# The header includes the seal of the California Department of Education and the label, California Equity Tools.

# Educator Equity Root Cause Analysis

California Department of Education, May 2021

Effective teachers have an enormous impact on the lives of students. Research shows that teachers are the most important “within-school” influence on student achievement. As such, ensuring student access to effective teachers can potentially be a powerful tool in addressing the achievement gap.[[1]](#footnote-1) The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that local educational agencies (LEAs) ensure that low income and minority students are not disproportionately taught by “ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers” (Elementary and Secondary Education Act [ESEA], section 1111(g)(1)(B)). This provision must be addressed with a narrative response within the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) Federal Addendum.

LEA’s should gather their equity data, analyze the relevant data, and conduct a root cause analysis to determine equity gaps. The steps outlined below and the tools that accompany them are provided to assist LEAs in this process. It is recommended that you use the Educator Equity Root Cause Analysis Tool at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/pl/step3equitableaccrtcs.asp> to complete this process.

To address the disproportionality in equitable access to great teachers, and to ensure this access for low-income students[[2]](#footnote-2) and minority students,[[3]](#footnote-3) LEAs must take a “Targeted Universalism”[[4]](#footnote-4) approach to analyzing data. This means that although all students should have access to effective, well-trained and experienced teachers, it is students living in poverty and students of color that have historically been taught by ineffective, out-of-field, and inexperienced teachers at much higher rates than students from affluent, white backgrounds. By setting universal goals, pursued by targeted processes focused on low-income and minority students, your LEA will ensure goals are met for all students.

“Engaging targeted universalism means that we believe that when we focus equity efforts on the student groups who have been most marginalized, all students benefit.”

Ways 2 Equity Playbook, page 7 <http://www.inclusioncollaborative.org/ways-2-equity.aspx>

## Step 1: Gather Equity Data

The first step in addressing teacher equity is to gather your LEA’s teacher equity data. The purpose of this data gathering is to identify and address disproportionalities of students of color and students living in poverty being taught at higher rates by inexperienced, out-of-field, and ineffective teachers. To gather your LEA’s teacher equity data, follow the Educator Equity Data Instructions at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ee/step1datacollection.asp> to collect your LEA’s data to identify ineffective, out-of-field, and inexperienced teachers.

| Equity Categories | Data Definition |
| --- | --- |
| Inexperienced Teacher | A teacher who has two or fewer years of teaching experience |
| Out-of-field Teacher | A credentialed out-of-field teacher is:  A credentialed teacher who has not yet demonstrated subject matter competence in the subject area(s) or for the student population to which he or she is assigned. Under this definition, the following limited permits will be considered out of field:  General Education Limited Assignment Permit (GELAP)  Special Education Limited Assignment Permit (SELAP)  Short-Term Waivers  Emergency English Learner or Bilingual Authorization Permits  Local Assignment Options |
| Ineffective Teachers | An ineffective teacher is any of the following:  An individual whose assignment is legally authorized by an emergency permit that does not require possession of a full teaching license; or  A teacher who holds a teaching credential but does not possess a permit or authorization that temporarily allows them to teach outside of their credentialed area (misassigned);  An individual who holds no credential, permit, or authorization to teach in California.  Under this definition, teachers with the following limited emergency permits would be considered ineffective:  Provisional Internship Permits,  Short-Term Staff Permits  Variable Term Waivers  Substitute permits or Teaching Permits for Statutory Leave (TSPL) holders serving as the teacher of record |

