California Department of Education

Executive Office

SBE-002 (REV. 11/2017)

memo-pptb-iad-jun18item01

# MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** June 20, 2018

**TO:** MEMBERS, State Board of Education

**FROM:** TOM TORLAKSON, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT:** Update on the Development of California’s System of Support for Local Educational Agencies and Schools.

## Summary of the Issue(s)

This item provides an update on the development of California’s system of support for local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools. It was created in collaboration with several agencies charged with specific responsibilities to provide assistance and support to LEAs under the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF).

Since August 2016, the State Board of Education (SBE) has received a total of eight updates regarding the development of the statewide system of support, each building on the other and providing an update on the progress, implementation, and continuous improvement of initiatives, policies, and assistance efforts of stakeholders engaged in California’s system of support.

## Brief History of Key Issues

In order to improve the education of our students, California is in the process of creating a coordinated and coherent state structure to ensure that LEAs receive resources and support to meet identified student needs, including disparities in outcomes or opportunities. The LCFF is the foundation for reimaging California’s accountability and continuous improvement system. As a result of the LCFF, California worked with stakeholders to develop tools for educators that will help improve outcomes for students including the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and the California School Dashboard (Dashboard). In addition to those tools and a new funding formula, the LCFF outlined a vision for support and assistance. Previous SBE Information Memoranda and Agenda Items have laid the foundation for California’s system of support, which includes the following levels of support:

* **Support for All LEAs and Schools (Level 1):** Various state and local agencies provide an array of resources and voluntary assistance that **all** LEAs may use to improve student performance.
* **Differentiated Assistance (Level 2):** County superintendents, the California Department of Education (CDE), charter authorizers, and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) provide **differentiated** **assistance** for LEAs and schools, in the form of individually designed assistance, to address identified performance issues.
* **Intensive Intervention (Level 3):** The State Superintendent of Public Instruction or, for charter schools, the charter authorizer may require more **intensive interventions** for LEAs or schools with persistent performance issues over a specified time period.

The goal for support at all levels is to assist LEAs and their schools to meet the needs of each student served, with a focus on building capacity to sustain improvement and effectively address inequities in student opportunities and outcomes. This means that the outcomes for this work include not only improvement on Dashboard indicators from year to year, but also progressing on interim measurements that LEAs collect locally and use throughout the year.

Key shifts in support reflect the intent of the LCFF for differentiated assistance to be tailored to locally identified needs, rather than imposed as a one-size-fits-all solution. Table 1 identifies several key changes in the approach to assistance.

### Table 1. Shifts in California’s Approach to Improvement

| Education Improvement Before LCFF | Education Improvement After LCFF |
| --- | --- |
| Top down transactional exchanges focused on schools in isolation | Support providers work alongside LEAs and their schools to identify key challenges and opportunities |
| Packaged approaches for interventions | Systemic approach tailored to locally identified needs and strengths |
| Isolated team decision making | Engaging with local educators and communities as part of decision making |
| Redundancy and contradictions across state and federal programs | Streamlined and coherent expectations for LEAs across state and federal programs |
| Assistance disconnected from local priorities and focus | Assistance supports LEAs in aligning, prioritizing, and using resources to meet student needs identified in the LCAP |

In order to coordinate support at all levels and to ensure these shifts become reality, the agencies charged with providing support under the LCFF expanded their initial cross agency group to include stakeholder perspectives and practitioners from the field. This larger team is the System of Support Planning Group that will address common concerns and interests from the field regarding support for LEAs and schools.

At the June 2018 System of Support Planning Group meeting, the team reviewed feedback from the Differentiated Assistance Progress Check feedback loop that they created. Feedback is one integral piece to ensuring that support for LEAs and schools is responsive to their needs. In the Governor’s proposed budget, additional elements of support will dramatically increase California’s ability to respond to the needs of LEAs and schools. The September SBE meeting will include an item on the system of support. This allows staff to present to the SBE on all aspects of the final, approved budget that impact the ongoing work to develop the system of support and provide an update on the collaborative work with other agencies to implement new components included in the final budget.

