



GETTING DOWN — TO FACTS II —

Technical Report

Taking stock of stakeholder engagement in California's Local Control Funding Formula: What can we learn from the past four years to guide next steps?

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About: The *Getting Down to Facts* project seeks to create a common evidence base for understanding the current state of California school systems and lay the foundation for substantive conversations about what education policies should be sustained and what might be improved to ensure increased opportunity and success for all students in California in the decades ahead. *Getting Down to Facts II* follows approximately a decade after the first *Getting Down to Facts* effort in 2007. This technical report is one of 36 in the set of *Getting Down to Facts II* studies that cover four main areas related to state education policy: student success, governance, personnel, and funding.

Stanford
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Policy Analysis for California Education

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Table of Contents

I. Introduction	1
II. Background on LCFF and Civic Engagement	3
LCFF and Its Equity Goals.....	3
LCFF’s Engagement Provisions.....	4
What We Know from Prior Research on LCFF & Civic Participation in Education.....	5
III. Methods	6
Case Studies (R1,2,3).....	7
Superintendent Survey (R1,2).....	9
Public Opinion Poll (R1).....	10
Limitations.....	10
IV. Stakeholder Engagement Over Time	11
LCFF Requirements.....	11
Framework and Analysis.....	12
Applying the Framework to Our Data.....	13
Findings: Overview of Case Study Patterns of Engagement.....	14
Findings: WHO Participated.....	17
Findings: HOW stakeholders Participated and for WHAT Purpose.....	22
Findings: WHY? Conditions and Factors Explaining Patterns of Engagement.....	34
Summary and Discussion.....	45
V. School Board Participation in LCFF	47
Framework and Analysis.....	48
Findings: How Board Members Engaged.....	49
Findings: Factors Influencing Board Involvement.....	52
Summary and Discussion.....	56
VI. Equity and Engagement	56
Framework: Four Perspectives on Equity.....	58
Findings.....	61
Community Engagement in Outlier and Non-Outlier Districts.....	63
Resource Allocation in Outlier and Non-Outlier Districts.....	66
Equity conceptions in Outlier and Non-Outlier Districts.....	69
Discussion of Patterns across Engagement, Resource Allocation, and Equity Conceptions.....	72
Summary and Discussion.....	74
VII. Conclusion and Implications	75
Implications for State Leaders.....	77
References	80
Appendix A: State Statue and Regulations	85
Appendix B: Case Study District Characteristics	88
Appendix C: Illustration of Matrix Analysis	89
Appendix D: Patterns in District Equity Conceptions	90
Appendix E: Resource Allocation Approaches and Equity Conceptions	91

I. Introduction

In 2013, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) with a clear mandate for democratic involvement in district goal setting and budgeting. School districts are expected to organize “meaningful engagement”¹ of key stakeholders, including parents, students, educators, and the broader community, in developing and reviewing Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs) that detail annual goals and improvement strategies and are ultimately approved by elected school boards.²

Implicit in this policy is an understanding that local voices are critical for informing district goal-setting and resource allocation decisions and that greater transparency and involvement can support equity and better outcomes for students. State leaders believed that LCFF would result in more effective policymaking, aligning resource decisions with community needs rather than needs defined in Sacramento. As the California state board president explained,

We’d had a history in California of everybody coming to the state to get a categorical program to impose something locally. As we tried to reverse the whole flow of power from Sacramento down, we looked at the budget process and if we send the money down there flexibly ...if we had a robust democracy at the local level, then we could say there is a lot of public participation that is not dominated by the groups that have lobbyists and can come to Sacramento. ... [and] change the politics from a top-down politics to a bottom-up politics. (M. Kirst, personal communication, 2015)

Early research suggests significant variation and challenges in engaging stakeholders in LCFF at the district level. As we and our colleagues have documented elsewhere (Humphrey et al., 2017; 2014; Koppich et al., 2015; Marsh & Hall, 2017), local leaders have worked hard but struggled to obtain widespread participation and involve participants substantively in planning. Yet, to date, this literature leaves several questions unanswered. First, how have engagement efforts changed over time? To date most of this research has taken a one-year snapshot of engagement in a set of case study districts. But what have local leaders learned over the past four years and has the quantity and quality of engagement shifted at all? Second, what are the views of district leaders statewide? To date, the majority of research comes from a limited set of case studies but not a representative sample. Third, as democratically elected representatives of the community, what role are school board members playing in this process? Again, existing research has provided only a limited look into these key actors. Finally, how do engagement efforts relate to resource decisions and the ways in which districts take up the equity goals of LCFF? For example, do districts that secure more representative participation end up making budget decisions that differ in nature from districts that involve a narrower constituency?

¹ As we discuss later, the term comes from regulatory guidelines and is not well defined by the state. Instructions for completing planning documents call for “meaningful engagement of parents, pupils, and other stakeholders, including those representing the subgroups identified in [the policy] is critical” and asks districts to describe the process used. The guiding questions provide clues about assumptions regarding “meaningful,” including 1) how stakeholders have been involved in “developing, reviewing, and supporting implementation of the LCAP”, 2) how they have been included in a timely manner, 3) what information was made available to them, 4) what changes were made in the plan as a result of stakeholder feedback, and 5) how stakeholder involvement improved student outcomes.

² The State of California in its most recent fiscal year 2018 budget has adopted language with intent to pursue legislation that would improve the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). For specific references see page 25 here: <http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/2018-19/pdf/Enacted/BudgetSummary/K-12Education.pdf> and see page 46 here: http://www.dof.ca.gov/Budget/Trailer_Bill_Language/documents/2018-19EducationOmnibusTrailerBill_001.pdf.

As the state enters the 2018 election cycle and leaders debate the future of and adjustments to LCFF, these important questions must be answered. While some continue to question the benefit of state mandated local control and debate who should be engaged in directing local education policy, many community and advocacy organizations remain adamant that not only is local control vital but also it must be broadened to include a more diverse set of stakeholders. They have urged districts to pay “particular attention to reaching out to parents/guardians of high-need students who receive additional resources under LCFF” and to use LCFF as “an opportunity to build relationships, and a direct connection to the decision-making process” (Public Advocates, 2016).

In recent months the Governor has doubled down on his commitment to the local decision-making aspects of this policy. Upon announcing the 2018-19 budget, Governor Brown defended LCFF, declaring “Local empowerment - that’s what it’s all about. The age of micromanagement from Washington or Sacramento is over as far as I am concerned.” (EdSource, 2018). At this critical juncture—with LCFF in its 5th year and likely to come under even more scrutiny in the coming year with a new administration—we must be certain that districts can realize this vision of local empowerment. In particular, we must ask if California should maintain a commitment to local control and expectations for stakeholder engagement in accountability and resource allocation. And if so, what more is needed to fully realize these democratic goals?

This report seeks to address these key issues by answering three overarching research questions:

- R1: How have districts interpreted and implemented the LCFF requirement for democratic engagement over time?
- R2: What role have school board members played in LCFF generally and stakeholder engagement efforts more specifically?
- R3: How does the implementation of stakeholder engagement relate to the enactment of LCFF’s broader equity mandate?

Answers to these questions can inform important policy discussion around LCFF and its future. Research on how local engagement has played out over time and what may be facilitating and inhibiting “meaningful” engagement can provide state and local leaders with information to better achieve these democratic goals, such as information to inform capacity-building, communication, production of tools, and partnerships. Similarly, understanding the ways in which board members are enacting their roles as elected representatives of the community in the context of LCFF could help the state and other organizations (e.g., California School Boards Association) provide better guidance and support to facilitate meaningful democratic participation in district decision-making. And finally, linking stakeholder engagement efforts to the interpretation and enactment of the policy’s equity goals begins to address the question of “so what?” It speaks to why we should care about the nature of stakeholder engagement and the broader purpose of improving learning opportunities and outcomes for all students, and closing “opportunity gaps” between privileged and historically underserved students.

In summary, we find:

- R1: Despite reported learning and improvement over time, most districts are complying with the letter of the LCFF policy but not the full spirit of democratic engagement. We find variation in the breadth and depth of engagement in case study districts within and across years: the majority of districts demonstrated shallow forms of engagement, while a set of “outlier” districts achieved deeper and broader engagement. Statewide survey and case study data indicate widespread struggles to attract participation, particularly among traditionally underserved

stakeholders and groups targeted by LCFF. Finally, a complex array of individual, relational, organizational, and institutional conditions appears to contribute to these patterns. These conditions and the experiences of outlier districts highlight potential leverage points for improvement.

- R2: While board members may be fulfilling the perceived required duties with regard to LCFF, there may be opportunities for them to do more in their consultative duties to advance LCFF goals. Statewide survey and case study data indicate that school board members were generally approving the LCAP and attending formal board meetings, but were not actively participating in the broader stakeholder engagement activities. Qualitative analysis indicates three main conditions shaped board involvement in LCFF: perceptions about the proper role of board members, capacity/perceived lack of capacity, and leadership of the board and/or superintendent.
- R3: Our exploratory analysis indicates a strong, potentially reinforcing, relationship between 1) the nature of stakeholder engagement, 2) the ways in which district leaders conceptualize equity, and 3) the approach taken to allocating LCFF funds. We find that districts engaged in deeper and broader ways—with participation from a wide range of stakeholders, especially historically marginalized students/families, an emphasis on advancing the common good rather than self-interest, and facilitation of reciprocal conversations—were also districts with more consistent understandings of equity and more strategic targeting of funds to high-needs student groups or schools. Districts with vague or competing equity notions generally allocated funds fairly evenly across the district (without a strategic orientation to differentiating) and were often districts that did not achieve broad or deep participation. While we cannot prove causality or the direction of these relationships, the consistent patterns suggest potentially important connections between key mechanisms of the LCFF that have great potential for affecting the realization of equity goals.

In the remainder of the report, we first provide brief background on LCFF and its call for stakeholder engagement, followed by a description of the research methods. The remainder of the report is organized around the three research questions. Each is in a sense a sub-study, with its own framework and set of data sources we will expand on in the sections that follow. Ultimately, this report explores important relationships between 1) stakeholder engagement processes, 2) school board member involvement in LCFF, 3) equity conceptions and the related resource allocation approaches, and 4) broader district contexts and conditions.

II. Background on LCFF and Civic Engagement

LCFF and Its Equity Goals

As detailed in other papers developed for Getting Down to Facts II (see Koppich & Humphrey) and elsewhere (Marsh & Hall, 2017), the LCFF decentralizes funding decisions from the state to locally elected school boards and districts. The policy also shifted the state funding model from a purely categorical one to a more flexible system that provides additional funds to district with students who qualify as English language learner (EL), low income (LI), and/or foster youth (FY). All districts receive a *base* grant determined by the size and grade levels of the student population, and two additional funding sources: 1) 20% above the base amount in *supplemental* grants to districts for each student who qualifies as FY, LI, or

EL and 2) an additional 50% of the base grant in *concentration* grants to districts serving unduplicated³ student headcounts of above 55%. These supplemental and concentration grants are intended to ensure that FY, EL, and LI students gain access to the high-quality teachers, programs, and materials they need to succeed and ultimately promote more equitable outcomes. Endorsing the LCFF equity goals in 2013, Governor Brown stated, “Equal treatment for children in unequal situations is not justice” (Strauss 2013).

The final significant component of this policy is a requirement that districts create budgets with input from a broad group of stakeholders and, in accordance with eight state-priorities⁴, set their own accountability standards for student outcomes in a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP). The intended purposes of this stakeholder engagement component of LCFF include:

- *Accountability for equitable distribution of resources*: By understanding and contributing to district budget and goal decisions, it is assumed the public will review progress annually and put pressure on district leaders to spend funds to achieve well-publicized goals and to address the needs of all students, along with high-needs students; and
- *Enhanced decision-making*: By shifting resource decisions away from state-level politics and requiring involvement from local stakeholders, it is assumed local leaders would make better decisions reflecting local contexts and needs, leading to better outcomes for students (Marsh & Hall, 2017)

LCFF’s Engagement Provisions

In terms of mechanics, LCFF requires districts, at a minimum, to present the LCAP or annual update to a parent advisory committee and English learner parent advisory committee “for review and comment.” The superintendent must also notify the public that they can provide written feedback. Finally, the statute requires school boards to 1) hold at least one public meeting to solicit public “recommendations and comments” on “specific actions and expenditures” outlined in the LCAP or annual update and 2) adopt the LCAP or annual update in a public meeting.

State guidelines for completing the LCAP (the “template”) state the importance of “meaningful engagement” from parents, students, and other stakeholders individuals connected to subgroups targeted for extra funding (e.g., FY, EL). Template guidelines provide a list of potential stakeholders (e.g., teachers, principals, local bargaining units, child welfare agencies) and suggest districts share LCAPs with school site advisory groups to ensure alignment between district and school goals and actions. Guiding questions for the template ask districts to describe how stakeholders have been involved in a timely manner, the information they made available and how stakeholder engagement has been supported. Yet neither the statute nor template provides guidance on the number or proportion of individuals or groups to involve and or how to engage them (or what “meaningful” engagement entails). While the statute established the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) to support districts in achieving the goals outlined in their adopted LCAPs, the state has not provided technical assistance or information on how to implement stakeholder engagement requirements. Appendix A provides a more detailed account of the policy guidelines and regulations as they pertain to stakeholder and school board involvement.

³ Unduplicated students are students who are low-income, foster youth, and/or English learners, but counted only once if they fit into more than one category.

⁴ The eight priorities are: student achievement, school climate, basic services, implementation of Common Core standards, student engagement, parental involvement, course access, and other student outcomes.

In sum, this new mandate for stakeholder engagement is no small task for school districts. Research has long documented the challenges of instantiating change in central office practice (e.g., Honig 2004, 2009; Marsh, 2002). Studies document the ways in which administrators' knowledge, beliefs, and biases as well as organizational structures shape interpretations and enactment of reform, often limiting the potential for deep change in practice (Coburn et al., 2009; Hannaway, 1989; Honig, Venkateswaran, McNeil & Twitchell, 2014; Rosenholtz, 1989; Spillane et al, 2002; Spillane & Thompson, 1997; Spillane 1998b). Given the limited guidance provided by the state, and the lack of external support—a factor often found to contribute to change within district offices, e.g., Honig & Ikemoto, 2008; Honig, Venkateswaran, McNeil & Twitchell, 2014—one may expect to see challenges in responding to LCFF's call for meaningful engagement of stakeholders.

What We Know from Prior Research on LCFF and Civic Participation in Education

The call for public engagement in education policy is not new. For years, policymakers at the local, state, and federal level have required citizens to participate on advisory bodies or inform the development of plans or use of targeted funding. More and more, schools are also requesting greater parent involvement both in their children's education and in the day-to-day efforts at school campuses. Elections for school board members also provide regular opportunities for public participation in selecting those making decisions over public schools.

Yet research documents the challenges of parent engagement (Hein, 2003; Lopez, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Waanders, Mendez, & Downer, 2007) and low turnout in local school board elections (Hess, 2002; Moe, 2005, 2006; Wirt & Kirst, 2005). Studies indicate a host of factors associated with engagement and turnout. For example, studies show that citizens with higher education levels and belonging to teachers' unions are more likely to participate in local board elections (Allen & Plank, 2005; Hess, 2002; Hess & Leal, 2005; Moe, 2005). Past research also documents the ways in which students and families of marginalized backgrounds—including low-income communities, people of color, and immigrants to the United States—are often silenced or excluded in school and district decision-making (Ishimaru et al., 2016; Luet, 2015; Marsh, Strunk, Bush-Mecenas, & Huguet, 2015; Su, 2010). Other studies document common obstacles and facilitators to democratic engagement in schools and districts, including capacity and perceptions of capacity (e.g., Bryk et al., 1998; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2006; Hein, 2003; Fruchter, 1987; Malen & Ogawa, 1988; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Mediratta, Shah, & McAlister 2009; Mediratta & Fruchter, 2001), leadership (e.g., Auerbach, 2007; Marsh et al., 2015), trust (e.g., Kruse, Louis & Bryk, 1994; Malen, 1994; Marsh, 2007; Weiss & Cambone, 1994), intermediary organizations (e.g., Ishimaru, 2014; Ishimaru, Torres, Slavador, Lott, Williams & Tran, 2016; Warren, Hong, Rubin & Uy, 2009; Warren, 2005) and heterogeneity (e.g., Bryk et al., 1998; Marsh, 2007)

Thus far, there has been limited research on the stakeholder engagement components of LCFF—arguably one of the largest mandates for civic participation in educational decision making in the country. Our in-depth study of engagement in the first year of LCFF implementation found that power imbalances limited the realization of democratic goals and that climates of trust, partnerships with external organizations, and demographic homogeneity may have provided the foundation for deeper, broader engagement (Marsh & Hall, 2017). Our annual briefs in years two and three continued to document some of the same trends and began to touch on important shifts occurring in the structure of engagement (e.g., moves away from districtwide meetings) (Humphrey et al., 2017; Koppich et al., 2015). Yet to date, there has been no systematic review of implementation over time or analyses of statewide representative data. We attempt to fill these gaps in Section IV.

