



# THE LOCAL CONTROL FUNDING FORMULA: WHY ENGAGEMENT IS ESSENTIAL FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

The advancement of equity and excellence for California’s students depends on the ability of counties, districts, and schools to create meaningful **stakeholder engagement** practices that address the unique needs of their constituents.

**Educational equity means that every student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need.** Put simply, an equitable and excellent system is one where each and every student can succeed.

The requirements of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs) offer an opportunity for Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to meaningfully engage their communities as they provide more and better resources to students with the greatest needs.

## 5 PILLARS OF ENGAGEMENT

Meaningful engagement of communities in policy decision-making — by agencies at a state, county, and district level — is vitally important for educational equity and excellence. The five pillars of meaningful engagement ensure an inclusive process for decision-making that advances educational equity and excellence:



**Stakeholder engagement means the close collaboration of state, district, and local groups to help our most vulnerable students and schools.**

Find out more about these pillars of engagement in *Process and Protest California: How are Districts Engaging Stakeholders in LCAP Development?* found at [partnersforeachandeverychild.org](http://partnersforeachandeverychild.org)

## PROCESS AND PROTEST

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“ Rather than top-down, transactional exchanges ... the new system favors teams of local educators engaging with their communities to tailor approaches to specific needs...

[S]takeholders must be authentically engaged and transparency must be a top priority. Ensuring that each student has the support they need to succeed is a collective responsibility we all share. ”



— State Superintendent Torlakson  
and State Board of Education President Kirst  
Oct. 2, 2017 letter to superintendents

## ENGAGEMENT IS ACCOUNTABILITY

The ideal of democratic participation lies at the heart of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). Community, family, and student leaders were at the forefront of designing and advocating for LCFF and Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs) to recast accountability as a local responsibility, not a compliance exercise. The assumption holds that the members of the local community — **students, families, educators, and advocates** — are the most knowledgeable about the needs and strengths of a school, and most invested in its success. By meaningfully engaging them in the decision-making process, school communities are strengthened and students are better served.

# ENGAGE FOR EQUITY: 5 PILLARS OF ENGAGEMENT

MEANINGFUL INCLUDES:



## 1 REPRESENTATION: REACH THE UNREACHED

LCFF recognizes that part of closing achievement gaps requires providing more resources for English Language learners, foster youth, and socio-economically disadvantaged students. To make the most of these resources, LEAs should engage with stakeholders that are most familiar with the challenges those students face. Unfortunately, these stakeholders are often ones that have been left out of decision-making conversations and are frequently unable or unwilling to participate in traditional, administrative processes. The vital work of including the voices of the unreached requires a commitment to capacity-building and addressing the hurdles that have prevented meaningful participation in the past.

### How to Put This Into Practice:

- ✓ **Use district and school Dashboard data** with particular focus on those struggling the most. Make targeted efforts to include the families and advocates that can represent under-performing and underserved student groups in reviewing student performance data as part of LCAP resource allocation and decision-making conversations.
- ✓ The LCAP Parent Advisory Committees should **consider every group within the district** and actively include representatives that reflect the voices and lived experiences of students and families of underserved populations.
- ✓ Prioritize regular **leadership opportunities for existing parent committees**, e.g. English Learner Advisory, Special Education Advisory, to guide and help facilitate LCAP development and implementation. This should include data review, determining priorities, and assessing impact.
- ✓ Identify and **partner with advocacy and community groups** that regularly convene the groups you are trying to reach and work to amplify the voices of high-needs students.
- ✓ Make sure that all **events and materials are accessible**, and that information is shared in advance of decision-making.
- ✓ Address barriers to participation by **holding meetings at times and places that are convenient** for stakeholders.
- ✓ Invite trusted **community leaders to facilitate** important conversations.
- ✓ **Tailor communication strategies and engagement methods** to reach more stakeholders. Translated materials are important, but should not be a stand-alone effort; use materials to support face-to-face opportunities to build understanding and dialogue.
- ✓ Ask stakeholders on an ongoing basis if there are **specific constituencies that are absent** from the discussion and what might be done to **support their inclusion**. Make changes accordingly.

PROCESS  
AND  
PROTEST

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## 2 TRANSPARENCY: SHOW YOUR WORK

LCFF sets the LCAP as a minimum standard for districts to document how decisions are made, funds are spent, and progress is tracked. To deepen and accelerate the goals of LCFF, LEAs must go beyond the bare minimum required by law and equip stakeholders with timely and accurate data, increase stakeholder capacity to engage, and clearly define a stakeholder-centric decision-making process.