In addition to feedback from practitioners in the field and the Governor’s proposed budget, provisions of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) related to accountability and school improvement also impact California’s support for LEAs and schools. A future item will include an overview of the timeline and milestones for implementing these and other provisions of the ESSA.

The System of Support Planning Group looks forward to working with stakeholder groups to further build out the system of support by integrating the feedback received; the proposed elements of support in the Governor’s budget, once finalized; and guidance from the approved ESSA State Plan.

Attachment 1 provides an update on Differentiated Assistance, specifically, a high-level overview of the differentiated assistance feedback loop that the System of Support Planning Group planned and implemented. Attachment 2 provides an update on the ongoing communication about the system of support; specifically it provides background information about the system of support. Attachment 3 is a resource to clarify frequently asked questions about the system of support.

## Summary of Previous State Board of Education Discussion and Action

In May 2018, the SBE received an update on the system of support (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr18/documents/may18item01.docx>).

In March 2018, the SBE received an update on the system of support (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr18/documents/mar18item02.docx>).

In January 2018, the SBE received an update on the system of support (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr18/documents/jan18item03.docx>).

In November 2017, the SBE received an update on the system of support (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr17/documents/nov17item04.doc>).

In September 2017, the SBE received an update on the system of support (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr17/documents/sep17item03.doc>).

In July 2017, the SBE received an update on the proposed goals and characteristics of an integrated system of support (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr17/documents/jul17item02.doc>).

In June 2017, the SBE received the following Information Memorandum:

* Developing an Integrated Statewide System of Support (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/pn/im/documents/memo-exec-ocd-jun17item02.doc>).

In August 2016, the SBE received the following Information Memorandum:

* California’s Local, State and Federal Accountability and Continuous Improvement System: Framework for Supporting Local Educational Agencies and Schools (<https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/pn/im/documents/memo-sbe-aug16item02.doc>).

## Attachment(s)

* Attachment 1: Differentiated Assistance Update (9 Pages)
* Attachment 2: Update on the Ongoing Communication about the System of Support (2 Pages)
* Attachment 3: Frequently Asked Questions about the System of Support (7 Pages)

# Attachment 1: Differentiated Assistance Update

## Feedback from the Field

### Introduction

Beginning in the spring of 2017, the state of California officially launched its efforts to design, develop, and deploy the state’s system of support to offer resources, guidance, and tools to school districts and schools as they seek to improve the educational outcomes of students. While there were some groups within state agencies and other intermediary organizations that had begun elements of this work, California set out to pull together all the state agencies with a role or responsibility for coordinating support to school districts and schools. These agencies included the California Department of Education (CDE), the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), county offices of education (COEs), and the California State Board of Education (SBE). Over time, the state agencies were joined by other education associations, education advocacy organizations, and practitioners as a means to collect ongoing and meaningful feedback into the strategies and activities being developed under the system of support. Feedback became an early and important theme for leaders from the state agencies who recognized that in order to improve their own work, it was important to hear from those “on the front lines” doing this work. They also recognized that if state agencies espoused the need to collect data as a means to identify areas of improvement then they, themselves, should be engaging in similar activities.

In addition to the feedback collected during the bi-monthly planning group sessions, another vital source of feedback for state agencies and other stakeholders was through alternate means of data collection such as surveys, interviews, and groups’ responses to prompting questions about the system of support. Beginning in early 2018, various state agencies, with support from WestEd, began to collect data about the first year of implementation of the system of support.

What follows is a brief description of the methodology for the collection of feedback on the system of support’s first year of implementation, followed by key findings. While data was collected on various aspects of the work of the system of support, much of the feedback is related to the support provided to those school districts that were identified for differentiated assistance.

### Methodology

This feedback was primarily collected through surveys, interviews, or facilitated group discussions with professionals across numerous California state education agencies, staff from COEs, and staff from school districts. In total, this analysis incorporates the perspectives of over 250 people who are actively involved in either supporting the implementation of or receiving support as a result of California’s system of support. The data collection period for this information spanned much of the spring of 2018. Due to differences in the timing of the collection of data and differences in the school district and COE context, the results reported likely vary across school districts and COEs. In addition, given the timing of data collection, the recommendations section in particular is likely to contain suggestions that some state agencies or COEs are already in the process of implementing.

