



California's System of Support 2–Assess Needs

Module 2A: Planning a Needs Assessment for Continuous Improvement

Updated January 2019



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California's System of Support Goal

To help local educational agencies (LEAs) and their schools meet the needs of ***each student they serve***, with a focus on **building local capacity to sustain improvement** and to **effectively address disparities** in opportunities and outcomes.

- California Department of Education (CDE)
California's System of Support web page



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Overview of Modules

1. Set Direction and Purpose

1A. Overview of Continuous Improvement and the Local Control and Accountability Plan

2. Assess Local Needs and Determine Causal Factors of Greatest Needs

2A. Planning a Needs Assessment for Continuous Improvement

2B. Designing a Needs Assessment for Continuous Improvement

2C. Introduction to Root Cause Analysis



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Purpose of Module 2A

To provide LEAs and local stakeholders with an introduction to needs assessment, as well as specific guidance and questions to consider when planning needs assessments for use within the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and school planning processes.



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Needs Assessment for Continuous Improvement

Introduction to Needs Assessment



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What is a Needs Assessment?

- A needs assessment is a **diagnostic tool** used to identify a school's, LEA's, and/or county office of education's (COE's) strengths, weaknesses, and the areas in which improvement is needed.
- The needs assessment goes beyond student data to include data on the **prevalence of effective practices**.



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California School Dashboard

- The California School Dashboard (Dashboard) is an example of a **high-level needs assessment tool**.
- While it does not provide insight into the root causes of areas in need of improvement, it provides a **starting place for deeper analysis**.

Enrollment: 41,028 Socioeconomically Disadvantaged: 73% English Learners: 10% Foster Youth: N/A Reporting Year: Spring 2017

Grade Span: K-Adult Charter School: No

Equity Report Status and Change Report Detailed Reports Student Group Report

The Equity Report shows the performance levels for all students on the state indicators. It also shows the total number of student groups that received a performance level for each indicator and how many of those student groups are in the two lowest performance levels (Red/Orange). The total number of student groups may vary due to the number of grade levels included within each indicator. Select any of the underlined indicators for more detailed information.

State Indicators	All Students Performance	Total Student Groups	Student Groups in Red/Orange
Chronic Absenteeism	N/A	N/A	N/A
Suspension Rate (K-12)	🔴	11	8
English Learner Progress (K-12)	🔴	1	1
Graduation Rate (9-12)	🔴	10	6
<u>College / Career</u> Available Fall 2017. Select for Grade 11 assessment results.		N/A	N/A
<u>English Language Arts (3-8)</u>	🟡	11	2
<u>Mathematics (3-8)</u>	🟡	11	3

English Language Arts (Grades 3-8) - Schools Five by Five Placement

Select an indicator: English Language Arts (Grades 3-8) Reporting Year: 2017 (2018) View Student Groups by Five by Five Report

LEVEL	Exceeded Expectations to more than 10 points above	Exceeded to 1 to 10 points above	Met	Below	Below Expectations to 1 to 10 points below	Below Expectations to more than 10 points below
Very High All or most points above	None	None	None	None	None	None
High 80 points or less, but 10 points above	None	None	None	None	None	None
Medium 60 points or less, but 10 points above	None	None	None	None	None	None
Low More than 5 points below to 10 points below	None	None	None	None	None	None
Very Low More than 10 points below	None	None	None	None	None	None

Note: Because the data comes from Spring 2017, there are some schools in Orange, Red, and Yellow that are not on the list. They are not included in this report. The only schools on this list & other schools in other colors are shown.

Total Number of Schools in Each Performance Level

All Schools	Red	Orange	Yellow	Green	Blue



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We've seen the Dashboard...

Now what?

- Once general areas of improvement have been identified using the Dashboard, a **needs assessment for improvement** will provide a structure for collecting the data necessary to **identify root causes**.
 - Root cause analysis addresses the problem rather than the symptom, eliminates wasted effort, conserves resources, and informs strategy selection. (Root cause analysis will be discussed in more detail in Module 2C).