There has also been a gap in our understanding of the role of school board members in this process. State leaders assumed that the shift to flexible funding would grant greater authority to school board members—authority that has been long eroded since the passage of Proposition 13 and the growth of categorical funding, which were both seen as removing fiscal control from local leaders. State leaders believed school board members would be active players in resource and budget decisions. Language in the statute directs school boards to “consult” with a variety of stakeholders in developing the LCAP (see Appendix A), but does not provide any further detail or description as to what the consultation process should entail. As democratically elected representatives of the very stakeholders being called upon to engage, school board members could be central actors in this process. While research indicates that school boards play a central role in mediating between local community preferences and broader state and federal policy choices (Ehrensals & First, 2008; Iannacone & Lutz, 1970), we know little about how and to what extent they are serving in this mediating role in the context of LCFF. Given some evidence that school boards have experienced diminished local influence (Howell, 2005; Kirst, 2008) and that board members often experience “role confusion” (Danzberger & Usdan, 1992; Mountford, 2008), it is possible that California school board members are not serving in significant positions of influence in the implementation of LCFF stakeholder engagement. We return to this topic in Section V.

Finally, there are important gaps in our understanding of the ways in which engagement efforts relate to the LCFF resource allocation and equity approaches taken in districts. LCFF is designed to advance equity and calls for districts to involve the students and families of low-income students, English learners, and foster youth in decisions around the use of LCFF funds. Yet we know little about how district leaders’ beliefs about equity shape their approach to engagement and to resource allocation, and how these processes might in turn relate to equity conceptions. Consistent with scholarship asserting that local implementers’ beliefs shape policy enactment (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002; Weick, 1995), our prior research found that district leaders sometimes differed in how they thought about equity (Humphrey et al., 2017) and that these views may have shaped LCFF funding decisions (Allbright et al., 2018). But we have yet to understand how all of this relates to stakeholder engagement. Local district actors’ different understandings of what is equitable, fair, or just, may inform how they decide to communicate with stakeholders and how they decide to spend LCFF dollars. Alternatively, the experiences of interacting with stakeholders and distributing LCFF funds might shape how district leaders think about equity. We further discuss this topic in Section VI.

III. Methods

This mixed-methods study addresses three key questions:

- R1: How have districts interpreted and implemented the LCFF requirement for democratic engagement over time?
- R2: What role have school board members played in LCFF generally and stakeholder engagement efforts more specifically?
- R3: How does the implementation of stakeholder engagement relate to the enactment of LCFF’s broader equity mandate?

To answer these questions, we draw on three main sources of data: 1) case studies of school districts conducted in 2013-14, 2014-15, and 2015-16, 2) a 2017-18 survey of superintendents, 3) public opinion polls in 2015, 2016, and 2018. As Table 1 below illustrates, each of the three main research questions draw on a different mix of data sources. In the chapters that follow we describe further the particular methods and frameworks used to analyze the data and answer the three research questions.

Table 1: Research Questions and Data Sources

	Case Studies Years 1, 2, 3 (2013-2017)	Superintendent Survey (2017-18)	Public Opinion Poll (2015, 2016, 2018)
R1	All cases	√	√
R2	All cases	√	
R3	Year 3 cases		

Case Studies (R1, 2, 3)

This study draws on three years of school district case studies conducted by the LCFF Research Collaborative (LCFFRC)⁵ from 2013-2017 (see Humphrey et al., 2017 for additional details). In particular, we examine 27 districts. Importantly, most of these are not longitudinal case studies but instead snapshots of districts at one point in time: two districts were visited two years in a row; all others were visited once. We selected this purposeful sample to represent districts that varied in student enrollment, geography, urbanicity, and student demographics. Although based in part on the broader LCFFRC study’s intent to capture the range of district characteristics statewide, these sampling criteria align with conditions cited in the literature as influencing stakeholder engagement, such as capacity, homogeneity, size, trust, and leadership (Marsh & Hall, 2017). Importantly for our analysis of school board involvement, the districts also vary in the extent to which board members are elected at large or by region. As Table 2 below illustrates, the sample includes geographic region, urbanicity, student enrollment, percentages of English learners and low-income students, as well as the proportion of unduplicated students. A table of characteristics for each case study district is found in Appendix B.

⁵ The LCFF Research Collaborative leaders include: Julie Marsh, Julie Koppich, Daniel Humphrey, Jennifer O’Day, Magaly Lavadenz, and Laura Stokes.

Table 2: Summary of Case Study Characteristics by Year

Characteristics		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total Years 1-3
Geographic Region	North	4	2	1	7
	Bay	3	2	2	7
	Mid	1	1	2	4
	South	2	4	3	9
Enrollment	>50,000	1	1	2	4
	25,000-50,000	3	3	1	7
	10,000-25,000	1	2	2	5
	<10,000	5	3	3	11
Urbanicity	Large City	3	5	4	12
	Suburban	4	2	2	8
	Rural/Town	3	2	2	7
Proportion of EL Students	50%-75%	1	1	0	2
	25%-50%	4	4	4	12
	<25%	5	4	4	13
Proportion of LI Students	>75%	3	6	5	14
	50%-75%	4	1	2	7
	25%-50%	2	1	1	4
	<25%	1	1	0	2
Proportion of Unduplicated Students	>75%	4	6	5	15
	55%-74%	4	1	2	7
	25%-54%	2	1	1	4
	<25%	0	1	0	1
Electoral Process	By-district	4	4	3	11
	At-large	6	5	5	16

In each of the case study districts, teams of at least two researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with district administrators, board members, principals, teachers, parents, and civic leaders. Notably, we targeted individuals overseeing or participating in LCFF/LCAP engagement, as well as key district and community leaders. In each district, we also reviewed documents, including district LCAPs, budgets, and strategic plans. See Table 3 for totals. We used semi-structured protocols in all interviews, which were audio recorded and transcribed. All respondents were promised anonymity and all names of individuals, schools, and districts included herein are pseudonyms. To further protect anonymity, all numbers (e.g., enrollment counts, budget figures) reported herein have been rounded up or down or reported in ranges and the gender of particular individuals may have been changed.

Table 3: Total Interviews by Respondent Type and Year

Respondent Type	Number of Interviewees Year 1	Number of Interviewees Year 2	Number of Interviewees Year 3	Total Interviewees Years 1-3
Total districts	10	9	8	27
District Staff	51	67	69	187
COE Staff	9	16	1	26
School Board Member	6	7	14	27
Principal	0	6	21	27
Teacher	0	0	11	11
Union Member	7	22	14	43
Parent	7	14	23	44
Community Organizations	2	6	10	18
Total interviews conducted	82	138	163	383

We discuss the specifics of how we analyzed these data in subsequent sections organized around each research question. Generally, authors of this report conducted multiple rounds of analysis. First, to gain a broad understanding of the district, its context, and approach to stakeholder engagement, we examined case study memoranda developed by the original LCFRC teams who conducted the visits. Second, we coded the original transcripts using frameworks and codes aligned with the main research questions. In all cases, multiple researchers were involved in analyses and multiple data sources consulted to ensure credibility of findings.

Superintendent Survey (R1, 2)

In 2017-2018 (September-March), we administered a survey to a statewide representative sample of superintendents (see Marsh & Koppich, 2018 for additional details).⁶ The survey sample included elementary, high and unified public school districts and was stratified by district size and percent of unduplicated students (two variables affecting the amount of LCFF funds allocated to districts and the potential implementation of the policy). The stratification plan defined three levels of district size—small (less than 2,000 students), medium districts (2,000 – 9,999 students), and large (10,000 or more students)—and two levels or proportion of unduplicated pupils—low proportion (55% or less) and high proportion (more than 55%). The survey instrument asked superintendents about the level of stakeholder participation by role groups, strategies used for engagement, challenges, attitudes about engagement, and support received and desired. The instrument was reviewed by state policymakers and researchers familiar with LCFF and pilot tested with and revised based on feedback from a group of recently retired California Superintendents. Surveys were administered online with extensive email and phone follow-up.⁷ We administered the survey to a total of 735 superintendents and obtained responses from 350, for a final response rate of 48%.

⁶ Ninety percent of respondents were superintendents: 10% were other cabinet level leaders with decision-making authority over LCFF (e.g., associate/deputy superintendent, chief financial officer). For ease of reporting, we refer to respondents as superintendents throughout this report.

⁷ Attempts were made to contact participants who had not yet completed the survey up to 10 times by email and up to 6 times by phone. In addition, a letter of support from the Association of California School Administrators

Results were then weighted by district size and unduplicated pupil count to bring these variable into alignment with their actual proportions in the population. The ultimate weighting yielded a sample that is almost identical to the overall population in terms of region, district type, free- and reduced price, English learners, homeless students, foster youth, and migrant students. A comparison of superintendents who completed the survey to potentially eligible superintendents who received but did not complete it indicates that responding and non-responding districts were nearly identical on all characteristics reported in the California unduplicated pupil count database, with no statistically significant differences. The margin of error for proportions in the sample as a whole is +/- 4.3%.⁸

Public Opinion Poll (R1)

The study also draws on item-level data from the Policy Analysis of California Education (PACE) and University of Southern California (USC) Rossier School of Education statewide representative polls fielded online (in English and Spanish) in August 2015 with 2,411 registered voters, August 2016 with 1,202 registered voters, and January 2018 with 2,500 registered voters. Experienced online polling firms conducted the polls in 2015, 2016 (MFour/Tulchin Research) and 2018 (Tulchin Research/Moore Information). All poll participants affirmed that they were registered to vote in California and completed the poll on any web-connected device, including laptops and mobile phones. Poll results were weighted based on the probability of selection in order to represent the population of California voters. Voters were sampled to match the state's population of registered voters on party affiliation, age, ethnicity, gender, geographical location, and education level, and responses were weighted on the same set of demographics. Respondents were paid less than a dollar to incentivize participation, and mischievous responders, such as those who speeded through, were excluded. For this report we draw on questions regarding voter awareness of LCFF as well as interest and actual engagement in district decision-making (LCFF and more generally). For more information see: <http://edpolicyinca.org/polls>.

Limitations

There are several limitations to our data collection and analyses. First, the case studies rely primarily on self-reported, retrospective data from a limited sample of individuals. Given resource constraints we were unable to conduct extensive observations and interviewed a sample of stakeholders from each district and thus, likely spoke with more engaged participants, limiting our understanding of everyone affected by the engagement outcomes. And while there may be some bias from retrospective interviews, given the brief time between actual events and interviews (months), interviewee recall was less of a concern. Additionally, to minimize potential bias, we triangulated evidence and had interviewees reflect on artifacts from the engagement process to enhance recall. As noted above, the data are not strictly longitudinal as only two districts were visited more than one year. Our evidence of change instead comes from reports of shifts in practice as well as a comparison of one-year snapshots over three years.

(ACSA) was included with the survey invitation. ACSA also contacted its membership to encourage participation in the survey.

⁸ The margin of error for proportions was calculated using a formula that accounts for both clustered sampling and the fact that the survey sample comprises a substantial proportion (37%) of the total population of all superintendents. <https://cals.arizona.edu/classes/rnr321/Ch4.pdf>

IV. Stakeholder Engagement Over Time

LCFF called for “meaningful engagement” of stakeholders in developing Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs) and in setting district goals and budgets. Without explicit guidelines defining what meaningful engagement looks like, districts had considerable discretion in how to implement this democratic mandate. Thus, the first part of our analysis examined the question: ***How have districts interpreted and implemented the LCFF requirement for democratic engagement over time?*** More specifically, we asked:

1. Who have they involved, for what purpose, and how?
2. What shifts have occurred and why?
3. What factors explain these patterns?

We draw on case study data, as well as survey and poll data to answer these questions. Notably, when describing shifts, we rely on self-reports as well as patterns observed in the different sets of cross-sectional case studies over time. In summary, we find variation in the breadth and depth of engagement in case study districts within and across years: the majority of districts demonstrated shallow forms of engagement, while a set of “outlier” districts achieved deeper and broader engagement. Statewide survey and case study data indicate widespread struggles to attract participation, particularly among traditionally underserved stakeholders and groups targeted by LCFF. And while many district leaders report learning and improvement over time, most districts appear to be complying with the letter of the LCFF policy but not the full spirit of democratic engagement. Finally, a complex array of individual, relational, organizational, and institutional conditions appears to contribute to these patterns. These conditions and the experiences of outlier districts highlight potential leverage points for improvement.

In what follows we first remind the reader of the requirements of the policy, describe our analytic framework and process, and then present our findings.

LCFF Requirements

As noted in the introduction, LCFF requires districts, at a minimum, to 1) present the LCAP or annual update to a parent advisory body for review 2) notify the public that they can provide written feedback, 3) hold at least one public meeting to solicit public “recommendations and comments” on “specific actions and expenditures” outlined in the LCAP or annual update, and 4) adopt the LCAP or annual update in a public meeting.

Guidelines for completing the LCAP call for “meaningful engagement” from parents, students, and other stakeholders individuals connected to subgroups targeted for extra funding (e.g., FY, EL). These guidelines provide a list of potential stakeholders (e.g., teachers, principals, local bargaining units, child welfare agencies) and suggest districts share LCAPs with school site advisory groups to ensure alignment between district and school goals and actions. Guiding questions for the template ask districts to describe how stakeholders have been involved in a timely manner, the information they made available and how stakeholder engagement has been supported. Aside from this, there is little explicit description of the number or proportion of individuals or groups to involve and or how to engage them (or what “meaningful” engagement entails). (See Appendix A for details on the law and regulations.)

Given the limitations of the design and lack of explicit guidance or technical assistance one might expect to see very little deep or meaningful engagement. Yet, the discretion provided to local actors opens up the possibility for variation. With this in mind, we developed a framework to capture different dimensions of engagement and the variation likely to occur along these continua.

Framework and Analysis

The framework for our analysis builds on a long history of democratic theory and literature on public administration (see Marsh & Hall, 2017 for thorough review of the theory and empirical literature). While the democratic theories from which we draw are normative in nature (i.e., scholars claim particular models will lead to better outcomes), we do not advocate one model over another. Rather, we use these concepts to highlight key dimensions of LCFF engagement efforts and present this framework as a schematic illustrating possible variation. We also relate the framework back to the intent of LCFF and the models state policymakers envisioned in their development of LCFF. In the end, this descriptive lens helps elucidate the who, what, and how of engagement (Figure 1).

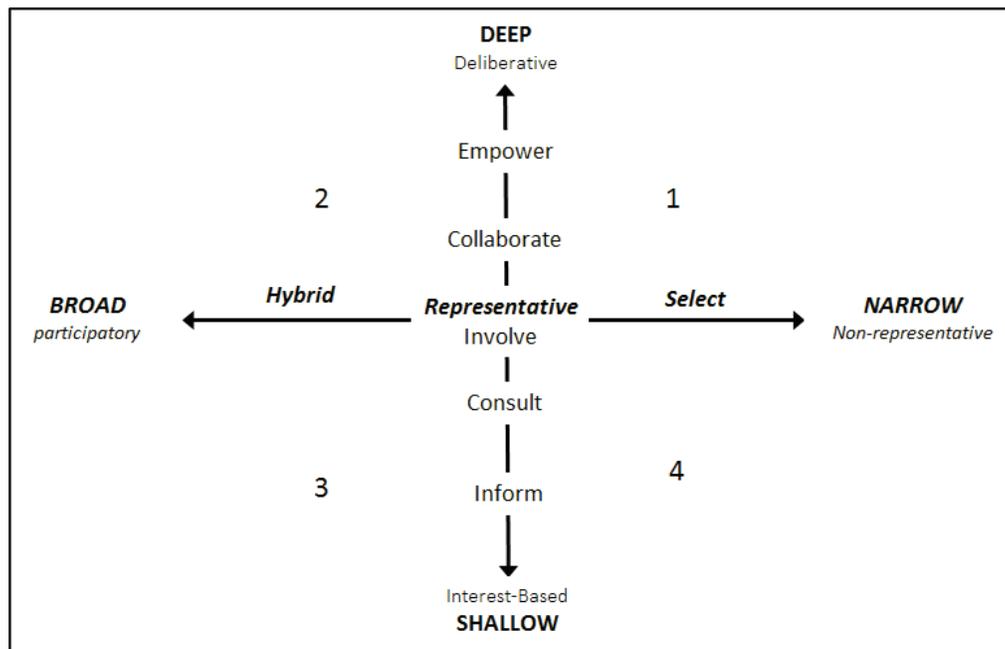


Figure 1. Models of Stakeholder Engagement (Marsh & Hall, 2017)

Who is involved. First, the framework asks: Who is involved? The “who” of community involvement falls within a range, stretching from *broad* to *narrow*. *Broad* engagement—often associated with participatory democratic theories (Dewey, 1927; Pateman, 1975)—involves the vast majority of the community, whereas a *narrow* process includes some, but not all, stakeholders affected by the LCFF decisions. For example, *narrowly* engaged districts might have a committee that lacks diversity and excludes members of under-represented communities. In the middle of these two extremes is a *representative* engagement process—often associated with representative democratic theories (Schumpeter, 1942)—which may utilize a district-wide committee that includes representatives of internal and external stakeholders (e.g., teachers and parents) and traditionally under-represented groups.

