**California Department of Education**

# Report to the Legislature, Department of Finance, State Board of Education, and Legislative Analyst’s Office: The Developing, Aligning, and Improving Systems of Academic and Behavioral Supports Grant



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*Description*: The 2021–22 Developing, Aligning, and Improving Systems of Academic and Behavioral Supports Grant: Annual Report for Fostering a Positive School Climate Grant

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**The Developing, Aligning, and Improving Systems of Academic and Behavioral Supports Grant**

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**California Department of Education**

**Report to the Legislature, Department of Finance, State Board of Education, and Legislative Analyst’s Office**

**The Developing, Aligning, and Improving Systems of Academic and Behavioral Supports Grant** **2022 Annual Report to the Legislature**

## Executive Summary

This report summarizes the key content of two annual reports submitted by the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) in 2022. The reports share the title *Developing, Aligning, and Improving Systems of Academic and Behavioral Supports*, with one subtitled *Enhancing the Social–Emotional Well Being of Youth* (*Social–Emotional Well-Being*) and the second subtitled *Fostering a Positive School Climate* (*School Climate*). The *Social–Emotional Well-Being* report details the impact of project activity on the implementation of the California Multi-Tiered System of Support (CA MTSS) framework in Year 1 (2021–22). The *School Climate* report focuses on the implementation and impact of the CA MTSS Improving School Conditions and Climate pilot in the 2021–22 fiscal year. This pilot project follows 14 schools from seven districts across California as they implement theCA MTSS framework at the school level, with a focus on school climate, positive behavioral supports, and social–emotional learning. It describes the use of funds in the 2021–22 fiscal year.

This report covers the following information, as summarized from the original reports:

1. A summary of activities conducted and resources developed.
2. The number of local educational agencies (LEAs), educators, and pupils served.
3. A description of effective, evidence-based strategies identified to help LEAs statewide to create a positive school climate.
4. A summary of any data available on outcomes resulting from the activities conducted, including data reported by LEAs.
5. Recommendations for improving state-level policy or activity in support of improving school climate.

For full details and comprehensive descriptions, please see the original reports as submitted to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction on the OCDE California SUMS Initiative Annual Reports web page at <https://ocde.us/MTSS/Pages/California_SUMS_Initiative.aspx>.

If you have any questions regarding this report or would like to request a hard copy, please contact Susie Watt, Education Programs Consultant, Educator Excellence and Equity Division, at 916-323-5252 or at swatt@cde.ca.gov.

## Introduction

### Review: What is the California Multi-Tiered System of Support?

The California Multi-Tiered System of Support (CA MTSS) is a systemic, continuous-improvement framework designed to provide effective technical assistance for districts and schools to increase attendance, prevent dropouts, lower disciplinary rates, improve school climate, and boost academic performance.

The CA MTSS aligns numerous state, regional, county, district, school, family, and community resources to provide a unified, universally designed, and differentiated educational framework to meet individual needs. The framework is structured in three tiers: (1) universal support for all students, (2) supplemental services for students who require more academic or behavioral assistance, and (3) individualized help for those with the most significant needs.

### Background

In 2016, the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE), with support from the Butte County Office of Education (BCOE) and the Schoolwide Integrated Framework for Transformation (SWIFT) Center, began to lead a statewide effort to expand implementation of the CA MTSS. The OCDE titled this effort the California Scale-Up MTSS Statewide (SUMS) Initiative. Through technical assistance and professional learning (PL) resources, the partners endeavored to assist local educational agencies (LEAs) in establishing and aligning a data-driven system of learning and behavioral supports to meet the needs of California’s diverse learners in the most inclusive possible environment.

In 2018, $15 million in state funding was allocated in Assembly Bill (AB) 1808 (Chapter 32, Statutes of 2018) to further expand training and resources supporting the implementation of the CA MTSS framework, as well as the California Department of Education (CDE) Conditions and Climate Workgroup Recommendations addressing school climate and discipline. To this end, a state design and advisory team created a pilot program to implement school culture/climate training based on the CA MTSS, also known as the CA MTSS Pathway Certification for Schools. The OCDE, BCOE, and the University of California, Los Angeles Center for the Transformation of Schools (UCLA-CTS) co-lead this ongoing effort.

The graphic below (Figure 1) portrays the SUMS Initiative phases from the start of this work until the present, providing a concise representation of the project timeline. The program year described in this report, 2021–22, includes the launch of the school climate pilot Phase 2B, with 21 participating school sites, and the initiation of SUMS Phase 3, the Social–Emotional Well-Being of Youth.