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What is a Needs Assessment for Improvement? (1)

A needs assessment for improvement is part of a **systemic process** used to:

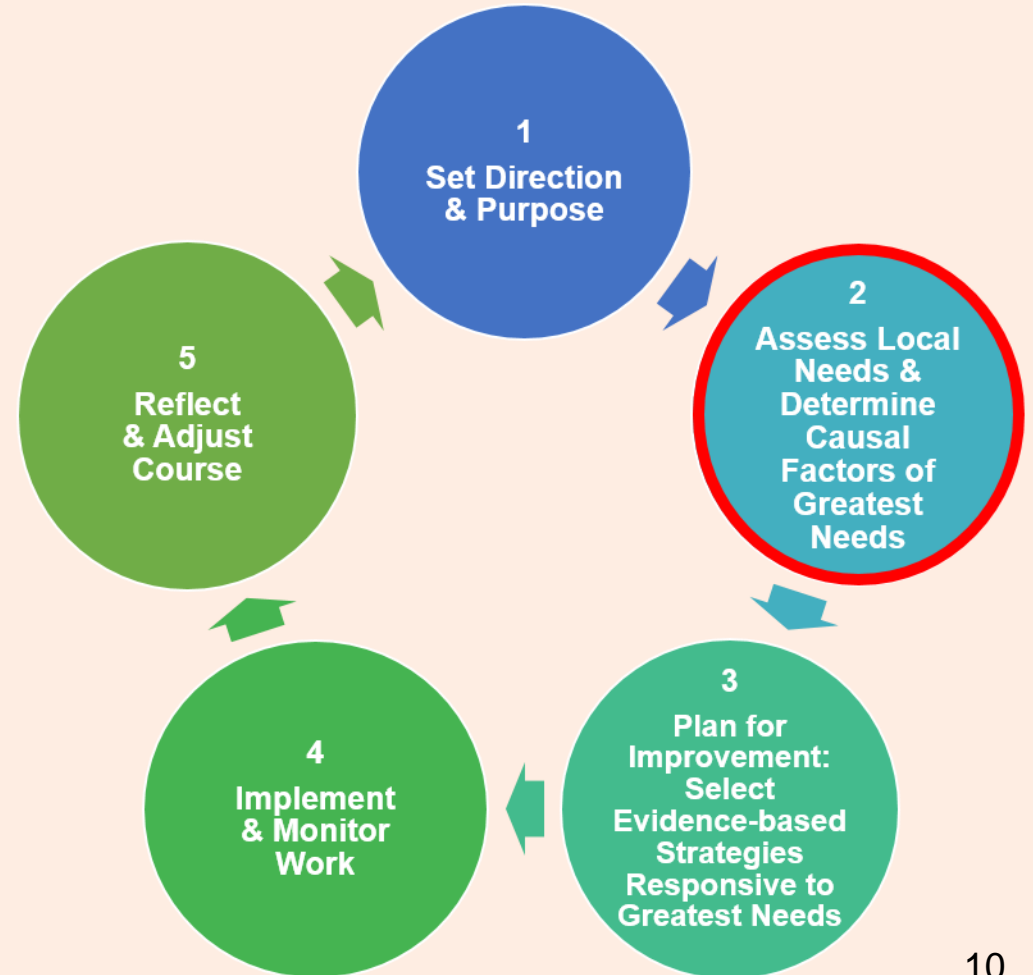
- Determine strengths and weaknesses
- Understand context and constraints
- Perform a root cause analysis
- Develop an improvement plan (e.g., LCAP or school plan) outlining changes considered most likely to bolster or build on strengths and to remediate weaknesses



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What is a Needs Assessment for Improvement? (2)

A needs assessment for improvement is *not* an isolated tool or practice, but should be part of an **ongoing cycle of continuous improvement** that includes both long-range performance goals and short-cycle implementation targets.





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What is a Needs Assessment for Improvement? (3)



Needs assessments should be revisited and **updated on a regular basis** (e.g., LCAP Annual Update) to ensure alignment to the improvement plan and to check for progress against the original discoveries.



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Needs Assessment for Continuous Improvement

Planning the Needs Assessment



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Needs Assessment Implementation Phases

- A. Planning
- B. Collecting and Organizing Data
- C. Interpreting Information
- D. Prioritizing
- E. Connecting to Implementation



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A. Planning

- Articulate the **purpose** and **intended outcomes**.
- Determine **central guiding questions** that the needs assessment should address.
- Identify **relevant stakeholders** to participate in the process.
- Define your **content, process, and presentation**.



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B. Collecting and Organizing Data

- Organize **readily available data** from existing sources.
- Determine and collect **additional needed data**.
- Decide on **presentation** of data.



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C. Interpreting Information

- Uncover what individual data sources say about guiding questions.
- Identify and categorize discoveries and themes.
- Investigate areas of stakeholder disagreement and causes of disagreement.
- Articulate discoveries without casting blame.