A district might appoint an LCAP advisory committee with representatives of all major stakeholder groups and survey the entire community, making it a *hybrid* of representative and broad participation. If this district makes strong efforts to reach all stakeholders with a survey, and obtains a high response rate, it might be situated farther to the left of the continuum in Figure 1. If a district simply appoints a LCFF committee but fails to include representatives of entire groups, such as teachers, it would move farther to the right into the *select* range of the continuum.

How participants are engaged and for what purpose. Second, the framework in Figure 1 asks: How are participants engaged? For what purpose? This ranges from *deep* engagement, where there is two-way exchange of ideas between community and district, to *shallow* engagement, where the district is providing a one-way flow of information. In a shallowly engaged district, the focus is on providing information with little opportunity for stakeholders to engage in reasoned discussion and consider the needs of the greater good, instead of just their own children or students. Moving up the x-axis, a district might provide stakeholders some opportunity to provide feedback—or *consult*—on how LCAP goals fit their own personal needs. A district moves closer to the *deeper* end of the continuum by involving stakeholders in a more complex, ongoing engagement process. This deeper engagement could include multiple meetings to review progress towards goals, identify areas of need for all students and work with district staff to develop strategies to address these needs (representing *collaborate* or *empower*). At the far end, one could imagine a process where stakeholders deliberate and consider each others’ claims and needs with the goal of promoting the common good of the district as a whole. This deeper model aligns with deliberative conceptions of democracy (e.g., Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Habermas, 1996) and contrasts with conceptions calling for competition for the advancement of private interests (Bohman & Rehg, 1997; Fung, 2006; IAP2, 2007; Phillips, 1995).

Mapping back to LCFF policy intent. As documented elsewhere (Marsh & Hall, 2017), the design of LCFF’s engagement intends for both broad and representative forms of engagement to inform and consult with local stakeholders—falling primarily into quadrants 2 and 3 of Figure 1. When interviewed about the intent of LCFF, state leaders indicated an interest in districts gaining broad participation in the LCAP development and review process, but the law and its regulations provided only minimal guidance on *who* to involve. Aside from a requirement to involve a parent advisory group (a representative form of engagement), the policy *recommends* involvement from other stakeholders such as students, labor associations, and educators. The policy also requires school board members to approve the LCAP. In terms of the *what*, LCFF directs districts to solicit input on proposed expenditures and actions outlined in the LCAP and to inform stakeholders about the LCAP goals. Aside from references to engage in “meaningful engagement,” the state does not dictate *how* to structure the process and there is no reference to pushing on deliberative practices of two-way exchange or focus on the common good.

Applying the Framework to Our Data

To understand how districts implemented stakeholder engagement over time, we used this framework to analyze our qualitative data. For these analyses, we drew on qualitative data from 27 districts – 10 visited in Year 1, 9 in Year 2, and 8 in Year 3. All but one of these districts were selected to represent variation in the types of districts statewide. In Year 3, one additional district, O’Connor, was added to the sample because of its reputation for excellence in engaging with their community in a meaningful way. It is important to keep in mind that with the exception of two districts (Cotterdam visited in the first and second year; Ansilie in the second and third year), these are not longitudinal case studies. Our intent is to look at general patterns across the three sets of cases studies in an exploratory way. Collectively these 27 districts provide important qualitative data to explore the nature of stakeholder engagement.

Our analysis included a multistep process. First, we triangulated data from multiple sources, comparing interview data to documents wherever possible. Guided by our framework, we coded all data, first analyzing the nature of engagement in each case along the broad dimensions of who, how and what of participation, along with contextual factors. Next, we analyzed each case individually, developing independent case memos. We then conducted a matrix analysis to systematically analyze patterns across all three years’ cases (Averill, 2002; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) and factors associated with patterns (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

First we applied a set of matrix columns developed by Marsh and Hall (2017). This study identified categories describing each district's stakeholder engagement based on the who, how, and what, and classified cases based on column-specific criteria (see Appendix C for more details). In the current study, we identified columns in terms of *who* as: (a) the estimated percent of participants (turn out in meetings, response rates); (b) participant types (internal vs. external, representative groups, targeted groups, traditionally marginalized groups); and (c) participant mechanisms (e.g., survey, meetings, advisory, informal events). We then aggregated evidence across these categories to plot each case on a horizontal spectrum between broad and narrow engagement.

We applied six matrix columns concerning the nature and content of engagement (*what* and *how*): (a) amount of information provided to the community; (b) the types of feedback solicited from community (e.g., feedback on goals vs. budgets); (c) how often stakeholder engagement was part of the LCAP process (e.g., one-time vs. ongoing); (d) communication flow between stakeholders and district officials (1-way vs. 2-way); (e) focus conveyed by district leaders (common good vs. interest-based input); and (f) level of community authority over LCAP (i.e., did the community provide input and the district controlled the outcomes or did the community co-construct decisions?). We then plotted each case along the vertical spectrum between shallow and deep engagement. Once data were coded and plotted we then compared case study findings to ensure inter-rater reliability. Figures 2-4 illustrate the final placement of each case studied within each year along the two continua with patterns of engagement type.

We also added columns summarizing contextual conditions of each case, including district size, homogeneity, wealth, capacity, organizational structure, and leadership and analyzed their association with the type of engagement observed. Additionally, we analyzed how districts in the second and third year reported changing their stakeholder engagement process and the rationales behind those choices. Aside from longitudinal data collected in the two cases visited more than once, the findings on shifts represent either self-reports of changes made over time or overall differences in the patterns observed in year one versus year two versus year three.

Finally, we drew on items from two data sets to understand the nature of stakeholder engagement statewide. First, the LCFRC superintendent survey provides statewide representative data on district efforts, including the nature of engagement (*who, how*), reported challenges, and factors shaping this process. Second, the PACE/Rossier USC public opinion poll provided important information about public awareness of and involvement in LCFF, which clearly relates to *who* participated. Together these data provide a broad understanding of how LCFF engagement efforts have played out across the state, as well as a more in-depth look into the factors shaping the process, as well as changes and learning over time in a set of focal districts.

Findings: Overview of Case Study Patterns of Engagement

To me, meaningful stakeholder engagement is where you're able to have the opportunity to explain what the State Department of Ed. has now asked us to do, and that our governor has asked us to do, and the why's behind it. And explain to them the LCFF dollars and what does that mean, and especially for our district because we are one of the districts that receives more dollars because of our free and reduced lunch count and our high roster of homeless population. ... to really have an opportunity to share that with them and then have them have the opportunity to share back with us what they feel is the most important thing for their children, or for our community of students. I think we've had some meaningful engagement with our district leadership team that I described. I think we've had meaningful engagement with our site councils. I feel like we're getting to where we're having more meaningful engagement with our English language, second language learners families. ... I don't feel that we've had really good meaningful

engagement with our parent population as a whole. I think we have these pockets where we've been able to have meaningful engagement and get back information that is helpful.

-School Principal (Thorsby Union, Year 3)

As this principal articulated, the interpretation and realization of meaningful community engagement is complex. Much like this principal, many individuals conceptualized “meaningful” as a two-way exchange involving discussion of dollars and services (how and what), and participation from all stakeholder groups (who), but recognized the difficulty of achieving this vision for all groups. Other respondents throughout our research reported different understandings of the ideal process and assessments of their ability to realize it.

The combination of interview and document data allowed us to explore these understandings and capture general patterns of implementation over time. As Figures 2-4 illustrate, we found considerable variation in the nature of case study stakeholder engagement each year—variation in both the breadth (who was involved) and depth of engagement (how they engaged and for what purpose). In addition to this variation, there were a set of broad patterns and themes that emerged throughout our study.

Next, we draw on both superintendent survey and case data to explain overarching patterns and trends in WHO participated, followed by a discussion of patterns and trends in HOW they participated and for WHAT purpose. We conclude with a discussion of the conditions and factors that help explain these patterns.

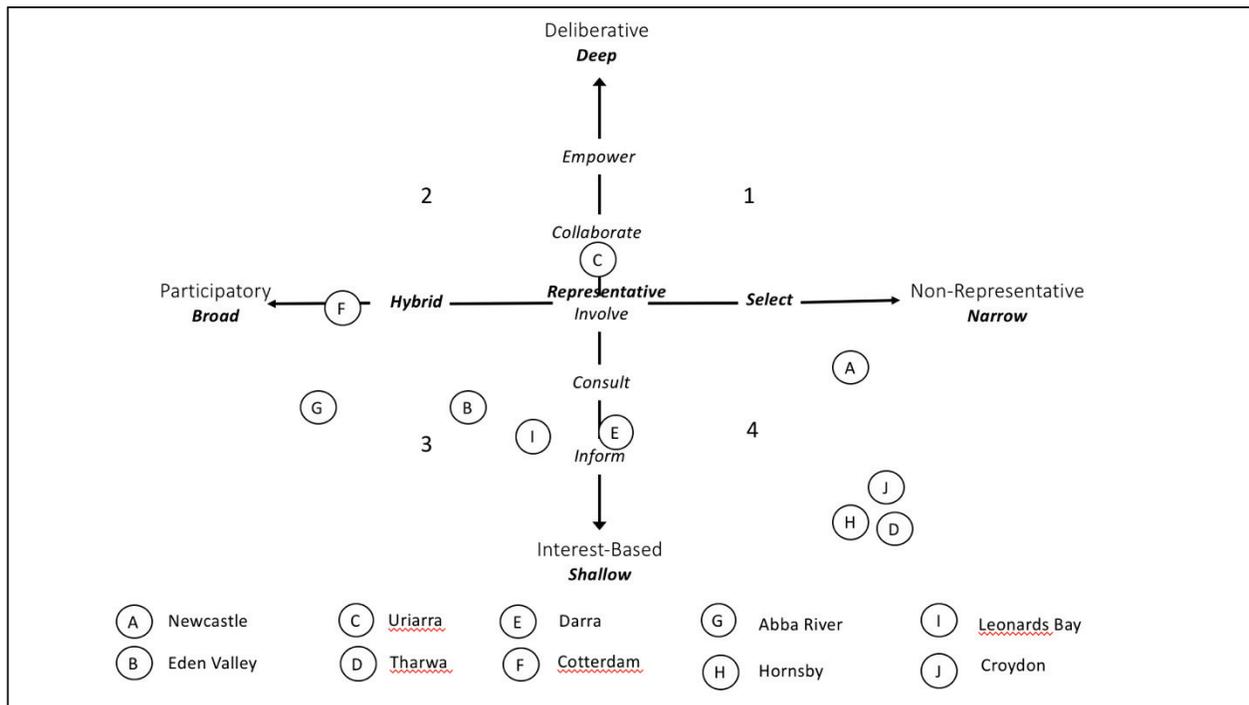


Figure 2. First-year LCFF implementation democratic engagement framework.

Findings: WHO Participated

Overall, survey and case study data indicate that while districts worked hard to attract participation, they struggled to bring in non-parents and traditionally underserved participants. Case data further indicate that district leaders improved outreach strategies over time and included more student voices. Next we examine statewide data, followed by a more in-depth examination of the cases.

Statewide Survey Results

Participation by all reports is mixed and is particularly low for non-parent community members and traditionally underserved stakeholders. Superintendents were evenly divided in their overall assessment of the *level of stakeholder engagement* achieved in 2016-17, with about half saying it was excellent (12%) or good (37%) and the other half rating it as average (39%) or poor (12%). As for specific stakeholders, central office and school administrators and other educators, as well as LCAP advisory members were reported to be the most involved in developing LCFF goals and resource allocation decisions (Figure 5 below). Students and, to an even lesser extent, nonparent community members and consultants were the least likely to be involved, according to superintendents. These patterns are perhaps not surprising, as one might expect higher participation among district employees.

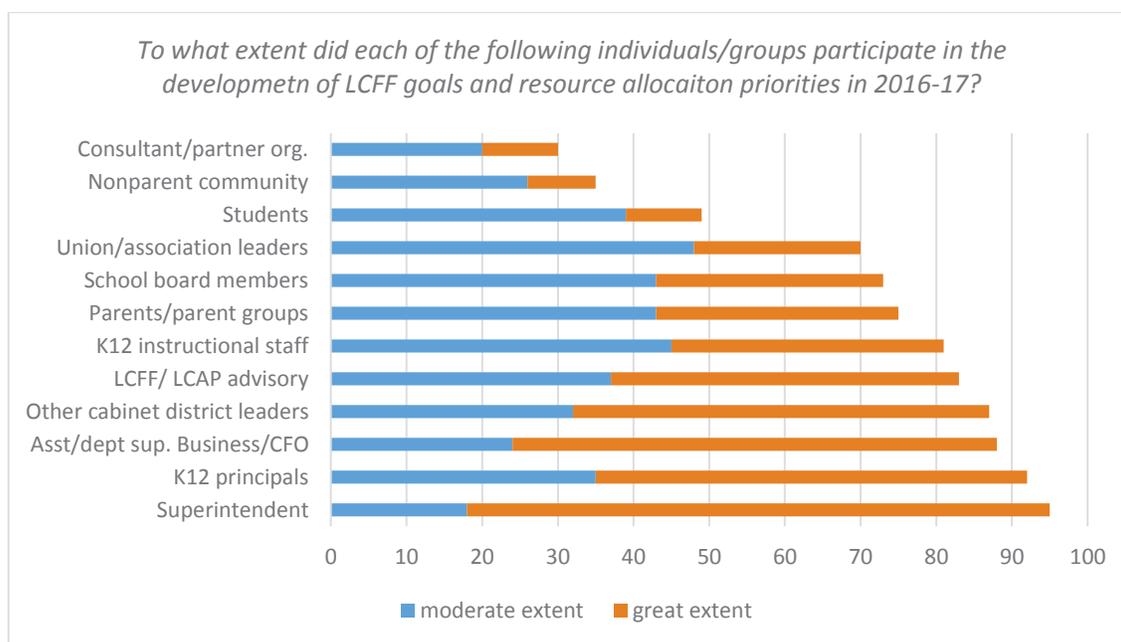


Figure 5. Percentage of Superintendents Reporting Engagement by Stakeholder Group

Superintendent reports also raised questions about representation of traditionally underserved stakeholders and groups targeted by LCFF. As illustrated in Figure 6 below, more than half of superintendents reported that it was difficult to obtain input from parents/guardians of foster youth, low-income students, and English learners. Further, more than half (55%) strongly or somewhat agreed that “district engagement activities tend to be dominated by a few stakeholders that impedes a balanced representation of stakeholders' interests.” Overall concerns about low engagement and representation, particularly for traditionally underserved stakeholders and groups targeted by the policy, raise important questions about the realization of LCFF’s equity goals and is a theme that emerged in the case study districts as well. We will examine these issues further in later sections.