Figure 1: SUMS Initiative



### Phase 3: Social–Emotional Well-Being of Youth (2021–22 to 2025–26)

AB 130 (Chapter 44, Statutes of 2021) allocated $50 million in state funding to enable school staff to support the implementation of high-quality integrated academic, behavioral, and social–emotional learning (SEL) practices in an integrated MTSS at the school level. This work, led by the OCDE and the BCOE, focuses on implementing the CA MTSS framework with fidelity at the school level, concentrating on building or enhancing the social–emotional well-being of youth using Universal Design for Learning, Trauma-Informed Practices, and Culturally and Linguistically Relevant and Responsive Teaching practices. The purpose of this report is to summarize the implementation and impact of the project and how funds were used in the year 2021–22.

## Summary of Activities Conducted and Resources Developed

### Social–Emotional Well-Being of Youth Phase III and School Climate Pilot Program

As mentioned, AB 130 allocated $50 million in state funding for schools beginning in the 2021–22 fiscal year to reinforce, expand, and improve the implementation of the CA MTSS framework at the school level. The OCDE and the BCOE are co-leading this effort, with an emphasis on employing Universal Design for Learning, Trauma-Informed Practices, and Culturally and Linguistically Relevant and Responsive Teaching practices. To accomplish this, the OCDE and the BCOE employ the following activities:

* Educator and leader training on the foundations of the CA MTSS framework.
* Training and coaching support to school-level educators for implementation of high-leverage practices.
* Training and support to educational agency leaders in aligning practices, policies, and structures to integrate and sustain an MTSS schoolwide and agency-wide.
* Establishment of school-level and LEA-level teams to drive implementation efforts.

Robust programs and resources are offered at the state, regional, and local levels to further support the CA MTSS implementation with fidelity, for which detailed descriptions are included in the original reports. These programs and resources include:

* Statewide Support
	+ CA MTSS Pathway Certification for Schools
	+ CA MTSS Framework Enhancements
	+ Executive Leadership Team direction and coordination
	+ Partner entities’ contributions:
		- California Integrated Supports Project
		- SWIFT Education Center
		- State Support Team
* Regional Support
	+ Region Lead County Office of Education (COE)
	+ Communities of Practice
	+ Annual CA MTSS Professional Learning Institute (PLI)
		- The next PLI is scheduled for July 18–20, 2023, at the Anaheim Convention Center.
* Local Support
	+ School Site Coaches
	+ School and LEA Teams

Sub-grants are available for California public schools, COEs, and other LEAs that voluntarily participate in this project:

* $50,000 for schools with up to 1,000 students
* $100,000 for schools with over 1,000 students
* Up to $315,000 for consortia consisting of a lead agency and up to six schools (Each school receives $50,000 regardless of school enrollment, and the lead agency receives an additional $15,000.)

Sub-grant recipients agree to meet all grant requirements, including submission of implementation and outcome data on an annual basis through 2026, and fiscal reporting, with submission of a budget plan, invoice, and expenditure reports on a regular basis. Funds must be encumbered by June 30, 2025, and expended by June 30, 2026.

In addition to the measures outlined above, the OCDE, jointly with the BCOE, and in consultation with the executive director of the State Board of Education, selected the UCLA-CTS as the postsecondary educational institution partner. The plan of action co-designed by the UCLA-CTS with the OCDE and the BCOE connects evidence-based, positive approaches to school discipline with ongoing efforts to address the educational needs of students. The plan and sequence of work over five years were developed to guide both the CA MTSS implementation and the school climate pilot. The pilot program provides a school culture/climate training incorporating the CA MTSS Pathway Certification for Schools, with guidance in expanding the use of restorative approaches and positive behavior intervention, supporting SEL, and minimizing the use of emergency interventions.

## The Number of Local Educational Agencies, Educators, and Pupils Served by the Activities and Resources

### Subgrant Recipients

Applications were accepted for three types of sub-grants available for all California public schools, LEAs, and COEs to voluntarily participate in this project:

* $50,000 for schools with up to 1,000 students
* $100,000 for schools with over 1,000 students
* Up to $315,000 for consortia consisting of a lead agency and up to six schools (Each school receives $50,000 regardless of school enrollment, and the lead agency receives an additional $15,000.)

Timelines were developed for the first and second rounds of applications. In the first round of applications, schools and consortia could determine when they wanted to begin their coursework by selecting one of three cohorts/start times (Cohort A: March 2022, Cohort B: September 2022, or Cohort C: March 2023). Schools and consortia in the second round will join Cohort C. The grant period for all COE awardees and cohorts will end on June 30, 2026.