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D. Prioritizing

- Identify which discoveries and themes will have the greatest impact if addressed.
- Contemplate if there is additional data that should be reviewed.



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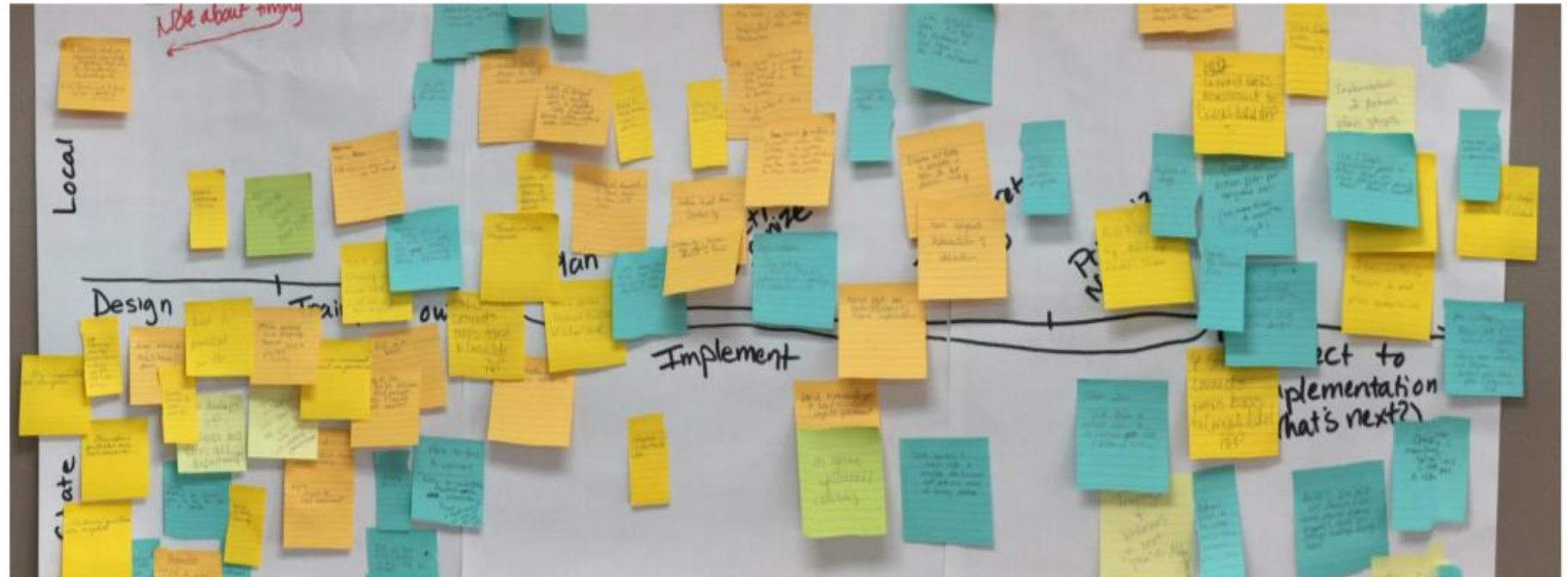
E. Connecting to Implementation

- Use results to create meaningful, long-term change.
- Collect additional information about prioritized needs.
- Investigate root causes of prioritized needs.
- Reflect on the progress of improvement efforts.



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Implementation Path Activity





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Implementation Path Protocol (1)

1. Assemble a group or small groups (including stakeholder representatives) to create an implementation path for the needs assessment project.
2. Draw a path (for sequencing only, not a timeline) on butcher paper.
 - If more than one entity is involved in the implementation of the needs assessment (e.g., the LEA and the COE), add one entity name above and the other below the line as shown in the preceding image.



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Implementation Path Protocol (2)

3. Add the five needs assessment phases to the path in chronological order (Planning, Collecting and Organizing Data, Interpreting Information, Prioritizing, Connecting to Implementation).
4. Brainstorm needs assessment implementation milestones for each phase on Post-its.
5. Place milestones on path in order above or below the line depending upon which entity is responsible for the milestone.



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Working With Frameworks (1)

- For purposes of this learning module, the word “framework” refers to a basic conceptual structure for a needs assessment, rather than the California Department of Education’s Curriculum Frameworks.
- Frameworks can be used as a foundation for needs assessments and as a broader **theory of action** for continuous improvement efforts.
 - See Module 2C for more information on theory of action.