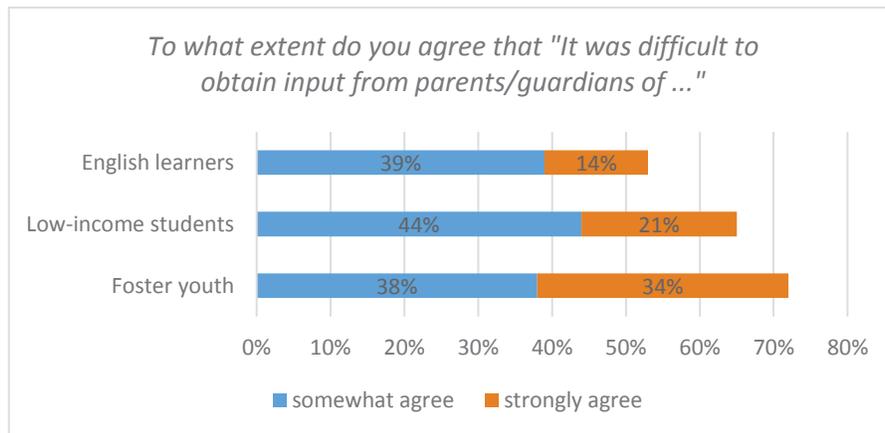


Figure 6. Percentage of Superintendents Reporting Difficulty Gaining Input from Target Groups Parents

Statewide voter poll data indicate low levels of voter participation in LCFF. Results from the statewide poll indicate an even more dire picture of general public participation in LCFF. According to the 2016⁹ PACE/USC Rossier poll, only 5% of voters reported attending an LCFF/LCAP related meeting and 6% reported hearing about but not attending a LCFF/LCAP meeting. Reported attendance at LCFF meetings increased only slightly for parents (9%) and parents with children still in school (11%). These numbers were essentially the same in 2015, with 4% of voters reporting attendance at LCFF meetings or events.

Case Study Data

Over the years, we found the greatest variation in who participated in Year 1. More importantly, over time, we found fewer cases of narrow engagement, more representative forms of engagement, and greater attention on student engagement. Each year, a minority of districts engaged in broader, more participatory forms of engagement. And while district leaders reported improving stakeholder outreach strategies over time, engaging nontraditional actors remained a challenge all three years.

Over time, fewer cases engaged stakeholders in a strictly narrow way. In Year 1, 4 of the 10 districts narrowly engaged with their community, compared with no cases in years two and three. In these early cases, district administrators did not rely on broad participatory approaches to engaging stakeholders nor did they configure representative groups—but instead, these four cases used existing groups (e.g., EL or parent advisories) or appointed select individuals to contribute to LCAP development. They often limited LCAP “community meetings” to one or two meeting(s) in which turnout was reported to be quite low and representation limited. The rationale given by these districts for narrowing their engagement included the belief that the timeline for LCFF implementation¹⁰ limited their ability to fully develop their process. One first year district leader explained, “One of our biggest challenges was how do we communicate when [the] airplane is being built while it’s in the air.”

Further, districts with the narrower forms of engagement in Year 1 shared common struggles defining who in the community should be engaged. District leaders in this category often focused their engagement around either internal (teachers, administrators) or external (parents, community groups)

⁹ We did not ask this question in 2018.

¹⁰ In January 2014, the California State Board of Education adopted new fiscal regulations and the LCAP template. In May 2014, all districts were required to present their completed LCAP.

players, but not both. Although all districts in Year 1 agreed that parents should be involved, specifically parents of LCFF-targeted students (EL, LI, FY), several of our narrower districts disagreed about the role of teachers. Abba River, for example, prioritized parents and citizens in its conception of who should be engaged. “We need to hear the voices from the community,” said the superintendent, who went on to explain that principals and school staff were not initially involved in LCAP meetings. Other districts shared in the debate over educator inclusion, and, in a few cases, we heard union officials expressing frustration over their omission from district engagement efforts.

Perhaps the result of more time to understand the policy, to define who should be included, and to build capacity to engage more broadly, districts in the later years were less likely to engage in narrow forms of engagement. Most district leaders seemed to recognize that non-representative forms of engagement did not meet the intent or spirit of the LCFF policy.

Over time, engagement seemed to coalesce around more representative forms. Compared to the first year cases, case districts in years two and three engaged in more representative forms (we categorize 14 of 19 cases these two years in this general range of engagement). Rather than broader wide-scale community meetings, these districts tended to rely on existing groups such as an LCAP Advisory Committee, School Site Council, or DELAC, to provide feedback on the district LCAP. Some also offered stakeholder feedback opportunities through attendance at community meetings (e.g., Rotary, Kiwanis) and school board meetings (during audience comment periods).

Not only did we see districts moving away from non-representative, and to some extent select approaches, but we also heard leaders describe conscious efforts to shift away from broader districtwide meetings because they were either too difficult to manage or due to low attendance, resulted in a “low return on investment” and a lack of meaningful input. Regarding pragmatic challenges, one district administrator explained:

One of the things that we learned was that, in regard to the number of meetings, facility-wise, if we have a group of, let's say, 200 people attend a function, a meeting, even though it's a small percentage of our overall population, facility-wise, it's hard to find a facility that is that user friendly. That's one thing. Also, with our [EL population], whatever we do in English, we have to do in Spanish. So finding the time to translate the materials, making sure it's user friendly, making sure that we have people who are fluent enough in that primary language to feel comfortable engaging in that dialogue. Also, normally whenever we attend a meeting, some of our parents will say 'I need more information on this; then it's hard to do the turn-around, translation-wise, from one day to the next because they expect a certain level of academic level in Spanish. Sometimes we're fluent enough, but to that precise level of academic Spanish, it's hard ...

-Central Office Administrator (Ansilie)

Others calculated the cost-benefit of the significant investment of resource required to organize the large-scale participatory engagement process and the resulting participation. The same Ansilie administrator above noted, “Oftentimes we send—whether it be a flyer or a phone message—and to send it to 52,000 people and only five show up, so that's really forced us to really reevaluate how we engage or invite people.” Similarly, the superintendent in Charnwood (Year 2) expressed disappointment with the low return on their investment:

We did a whole slew of things to try to engage our parents in a variety of ways . . . We just had a big parent empowerment dinner, and we have a variety of other activities we do, and consistently we tend to be somewhat disappointed that we don't have a better turnout.

In fact, in Years 2 and 3, 6 of the 17 case study districts did not engage in any active, large-scale, district-wide LCAP community-engagement meetings because administrators believed those meetings failed to provide meaningful engagement.

While the majority of case districts in all three years (2/3 in Year 1 and all in Years 2 and 3) used surveys to try and capture broader perspectives, many seemed to learn over time that they could not rely on high response rates to guarantee a participatory process. Although most of these districts did not report response rates, those that did cited an average of less than three percent. This too provided impetus for investing in more representative forms of engagement.

Districts paid more attention to student engagement and representation over time. Over the three years, we found districts more focused on including students in engagement efforts. Although six out of the ten districts in Year 1 included students in the surveys, only one district (Cotterdam) went further and organized student meetings regarding the LCAP. According to one leader in this district, the intent was to solicit from students what they “found lacking” in their education and to envision where the school should go in the future: “Not, ‘What is school?’ but ‘Where should it be going? Don’t just think about yourself; think about your little brothers, your little sisters and cousins. This is a long-term conversation.”

In Year 2, eight out of the nine districts included students in surveys *and* other engagement activities, including focus groups, seating a student representative on the school board and/or LCAP advisory boards, as well as other less formal activities, such as community gatherings. Some used innovative techniques, like polling students via smartphones.

In Year 3 administrators in four districts (O’Connor, Lyneham, Kambah, and Cooper Plains) reported deliberate efforts to expand student engagement—using student specific surveys and meetings, and identifying student representatives to participate in the LCAP development process. These district leaders believed that expanded efforts were necessary because students responding to broad surveys in the early LCFF years were not LCFF-targeted group students. To remedy this for example, O’Connor included students in both school level and district level LCAP advisory meetings, school-site council meetings, student advisory groups, the superintendent advisory group, and as nonvoting members of the school board. A teacher there explained, “When students are in a lot of these LCAP meetings, they’re being asked not just to speak on their own experience but to speak on behalf of students.” Similarly, Kambah created a student advisory committee because, as one CBO staff member explained, “. . . the first year I think what we noticed was that a lot of the students were providing input were not students that were high-need students. They were more like students that were in student government and those types of programs within the schools.” Other districts, such as Lyneham, used focus groups to incorporate more diverse students into the engagement process.

A minority of districts each year engaged in broader forms of engagement. Across all three years, we found five district “outliers” (Cotterdam Year 1, Abba River, Page, O’Connor, and Lyneham) that enacted broader forms of engagement, relying on both representative approaches and other means to expand stakeholder participation. Although leaders in these districts acknowledged that stakeholder engagement was a challenge or “a lot of work” (District Leader, Page), they all expressed a belief that broad and diverse stakeholder engagement was essential to student success. Committed to moving beyond simple compliance with the law, the districts expanded participation beyond representation with strong meeting attendance or survey response rates. They also achieved the largest proportions of community participants and sought to include more people, beyond the usual players – such as nontraditional parents and CBOs, using multi-lingual print and social media, mail flyers, surveys, school websites, and televised board meetings. In several first year districts, intermediary organizations helped to educate and recruit “new” participants in the LCFF process—a strategy recognized in the literature as reducing participation bias and “mitigate[ing] the natural tendencies toward over-representation of the

advantaged” (Fung, 2003, p.348). In Cotterdam and Abba River, for example, intermediary organizations marketed and transported parents to LCFF meetings, thus broadening the scope of those traditionally engaged in school activities

A central office administrator in Page explained that they did not want to replicate what they observed in other districts, “where a very small group of people at the district level, sort of in a smoke-filled back room, created what they thought was an ideal plan and kind of went out to stakeholders after the fact and asked them to endorse it, or asked them to sign off on a present list of actions and services they want to prioritize.” These districts also stood out for their commitment to improving and adjusting their approach each year. As one consultant in O’Connor explained, “We started the work, but there’s still much more to do, and they [district leaders] recognize [that] and that’s why I give them credit because they have seen this as an ongoing effort, not just a flash in the pan.”

District leaders reported improving stakeholder outreach strategies over time. In the last two years of our study, many district leaders reported learning more effective and personalized outreach strategies. In Lyneham, a school board member stated his focus was on “figuring out how we can continue to do better”:

A place where we are targeted for growth and improvement over this year is engaging the broader community. We have done in the past, I think, too passive an outreach, by basically sending neighborhood association leaders, elected officials, and other community leaders, sending them emails saying, “We’re meeting at this time. Join us.” That, to me, is insufficient. It may be sufficient for parents who have a direct interest, but this year, we are working much more to actually call people that we want to be there, explaining why we want their input. Really creating a greater sense of value and urgency, and you’d have to ask me in five months how that has panned out, but I think it will . . . I have high confidence that it will yield a better turnout of community stakeholders.

Similarly, leaders in Page reported investing more in networks and personal communication:

There was word of mouth, there was radio broadcasts in Spanish on the Spanish language radio station, there was television spots on Spanish language television, there were community flyers, there were flyers sent home from the schools, these are all bilingual. There were bilingual phone messages sent out from the schools, there was bilingual information put out on the website, there was bilingual information sent out on a variety of mobile learning apps, such as Facebook and Twitter, there was also personal phone calls from each of the principals who were charged to reach out to key parents to come. And then there was phone calls at the district level where we had contact with key stakeholders, such as community advocates or certain parents, because by getting the word out to them they also have their own networks that they would disseminate the information through.

Engaging the disenfranchised and nontraditional actors was a struggle in all three years. Although particularly true for districts in the first year that narrowly engaged stakeholders, districts in all three years found it difficult to ensure involvement and/or representation of nontraditional actors, such as non-English-speaking and “traditionally disenfranchised” parents—reflecting the ways in which historical-structural issues and power imbalances can shape democratic practice (Marsh, 2007; Mansbridge, 1983; Roberts, 2004). In one Year 1 district, we were told that “a good 20% of the first LCAP meeting . . . was comprised of parents and teachers from that elementary school—that wasn’t the target audience [of the LCFF], but they were trying to make sure that the needs of their school were met.” In Year 2, a leader in Bornia Heights confessed, “We have a very hard time engaging parents from our students of color, our low SES, and our ELL.” Even one of the cases we visited two years in a row struggled both years to engage parent *and* teachers.

In some cases, the decision to use existing representative groups (e.g., English language or parent advisories) may have further exacerbated this problem and limited participation of nontraditional and disenfranchised individuals, such as low-income and English-learner parents, who may not traditionally participate in formal activities. In all three years, administrators reported struggling to bring in more than the “usual suspects”—those who typically participate in activities but may not authentically represent their community. These educators recognized, however, that these seasoned participants had a deeper understanding of the district and how to participate, and that casting a broader net could bring in individuals who are less “system savvy.” Many districts on the broader end of the spectrum employed strategies to reconcile this tension—such as the “bring a friend” strategy, encouraging participants to “grab a friend or another parent who is not typically involved and bring them in,” or employing community organizers to network and conduct outreach to nontraditional actors.

So What? Aligning with the Letter and Spirit of the Policy

Like most democratic processes, LCFF called for inclusion of a range of stakeholders likely to be affected by decisions around district goals, activities, and budget allocations. In an ideal engagement process, all stakeholders would be either directly involved or represented in the process. As we observed, however, districts varied widely in the breadth of participation achieved.

One positive trend in our data is that we did not see as many non-representative, narrow forms of engagement in the later years of LCFF implementation. District leaders may have gained time to understand and plan, and recognized the importance of at a minimum, including a representative group of individuals in the LCAP development process. This aligns well with the intent of the policy, which called for school district to consult with the parent advisory committee, the English Learner Parent Advisory Committee, as applicable, as well as parents, students, teachers, principals, administrators, other school personnel, local bargaining units, and the local community in accordance with EC sections 52060(g) and 52066(g). Our data also indicate that some districts are retreating from broad, district-wide engagement efforts due to the low participation and high costs, in favor of more representative approaches. Again, this appears to align with state policymakers’ intent – nowhere in the policy or regulations do we see a mandate for participatory forms of engagement and the policy does not require districts to establish a new advisory committee if it has already established an advisory committee that meets the LCFF statutory and regulatory requirements (EC sections 52062, 52063, 52068, and 52069).

Although our case data suggest alignment with the letter of the LCFF policy, they nevertheless raise concerns about achieving the true spirit of democratic engagement. The minority of districts falling in the “select” category and the reported struggles of many districts to involve non-traditional stakeholders indicate that some districts have not achieved authentically representative input in their LCAPs. These limitations could in theory be attenuated if participants, however narrowly construed, are explicitly directed to consider the interests of non-participants and all stakeholders, and the expectation is enforced. We now turn to these structural arrangements and the ways in which districts organized engagement and for what purposes.

Findings: HOW Stakeholders Participated and for WHAT Purpose

Collectively our data indicate that district leaders have tried a variety of engagement strategies and have made some important shifts in later years—shifts resulting in consequential tradeoffs. While districts report learning and improvement, the majority have engaged stakeholders in relatively shallow ways.

Statewide Survey Results

Many Engagement Strategies Used, but Assessments of Usefulness Vary. Superintendents report using a variety of strategies to engage stakeholders, as illustrated in Figure 7. The vast majority communicated via existing advisory groups (93%), administered surveys to parents (91%) and school stakeholders (83%), and convened an LCAP advisory group (76%). Two thirds or more hosted LCAP/LCFF-specific community meetings (72%) or hosted school-specific meetings (66%).

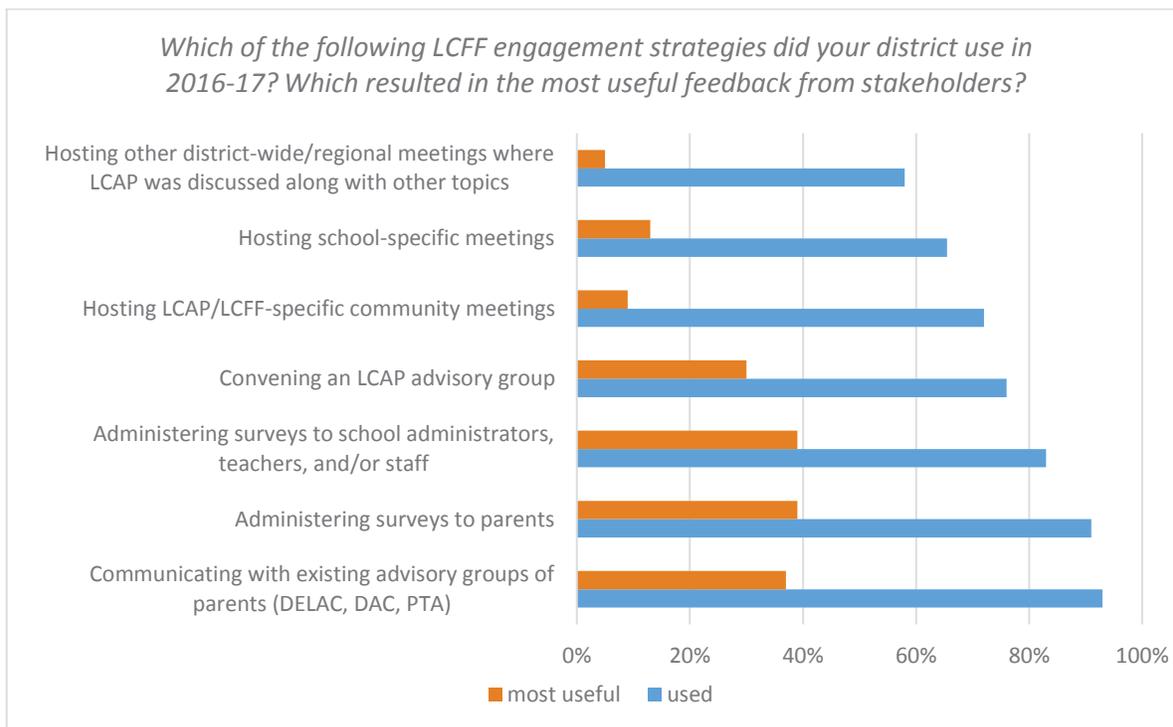


Figure 7. Percentage of Superintendents Reporting Use and Usefulness of Engagement Strategies

They were more divided, however, on their assessments of which strategies yielded the most useful feedback (Figure 7). More than a third of superintendents said that surveys to parents (39%) and school staff (39%) and communicating via existing advisory groups (37%) were the most useful. Very few found the other types of meetings—school-specific meetings, LCFF-specific community meetings, and other district/regional meetings—to be useful sources of stakeholder feedback.