Information about the sub-grants and how to apply was broadly distributed using a variety of communication channels, including the CA MTSS web page, newsletter listservs, social media, various contacts, education networks, and education-centered organizations.

Schools, LEAs, and COEs from the seven geographic lead areas for the project and representing elementary, middle, and high schools serving rural, suburban, and urban areas, as well as COEs, were to be represented among the recipients.

Schools and LEAs throughout the state applied in the first round. Two-hundred-and-seventy-two schools and 38 COEs were awarded sub-grants and agreed to participate. A second round to receive applications for sub-grants was opened in July 2022, with a deadline to apply of October 15, 2022.

### Round 1

The table below summarizes by geographic area the number of schools and COEs that were awarded sub-grants in the first round and agreed to participate.

Summary of Sub-Grantees by Geographic Area

| **Geographic Area Leads** | **Cohort A Schools** | **Cohort B Schools** | **Cohort C Schools** | **Number of COEs** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Shasta COE | 9 | 28 | 2 | 6 |
| Sonoma COE | 1 | 20 | 0 | 3 |
| Placer and Sacramento COEs | 0 | 33 | 1 | 6 |
| Alameda COE | 5 | 4 | 0 | 5 |
| Tulare COE | 10 | 31 | 3 | 8 |
| Kern County Superintendent of Schools | 10 | 51 | 0 | 6 |
| Riverside and San Diego COEs | 16 | 42 | 6 | 4 |
| **Totals** | **51** | **209** | **12** | **38** |

Funds will be used to support the increase of educator knowledge and skills pertaining to the CA MTSS framework and its implementation in the following ways:

* Toward stipends for educators to complete the CA MTSS Pathway Certification for Schools online course, as some time may be used outside of school or contracted hours.
* For release time to hire substitutes so that staff may work together to complete the online course as a team during school hours.
* Any additional funding that remains after 90 percent of the staff at a given site completes the course may be allocated for service agreements between the school and external service providers, limited purchases of technology hardware and software, and/or instructional materials to scale CA MTSS efforts as agreed upon by the coach and administrator.

### School Climate Pilot

To ensure that a broad yet representative sample was chosen for the pilot, discipline and demographic data were organized for 1,026 California school districts. Data were then structured into seven geographic areas identified through the Statewide System of Support.

Priority for voluntary participation in the pilot was given to districts from each geographic area with a demonstrated need to improve school climate, as measured through the California School Dashboard.

### Phase 2A

One school district from each geographic area was selected and each school district identified two schools to participate in the pilot program, for a total of 14 schools. Participation for the schools is voluntary. In 2021–22, two schools withdrew from participation due to a lack of staff who were able to focus on the CA MTSS implementation.

### Phase 2B

A second group of sub-grants was distributed to schools to participate in the CA MTSS Pathway Certification for Schools. Participating school sites are eligible for up to $215,000 to provide stipends/release time for educators who participate and complete the course within 18 months. Twenty-two school sites were selected, representing the seven California Geographic Lead Areas. During the review process, priority was given to schools that demonstrated the capacity and willingness to evaluate their school conditions and climate and create the systemic change needed to improve outcomes for all learners.

Each school site administrator was provided a coach to assist in the planning and implementing of the CA MTSS Pathway Certification for Schools. Grant awardees committed to ensuring a minimum of 90 percent of their school staff would complete the course within 18 months and agree to become a CA MTSS Pathway Certification for Schools Demonstration Site. In 2021–22, seven schools withdrew from participation.

## Description of Strategies Identified

Through coaching support and the CA MTSS Pathway Certification for Schools course, learning opportunities are provided to enable the enhancement of school conditions and climate. Role-specific pathways allow educators to make connections to their work that guide them in providing a continuum of support to meet students’ academic, behavioral, social–emotional, and mental health needs. Specific evidence-based practices include:

* Continuous Improvement—Implementation Science and Improvement Science
* SEL to Support Social–Emotional Competencies
* Restorative Practices
* Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports
* Universal Design for Learning
* Culturally and Linguistically Relevant and Responsive Teaching
* Trauma-Informed Practices

Annual reports from school sites include descriptions of the ways in which these strategies are implemented.

## Summary of Data Available on Outcomes Resulting from Activities

The SUMS Initiative set the following goals:

* Build overall understanding and working knowledge of the CA MTSS with a special emphasis on the SEL and Mental Health domain.
* Increase individual educator capacity based on their role in the school.
* Improve fidelity of implementation for school sites.
* Improve overall outcomes for students related to academics, behavior, SEL, and mental health.

