studies and enrollment projections, www.totalschoolsolutions.net/fac_demoEPs
- » Link to more detailed information on needs assessment, www.totalschoolsolutions.net/fac_needsAssessment.php
- » Link to CSBA GAMUT Policies, gamutonline.net

CONCLUSION

Planning for a school district's future — whether short-term needs or in anticipating how many students you will serve five or ten years hence, and where you will need facilities to house them — is never easy. Boards can play an important role in ensuring that the most up to date and accurate information is used in making these important long-term decisions for their district.

 **TOTAL SCHOOL SOLUTIONS**



CREATING A FACILITIES MASTER PLAN PART II

Critical Elements of a Facilities Needs Assessment for Existing Facilities

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Creating a facilities master plan is essential for a district to be prepared for the future and to continue to serve the needs of its changing student population. This fact sheet is the second in a series that will provide essential information for board members about the main components of a facilities master plan, and important considerations for governance teams as they review and approve such plans. While district and county office staff develop these components, board members have the critical role of ensuring that the plans are in place and that they contain the information needed for making critical decisions about facilities.

The preparation of a Facilities Master Plan includes many key components. This brief addresses the facilities needs assessment. A needs assessment informs the district of the current physical conditions of existing facilities, including what sort of upgrades or replacements are necessary to bring these facilities up to a standard that will provide an effective learning environment for 21st century students.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Needs Assessment process typically begins with an inspection of facilities to obtain visual determinations of their current physical condition. In addition, meetings with maintenance and facilities staff are conducted to assess needs based on a building's history, as well as records of system and equipment repairs or replacements that were done over the years are reviewed, and an overview of the facilities inventories, equipment data, plans and drawings. The Needs Assessment process also includes meeting with the school administration to discuss end-user concerns with the condition and adequacy of existing facilities to meet current and planned future educational programs, which could necessitate additions and/or modifications to the existing facilities.

There are some important considerations for governance teams to consider as their districts conduct the needs assessment:

Participants in the Process. Broad participation and input from the following groups will greatly enhance the coverage and completeness of the Needs Assessment. In general, the assessment process should include:

- » District administration
- » Teachers
- » Maintenance/operations and facilities staff
- » Other school staff

Coverage of the Needs Assessment. The assessment should cover a wide array of district needs, including:

- » Grounds and site work
- » Outdoor facilities
- » Utilities
- » Centralized equipment systems
- » Building envelope
- » Interior finishes
- » Furnishings and fixtures

Factors that determine needs. The need for modernization, upgrades or replacements to existing facilities, equipment and systems are driven by a number of factors including:

- » New code requirements
- » Economic service life
- » Exposure to weather
- » Wear and tear

- » Obsolescence
- » CDE standards

Sources of information. A comprehensive needs assessment also derives information from sources such as:

- » Facilities equipment data
- » The demographic studies and enrollment projections mentioned previously
- » Site visits and inspections
- » Staff interviews

OTHER USE OF A NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

While the Needs Assessment is a critical component of a Facility Master Plan, governance teams should also ensure that their district has an updated Needs Assessment when making a decision to levy a Developers Fee for residential and commercial/industrial construction or to go to local voters with a Bond Measure to fund facilities modernization and new construction projects. The needs assessment is required for both of these endeavors. In the case of a bond measure, prior to an election the board, should prepare a list of projects for the voters, drawing on findings about existing facilities based on information included in the Needs Assessment.

QUESTIONS FOR BOARD MEMBERS TO ASK

- » Have we conducted a facilities Needs Assessment? How recently: Is it up to date?
- » Who has the information from the Needs Assessment? Do the right district staff have access to the results of the Needs Assessment?

- » What does the Needs Assessment indicate about current and ongoing facilities needs? What does this mean for current and future district investments?

Resources for Board Members

- » Link to more detailed information on demographic studies and enrollment projections, www.totalschoolsolutions.net/fac_demoEPs
- » Link to more detailed information on needs assessment, www.totalschoolsolutions.net/fac_needsAssessment.php
- » Link to CSBA GAMUT Policies, gamutonline.net

CONCLUSION

Planning for a school district’s future is never easy. Knowing the current physical conditions of existing facilities including what sort of upgrades or replacements are necessary to bring existing facilities up to a standard that will provide an effective learning environment for 21st century students is an essential part of understanding that future. Boards can play an important role in using the most up to date and accurate information in making these important decisions for their district.





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