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Working With Frameworks (2)

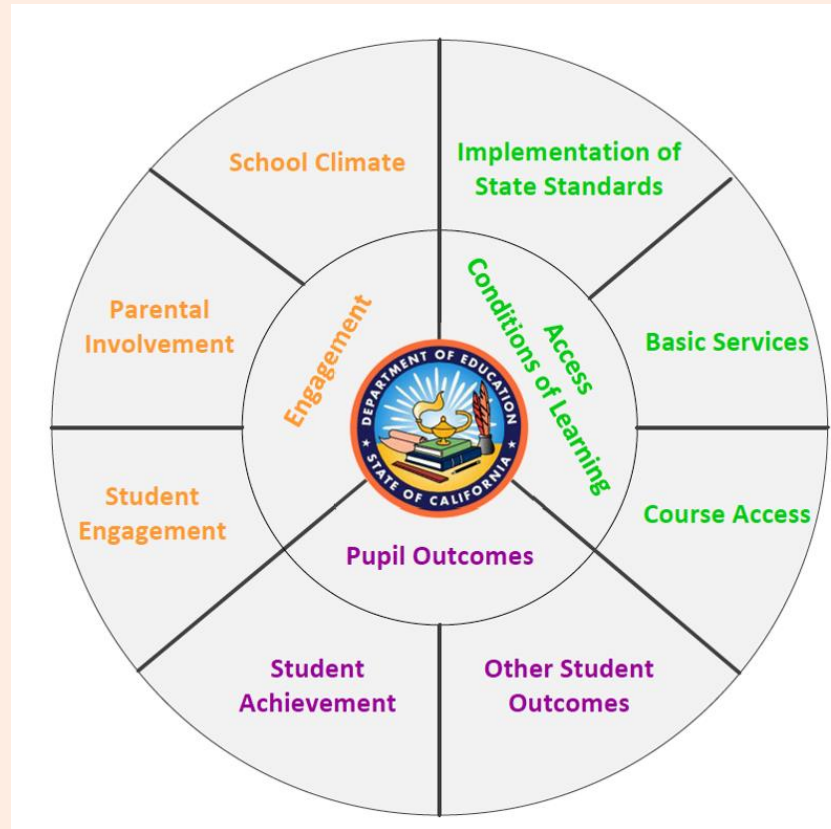
- Examples of frameworks include:
 - The Continuous Improvement Cycle (see Module 1A)
 - The California State Priorities
 - The Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement
- For a description of other best practices and evidence-based frameworks, see “Appendix A: Ways to Identify Sound (Best) Practice” in *Casting a Statewide Strategic Performance Net* (Layland and Redding, 2017). <http://www.bsccpcenter.org/casting/>



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Working With Frameworks (3)

California State Priorities



The Four Domains for Rapid School Improvement





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Crosswalk of Four Domains and State Priorities

LCFF State Priorities	Themes	Domain for Rapid School Improvement			
Student Achievement Other Student Outcomes	Student Outcomes	Turnaround Leadership	Talent Development	Instructional Transformation	Culture Shift
School Climate Student Engagement Parental Involvement	Engagement				
Implementation of State Standards Course Access Basic Services	Access to Conditions of Learning				



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Whole or Part? (1)

A needs
assessment is
a point-in-time
snapshot
that may be:

- Comprehensive, assessing all aspects of the LEA and its context (including its COE)
- Segmented, assessing only one or a few aspects of the LEA and its context



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Whole or Part? (2)

Comprehensive Needs Assessments Inform:

- Organizational direction, including goals and strategies
- Systemic functions
- Long-range plans (typically multi-year; e.g., at the end of a three-year LCAP cycle)

Segmented Needs Assessments Inform:

- Improvement to targeted functions or aspects of the school
- Incremental change
- Short-cycle plans (typically less than a year; e.g., LCAP Annual Update)



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Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) (1)

- LEAs can collaborate with their COE to develop a single CNA template that will work for all its LEAs.
- Creating a CNA typically involves a significant time commitment because it includes developing the necessary tools and processes, as well as planning and coordinating related to implementation.
- However, this approach can result in resource savings for the COE, the LEA, and the schools over time.