As the phases and activities of the project proceed, progress on the achievement of these goals will be measured through data gathered and analyzed, and the analysis applied to continuously improve the CA MTSS implementation and enhance a positive school climate.

### Building Knowledge of the CA MTSS and Increasing Individual Educator Capacity

The first two goals of the project concern the building of educators’ knowledge and skills in regard to the CA MTSS framework itself and increasing individual ability to access resources and apply appropriate strategies in their roles within the learning environment. These goals are addressed through the development and delivery of PL. Data from key PL activities are briefly reviewed below. A complete and detailed review is included in the original reports.

### Professional Learning Institute

The annual PLI features keynote speakers, presentations, and interactive breakout sessions focused on best practices to support all students’ academic, behavioral, and social–emotional success. The 2022 PLI featured more than 150 presenters covering knowledge and practices, equity and access, and school conditions and climate. Over 2,500 educators attended the PLI in July of 2022. The feedback from participants, collected through conference evaluations, was overwhelmingly positive. Respondents gave high ratings to presentation topics, content, and relevance. Live interactive sessions, keynote speakers, wellness space, and wellness moments were highlighted as valuable parts of the conference.

### California Multi-Tiered System of Support Pathway Certification for Schools Course Completion

The Pathway Certification for Schools is the principal component educators will use to build their capacity regarding the CA MTSS. At this juncture, there is no course completion data to report. Course completion is ongoing and certification attainment will be monitored through annual reporting. The recommended target for personnel completing the course during the grant period is 90 percent of a school’s certificated and paraprofessional staff, in order to support fidelity of the CA MTSS implementation. For COEs, the recommendation is for two to five county office staff to complete the course and achieve certification during the grant period.

### Improving Fidelity of Implementation

Multiple measures are employed to assess the CA MTSS fidelity of implementation at the site level, including self-assessments completed by site leadership teams and annual year-end reports. Baseline measurements will be taken in 2022–23 and follow-up measurements of implementation progress will be conducted annually through the end of the grant period.

School teams can use self-assessment results to identify and prioritize practices for transformation, plan actions to install and implement those practices, and follow up on the effects of those action plans. A brief summary of data from self-assessment instruments follows. For complete and detailed data reporting, please access the original reports, which are available on the OCDE California SUMS Initiative Annual Reports web page at <https://ocde.us/MTSS/Pages/California_SUMS_Initiative.aspx>.

### Fidelity Integrity Assessment

A key assessment for establishing baseline data and recording the CA MTSS implementation progress and status of school climate is the Fidelity Integrity Assessment (FIA). This self-assessment examines the current status of schoolwide practices that have been demonstrated through research to provide a basis for successfully including all students.

The FIA guides teams in assessment across five CA MTSS domains. The teams review descriptive statements and determine their current implementation on the following four-point scale: (1) Laying the Foundation, (2) Installing, (3) Implementing, or (4) Sustaining Schoolwide Implementation.

FIA results show that schools and sites in Phase 2A of the school climate pilot made progress toward Implementing or Sustaining Implementation of the practices described in the FIA, but remain at the Installing level on most items. Some progress is also evidenced in the domains of Family and Community Engagement and Inclusive Policy Structure and Practice.

Schools and sites in Phase 2B established a baseline at the Laying the Foundation or Installing level.

All schools and sites are scheduled to complete annual follow-up FIA self-assessments.

### The Schoolwide Implementation Tool

The Schoolwide Implementation Tool (SIT) is the self-assessment used by School Leadership Teams to examine the current status in addressing the four domains necessary for schools to improve their climate and culture: (1) developing a Shared Vision for Readiness, (2) developing a School Identity, (3) adopting Approaches to Learning, and (4) adopting schoolwide Structures that support all students to succeed.

The SIT employs the same four-point scale as the FIA to assess site status in each domain: (1) Laying the Foundation, (2) Installing, (3) Implementing, or (4) Sustaining Schoolwide Implementation.

At the beginning of pilot participation in the fall of 2019, staff from each pilot school site used the SIT to rate the school’s initial implementation level of the first two domains: Shared Vision for Readiness and School Identity. In spring 2021, staff from each site rated their site’s implementation level on all four domains.

### Local Educational Agency Self-Assessment

LEA/District Leadership Teams use the LEA Self-Assessment (LEASA) to examine the current status of systemic practices consistently demonstrated through research to be the components of effective district systems.