Consistent with these views of usefulness, hosting these new meetings (as opposed to communicating via existing advisory group meetings) were reported to yield low levels of stakeholder participation (Figure 8 below). For example, almost half of superintendents (46%) reported low stakeholder participation in LCFF-specific community meetings. These concerns about broad meetings—both in terms of usefulness and participation—were echoed in the case study districts and will be examined further below.

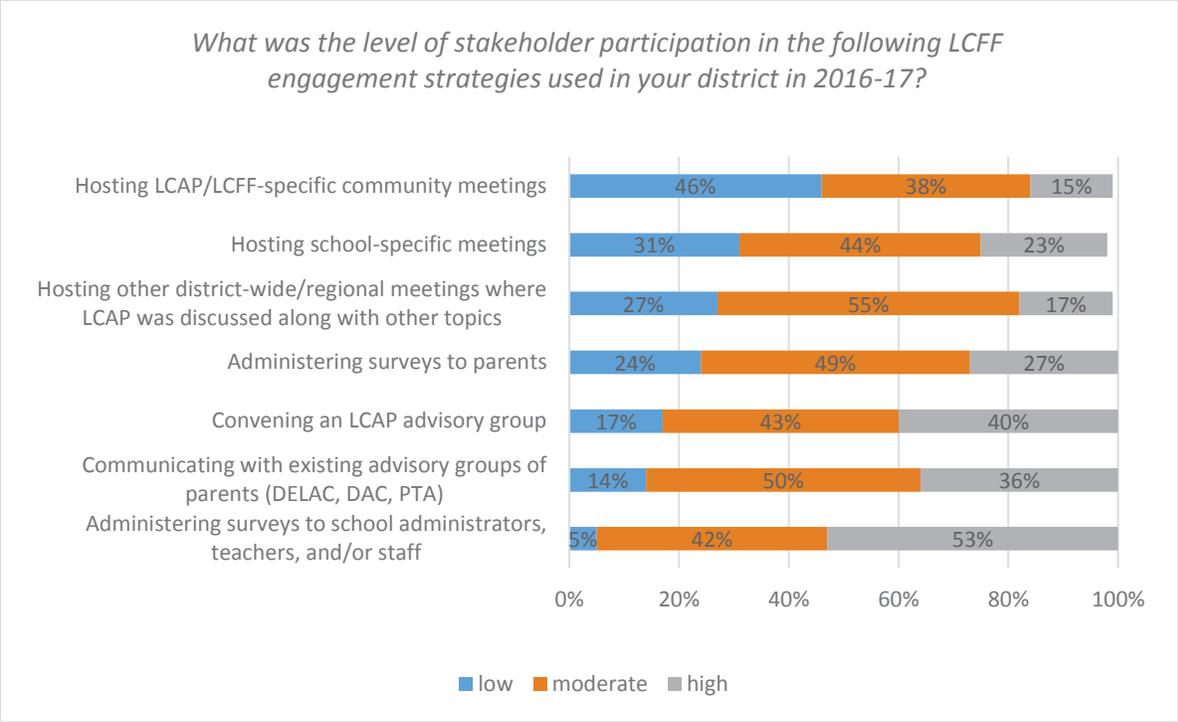


Figure 8. Percentage of Superintendents Reporting Level of Participation in Engagement Activities

And while parent surveys were seen as providing useful feedback, they too suffered from reports of low participation. For example, only 27% of superintendents reported high levels of stakeholder participation in parent surveys. Interestingly, the strategy seen to yield relatively high participation was surveys to school faculty and staff: 53% of superintendents reported high participation on these surveys. It is important to note that surveys were often multilingual and generally included often academically worded questions asking respondents to 1) assess the quality of the school/district’s methods for gathering parent input, how the school or district can improve student attendance, and quality of EL instruction, and 2) rank district determined priorities¹¹ for the upcoming year. Respondents were also asked to report student race/ethnicity, school of attendance and qualifier¹² for weighted funding under LCFF.

Case Study Findings

We commonly found shallow forms of engagement all three years—with a limited scope of engagement and unidirectional conversations. Nevertheless, a minority of cases enacted deeper forms of engagement each year, engaging stakeholders in two-way dialogue, promoting conversation with data, investing in community members as partners, and focusing on the common good, as depicted in Figure 9 below.

¹¹ These priorities included items such as develop or continue parent centers, offer summer school, offering coaching, training and supports for teachers to improve teaching and learning, programs to increase attendance, maintain or increase counselors, maintain or decrease class size.

¹² FRPL, EL, and/or Foster Youth



Figure 9. Differences in Stakeholder Engagement (How and What) in Non-Outlier and Outlier Case Districts

Over time, across all districts, many administrators seemed to realize the limits of districtwide meetings and tried new approaches, such as targeted engagement, school-level convenings, and informal engagement opportunities. They also reported improving their communication and engagement strategies each year. We examine these findings below.

Shallow forms of engagement were common across all three years. Across the years, we found that most districts (19 of 25) engaged in relatively shallow ways. Districts invoking a shallow interpretation generally (a) limited the scope of engagement and (b) engaged in one-way conversations.

Limited scope of engagement. Across the years district administrators commonly limited the scope of engagement. Reflecting an enduring dilemma in democratic engagement (Dewey, 1927), districts faced a choice between asking stakeholders to identify problems and goals (topics in which they may have greater capacity and interest) and asking them to identify the services to address the problems and goals (topics that may not align with community capacity or interest). An administrator from Bornia Heights—which greatly constrained the scope of engagement to informing the public—articulated this exact tension:

[O]ne of the things we struggle with community engagement is [that] education is a profession with expertise and so at what level you engage the parents becomes very important. ... Because we have parents who think they should be on the level of telling us what instructional strategies should we use ... and I'm of the mind that I think parent input is important. I don't think that's the appropriate level. I think the level at which they should be engaging is what outcomes do you want to see for your student? What opportunities do you want? Generally, what programming would you like your students to have an opportunity to engage in? Particularly I think in a community that sees itself as highly educated, they want to come in and say, "Oh no, this is how you should be teaching and this is exactly what you should ..." And so, we get into that tension where we say we're getting input, they say, "No, you're not."

Districts also struggled with decisions over how much information to share and whether conversations should focus specifically on budget and allocation of resources versus broader goals and perceptions of what was working well and not well.

Although the transparency component of the LCFF called on districts to solicit, respond to, and document stakeholder feedback on budget allocations, in the first year the majority of shallow cases engaged in what one observer called “visioning exercises,” consulting with or asking for input on broad problems and priorities while leaving decisions on budget and addressing LCFF-targeted student needs to central office staff, who then wrote the LCAP. In Years 2 and 3, many districts continued to limit the scope of engagement, providing LCAP updates to the community.

In many cases, districts also limited engagement information to a narrow set of predetermined goals and priorities. As the assistant superintendent in Bornia Heights explained, “The district asked community members to rank priority areas” as opposed to allowing stakeholders to share in the budget process and student outcome data, and decision-making. In another district, Aspley, a parent reported the following: “They picked a certain amount of parents to come to an actual meeting. We went through what we thought was important for our school ... We had the list of different budget things and what do we think is important. We rated it on a scale of 1 to 10 what we thought for our school.”

The limiting of scope was particularly acute in later years, as many administrators interpreted the purpose of engagement after year one as soliciting feedback on the updated portion of the LCAP. Many questioned the value of re-opening the same broad conversation and altering a three-year plan after just one year. We observed these questions and shifts in our visits to Cotterdam in Years 1 and 2. One administrator here explained to us in Year 2,

The challenge this year and going back out to those same stakeholder groups ... was really ... What did we say? Yeah, we want their input, but we don't want them to change the plan, because we haven't actually had a chance to fully implement the plan yet.

Similarly, in Year 2, an administrator in Broy Park explained that the scope of engagement was not as expansive as it had been the first year:

This is how much we spend; we're planning on spending; this is what we're doing. That was about it. ... We did some of that again, but it wasn't as open as it was the first year. Part of that is, is because we have to figure out how do we ... It's a fine line because we cannot just throw everything out every year and start over.

Not everyone, however, was happy with the decision to limit the scope of conversation in Years 2 and 3. In Majora Shore a district leader described meetings as “more reporting on our growth rather than really radically changing because it's a three-year plan.” Yet, several parents expressed frustration with the inability to go deeper:

I felt like when our group wanted to get into some deeper answers as to why maybe some of these numbers look the way that they did, it was like, "Oh well, I found out we don't really have to go in that far. Here, let's just do this." It was almost like, [we] got given just these, frankly, these fluff answers back, or fluff feedback back.

Unidirectional, often interest-based conversations. In all three years we found 14 case study sites based their engagement on unidirectional conversations. These districts were following the engagement mandate of the LCFF to “inform” (district→community) and “consult”¹³ (community→district) with targeted group stakeholders.¹⁴ These conversations took the form of surveys, voting on district designed

¹³ Education Code 2574, 42238.01, and 42238.02 as well as LCAP § 15495 (a)

¹⁴ Unduplicated count of pupils who (1) are English learners, (2) meet income or categorical eligibility requirements for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program, or (3) are foster youth. “Unduplicated count” means that each pupil is counted only once even if the pupil meets more than one of these criteria (EC sections 2574(b)(2) and 42238.02(b)(1)) (Retrieved from www.cde.ca.gov).

and state compliant goals, or providing feedback on a drafted LCAP. These one-way conversations limited the participants' ability to dialogue with district and school leaders to co-develop a shared vision and plan for the greater good of the district. In the case of consulting, these processes pushed on interest-based conceptions of democracy, allowing individuals to express their particular needs but not hear from or interact with others to negotiate a joint understanding of what would be best for the district as a whole. As documented in Charnwood's LCAP, "The superintendent shared revisions to the LCAP with the LCAP PAC/DELAC, student council, CSEA groups, RTA group, office staff, principals, and the cabinet with the opportunity for feedback. The superintendent invited written comments on the draft. He will provide written responses as needed. Translation was made available."

Given the limiting of scope noted above, it's not surprising that in Years 2 and 3 several districts that conducted more shallow engagement began to institutionalize engagement by only providing updates and explaining what was in the LCAP as opposed to using the opportunity to engage in deeper discussions about student outcomes or program improvement. In Kowen Forest, district leaders described a process of informing and soliciting some input:

It was, "Here is our mission, here is our vision, here is our goals ... here are the priority areas; here is what that looks like; here is how it's fitting into our plans right now; here are some of the things that we're doing. Is there anything else that we need to be thinking about, or anything else that we need to be doing to improve academic achievement, to help our English learners, to improve school safety. I get feedback from community members and parents on those areas.

One teacher who participated in this process, viewed it this way: "[The superintendent] came in and presented about the LCAP, but it was mostly informational and not really designed to get feedback from us."

A small minority of districts enacted deeper forms of engagement. In the first year, we found one outlier case, Uriarra, engaged relatively deeply. In Years 2 and 3, we found five: Page, Marsden Bay, and Holt in Year 2; O'Connor and Lyneham in Year 3. These districts: 1) engaged in two-way conversations, 2) broadened the scope of engagement, providing a wide range of information, including student outcome data and budget and expenditure data; 3) often educated stakeholders to engage in two-way, data-informed conversations; and 4) tried to focus conversations on the common good. In the end, these districts worked to build shared understanding of what programs and funding existed within the district and a collaborative effort to develop next steps.

Engaging in two-way dialogue. This group of districts engaged stakeholders in a two-way exchange and believed such an approach would generate meaningful strategies to improve outcomes for students. A Holt district administrator reflected these district beliefs as follows:

Well, obviously, there's a compliance document that's got an undertone there that we've got to make sure that we meet. More importantly, what I found being new here in the district was that it really became a support piece for us to really reach out to our community and be able to explain to them that we have funds that we need to spend on our children, and making sure that our community has a say-so of how those funds could be directed, and then for us to come back and design a program, vet it back with the community. I saw those things happening, and I saw them in a variety of meetings.

Similarly, a teachers' union representative in Page discussed the back and forth between the district soliciting input and circling back to stakeholders with accumulated information:

In the surveys, teachers were allowed to give their input as to what they wanted to see on the LCAP. At the meetings, you could see ..., where they listed all the items the teachers wanted to see, and then they listed the items from the parents, students, and district personnel, and they

tried to align them all in one area. After they had the initial meetings, they went back, and they had other meetings to report on what they found. Then, after that meeting, they went out and reported again what they found.

Additionally, district leaders reasoned that two-way dialogue encouraged individuals to participate and stay engaged. Confirming this belief, an O'Connor teacher explained,

And it's very welcoming. That's another aspect of, I think, the participation is [that] everybody feels valued. I know I was sitting with parents and their voice was just as valuable as the assistant superintendent's voice. The students' voice was [also] just as valuable as the teachers'.

Thus, reciprocal exchanges were seen as having substantive value (allowing for more well-informed development of LCAP goals and strategies) as well as symbolic value (signaling district commitment and motivating stakeholders to participate).

Focusing on collective interests. These processes often facilitated a substantive focus on what would benefit the district as a whole, rather than simple individual expressions of needs.

Uriara, for example, created an LCAP advisory committee that shared input from their respective constituencies, negotiated priorities and budgets between competing demands, and established goals to reflect collective priorities, not just the needs of those at the table. Similarly, in Cotterdam (Year 2), facilitators of LCAP meetings encouraged participants to think beyond their individual interests. In describing how he led student LCAP meetings, an administrator explained,

I went out and talked to the high school kids, we talked about ... where we were missing the mark in terms of their education. It was, "What should school be like?" Not, "What is school, but where should it be going? Don't just think about yourself, think about your little brothers, your little sisters and cousins. This is a long term conversation."

A Spanish-speaking parent reported a similar focus on the collective good, noting that at Cotterdam meetings "they explained them [PowerPoints] in English and in Spanish and we felt very comfortable ... It was very nice because like I said, we were all united for one same cause and that was the children." We found signs of this collective focus in several other outlier districts over time, including Page, Lyneham, and O'Connor.

Promoting conversations with data. Districts that interpreted their engagement process at the deeper end of the spectrum also expanded the data provided to stakeholders about district programs, services, and budgets. They asked and answered questions related to data and repeatedly voiced the importance of being transparent. "Transparency and open sharing of data drove the engagement process and priority-setting in this district," said the Marsden Bay assistant superintendent. Similarly, a Page district leader reported sharing positive and negative data at LCAP meetings:

Yes, anything and everything that we've measured, we've presented the data and much of the data was not favorable for the district. When you look at test scores, being the lowest in the county, reclassification rates... we were open and transparent about every single data point that's identified. In the LCAP template, we created graphs and data to share with the stakeholders, even if it showed us in an unfavorable light because we need to be open and transparent about what our student needs are at this point so that everybody will have a voice in identifying what the priorities are gonna be, to address those metrics, so if you see that, say suspension expulsion rates for the district, are kinda mid-pack compared to districts across the county that was maybe less of a priority to address that for the parents and for the teachers. Whereas, we see EL reclassification rates trailing everyone else, that became a big priority for parents to do something to address that.

As a result of the conversations with parents around EL reclassification rates, the district created an English Learner Services department to facilitate greater access to electives and improved supports for meeting A-G requirements. According to district leaders, parents argued that the district had to “turn that around” and “backwards mapped the elementary EL reclassification rates based upon being transparent with data and giving us that input that was a priority.”