### Review Teacher Equity Data

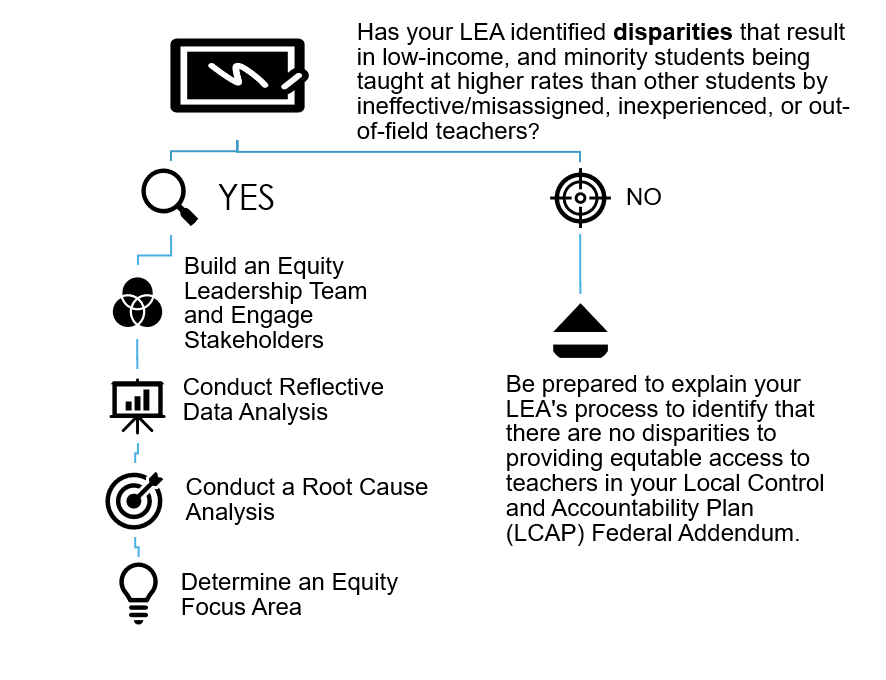
Disaggregate the data collected for analysis using the Equity Data Collection and Analysis Tools at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/pl/step2equitygapanalysis.asp>.

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Which teacher equity categories show equity gaps?
2. Are the same school(s) disadvantaged along multiple inequities?
3. Are there equity gaps by teacher level, grade level, or subject area?
4. Are there certain populations (e.g., minority students, low-income students, students with disabilities, English Language Learners) within a school systematically served by ineffective, out-of-field, and/or inexperienced teacher?

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

After completing each table and answering the accompanying questions, consider the following question to determine next steps in the following flow chart:



## Step 2: Build an Equity Leadership Team and Engage Stakeholders

One of the first steps in developing an equitable access plan involves forming a leadership team and planning for convening stakeholder groups.

### Build an Equity Leadership Team

The equity leadership team does the foundational work for the program improvement process for providing equitable access to teachers. The Equity Leadership Team should be 3–7 people. Begin by identifying key offices and staff who are directly engaged in policies and initiatives impacting teacher recruitment, retention, and development. To understand your system in the most complete way possible, your equity leadership team should also reflect the LEA or school community that needs to address equitable access to teachers. Consider representation from the following groups:

* Human Resources Department
* Teacher Professional Development Department
* Data and Assessment Department
* Teachers
* Induction Program
* School Administrators
* Teacher Coaches
* Teacher Union Representation

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Do the members of the leadership team represent the LEA/school community across departments and groups?
2. Are members of the leadership team willing to commit to this long-term, challenging work?
3. Are members of the leadership team ready to learn as well as act?
4. Are members of the leadership team available, and do they have the time and energy for the work?
5. What background information and training will the leadership team need before they can weigh in on the data analysis, root cause analysis and equity plan?
6. Are the members of the leadership team interested in and curious about working on issues of equity?

### Engage Stakeholders

An initial task of the leadership team is to convene a diverse stakeholder group. It is critical to start identifying stakeholders early because they provide important insight and support to developing the educator equity plan. They bring to the table skills and experiences that give context to the data collected. They also provide a feedback loop to ensure the equity plan addresses the appropriate root causes of educator inequities.

It may be necessary to build in time to ensure stakeholders are well-informed by developing and distributing background information including how to read the data, current LEA and school initiatives, and state mandates for reporting. Stakeholders will need to develop an understanding of equity as it relates to providing equitable access to teachers for students of color and students living in poverty, as well as contribute to the program improvement process. The stakeholder group may be either an existing or newly formed group, but it is important that it involve stakeholders that are representative of the LEA and include district staff, parents, students, and community members.