### Data Sources

This summary and analysis combines data collected from various sources. Each of these sources are listed below, along with the number of respondents, and the approximate time the information was gathered.

* Survey of school district leaders in districts eligible for differentiated assistance (57 responses) between March–May 2018
* Survey of COE leaders (29 responses) between March–April 2018
* Survey of System of Support Planning Group (6 responses) between March–May 2018
* Facilitated group discussion with the System of Support Planning Group members (approximately 30 people in attendance) on April 6, 2018
* Facilitated group discussion with COE leaders during the May Curriculum and Instruction Steering Committee meeting (approximately 90 people in attendance) on May 17, 2018
* Facilitated group discussion with COE superintendents during the April California County Superintendents Educational Services Association General Membership meeting (approximately 60 people in attendance) on April 23, 2018

The facilitated group discussions included requests for table groups to document the themes of the discussions in response to the prompts from the facilitators. It is likely that not all the dimensions of the group discussions were reflected in the written feedback submitted for analysis in this document.

### Successes in Year One

This section describes areas where respondents felt that the system of support was positively contributing to growth and advancement in supporting school districts.

* **Increased collaboration.** Planning group members, COE leaders, and district leaders all reported increased coordination between agencies across the state as a key success in Year One of the system of support. They also reported increased collaboration between COEs and districts, and early efforts to strengthen district peer-to-peer support as key successes.
* **Relationship-building.** District leaders reported positive, productive relationships with their COE as one of the most valuable components of differentiated assistance, and both district leaders and COEs reported that differentiated assistance has strengthened the relationships between them.
* **Building capacity for data use.** Planning group members, COE leaders, and district leaders noted that local capacity-building around data use has been valuable. For example, respondents identified the use of data to identify strengths and weaknesses, looking at root causes more systematically, and analysis of data by student group as valuable components of differentiated assistance.
* **Strengthening and aligning existing improvement efforts.** COE and district leaders reported that most districts already had some efforts underway to address areas of concern identified by the California School Dashboard (Dashboard), but differentiated assistance improved, expanded, and provided additional motivation for their efforts.
* **Access to new tools, information, and strategies.** Respondents reported that the use and provision of various new tools and information have been a valuable component of Year One of the system of support. For example, respondents noted the value of communication strategies and talking points, strategies to review data and conduct systems analysis, and an increased focus on strategies to support students with disabilities.
* **Opportunities for deep engagement and inquiry.** Respondents identified the focus on inquiry, systems work, and improvement science as valuable in guiding, focusing, and deepening districts’ work.
* **An emerging, new model of support and accountability.** COE superintendents have tried to articulate to districts their role as a support provider and thought partner, not as someone who will “tell them what to do.” COE superintendents noted that this approach represents a “shift from NCLB [No Child Left Behind] to collaboration and partnership,” and both COE and district leaders reported district ownership of the work as an important component of differentiated assistance.

### Areas of Growth Identified After Year One

This section describes areas that respondents felt that the system of support needs to pay additional attention and respond to as a means to better support school districts and COEs.