In O’Connor virtually all respondents reported basing their LCFF conversations around data. Their consultant, described the district philosophy as: “Good evidence needs to drive the conversation,” supporting discussions with all stakeholders by “digging deeper, asking the five why’s, looking at root cause analysis, and doing it with parents and students and staff and the district in a way that they understand it, cause they’re not all really experts in that process.”

Investing in community members as partners. Similar to Ishimaru (2014), we found across all three years outlier districts invested in the community as a key component to developing a partnership. In the first year multiple districts attempted to develop participants’ skills and knowledge to facilitate LCFF engagement. Darra administrators invested heavily in a recruitment and training process to reach “non-traditional” parents and students. According to the district coordinator, they utilized a parent volunteers process (PV) “to gather authentic input and feedback on LCAP” and depended upon “key community organizing strategies of empowering community members as PVs to solicit their personal and professional networks to share information and gather input.”

Further, consistent with past research on educational organizations engaged in effective community engagement (Fruchter, 1987; Ishimaru, 2014; Mediratta, Shah, & McAlister 2009; Mediratta & Fruchter, 2001), Year 2 and Year 3 outlier districts demonstrated a commitment to long term internal and external capacity building. In years 2 and 3 our five outlier districts (Marsden Bay, Page, Holt, O’Connor, and Lyneham) all envisioned LCAP development as part of an ongoing community partnership and invested in stakeholders to help them understand district processes, programs, and budgets. For example, Marsden Bay’s assistant superintendent explained:

We tell them, “This is how we’ve invested. This is what the school has done in order to show progress.” We try to give them as much knowledge and information, background information as to what has been successful in our district and what has worked and what hasn’t worked. With this grounding in prior-year data, the district asked stakeholders to look at the finances, look at the priorities, and they would weigh in. They were a very intelligent group, quite honestly. They were really astute and understood what needed to be done.

In O’Connor, internal stakeholders were trained to work across programs and to listen and be responsive to stakeholder requests. Through building the capacity of the community to understand and question the data, the district leadership believed they were encouraging equity and leveling the power of the voices in the room. “Evidence speaks the truth,” said a consultant working with O’Connor, “Just because I have a thought, I have to back it up with something, and I should get used to questioning the loud voice as a consensus process versus accepting the loud voice.”

Over time many districts realized the limits of districtwide meetings and tried new approaches—resulting in important tradeoffs. Not only did district leaders encounter problems with low attendance at large districtwide meetings (as noted above under who), but they also reported difficulties obtaining “meaningful” input and ensuring all voices were heard. In the first year, many interviewees acknowledged the difficulty of recruiting stakeholders, particularly traditionally disenfranchised groups, and reported a struggle to ensure their substantive participation even when they were present at meetings. In one district we heard about “many parents from ... more well-healed schools” attending meetings even though they “weren’t getting a lot of [LCFF] money.” These parents advocated to reduce class size and often drowned out other parents “who were very interested in helping and doing good, but

did not have the system savvy.” We heard similar stories of select parents dominating conversations in at least five other first-year districts, and in some of the larger districts, observers reported that advocacy organizations often held greater influence over LCAP development than unorganized parents or smaller groups

Reflecting on the second-year experiences of the districts they support and the changes district made to their approach to engagement, a county office of education leader noted:

[One district] really looked at it and said, “Okay we held a meeting and nobody came. So we're not going to hold another meeting, we're going to do things different. We're going to go to the market and pass out surveys. We're going to hold coffee nights at every elementary school in the morning and we're going to impose ourselves in that group and ask some questions and listen to some responses.” Overall, all of our districts have areas to grow in this regard. Some more so than others, but it's definitely a learning curve for the districts and the schools to think about doing things differently to “I just can't get any parents to come to a meeting at 3:30 in the afternoon. Those parents aren't involved.” To really step back and say, “Okay, so maybe I need to offer a different kind of meeting”. I need to paint that picture more where our LCAP group isn't just by invitation only which some of our districts did. It was more ... Every meeting that we have throughout the district, we're going to have an LCAP flair and an LCAP time to ask questions and gather input.

Recognizing the limitations and frequent power imbalances of the broad, formal meetings, many districts in the later years reported trying new approaches to increase the quantity and quality of participation – including 1) targeted engagement, 2) school-level convenings, and 3) informal opportunities (Figure 10).

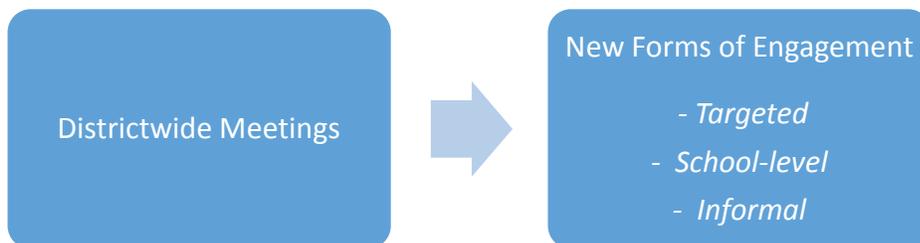


Figure 10: Shifts in Engagement Approaches Undertaken by Case Districts in Later Years

Targeted/segregated engagement. Many districts, particularly in later years, organized engagement around single stakeholder group meetings rather than broader collective convenings. In some districts, this took on the shape of district leaders meeting with individual groups and sharing that input with district leaders working on the LCAP. “I’ll get an informational report on it,” explained a Kowen Forest administrator, “talk to the individuals that are directly impacted, whether they’re parents or administrators or teachers, and if it’s a community member or a community partner like teaching fellows, then of course, I talk with them and then I wrap it into the LCAP process where it’s appropriate.” In Charnwood, the superintendent met with principals, union, PTA, and ELAC separately and noted that “the best engagement happened at those small meetings.” While some replaced the big meetings, others insisted that both separate and whole group meetings were important. Page, for example, “had both large scale open public forums and targeted meetings with the specified stakeholders in the LCAP template.”

Although these separate meetings prevented stakeholders from exchanging ideas and hearing the views of others (a limitation we return to later), they nonetheless may have helped ensure that individuals had an opportunity to express their views, particularly individuals who shied away from attending or speaking

in large meetings. In fact, several district leaders favored this approach because everyone could feel comfortable and be “heard”:

[T]he town hall-style meeting, I don't know that we're going to get a whole lot of EL parents in there and engaging and asking questions or depending on the level of English that they understand, even understanding the conversation that is often taking place. So we do do some targeted outreach, we hold meetings specifically in [an area where many EL parents live] in that sense, to try to make sure that we are capturing [their views] (Bornia Heights).

I mean it's all about respect. They do feel comfortable. A lot of those are my migrant families. So, they feel comfortable coming to my meetings, but they won't go to any other meeting but mine. So, when I have my migrant pack meetings, I try to cover as much information as I can from the district, because that's the only way they're going to go to it. So, I go out to their area, because they don't travel outside of... (Page)

[M]aybe this [smaller meetings held with individual groups] might help certain groups come out and speak and be more vocal, if not all of these other individuals are around. If you have teachers there, do you want the admin there? Maybe they won't speak as freely because then there might be fear of retribution, you know? (Cotterdam, Year 2)

By organizing many meetings to solicit input, one district reported that the large district meetings became more of a compliance exercise that yielded little new information. The same Kowen Forest administrator cited above said that by meeting individually with groups, “when we get to the public hearing, everything that needed to be said has been said; everything that needed to be heard had been heard, and its formality at the public hearing.”

School-level opportunities for engagement. Over time, many districts began organizing stakeholder engagement at school sites. During our visit in Year 2, Cotterdam was training principals to lead LCAP conversations. “This year,” said an assistant superintendent, “we're going to try to put it more on the individual school sites so they can talk with their parents much more about the needs at their school sites.” They were committed, however, to maintaining broader meetings: “we'll have six meetings in the community, so we can invite community members in along with the parents that don't attend those other [school] meetings to come and see our superintendent because we don't want them to say, ‘Oh, they're not asking us anymore.’”

In Year 3, all eight districts explicitly mentioned using the School Site Councils (SSCs) and/or PTA and ELAC meetings as a resource for LCAP community input and engagement. At Majura Shore district, principals led community meetings at each school site at the regularly scheduled site council meetings. The district’s LCAP outlined engagement this way: “Community members, staff, including bargaining unit members, parents, and students were invited and attended. Furthermore, to engage the Latino community, each site reviewed the LCAP at their ELAC meeting. The principals at each site led these discussions.”

The rationale for increasing school-level LCFF activities was based on the belief that stakeholders were more likely to have a relationship with an individual school (as opposed the district as a whole) and as a result would be more likely to participate and have more information to engage deeply. According to a Lyneham district leader, school-level engagement ...

fostered a rich discussion between our parents and their principals and gave parents time and space to ask questions about their specific school. This session helped parents understand how the district-wide plan connected, and was being implemented, at their school.

Others believed school-level meetings were more “intimate” and encouraged dialogue and interaction. A Cooper Plains leader said, “So instead of the district going out and having those open forums, we have now the sites doing a little more intimately and asking those questions”

Informal opportunities. Another approach taken in later years was to solicit stakeholder input in more informal settings. Instead of continuing the large meetings used in year one, the superintendent in Thorsby Union described this strategy:

We were able to visit many different places in towns, businesses, little hospitals, retirement homes, churches, police stations, fire halls ... Kiwanis. I tried to get that input there. About monthly, we're trying to do a meeting at a business in town so we've done one meeting so far at a local business, where we invite community members to come in and talk to us about what's going on. I met with the local police chief, the local city manager, local high school superintendent.

Similarly, Page administrators “went to churches and invited community to talk to them about what was happening.” O’Connor added a variety of opportunities for stakeholders to engage with stakeholders from different backgrounds alongside school and district officials. They used community holiday celebrations and set up an exhibit in the local shopping mall as ways to informally solicit feedback. Additionally, O’Connor offered classes (e.g., “Affirming Black Culture in School”) for both internal and external stakeholders designed to educate and empower the external community while simultaneously affirming the community culture for internal stakeholders. These efforts were quite visible. One parent explained, the district was “involved in so many more things other than just academics to get the community out and involved. But that mall presence ... and then they do a lot with Kiwanis and Rotary and all of that.” District leaders believed these informal opportunities built relationships with nontraditional actors, increased overall stakeholder involvement, and improved the depth of engagement.

District leaders frequently reported improving stakeholder communication and engagement strategies over time. In the second two years of our study, many administrators described “lessons learned” and efforts to improve upon the approaches taken in early years of LCFF. Many acknowledged learning to provide less technical information to stakeholders and using more “parent-friendly” language. And many participants recognized the improvements. The PTA president in Cooper Plains (year 3) acknowledged how district surveys improved,

The first year, it wasn't very good. It wasn't very clear ... they would ask questions broadly without any explanation about what exactly that looks like to a layman. A parent doesn't understand language that they use in the school district ... Because they have all kinds of abbreviations and all kinds of verbiage that they use. I'm educated, and I didn't understand. I'm involved with the school district, and I didn't understand. ... That one [the new survey] was a lot better, a lot better. It was a lot clearer. It was a lot shorter. Yeah, parents who weren't in the know understood it a lot better.

Other district leaders reported insights into how to “go deeper” in meetings. This was particularly true in the districts we’ve identified as “outliers.” “Community engagement's morphing a little bit,” explained a Kambah central office administrator, “It was just about getting the word out on LCFF and LCAP, and now it's really about trying to be a little bit more meaningful in the topics.” Page administrators believed that adding breakout sessions allowed for a similar deeper level of engagement in broad stakeholder meetings:

The idea was that not everybody wants to hear about every component of the LCAP, but they have greater interest in specific pieces of it. If I'm a parent, I have a different focus perhaps than a student or teacher and so we wanted to give people time to go into greater depth and have

greater opportunity for dialogue into the process, focusing specific topics. So that's why the adjustment was made, rather than doing everything whole group at the public forums is to break into smaller sessions based on specific topics.

As a Lyneham union leader explained, the district has focused on decreasing formality:

They are far less formal presentation now. They are more engaging, more questions of the stakeholders with time to actually discuss an answer. We've also simplified a little bit, in that we're not pulling out pages from the very intimidating LCAP and putting them up on a screen. But we're asking more generalized questions, like "What's your dream school? What's your ideal experience for your child?"

So What? Linking Back to Policy Intent and Spirit

As noted, state leaders and LCFF policy documents conveyed a strong orientation toward shallow engagement but provided districts with considerable discretion over how to structure the engagement process. These findings on how districts engaged stakeholders and for what purpose once again provide some signs of promise and also some concerns. In most cases, districts appear to be meeting the letter of the law to "inform" and "consult" with targeted group stakeholders. By year three we found no districts simply providing information (inform) and all of them provided opportunities for one-way feedback to the district. They also appeared to be learning from and improving their practices over time.

Yet the limiting of scope that we observed in later years does raise questions about the intended purpose of stakeholder engagement in consecutive years: was the intent for each year to revisit the same content year after year, or is the intent for this to be a three-year plan and thus limiting scope to simple updates is desired? Clarity around these questions seems critically important moving forward.

The observed patterns also indicate an important tradeoff being made in the approaches to engagement and potential limits to realizing democratic goals. While pragmatically advantageous, the decision to solicit one-way feedback denied participants the opportunity to dialogue and negotiate collectively to establish goals and strategies that meet high-priority needs. We see similar tradeoffs in the use of smaller and separate meetings. On the one hand, allow stakeholders to give feedback in separate, role-alike groups may have prevented a pattern we observed in the first year, where loudest voices tended to dominate. It may have also allowed individuals, particularly traditionally disenfranchised individuals, the safety to truly express their views. A Cotterdam union leader provided a defense of this perspective when criticizing the district's decision to do away with teacher-only meetings,

[T]hey didn't do the teachers only [forum], or the certificated non-management alone, which was a problem for us because even though teachers did participate and some of the community, they don't feel comfortable saying things in front of parents. There's things that you're not going to say in front of a parent, or a student for that matter. And we didn't think it was as sincere as it was the first time. I did request that this full year, we have only staff because I think the conversation is different when you only have staff.

On the other hand, segregated meetings limit the ability of stakeholders to deliberate collectively and hear the views of others. Such a design pushes an interest-based conception of democracy where groups are providing input on their interests and perspectives, without an explicit attempt to reflect on the interests of others and develop a shared vision for improvement. A parent from Aspley aptly captured this perspective, noting the value of stakeholders reasoning together in one room:

If it said [Aspley] Elementary Librarian, then if somebody from the high school said, "Why do they need a full time Librarian at the elementary school?" we were able to say, and principals and our classified people would be like, "This is why, because blah blah blah." Same thing at the high

school. There are things at the high school I didn't know what they were talking about. I was like, "What does that mean?" Then I would go, "Okay, that makes sense why you would want to put money there?" So I could grade it. Even though it wasn't my school ... Why it was important to them at their school and then I could gauge that.

Similarly, the decision to organize school-level meetings raises similar tradeoffs. School meetings may have facilitated greater participation and possibly deeper conversations because individuals have greater familiarity and connections with their local school, as opposed to the district at large. Yet, such meetings also closed off opportunities for school-level stakeholders to hear from and deliberate with stakeholders from other schools and confront broader tradeoffs that necessarily come when prioritizing limited resources at a district level. Combined with the previous findings regarding limited participation, particularly from traditionally disenfranchised groups, these efforts to limit the scope of deliberation, channel one-way communication, and segregate stakeholders in the process once again create potential barriers to realizing the democratic and equity goals of LCFF.

Findings: WHY? Conditions and Factors Explaining Patterns of Engagement

What accounts for the general patterns described above? Our analysis of survey, poll and case study data suggests several key conditions that did and did not contribute to the variation observed. In particular, we pay attention to why so many districts engaged in more representative and shallower forms of engagement and what appears to explain the rare "outlier" cases discussed above. Ultimately this analysis highlights potential leverage points to enhance engagement in the future, including conditions related to individual stakeholders (fatigue, awareness, capacity), relationships of trust, organizations (capacity, work with partners, history) and broader institutional-political pressures.

Conditions NOT Accounting for These Patterns

Before exploring the conditions accounting for low levels of and shallow nature of engagement, it is important to note three factors that **did not** appear to consistently explain these patterns: lack of buy-in, interest, and homogeneity of the population.