When identifying stakeholders, consider that there may be short- and long-term roles, and it may make sense for a particular stakeholder to be involved more in one role than another, or in both. In the short term, stakeholders should have opportunities to bring their concerns and ideas to the table as the LEA’s equitable access plan is developed. Their input may be particularly helpful when reviewing teacher equity data, to “bring to life” the statistical data. A longer-term goal of the stakeholder engagement plan could be to build a coalition to ensure successful implementation of the LEA’s equitable access plan.

“Bringing together diverse stakeholders to explore the data and make decisions based on the data informs the future of equity at your site”

Ways 2 Equity Playbook, page 36 <http://www.inclusioncollaborative.org/ways-2-equity.aspx>.

Consider including the following stakeholders:

* Parents
* Teachers (veteran and new)
* District and school administrators
* Representatives from community organizations
* High school students
* Union representatives
* Other school personnel
* Teacher education program partners
* School board members

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What skills and experiences do we need to bring to the work?
2. What existing professional associations have a stakeholder engagement structure in place for teachers, principals, district leaders?
3. What should be the role of teacher preparation program partners?
4. Which stakeholder groups should be part of which steps in the process?
5. What background information and training will we need to provide to stakeholders before they can weigh in on the data analysis, root cause analysis and equity plan?
6. How will we ensure stakeholders represent the school community in terms of race, ethnicity, language, religion, and other identities?

## Step 3: Analyzing and Prioritizing Equity Gaps

Using the Educator Equity Root Cause Analysis Tool at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/pl/step3equitableaccrtcs.asp>, complete the exercise for Step 3 to analyze and prioritize the identified equity gaps. Your team should conduct an equity gap data analysis and specify the challenges to be addressed.

### Conduct Reflective Equity Gap Data Analysis

In Step 1, your LEA identified key data elements that shed some light on equitable access to teachers. The reflective data process should now engage leaders and stakeholders in conversations about particular schools and classrooms in the LEA. At this point, your team should reflect and begin to hypothesize about the causes of the inequities in relation to the data being reviewed. Consider the questions below to begin to consider the causes of the inequities. In the next step you will begin to look at the challenges in the LEA that have contributed to the inequities.

### Specify the Challenges to be Addressed

Next, reflect on the equitable-access challenges in your LEA. Brainstorm a list of such challenges. Then highlight the one challenge that seems to represent the greatest disparity or seems to be the most immediate and pressing. Specify the challenge(s) in terms of a particular problematic equity outcome. For example:

* “There is a higher teacher turn-over in Title I schools as compared to non-Title I schools in our LEA.”
* “There are less experienced principals in rural schools in the district than in suburban schools.”
* “Across the LEA, lower income students are more likely than higher income students to be assigned a new teacher.”

The specified problem may relate to equitable access at the classroom, school or LEA level. It may also be related to access to effective teachers as defined by the state or it could be access to the most outstanding teachers. Although there may be many problems identified, highlight just one primary problematic equity outcome or gap in performance. Your team can come back to this step at another time to conduct additional root cause analysis for the other key equitable access challenges, but for now just focus on the primary one.

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Of the gaps identified in Step 1, which are the most meaningful for your LEA?
2. What support do teachers have in the LEA? In their individual schools?
3. Are there different ways to disaggregate the data that could help focus action at a later stage? For example:
   1. Turn-over among more versus less effective teachers
   2. Types of turnover (transfers between schools, movement out of the district, retirements)
   3. Vacancies and/or late hires by subject area
   4. Schools with predominantly one race/ethnicity of students
4. Are there additional data points that we want to consider? For example:
   1. Teacher absenteeism
   2. Teacher late hires
   3. Race/ethnicity of teachers by school
   4. Race/ethnicity of students by school

## Step 4: Identify Root Causes

“Although schools' racial Compositions and proportions of low-income students predict teacher turnover, salaries and working conditions—including large class sizes, facilities problems, multitrack schools, and lack of textbooks—are strong and significant factors in predicting high rates of turnover.”

From How Teaching Conditions Predict Teacher Turnover in California Schools, Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak (2005).

A root cause analysis is a process that leads to a narrowing potential cause of a problem to specific areas of focus. For this process your team is identifying the reasons why this problematic equity outcome may have occurred. For example, is it because great teachers don’t stay or because new teachers do not get enough support? Is it because the principal at a school does not know how to develop teacher talent?