* **Sequence and timing of activities.** COE and district leaders noted that the timeline of this work begins too late (e.g., too long after the release of Dashboard data). They also reported that the short timeframe led to difficulty scheduling meetings and completing the work.
* **Communication about the system of support.** Planning group members and district leaders noted the challenge of communication about differentiated assistance to school site staff and the public, including correcting the misperception that differentiated assistance is a sign that a school is “failing.” Others identified the need for more information about available resources for districts and COEs, and more communication with the charter school community about the system of support.
* **Data and data use.** Through the feedback, respondents identified data and data use not only as a success but as an area of improvement. Planning group members and COE leaders cited concerns that some districts may merely change their policies (e.g., by reducing student disciplinary actions), so that their data will no longer identify them for differentiated assistance; some districts may not be looking at all student groups’ data; some districts need more help with using data than anticipated; some districts’ data systems are not openly available to COEs; and data reporting is inconsistent across systems.
* **Building capacity among system actors.** Respondents pointed to the need to build capacity among various system actors—namely school district and COE staff—to engage in the work. They also reported that more clarification is needed on different agencies’ roles in building COE capacity, as well as a need for additional time, funding, and staff. Special education was also identified as an area of particular concern that requires more resources.
* **Changing mindsets.** COE leaders reported that there is still room for growth in changing mindsets across the system, including some districts’ resistance to engaging in the process of root cause analysis, a desire to jump to “quick fixes,” and a compliance mindset.
* **Identification for differentiated assistance.** Among district leaders surveyed, concern over the method for identifying districts for differentiated assistance was the top-cited concern. For example, some districts reported that they were identified due to a small group of students whose outcomes may be difficult to improve.
* **Lack of clarity about next steps.** Several respondent groups called for greater clarity or noted specific questions that need to be addressed on topics related to Year Two of differentiated assistance. For example, respondents reported a lack of clarity about the role of stakeholders in this work, how this work will affect what happens in the classroom, and what action will be taken with districts who decided on a plan during 2017–18 to address their differentiated assistance areas but whose Dashboard data no longer identify them in fall 2018. A few district leaders also reported concern about what accountability will look like in the future or concern that assistance will become too prescriptive.
* **Variation in school district needs.** Some district leaders reported a lack of value from differentiated assistance, sometimes due to redundancy with other supports or current district work in progress. COE leaders noted the challenge of engaging in deep, systems work with school districts that have experienced changes in leadership or are experiencing other district climate challenges. District leaders also reported challenges around creating and measuring change (e.g., the challenge of changing outcomes for a particular group of students); sustaining momentum for change; and measuring which change is having impact, given the large number of changes.

### Recommendations

This section describes the strategies and/or actions that respondents suggested should be taken by the state agencies and other actors in the system of support in the near to immediate future. Due to the timing of data collection and variation across COEs and districts, some of the recommendations made by respondents may already be in progress in some school districts and COEs.

* **Building COE capacity.** COE and district leaders recommended continued efforts to build county capacity across the state. COE leaders also requested additional opportunities to collaborate, such as regional meetings and trainings, as well as a statewide network for all COE staff who are leading differentiated assistance work. Respondents also noted a need for additional time, staff, and funding. Planning group members recommended that the Department of Finance and the Governor’s Office should be kept informed of this work and the resources required.
* **Align COE staffing and resources.** COE superintendents’ recommendations included conducting a comprehensive scan of how COE staffing structures have shifted to support differentiated assistance; identifying content expertise within the COE; discussing how to utilize any new funding to better meet districts’ needs; using Dashboard data to consider whether to shift COEs’ content focus (e.g., to chronic absenteeism); and considering how some districts may need more support than others (e.g., small districts).
* **Tools and strategies.** COE and district leaders offered a range of requests for tools and strategies to help districts access information and expertise to assist with their specific challenges. These included:
	+ Networks connecting local districts in differentiated assistance
	+ The identification of districts that represent “bright spots” (positive outliers) as possible models
	+ Allowing districts to choose a different COE for support
	+ Offering sources of content expertise beyond COEs
	+ A repository of resources including surveys, research-based practices, and updated information on accountability
	+ Stronger Level 1 supports
	+ Additional, specific strategies to address root causes after they are identified
	+ Additional resources on improvement science, special education, and community engagement
* **Professional learning, coaching, and mentoring.** COE superintendents suggested connecting district teams to ongoing professional learning, including by establishing institutes and by adding a coaching component to support/mentor districts.
* **Improvement cycle development.** Respondents suggested various mechanisms to improve the system of support’s ongoing management and monitoring.These included:
	+ Adjusting thedifferentiated assistance schedule to begin earlier in the school year
	+ A concrete timeline of actions for Year Two
	+ Scheduling differentiated assistance on COE staff calendars in advance of the following year (starting soon for 2018–19)
	+ Aligning the three different levels of support
	+ Guidance from CDE staff regarding ongoing COE monitoring of school district processes (i.e., to support implementation, identify leading indicators, and measure whether actions are leading to improvement)
	+ Clarification on actions for previously-identified districts after the release of new Dashboard data in Year Two
	+ Preserving local control and ensuring that differentiated assistance does not expand into a compliance activity
	+ Reconsidering the methods for identifying districts for differentiated assistance, particularly for small districts and small student groups