Buy-in. Studies indicate that a lack of buy-in for a policy can affect its implementation (McLaughlin, 1987). Our data, however, indicate widespread support for LCFF. Statewide, superintendents report strong support for LCFF and its equity goals, as well as for the specific stakeholder engagement components of the policy. The overwhelming majority of Superintendents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that:

- Students with greater needs should receive additional resources (94% - 65% strongly agreed/29% somewhat agreed)
- Requiring parent and community involvement in LCFF ensures that our district goals and strategies align with local needs (76% - 28%/48%)
- Requiring parent and community involvement in LCFF gives historically underrepresented students and families new opportunities to influence district decisions (74% - 25%/49%)

Statewide poll data also indicate that year after year, the majority of voters support underlying goals of the LCFF policy. As Figure 11 illustrates, once given a description of the policy, more than half of voters in 2015 and more than three fourths in 2016 and 2018 reported strongly or somewhat supporting LCFF.

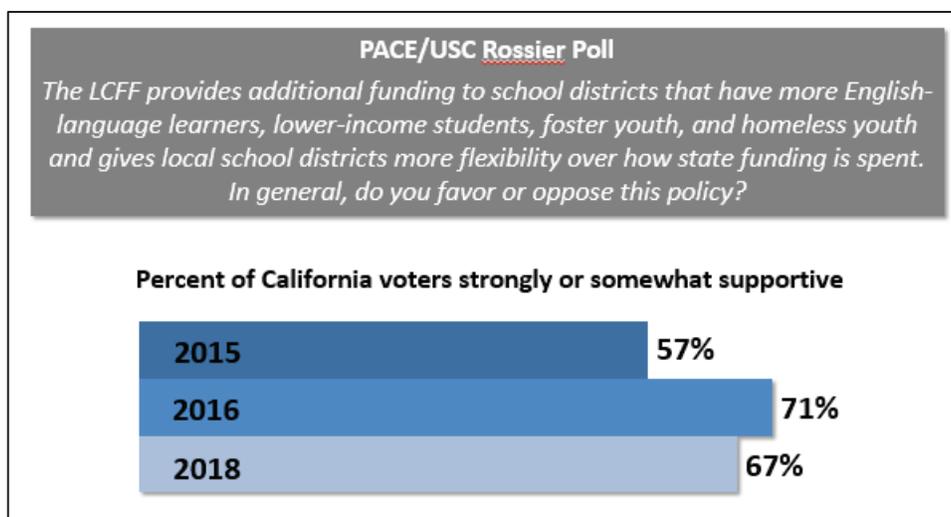


Figure 11. Statewide Voter Poll Results on Support for LCFF

Interest. Although one common explanation for low levels and quality of participation statewide was a perceived lack of stakeholder interest, particularly among LCFF targeted groups, we have contradictory evidence challenging this explanation.

Statewide, 91% of the superintendents reporting average or poor levels of stakeholder engagement in LCFF activities explained it based on perceptions that stakeholders were not interested in participating. (It is important to keep in mind that these are perceptions among a group of leaders who have reported difficulties attracting widespread participation.)

We heard similar explanations in our case studies. The Broy Park superintendent asserted that there could not be genuine community engagement in his district because the targeted parents were not interested in participating, which left the door open for other more engaged parents to take control. “The very involved, high-end, high-achieving student parents who are very engaged,” he said, “they’ve almost toppled our LCAP by demanding so much and being at every single board meeting and every single engagement thing we do.” Similarly, many districts that engaged stakeholders in shallow ways asserted that community members lacked interest in the details of budgets, programs, staffing, and student outcomes. They used this explanation to justify limiting the scope of engagement and providing updates on the prior year LCAP.

Some district leaders attributed stakeholder disinterest to their satisfaction with district performance. This idea aligns well with dissatisfaction theory and the assertion that voter turnout is higher in times of crisis and discontent (Alsbury, 2003; Lutz & Innaccone, 2008). The following comments all come from leaders in districts characterized by relatively shallow engagement processes:

If in the minds of the community, this is a well-run district, it makes it even harder to get people to become involved. We’re all good. We don’t need to come to your meeting. We got nothing to say, and it becomes a difficult thing, and they see those things as saying, “You’re not trying hard enough, you’re not reaching out, you’re not doing your job.” You’ve got to do something better to get them to get involved and make them be involved. It’s a difficult task for some of the impoverished communities.

-LCAP Administrator (Kowen Forest)

They [parents] are very single-issue focused whenever there’s a problem then all of a sudden there’s all of the attention at that problem and then we talk about it when we’re gonna fix it. But

the number of people who want to get in a room and talk about the district as a whole and what our priorities are, it's very hard.

-Administrator (Majura Shore)

You know, our parents, our level of education within the district. We're rural and we're agricultural. You know, we don't have a lot of PhDs. We don't have a lot of people that have degrees that have done four years of college and overall the people within our communities are very happy with the schools. They're not extremely well informed. They just go by, "Well the kids are home and they're smiling. What did you do in school today?" "I didn't get in a fight, I didn't ..."
You know it was okay. It was good day in school. They're happy with us. So they don't come. Our board meetings are extremely poorly attended which is because, you know, nobody has anything. When we're in those times where things aren't going well, our boardroom is packed.

-Board Member, (Aspley)

Yet our public poll data contradict these views that stakeholders are not interested in participating. In 2016, voters expressed strong interest in engagement: 67% of all voters and 84% of voters with children said they would like to be more involved in decisions about education in their community. As illustrated in Figure 12, more than 60% said they wanted to be involved in setting goals and reviewing progress made by their public schools and/or deciding how to allocate resources to advance these goals. In all of these reports, we found no difference between individuals based on party affiliation or whether they rent or own a home. If in fact community members are interested in participating, then what is getting in their way?

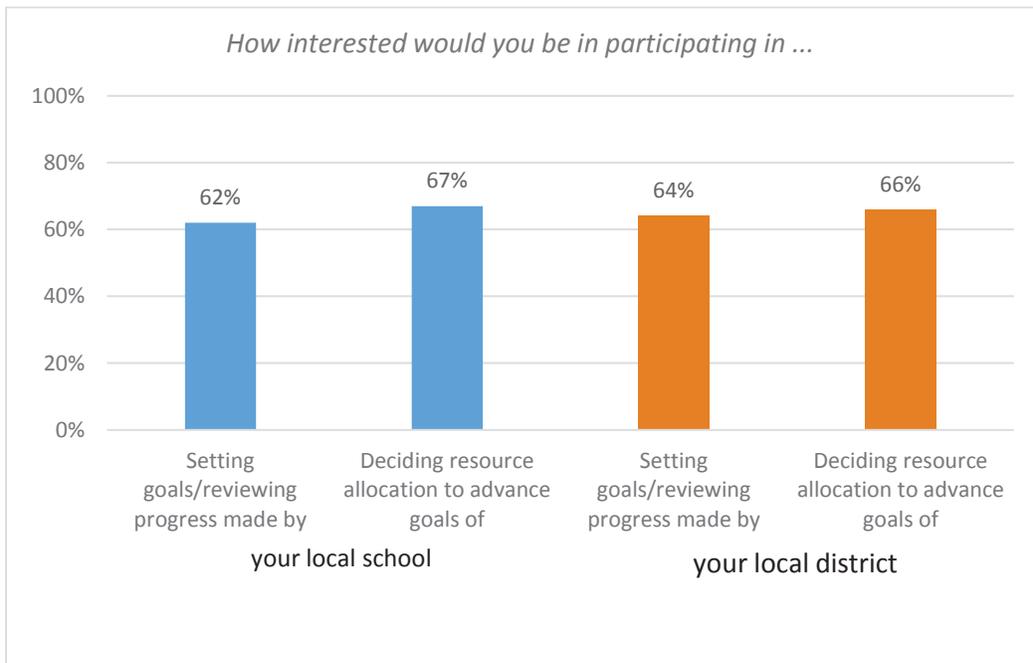


Figure 12. California Voter Reports of Interest in Engagement (percent reporting very or somewhat interested)

Homogeneity. In the first year of LCFF we found that while size did not predict deeper or broader forms of engagement, the level of diversity did (Marsh & Hall, 2017). We asserted that “homogeneity may have contributed to an ease with which community members engaged and simplified the coordination of engagement for district leadership because members spoke a common language and there were few competing voices” (ibid, p.32). In later years, however, homogeneity did not appear to be a consistent

distinguishing characteristic between outlier and non-outlier districts. While many outliers served populations with low-levels of ethnic diversity, so too did many of the non-outliers. Similarly, outliers tended to serve high proportions of students eligible for free- and reduced-price meals and high proportions of unduplicated students, but these characteristics also applied to non-outliers.

Conditions Contributing to Patterns of Engagement

Our analysis uncovered a host of individual, relational, organizational, and institutional conditions that appeared to contribute to engagement patterns described herein (Figure 13). These factors not only explain the widespread pattern of shallow and sometimes narrow engagement, but also the deeper/broader forms encountered in the outlier districts.

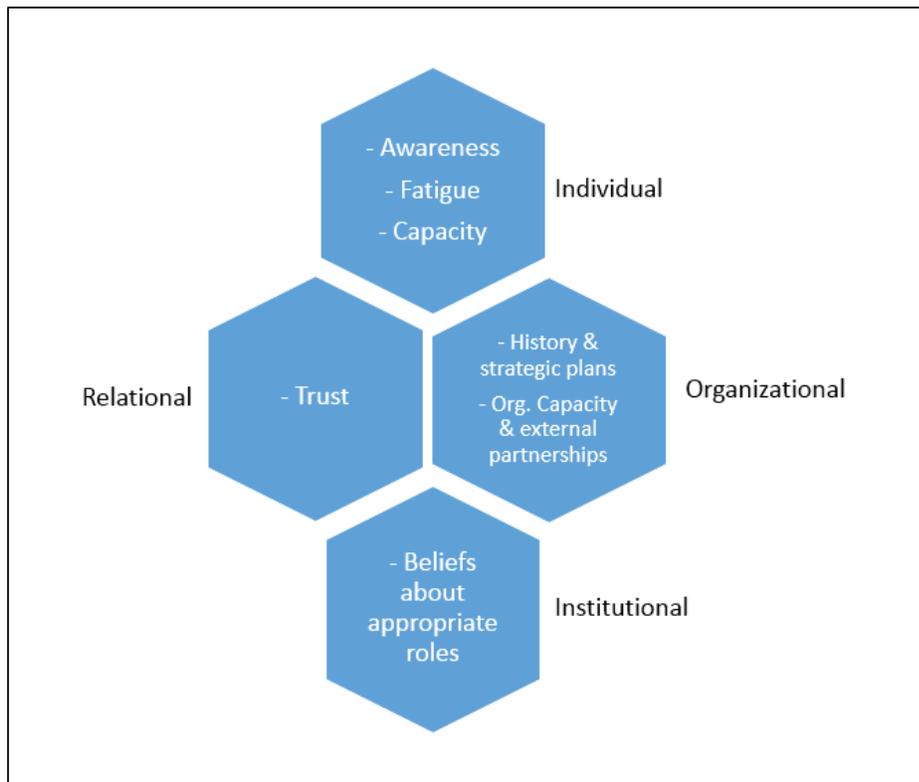


Figure 13. Conditions Shaping Stakeholder Engagement

Individual Conditions

In surveys, almost all of the superintendents reporting average or poor levels of stakeholder engagement in LCFF activities that placed the onus on stakeholders – that is, they explained it based on perceptions that stakeholders were not interested or did not believe they should be involved in making these types of decisions (Figure 14 below). More than half also believed that stakeholders simply did not have time and/or the knowledge and skills to participate.

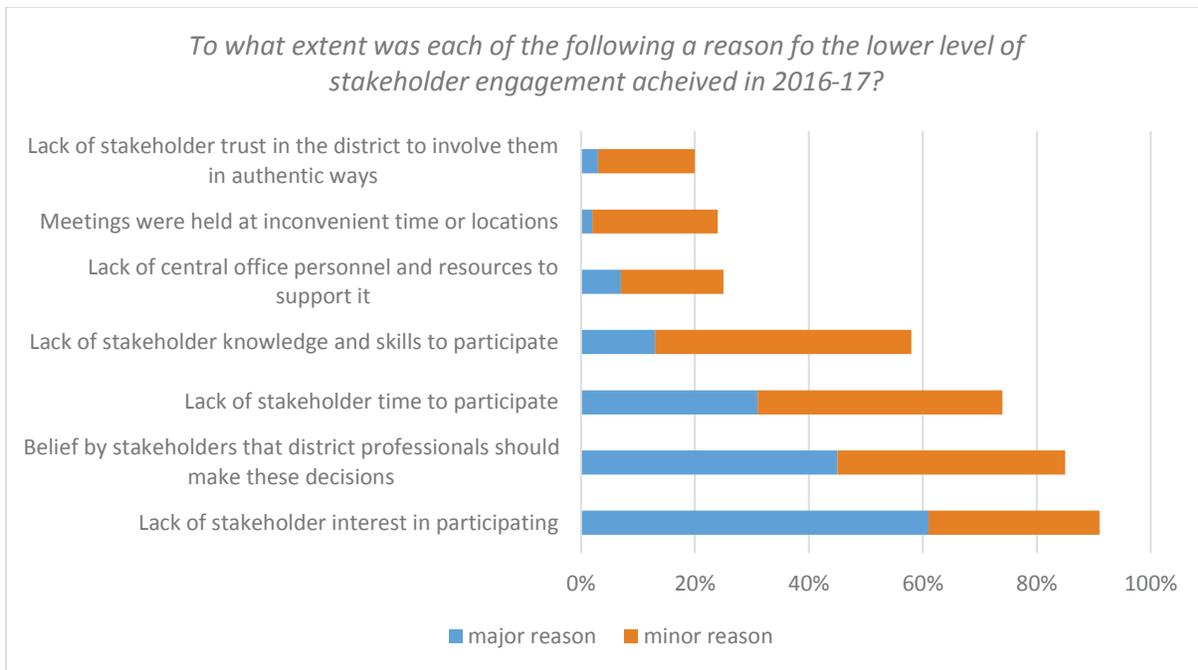


Figure 14. Superintendent Reports of Reasons for Low Engagement Note: n=179 (only those reporting poor or average levels of stakeholder engagement)

Case data indicate that there may in fact be several individual-level conditions affecting participant willingness and ability to engaged, including limited awareness, fatigue, and limited capacity.

Awareness. Public poll data suggest that one factor likely contributing to the lack of broad participation is limited awareness of the LCFF policy. In 2018, only 17% of all registered voters (37% of voters with children) had heard or read a good deal or little about LCFF – compared to 15% in 2016 (17% of voters with children) (See Figure 15 below). While the recent poll data suggest an increase in parents’ awareness of the policy, more than half of parents had either never heard of LCFF or not heard or read much about it.

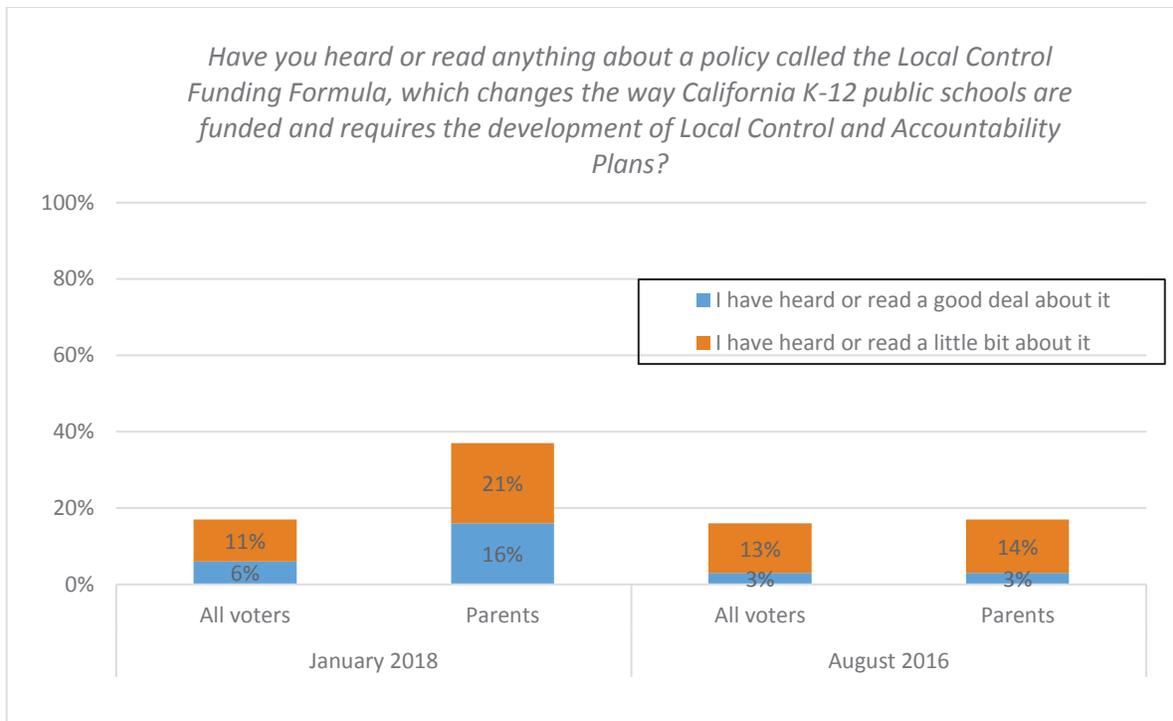


Figure 15. California Voter Awareness of LCFF in 2016 and 2018

Community fatigue. Related to interest, some district leaders attributed low participation to “community fatigue”—an outcome recognized in other studies of participatory reforms (e.g., Souza, 2001). In fact, in Years 2 and 3, district leaders that engaged in a more inform-and-consult form of participation believed their stakeholders had tired after the first year of engagement. Some described stakeholders as “meeting-out.” Others reported:

I've noticed a fatigue over the last year or two, and I don't know if it's related to a national fatigue, but it's certainly a fatigue in this district from all the uproar, people storming the board meetings in the last ... Not the last year, that started dying down. But the previous two years was just storming to the board meetings. I've noticed the fatigue in the attendance of our parent group meetings and in district meetings. Some of the decisions that landed on the Board's table in the last two months have barely attracted one or two vocal parents, where before they were attracting dozens.
 -District Leader (Majura Shore)

I think that what happens is people are like, “I don't want to come to another focus group. I don't want to talk about this anymore. I'm done.”
 -District Leader (Cooper Plains)

Many of these leaders justified shifting focus to standing committees as opposed to larger cross community events based on this perception of fatigue.