The most important function of this process is for the LEA to use evidence and data to gain a deeper understanding of the possible cause(s). Focus on system challenges, not symptoms. For example, the tendency of early-career teachers to move from inner-city to suburban schools after a few years is a symptom, while a lack of strong preparation and leadership in inner-city schools is a systems challenge. Also, the high percentage of teachers of students with disabilities who leave teaching for work in the private sector is a symptom, while unmanageable caseloads for these teachers is a systems challenge.

At the end of the process you should be able to leverage points that you have identified for improving outcomes. These conclusions will inform and guide your selection of area(s) of focus, a theory of action, and the development of an improvement plan.

1. Start to build an understanding of the factors that contribute to inequities by reviewing the policies and processes that might be contributing to the prioritized problems.
2. Share the focus areas with those who best understand the problem, such as district staff, principals, teachers, and parents (See Engaging Equity Stakeholders at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/pl/documents/engagingequitystakehldrs.docx>.
3. With these sources of input, brainstorm as many potential drivers of the problem as possible.
4. Brainstorm potential drivers of those factors to get to an increasing level of specificity on underlying issues.
5. Prioritize three to four factors that are (1) most related to the problem and (2) most actionable at the district level.
6. Categorize the root causes by grouping the causes into categories.

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Which stakeholders have the most knowledge of underlying factors contributing to the problem (e.g., district personnel, principal supervisors, principals, teachers, teacher prep program personnel, or parent and community organizations)?
2. How do district actions influence working conditions—which affect teacher performance and retention—in prioritized schools? For example, is the district supporting principals to build healthy cultures?
3. What are the district systems or lever that touch the main drivers of the problem? (See Educator Equity Root Causes and LEA Levers Chart on pages 10–11)

## Step 5: Conduct a Programmatic Self-Assessment

Conduct a programmatic self-assessment focused on the relevant teacher equity data gathered, along with the policies, procedures, and practices related to providing equitable access to teachers in the LEA. A programmatic self-assessment should include the following elements:

* Thorough and reflective analysis of a broad range of school-level data with a focus on the relevant teacher equity data gathered in Step 1, student race/ethnicity and poverty data by school, and teacher race/ethnicity data by school
* Reflective review of information on policies, procedures, and practices relevant to providing equitable access to teachers (beyond questions of compliance)
* Review of all existing LEA-wide and schoolwide initiatives
* Engage key personnel through surveys, focus groups, interviews and other tools to gather insight from diverse representation of individuals who oversee and are affected by teacher equity (district office of human resources, curriculum, induction, and school-based personnel such as teachers, principals, and teacher coaches)
* Engage other key school community stakeholders through surveys, focus groups, empathy interviews and other tools to gather insight from diverse representation of individuals who oversee and are affected by teacher equity (students, parents, and representatives from school partners and community organizations)
* Review the summary of the Programmatic Self-Assessment results with stakeholders and get feedback

Self-Assessment Tools to Consider:

Achieving Equitable Access to Strong Teachers: A Guide for District Leaders at <https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/EdTrust_AchievingEquitableAccessStrongTeachers_GuideDistrictLeaders_April2016.pdf> (The Education Trust)

[Teacher Equity Rubric](https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/EDI_EdTrust_TeacherEquityRubric_April2016.pdf) at <https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/EDI_EdTrust_TeacherEquityRubric_April2016.pdf> (U.S. Education Delivery Institute and The Education Trust)

Policy Equity Analysis Tool at <https://greatlakesequity.org/resource/policy-equity-analysis-tool> (Great Lakes Equity Center)

## Step 6: Identify Focus Areas

Select one or two teacher equity root cause themes that the LEA will monitor and work to improve over the upcoming two or three years. You should select categories based on (1) how they impact student learning and experience, and (2) how equitably they are distributed across your LEA. You can then prioritize schools that are most affected by inequities. Then select the appropriate “Levers” to focus your equity plan for providing equitable access to teachers.

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Questions to consider when choosing educator equity focus areas:

1. How do selected educator equity categories interact with the categories prioritized and monitored by the state?
2. How will the LEA communicate to stakeholders (LEA staff, educators, parents, and the community) about prioritized categories?