### How to Put This Into Practice:

- ✓ Clearly **define the LCAP timeline** as part of the academic calendar and make this information easy to access — online and in print — for all stakeholders regardless of background.
- ✓ Move beyond just providing access to information by **encouraging active, informed, deep involvement, using:**
  - ✓ **Data:** Increase the quality and depth of data and equip stakeholders with the tools they need to refine their questions and conduct their own analysis. This might mean including district **Dashboard data** as well as **formative student data** on discipline, attendance, and academic achievement that is available throughout the year.
  - ✓ **Budget:** Invite stakeholders to learn more about the budget so that they can be active contributors to budget decision-making processes. Expand the scope of the LCAP by including more than just the percentage of the budget funded by LCFF; **a complete picture of the district budget** allows for richer conversations about priorities and compromises.
- ✓ Allow ample time between drafts of the LCAP and **create multiple, targeted opportunities** to provide substantive feedback.
- ✓ Use the Stakeholder Engagement section of the LCAP to clearly document **how, when, and where stakeholder influence had an impact** on the development and refinement of the final plan.
- ✓ **Share and unpack stakeholder input** with all district and school board leadership and with community partners. Identify common themes that appeared across different groups. Respond comprehensively to stakeholder concerns.
- ✓ Commit to meaningful **dialogue on difficult issues**. Honestly and directly address the impact of power and privilege and acknowledge that lack of trust is a barrier to meaningful participation.

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## 3 SUSTAINABILITY: STICK WITH IT

The LCAP is a three-year plan that is updated annually. These updates allow LEAs and stakeholders to refine the plan so that it reflects new data, allows for evaluation of practices, and responds to emerging challenges. To fulfill the potential of the LCAP, LEAs must develop an engagement process that is sustainable, reflective, and responsive to the nuances of continuous improvement.

### How to Put This Into Practice:

- ✓ **Establish dedicated funding and staff** positions to support engagement efforts, including the development and distribution of informational materials and other products that provide helpful context to understanding the district’s LCAP.
- ✓ Build understanding and support of LCAP goals and processes both **inside and outside the district**. District leadership that isn’t explicitly part of the LCAP process also need to understand their specific role and responsibility in supporting a strategic decision-making process.
- ✓ Work with family and community leaders to **gather feedback** from stakeholders **at the end of an engagement cycle**. This information should inform improvements for future efforts.
- ✓ **Create expectations** for continued, meaningful engagement. Regularly convene stakeholder groups and be transparent about when — and on what topics — conversations will continue.
- ✓ Regularly and actively **acknowledge the contribution of stakeholders** and clearly communicate how their efforts made a difference. Their buy-in is critical to long-term relationship building.
- ✓ Think proactively about how to **recruit more stakeholder leaders** to replace those who leave as they “age-out” of the school system.
- ✓ **Go beyond the standard** “one meeting per month” for six out of the nine months of an academic year, or updates at school board meetings. Consider summer sessions or deep dives over the weekend, and in partnership with community organizations.

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## 4 COLLABORATION: MAXIMIZE YOUR RESOURCES

Community-based organizations can offer deep and credible insights into the unique needs of underserved groups and, in many cases, can provide recommendations on ways to address and overcome the challenges faced by these communities. Close partnerships between the district and community partners also increases the trust that communities have in the work of the district.

### How to Put This Into Practice:

- ✓ Work strategically with **trusted community leaders** to convene events and conduct wide-reaching and targeted outreach.
- ✓ **Align struggling student subgroups** with a community group or advocacy organization that can speak to their needs.
- ✓ **Identify groups that have been vocal, even critical**, of the district in the past and incorporate them into the LCAP process.
- ✓ **Build coalitions** to generate political momentum and foster innovation. Connect disparate groups to create common goals in the LCAP and foster consensus.
- ✓ Work with partners to help **transcribe, record, evaluate, and improve** engagement efforts.
- ✓ Identify districts of similar sizes and demographics and **learn about their successes and failures**. Don't reinvent the wheel!
- ✓ **Look for guidance** from the CA Department of Education (CDE), the CA Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), other counties and districts, and community-based organizations for LCAP and engagement resources, capacity-building opportunities, and best practices.

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## 5 ALIGNMENT: DOUBLE DOWN

LCFF should not interrupt pre-existing strategic reform initiatives, but instead LCAPs can serve as a comprehensive, organizing equity framework for district priorities, expectations, and progress. An essential part of this work is explicit alignment and connection between district and school-level efforts, and county and state-level resources.

### How to Put This Into Practice:

- ✓ **Make equity the central focus** of efforts to align LCFF and non-LCFF funding streams (e.g. local parcel taxes, federal funds) and policy initiatives in support of underserved students and communities.
- ✓ **Educate existing district offices and partners** (internal and external) in the LCAP process. Explain where their input is needed and how their current work strengthens and deepens progress towards LCAP goals.
- ✓ LCAP is not just a compliance exercise to be completed over the course of a couple of meetings. Stakeholders and district employees should understand how **LCAP priorities, processes, timelines determine and impact their respective roles** and responsibilities.
- ✓ Identify the strengths of community partners and public agencies and **coordinate efforts** to better address the needs of underserved groups. Share feedback across efforts and agencies to better align responses to community suggestions, concerns, and priorities.
- ✓ Involve **School Site Councils and school-based student government** in the district's LCAP development process. As goals and actions are discussed and finalized, give these leaders the tools they need to incorporate district-level goals into their school-site planning processes.
- ✓ Ask school-site leaders to **organize their site budget decisions and documents** around the district's LCAP principles. Consider having a "school-site LCAP" and process that reflects the district-wide plan and the stakeholder engagement values and process that guided its development.