### Themes from Root Cause Analysis Process with School Districts

In this section, we report some of the key themes identified by COE leaders when asked about their root cause analyses with districts. The most frequently cited themes from the discussion include:

* Culture, beliefs, and mindset amongst school district and school staff
* Data use and accountability for implementation
* Instructional support and delivery
* Systems (including a lack of coherence)
* School climate (including behavior) and discipline (including variation in suspension practices and inadequate support for alternatives to suspension)

Additional themes include: working in silos, the identification process, ownership, inconsistent expectations and support, connecting supports with needs, and a lack of cohesive intervention strategies. As this work continues, we hope to expand our data collection and analysis of root causes to inform the work in Year Two and beyond.

### Improving Communication within the System of Support

The feedback below is specific to the communication that is occurring within the system of support and offers specific recommendations for how to improve communication primarily within and among state agencies, COEs, and other stakeholders (e.g., education associations and education advocacy organizations).

* **Common language, common definitions, and common messages.** COE leaders recommended ensuring a common language (e.g., technical assistance “vs.” differentiated assistance), clearly defined terms, and common messages (e.g., what is “free” and what is a cost to districts; how are COEs using funding for the system of support) across COEs, across agencies, and across the state. They also suggested educating the public more about what differentiated assistance means.
* **Consistent messaging about the model.** COE superintendents recommended that to address concerns that districts view differentiated assistance as a compliance activity or that they will in the future, there should be consistent messaging from the state about the system of support and avoidance of any additional requirements. COE leaders also recommended that the distinct and clear role of each of the agencies in the system of support is defined and communicated to the field.
* **Increase communication about available resources**. COE leaders recommended that the flow of resources to support this work (i.e., the timing of the release of funds and responsibilities tied to funding) is clearly communicated.
* **Coordination across agencies and departments.** Respondents noted the need for collaboration with additional individuals at the local level, including COE LCAP directors, Special Education Local Plan Area teams, and consultants whom districts may be working with. COE leaders also recommended working toward greater coherence across agencies as initiatives and support resources roll out (e.g., CCEE California Content Library, CDE LCFF Priorities/Whole Child Resources Map, CDE Collaboration in Common).
* **Continued opportunities for input.** Planning group members and COE leaders requested additional, ongoing input from those closest to the work. For example, respondents suggested that state agency planning meetings include representation from COE differentiated assistance leads, COE leaders from all parts of the state, and leaders from COEs with districts identified for Level 3 support.
* **Vertical articulation across agencies**. COE leaders recommended the creation of a feedback loop up and down the system, a shared calendar of when different groups meet so COE leaders know what all of the agencies are doing and ways to access notes of each other’s meetings, and that the different levels of the system work together to build agendas or bring each other in, when needed, to other meetings.
* **Develop a communication process map.** COE leaders recommended that the state develop a process map that shows where the gaps in communication may be occurring, so they can be addressed.

### Next Steps

A longer and more detailed version of this document was presented to the system of support planning group during its June 2018 session to inform planning for Year Two of the system of support. Specifically, these feedback points are being used to identify various next steps for the planning group, work groups, and other subsets of participants in the coming months. This document will also help guide the planning group’s development of a proposal to continue to monitor progress and improve the work of the system of support. The proposal will include possible interim progress measures for Year Two of the system of support and an initial framework for defining capacity-building.

# Attachment 2: Update on the Ongoing Communication about the System of Support

The information below is meant to be a resource to clarify background information for the system of support and can be used as a communication tool. The System of Support Planning Group developed this resource collaboratively.

California is in the midst of implementing a new public school accountability system based on the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which overhauled public school finance and accountability. A critical feature of California’s new approach is a **refocused system of support** with three levels of assistance:

* **Support for All (Level 1):** All school districts and schools can access various resources and assistance such as trainings, conferences, voluntary technical assistance, and various tools. This support builds the overall capacity of school districts and schools to improve opportunities and outcomes for all students.
* **Differentiated Assistance (Level 2):** County offices of education (COEs) are required to provide customized assistance to school districts that meet eligibility criteria based on student group performance.
* **Intensive Intervention (Level 3):** The State Superintendent of Public Instruction may intervene in school districts if there are persistent performance issues over multiple years.