Questions to consider when choosing focus area schools:

1. Which subset of schools has the greatest need and will be prioritized?
2. Is there a category of schools that is most affected by inequities, such as high-poverty schools or Title I schools, or other state accountability priorities?
3. Are some schools disadvantaged across multiple teacher categories?
4. Has the district or state already prioritized a group of schools for other reforms? Depending on the context, the LEA may develop a rationale for prioritizing or not prioritizing this group

### Root Cause Themes and Levers

| Root Cause Themes | LEA Levers Available |
| --- | --- |
| Inadequate supply of teachers  May be evidenced by:   * Insufficient application numbers * High late-hire rates in specific subjects or grades | Teacher recruitment Levers include:   * Educator preparation program partnerships * Compensation * Hiring timelines * Certification assistance |
| Difficulty attracting teachers to high-need schools  May be evidenced by:   * Insufficient application numbers * High late-hire rates only at certain schools * Less desirable working conditions * Fewer opportunities for career advancement * Lower salaries and less adequate benefits * Lack of geographic proximity to home and other amenities (e.g., transportation) | Teacher placement Levers include:   * Compensation and incentives * Principal placement * Principal training/support * Priority hiring timelines * Ensuring schools are well-resourced * School working conditions |
| Difficulty retaining teachers in high-need schools  May be evidenced by:   * School-level turnover rates only at certain schools * Educator preparation programs that do not supply enough teachers who are fully prepared to teach in high-need schools * Lack of opportunities for career advancement * Low leadership quality * Less desirable working conditions * Low teacher satisfaction * Low salaries and inadequate benefits * Lack of geographic proximity to home and other amenities (e.g., transportation) * High retirements rates | Teacher retention Levers include:   * Compensation and incentives * Principal placement * Teacher leadership and advancement opportunities * Teacher recognition * School working conditions |
| Difficulty growing teacher talent in some schools  May be evidenced by:   * Lack of effective professional learning supports (including induction and mentoring) * Poor working conditions that inhibit professional learning * Scheduling constraints that pose limitations (e.g., for teacher collaboration, opportunities for observing or being observed) * Lack of professional learning supports aligned to teacher need | Development Levers include:   * Professional development * Principal supervision * Principal preparation * Principal professional development * Principal placement * Data reporting and sharing * Evaluation processes * Mentorship and coaching * Certification assistance |
| Difficulty managing human capital at some schools.  May be evidenced by a combination of categories including:   * School-level turnover * Late hires * Teacher satisfaction * Teacher effectiveness | School leadership Levers include:   * Evaluation processes * Mentorship and coaching * Teacher collaboration on curriculum and data * Teacher peer feedback * Focus climate and working conditions data for school improvement plans * Solicit feedback from teacher of leadership performance |
| Difficulty deploying high-quality teachers to and within high-need schools.  May be evidenced by:   * Seniority-based transfer and reduction-in-force policies (e.g., “last in, first out”) * Misassignment within schools (e.g., assigning novice teachers to low-performing students) * Teacher preferences for working in higher tracked classes * Parent demands (e.g., for tracking, for teachers with the best reputations, for small class sizes) * Underuse of technology or alternative staffing arrangements to extend reach or access | Teacher assignment Levers include:   * Bonuses for highly effective teachers working in high-needs schools * Incentives for teachers working in high needs schools including smaller class sizes, teacher aids, increased autonomy, career ladders |



1. See, for example, Linda Darling-Hammond (2000). Teacher Quality and Student Achievement. Education Policy Analysis Archives, 8, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Low-income students are defined in California as those who are eligible to receive Free or Reduced-Price Meals (including homeless, migrant, and foster students) or whose parents do not have a high school diploma. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. As a majority-minority state, California currently does not have an official definition of “minority” that describes historically underserved students. For the purposes of this process and to align with the teacher and student data that has been collected, **minority students** are defined as all students who are American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, African American, Filipino, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, or Two or More Races Not Hispanic. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For additional information, see John A. Powell, Stephen Menendian, & Wendy Ake (2019) *Targeted Universalism: Policy & Practice,* <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/targeteduniversalism>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)