The LEASA employs the same four-point scale as the FIA to assess site status in each domain: (1) Laying the Foundation, (2) Installing, (3) Implementing, or (4) Sustaining Schoolwide Implementation.

Overall, LEASA results show that LEAs in Phase 2A remain in the Installing stage. Progress towards implementing or sustaining implementation was noted in the components of 2. Teaching, Learning, and Assessment; 4. Professional Learning for All; and 5. Infrastructure Alignment. LEAs in Phase 2B started at the Installing or Implementing levels on most items. All LEAs will complete annual follow-up LEASAs to monitor progress.

School teams use these assessment results to identify and prioritize practices for transformation, make internal decisions about actions to install and implement those practices, and follow up on the effects of those action plans. A summary of results provides schools with a picture of their current implementation of the CA MTSS framework domains and features. FIA results show that schools and sites in Phase 2A made progress toward Implementing or Sustaining Implementation of the practices described in the FIA but remain at the Installing level on most items. In addition, progress toward implementing or sustaining implementation was made in the domains of Family and Community Engagement and Inclusive Policy Structure and Practice. On most items, schools and sites in Phase 2B rated themselves at the Laying the Foundation or Installing level. Assessments are scheduled to be repeated and reported annually to monitor progress going forward.

## Recommendations for Improving State-Level Activities or Policies

### From the *Social–Emotional Well-Being* Report

The SUMS Initiative in Phase I determined that successfully establishing and maintaining a coherent system of education delivered through the CA MTSS framework aligns and coordinates the many existing educational systems and services, thus increasing effectiveness. This determination also highlighted the need for educators’ deeper understanding of the CA MTSS framework and the necessity to foster a local school and school district culture of collaboration and coordination that identifies where access and achievement gaps exist and how to bridge them effectively.

The Phase II pilot project demonstrates that capacity building of administrators’ knowledge and ability through PL is vital for success. The CA MTSS Pathway Certification for Schools is a principal platform for the delivery of this crucial knowledge and skill-building.

The COVID-19 pandemic intensified students’ needs for social–emotional well-being and mental health support. Wellness and self-reflective strategies and interventions are required to improve student achievement and school climate and to meet Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) goals.

In light of the above, the report offers one comprehensive recommendation for Phase 3 moving forward:

* Support educators throughout California as they continue to strengthen and apply their understanding to increasing and continuously improving implementation of the CA MTSS framework through the CA MTSS Pathway Certification for Schools course, with the goal to organize schools across the state around the academic, behavioral, and social–emotional needs of students.

### From the *School Climate* Report

The 2021–22 *School Climate* Report notes that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a profound impact on the state of education in California, both in understanding the centrality of public schools to our economy for working families, and in recognizing the disproportionate effects of the virus on students of color and on staff mental health and well-being. Administrators, districts, and county officials have taken on new and unexpected responsibilities related to testing, vaccinations, and shifting state and federal guidelines.

The following recommendations for state-level activities or policies reflect the significance of the CA MTSS for this moment and for the 2022–23 school year. Establishing the CA MTSS as the primary framework and change strategy for school sites, districts, and COEs remains central to the Statewide System of Support, and must continue to drive the system to build a more coherent common strategy for all partners to improve student achievement and school climate, as well as to meet LCFF goals. The report lists seven recommendations:

1. Expand administrator support and training around the CA MTSS for California educators, administrators, and other key school staff.
2. Prioritize the provision of resources to geographically isolated school districts.
3. Focus more deliberately on aligning federal and state priorities around learning acceleration and state guidance that links to the CA MTSS.
4. Continue to prioritize strategies for the social–emotional well-being of school site staff as schools reopen.
5. Support educators in developing, strengthening, and sustaining relationships with students.
6. Continue to assist school sites to utilize their data to implement inclusive supports in addressing disparities and improving school climate.
7. Foster opportunities for collaborative relationships with families and communities in order to elevate and encourage their voices in school decision-making.

The OCDE identified the following recommendations for improving state-level activities (which are summarized below):

* Establishing the CA MTSS as the primary framework and change strategy for school sites, districts, and COEs remains central to the Statewide System of Support.
* Linking federal and state priorities around learning accelerationto the CA MTSS.
* Continuing toprioritize strategies for the social–emotional well-being of school site staff as schools reopen.
* Equipping educators with new tools for student engagement and student learning, especially those considered universal supports.
* Supporting school sites to utilize data to inform decisions around implementing social–emotional supports in addressing:
	+ Discipline disparities apparent by race,
	+ The overidentification of students of color for special education services, and
	+ Improving school climate.
* Foster opportunities for collaborative relationships with families and communities