**Three key characteristics** distinguish the system of support from California’s past approaches to school improvement, which research shows have not been successful in narrowing achievement gaps.

**A focus on student groups:** Student group performance and improvement is the core focus under LCFF.

* + Student group performance is the basis for receiving additional support. High overall performance cannot mask low performance by one or more student groups.
	+ All school districts and charter schools must annually complete a local accountability plan, with mandatory stakeholder engagement, that requires them to identify steps to narrow any performance gaps among student groups.
	+ This focus is aligned to LCFF’s major change to school finance, in which school districts and charter schools receive additional resources based on the number of high-need students they serve.

**School districts as the focus rather than schools:** School districts are the locus of responsibility for improving opportunities and outcomes for students at schools.

* Evaluations of California’s past school improvement efforts have found that school-focused efforts have not consistently led to statistically significant gains in student achievement.
* Research has shown many barriers to improved student achievement are outside the control of school leadership (e.g., staffing/Human Resources, resource allocation, curriculum/instructional materials).
* School-level strategies should align with the school district’s local accountability plan, which should reflect the needs of the school communities within the district.

**Capacity-building rather than externally developed interventions:** Assistance focuses on building the skill and will within school districts to address underlying issues that districts identify in working with their stakeholders.

* Evaluations of California’s past school improvement efforts have found that even when individual schools experienced statistically significant gains, those gains generally dissipated when program participation ended.
* COE assistance involves a facilitated review of district data, including student group and school data, with a focus on helping the district identify any barriers to improved student performance and possible solutions for overcoming those barriers.

# Attachment 3: Frequently Asked Questions about the System of Support

The information below is meant to be a resource to clarify frequently asked questions about the system of support and can be used as a communication tool. The System of Support Planning Group developed this resource collaboratively.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Background

California is in the midst of implementing a new public school accountability system based on the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), which overhauled public school finance and accountability. A key part of California’s new approach is a refocused system of support for local educational agencies (LEAs) (school districts, charter schools, and county offices of education [COEs]), which is based on a three-level framework:

* The **first level is support for all**, which is made up of resources and assistance that are made available to all LEAs and schools. The California Department of Education (CDE), the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), COEs, and other agencies develop, provide, and/or disseminate these resources and assistance, which include trainings, conferences, voluntary technical assistance, and various programmatic tools. This support is intended to build the overall capacity of school districts and schools to improve opportunities and outcomes for all students.
* The **second level is differentiated assistance**, which county superintendents, the CDE, charter authorizers, and the CCEE are required to provide to LEAs that meet eligibility criteria based on student performance. This assistance is individually designed to address identified performance issues, including significant disparities in performance among student groups, and may range from working with the LEAs to identify the underlying causes for performance issues to in-district support(see below). Differentiated assistance is intended to build upon and leverage the resources and assistance provided within the first level (Support for All).
* The **third level is intensive intervention** by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI), who is authorized to respond to persistent performance issues over multiple years.

**What is the goal of differentiated assistance?**

California’s public school accountability system is designed to reinforce the expectation that everyone can improve while also ensuring additional support is provided to LEAs that are struggling. Accordingly, the goal for support at all three levels within the system of support is to assist LEAs and their schools to meet the needs of each student served, with a focus on building capacity to sustain improvement and effectively address inequities in student opportunities and outcomes.

Differentiated assistance is therefore intended not only to help the LEA address the underlying causes that led to its eligibility for assistance, but also to strengthen the LEA’s overall ability to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and programs and make adjustments as appropriate. This approach equips the LEA to improve in areas that were not the focus of differentiated assistance and increases the likelihood that improvements will be sustained when the differentiated assistance ends.

**Is this different from California’s past approaches to assistance and intervention?**

Yes. Support under the LCFF is intended to be tailored to locally identified needs, rather than imposed as a one-size-fits-all solution. Table I below identifies several key changes in California’s approach to supporting LEAs and schools to improve.