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Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) (2)

As is true for all needs assessments, the findings yielded through a CNA are only accurate as long as the LEA context remains the same. Thus, **CNAs need to be updated as the LEA evolves.**



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Segmented Needs Assessment (SNA) (1)

An SNA can be:

- Used by one LEA or a limited number of LEAs within a county.
- Used by a COE or LEA to address one functional area or a limited number of functional areas at a time, to inform short-cycle improvement planning
- Conducted relatively quickly, thus allowing for opportunities to capture and learn from the most current data



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Segmented Needs Assessment (SNA) (2)

- An SNA may be produced by administering **each component** of a CNA **separately** so that improvement in each area can be planned and executed as a manageable chunk of work.
- This approach retains the CNA's advantage of providing a coherent view of **how the components fit together.**



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Differentiation of Needs Assessment

The instruments and methods required for conducting a CNA or an SNA may vary by an LEA's position in the current LCAP cycle and identified Level of Support under the Statewide System of Support.

- Position in LCAP cycle (e.g., Annual Update or end of three-year cycle)
- Identified Level of Support (e.g., using accountability metrics and SBE-adopted criteria)



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Differentiation by Level of Support

California System of Support	Description of Supports	Tools & Infrastructure	Guidance
Level 1: Support for All LEAs and Schools	Various state and local agencies provide an array of support, resources, tools, and voluntary assistance that all LEAs may use to improve student performance at the LEA and school level and narrow disparities among student groups across the Local Control Funding Formula priorities, including recognition for success and the ability to share promising practices.	LEA is able to apply CDE- and COE-provided tools, data, implementation infrastructure, and information to its own advantage.	Self-directed; LEA will access the resources and supports required for [its] continued growth.
Level 2: Differentiated Assistance	County superintendents, charter authorizers, the CDE, 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, including significant disparities in performance among student groups.	LEA would benefit from coached self-assessment, applying the CDE-, CCEE-, and COE-provided tools, data, implementation infrastructure, and information. Coached self-assessment may be supplemented by external reviews to provide an objective view of an LEA's operations, implementation infrastructure, and recommend improvements.	Guidance of an external consultant (COE, charter authorizers, CCEE) and/or coaching are needed in diagnosis and planning.
Level 3: Intensive Intervention	The State Superintendent of Public Instruction may require more intensive interventions for LEAs with persistent performance issues and a lack of improvement over a specified time period.	LEA review is useful in determining the appropriate intervention and implementation infrastructure model to inform the CDE and COE about conditions and practices prevalent in the LEA in order to strengthen the reform efforts.	Needs interventionists and external reviewers for diagnosis, planning, and strategy selection.



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Worksheet 1: Planning Your Needs Assessment (1)

1. Purpose statement for your needs assessment: The purpose of this needs assessment is to ...
2. What will you call the needs assessment? The needs assessment will be called ...
3. Who will develop the needs assessment (i.e., COE, LEA, external partner, or combination; in collaboration with stakeholders)? The needs assessment will be developed by ...
4. Will you work with a framework of effective practice? If so, which one(s)? (You may incorporate portions of more than one.)



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Worksheet 1: Planning Your Needs Assessment (2)

5. Will the needs assessment be comprehensive (CNA) or segmented (SNA)?
 - If a CNA, which LEA areas of school operations are included?
 - If an SNA, what are the separate needs assessments or the CNA components that will be administered separately? When will they be administered? Who (COE/LEA/external partner) will administer them?
6. Will the same needs assessment tools be used for all LEAs, or will different versions be used to address specific contexts? If the latter, which contexts will require different tools?
7. How does the capacity of the COE and LEA inform the needs assessment tools and/or processes?



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Resources and Tools

- California School Dashboard
<https://www.caschooldashboard.org/#/Home>
- Continuous Improvement Resources web page
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/sw/t1/continuousimprovement.asp>
 - Worksheet 1
<http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/sw/t1/documents/contimp2aw1.doc>
- *Using Needs Assessments for School and District Improvement: A Tactical Guide* (Council on Chief State School Officers [CCSSO]/Center on School Turnaround [CST] at WestEd)
<https://centeronschoolturnaround.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/NeedsAssessment-Final.pdf>
- *Utilizing Integrated Resources to Implement the School and District Improvement Cycle and Supports* (CCSSO)
<http://www.ccsso.org/resource-library/utilizing-integrated-resources-implement-school-and-district-improvement-cycle-and/>
- “Appendix A: Ways to Identify Sound (Best) Practice” in *Casting a Statewide Strategic Performance Net* (Layland and Redding)
<http://www.bscpcenter.org/casting/>



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References

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