### Table 1. Shifts in California's Approach to Improvement

| Education Improvement Before the LCFF | Education Improvement After the LCFF |
| --- | --- |
| Top-down transactional exchanges focused on schools in isolation | Support providers work alongside LEAs and their schools to identify key challenges and opportunities |
| Packaged approaches for interventions | Systemic approach tailored to locally identified needs and strengths |
| Isolated team decision making | Engaging with local educators and communities as part of decision making |
| Redundancy and contradictions across state and federal programs | Streamlined and coherent expectations for LEAs across state and federal programs |
| Assistance disconnected from local priorities and focus | Assistance supports LEAs in aligning, prioritizing, and using resources to meet student needs identified in their Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) |

**Why do certain LEAs receive differentiated assistance?**

Eligibility for differentiated assistance is based on performance criteria set by the State Board of Education (SBE) (see below) Although this system continues to evolve, the criteria are currently based on performance within the eight state priorities under the LCFF, measured through both the state indicators (color-coded rating) and local indicators (met, not met rating) that are reported annually in the California School Dashboard (Dashboard). More information on the Dashboard, including the state and local indicators, is available on the California School Dashboard Frequently Asked Questions web page at <https://www.caschooldashboard.org/#/faq>.

**What are the eligibility criteria for differentiated assistance?**

In brief, education law required the SBE to adopt “evaluation rubrics” (which have been implemented as the Dashboard). One purpose of the evaluation rubrics is to determine whether LEAs are in need of additional assistance:

* COEs must offer differentiated assistance to a school district if any student group meets the criteria for two or more LCFF priorities. California *Education Code* (*EC*) Section 52071(b)
* The CDE must offer differentiated assistance to a COE if any student group meets the criteria for two or more LCFF priorities. *EC* Section 52071.5(b)
* As the accountability system moves forward, the SSPI, with approval of the SBE, may intervene in a school district or COE if three or more student groups (or all the student groups if there are less than three) meet the criteria for two or more LCFF priorities in three out of four consecutive years. *EC* sections 52072 and 52072.5.
* Charter school authorizers must offer differentiated assistance to a charter school and may refer the charter school to the CCEE if three or more student groups (or all the student groups if there are less than three student groups) meet the criteria for one or more state or school priorities identified in the charter for three out of four consecutive school years. *EC* Section 47607.3.

### Eligibility Criteria for Differentiated Assistance within the System of Support

**Basics** (LCFF Priority 1)

* Not Met for Two or More Years on Local Performance Indicator

**Implementation of State Academic Standards** (LCFF Priority 2)

* Not Met for Two or More Years on Local Indicator

**Parent Engagement** (LCFF Priority 3)

* Not Met for Two or More Years on Local Indicator

**Pupil Achievement** (LCFF Priority 4)

* Red on both English Language Arts (ELA) and Math tests **or**
* Red on ELA or Math tests AND orange on the other test **or**
* Red on the English Learner Progress Indicator (English learner student group only)

**Pupil Engagement** (LCFF Priority 5)

* Red on Graduation Rate Indicator **or**
* Red on Chronic Absence Indicator

**School Climate** (LCFF Priority 6)

* Red on Suspension Rate Indicator **or**
* Not Met for Two or More Years on Local Indicator

**Access to and Outcomes in a Broad Course of Study** (LCFF Priorities 7 & 8)

* Red on College/Career Indicator

So, for example, a school district would be eligible for differentiated assistance if one or more student groups has:

* Red on ELA and orange on Math (Pupil Achievement), and Red on Suspension Rate (School Climate)
* Red on Graduation Rate (Pupil Engagement), and Not Met for Two or More Years on Parent Engagement Local Indicator (Parent Engagement)

Note: Local indicators apply to the LEA as a whole; for example, how a school district is implementing state academic standards or engaging parents. For purposes of applying these criteria, a rating of Not Met for Two or More Years on a local indicator is applied to each student group within the LEA.

**How do school districts get out of differentiated assistance? Do school districts that are currently receiving differentiated assistance ever stop being eligible for differentiated assistance?**

Differentiated assistance is a type of support provided to school districts within the system of support. It is not a label applied to school districts or a status that they enter and exit.

Eligibility for differentiated assistance is determined annually when the Dashboard results are released (around December 1). If performance improves so that the school district no longer meets the criteria, the school district will no longer be eligible for differentiated assistance.

**Does the state post information about school districts identified for differentiated assistance?**

Yes. This information is posted in conjunction with the release of the Dashboard each fall. It shows all school districts, organized by county and what type of assistance they are receiving. For those school districts receiving differentiated assistance, it also identifies how the school district met the eligibility criteria (i.e., the student group[s] and relevant indicators). A link to the information from the Fall 2017 Dashboard is available on the CDE LCFF web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/lc/>.

**Can charter schools become eligible for differentiated assistance?**

Yes. As noted above, the law treats charter schools differently from school districts. Specifically, charter schools are eligible for differentiated assistance based on student group performance in three out of four consecutive years, rather than student group performance in a single year for school districts.

**Do LEAs have an opportunity to review the Dashboard data before the Dashboard is publicly released?**

Yes. Every fall, LEAs will have an opportunity to preview the Dashboard data prior to the public release.

**What will differentiated assistance include?**

The statute describes what differentiated assistance may entail through three examples, but explicitly notes that these three examples are “among other things” that differentiated assistance may include.

This definition reflects an intent that differentiated assistance be flexible and context-specific.

Consistent with the intent under the LCFF that differentiated assistance be tailored to locally identified needs rather than imposed as a one-size-fits all solution, the approach to providing differentiated assistance has the following features:

* Support providers work alongside LEAs and their schools to identify key challenges and opportunities
* A systemic approach tailored to locally identified needs and strengths
* Engagement with local educators and communities as part of decision making
* LEAs retain control to select the improvement strategies and actions they will implement to address identified challenges and opportunities

All COEs have committed to working with their districts to facilitate a collaborative review of their Dashboard data and other local data and a discussion of underlying causes of performance challenges.

Additional information on this topic, including specific examples of what differentiated assistance may entail based on local circumstances, is provided in the November 2017 SBE Item 4 available at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr17/documents/nov17item04.doc>.

**Do school districts receive additional funding as part of differentiated assistance?**

No. Differentiated assistance is intended to support school districts in building their capacity to improve student outcomes through the LCAP process, which includes deciding how to use resources provided through the LCFF and other state, local, and federal funding sources to meet the needs of students and the local community. As noted, COEs must provide differentiated assistance to eligible school districts, and school districts also have the choice of working with another agency or provider.

**How does differentiated assistance fit into the development of LCAPs? What is the role of stakeholders in the differentiated assistance process?**

School districts do not have to develop a new improvement plan as part of differentiated assistance. Instead, the insights and conclusions gained from differentiated assistance should be reflected in the school district’s ongoing LCAP process, which requires stakeholder engagement.

Additional information on the LCAP process, differentiated assistance, and stakeholder engagement is available in the March 2018 SBE Item 2 at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/ag/ag/yr18/documents/mar18item02.docx>.

**How does assistance for schools under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act fit into differentiated assistance for LEAs?**

Under federal law, the state must identify schools in need of additional assistance based on various criteria. This requirement goes into effect for the first time in 2018–19, so schools will be selected based on their 2018 Dashboard data. LEAs will be responsible for developing improvement strategies for schools that are identified for assistance.

More detailed information about school identification, including the various identification criteria, and requirements for LEAs with identified schools will be provided later this summer.

**How can LEAs share this information with their local stakeholders?**

A communications toolkit, which includes resources about the Dashboard and differentiated assistance, is available at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm/>. COEs can also support school districts in determining how to communicate with local stakeholders.

**Who should I contact if I have questions or concerns about the differentiated assistance process or a specific situation related to differentiated assistance being provided to a school district?**

You can contact any of the agencies listed below if you have any questions or concerns. Staff from these agencies talk regularly to respond quickly to any issues or concerns that arise.

**Your COE**

Contact information for the COEs is available at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/sd/co/index.asp>

You can also contact Sandra Morales, Associate Director, California County Superintendents and Educational Services Association (smorales@ccsesa.org)

**CDE**

Melanie Schoeppe, Director, Improvement and Accountability Division (mschoeppe@cde.ca.gov)

**Association of California School Administrators**

Martha Alvarez, Legislative Advocate (malvarez@acsa.org)