Stakeholder capacity. Much like the findings of prior studies (Bryk et al., 1998; Hein, 2003; Ishimaru, 2014; Ishimaru, Torres, Salvador, Lott, Williams & Tran, 2016; Malen & Ogawa, 1988), the capacity and perceived capacity of the district and community stakeholders played an important role in the implementation of LCFF engagement. As noted in Figure 14 above, more than half of superintendents reporting poor or average levels of stakeholder engagement believed that one reason was the lack of *stakeholder* time, skills and knowledge to participate and were much less likely to cite lack of *district* capacity as an explanation.

In case studies, individuals also commonly cited limited community capacity as a barrier. At a basic level, many respondents noted that parents and community members, particular from the target groups, lacked the physical resources and time to participate in LCFF engagement opportunities. A parent in the rural district of Aspley, for example, attributed low survey responses to a limited technology access: “I think another barrier in this county, in this town is computers. So many of our families don't have internet access.” She and other parents cited a similar lack of capacity for low meeting turnout: “I think that people just don't have the time. They are working multiple jobs. Both parents in the family work. ... I think that's been a real hurdle that we've tried to get over the years ... It's really hard to get the parent participation.”

In other cases, district leaders defended efforts to limit the scope of engagement based on deficit-based perceptions that the community lacked the capacity to deeply engage. One board member in Cooper Plains said engagement was a struggle because “most people don't understand how school districts work or the budgeting or the process.” Similarly, reflecting on school-level LCAP meetings, a principal in Aspley said, “Some of it, I don't think they understand what it is. . . . The parents that came to back-to-school night, I tried to explain, this is what we do at site council. It's not just a meeting; we really want to help the school. What do you see are the problems? Let's problem-solve. ... But it's just, I don't know. I'm at a loss.” As we discuss below, these perceptions may reflect broader institutional forces and biases.

The voter polling data also seemed to confirm some of these concerns about community capacity. We asked the minority of voters who expressed either no interest in or not being sure about participating in school or district decision-making around goals and resources to provide their reasons. Aside from not having children in school, the top reasons cited for a lack of interest was a belief that they did not have the information or experience to make participation worthwhile and that they did not have time (Figure 16). It is important to keep in mind, however, these reports come from voters expressing no interest in participation—which represented a minority of the overall population (recall that more than 60% said they wanted to be involved in setting goals and reviewing progress made by their public schools and/or deciding how to allocate resources to advance these goals).

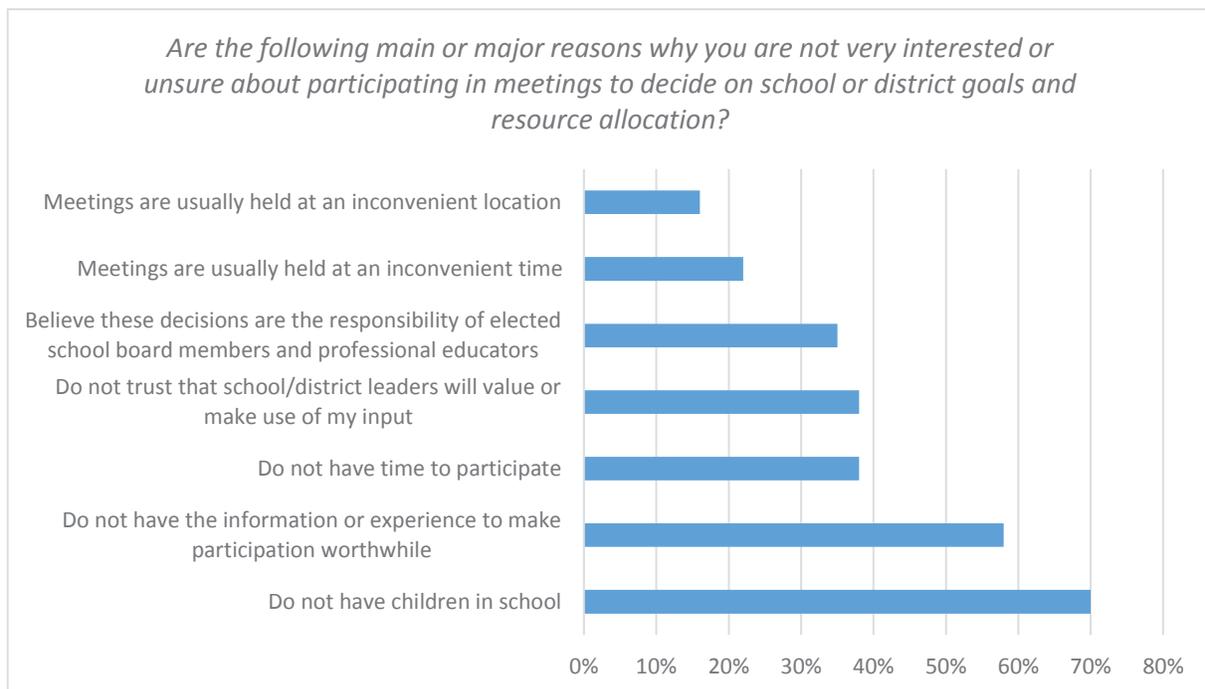


Figure 16. California Voter Reports of Reasons for Their Lack of Interest in Engagement

Nevertheless, administrators in case study districts engaged at the broadest and deepest levels (O'Connor, Lyneham, Kambah, Cotterdam, and Page) described capacity not as a fixed condition, but as an opportunity to build on stakeholder's assets and create a shared understanding of district goals and objectives. Many worked with external organizations to develop stakeholder knowledge and skills (see further description below). One such partner in Cotterdam explained,

Our main goal is to develop community capacity, to be able to, not just understand policies, but work to impact them, and to be part of the decision making spaces in our city and school district. The ultimate goal is for parents and students to be seen not just as stakeholders by the school district, but also as true community partners that are experts in the community, that are capable of delivering solutions to their district.

Relational and Organizational Conditions

Our data uncovered several relational and organizational-level conditions affecting the nature of stakeholder engagement, including trust, history, organizational capacity, and external partners

Trust. Consistent with past research (Anderson, 1998; Croniger & Malen, 2002; Malen 1994; Malen & Ogawa, 1988; Marsh et al., 2015), the presence and absence of trusting relationships—between the district and stakeholders—greatly shaped the quantity and quality of engagement observed over time. Although superintendents surveyed did not identify trust as the driver of low engagement (Figure 14 above), case study districts in all three years that interpreted engagement from narrow to hybrid described ways in which a lack of trust between district leaders and stakeholders constrained participation. These districts struggled to identify who their stakeholders were and how to engage them.

In Tharwa, a first year case study district with notably narrow engagement, both district leaders and teachers described a “culture of distrust” among the community—in that even with the LCFF mandates for engagement, “there was never really full disclosure, and there was no intent to involve people.” In Eden Valley, a district with similar preexisting low-trust conditions, one community observer explained, “Public perceptions of LCFF: Most don't know anything about it. Lots [are] jaded about [Eden Valley], [and] so suspicious.” These districts started LCFF implementation with a very weak foundation of trust, whereas districts that were broader on the horizontal spectrum attempted to build trust through increased transparency, shared information, and a goal of supporting increased stakeholder voice. In Ansilie, a district demonstrating the narrowest engagement in year 3, we found distrust both within community members and between different community groups and district leaders. This conflict was perceived by district leaders as “posturing between the two groups with the district as to...How do we get resources?” Conversely, parents in this district agreed “We do not trust them very much in very many things. I've been involved for more than 20 years and it's always been this way.”

We found all of the districts that demonstrated broader engagement either had pre-existing climates of trust or used the mandate for engagement to promote trust through open engagement and identifying how feedback is incorporated. Leaders in Cotterdam noted that as stakeholders started trusting the district more and seeing that the district was honestly looking for feedback, more and different kinds of stakeholders started attending meetings. Reflecting on a well-attended community meeting in year two where a group of 30-40 people sat at the back of the room instead of participating in a visioning activity, one administrator explained:

I asked the interpreter to come with me and we went over and started talking to some of these people and they said “No, no, I did this last year I don't need to do it again.” So what it showed to me was that these parents had brought other people who didn't come during the last cycle and they wanted them to participate as well. And so they felt like they had done their part but now my friend, who didn't come last time, is going to come and talk about the things that are important

to them. So “Go back up, you can still participate it's okay,” but it communicated I think something really important that they were telling their friends that they could trust the process ... they were communicating to us that there was trust developing in the process, that there was safety, that it was okay to come and talk and say the things you're not happy about. You're not going to get in trouble but it's okay to come and say “We need more of this, or we need less of that.”

In several of the outlier districts, we also heard stories of intentionally demonstrating responsiveness as a way to build trust. These central office leaders reported conscious efforts to identify actions that could be acted upon quickly to demonstrate “wins.” For example, when students asked for more music programs O'Connor administrators quickly purchased new instruments and appointed a student to the school board. Administrators viewed these acts as both “operational and symbolic” – giving the district “an effective boost in participation and a better quality of engagement” because stakeholders realized the district was willing to “put their money where their mouth is.”

Conversely, the perceived lack of responsiveness to stakeholder input in some cases strained relationships and climates of trust in other districts, further contributing to low quantity and quality of engagement. As one disgruntled parent in Majura Shores exclaimed, “You would vent your frustrations, you'd say things that you wanted changed, and then nothing would ever change. I think it turned people off.”

Importantly, our data suggest that union-district trust also mattered greatly for engagement. In Uriarra, a district demonstrating one of the deepest level of engagement relative to the other cases, was one of the few cases to demonstrate a strong climate of district-community *and* district-union trust. “We have that ability to reach out to parents and continue the conversation we had all along,” said one district official, “I think that felt seamless that they had the right to give this input.” When explaining the LCAP process, a teachers' union leader noted, “[They are] trying to see if you have available funds to address those needs. It's a major mind shift. I think this district took it very, very seriously.”

Union-district relations were also quite volatile, as observed over time in our back-to-back visits to Cotterdam. While respondents characterized the union-district relationship positively in year one, by year two we found signs of decay that likely affected some of the participation patterns. In other districts, the perceived lack of responsiveness further strained district-union relations, as witnessed in Thorsby where union leaders reported losing faith in the district after they failed to adhere to input:

Something on the back end happened where we had something written into the LCAP and it was supposed to be for a specific term, and the superintendent decided to take it upon herself to eliminate that position without the input of any other stakeholder, but yet claims that the stakeholders had the input to do it. ... We thought we had a voice and we did all of our brainstorming and everything, but ...

History and strategic plans. In addition to trust, a prior history of community engagement seemed to contribute to deeper and broader forms of engagement. In these districts, strategic planning efforts had already brought many of the same stakeholders to the table, which seemed to further support climates of trust and facilitate deeper forms of engagement. Three of the five deeper cases (O'Connor, Lyneham, and Marsden Bay) reported that having a well-established strategic plan was helpful in deepening engagement efforts. These district leaders used strategic plans as guideposts to push engagement in LCAP development. Lyneham leaders described the relationship as follows:

The strategic plan has five objectives. The LCAP has the eight state priorities, but they're basically the eight, are woven into our five, almost exactly the same way. Different terminology but the

same feeling. The strategic plan, I think, the reason it doesn't sit on the shelf is just the heavy communication about it. We just talk about it all the time.

We heard a similar narrative in O'Connor:

We really literally take the LCAP and [our strategic plan] because they're very interrelated, and I don't go to a meeting where I'm not looking at that going, "Okay, what do I need to update them so that they know this is the [O'Connor Strategic Plan] that we're working on?" This is provided to us through LCAP or Title I or whatever. I look at that every time I go to schedule a meeting because it keeps my focus on making sure that we're addressing those things that we need to, and it also keeps it in the forefront. - State and Federal Programs Coordinator (O'Connor)

An O'Connor parent attested to the value of the plan for encouraging LCAP engagement:

I see a lot of reference to just regular community things where ... the [O'Connor strategic plan name] is on there. And it makes family members feel comfortable going. It may have been something that I wasn't even thinking about attending, but hey! There's my school district! You know, I'm going over there.

Organizational capacity and external partnerships. While in the first year we heard a lot about limited district capacity – time, staff, resources – to organize engagement (Marsh & Hall, 2017), in later years we found that districts had gained experience on which to build and improve their practices. As illustrated in Figure 14, only a quarter of superintendents reporting average to poor participation attributed it to a lack of central office personnel and resources. Nevertheless, there were many examples in the case studies of districts lacking the staff knowledge or physical capability of organizing outreach and gaining additional leverage on engagement activities via support from external partners. These partnerships not only enhanced central office capacity, but also community capacity.

Districts characterized by deeper and broader engagement attempted to address limited capacity by working with external partners to help build community capacity or benefited from community-based organizations already working to support stakeholders in this process. These partners helped increase nontraditional stakeholder engagement compared to districts without external resources. For example, Page worked with People Improving Communities through Organizing (PICO), a nationwide faith-based community organization, to assist them in expanding student engagement:

We've had some of our students alongside with the greater PICO entity really look at the student engagement piece of how things are looking and how students are authentically being engaged alongside with the student voice coalition and really looking at engagement, how parents are actually being engaged at that time as well at a state level, which really complemented the local work... that the school's action team helps to be able to move forward and create community engagement as well.

Other community partners helped Page with outreach and increasing responses to surveys and turnout at meetings. District administrators also worked with a consultant who they saw as serving an important role to “[keep] us on track.” Other outlier districts used faith-based organizations; long-standing, local, community-based organizations and statewide organizations to educate and recruit those who traditionally are less likely to participate.

O'Connor used multiple intermediaries to train staff on how to listen to community questions and feedback and how to use data to respond to questions. These partnerships also helped district leaders craft culturally responsive engagement strategies. For example, they provided cultural proficiency training for faculty and staff that emphasized the importance of affirming the cultural backgrounds of community members. When discussing these trainings the LCAP director explained, “Those are part of

the things that everybody needs.” The district also utilized intermediary organizations as part of its ongoing external stakeholder training to ensure community members and district leaders developed a shared understanding of the district inputs, outputs, goals, and metrics. As a result, O’Connor’s coherent model helped district leaders implement plans aligned to visible evidence of student learning and ensure the implementation of research-based pedagogical practices that support student learning. This capacity-building included specifically teaching noninstitutional actors how to understand and question data used to support programmatic decisions. Furthermore, O’Connor, like other districts in our study, included students in its engagement and enhanced student voice by building student capacity to understand both fiscal and outcome metrics while ensuring that their engagement efforts were equal to that of the adults in the room. One district leader explained, “The biggest piece, I think, that we’ve done aside from building the capacity of our parents it is our students. The piece with our students has been very, very powerful.”

Several districts characterized by shallower and narrower engagement simply did not have access to partners. Some reported that either they did not find support from their county office of education or that their community lacked community-based organizations.

Statewide data indicate that not all districts have worked with partners or received support to improve stakeholder engagement, yet many of those who did report wanting more. In 2018, 39% of superintendents reported receiving support from other organizations/networks on how to improve stakeholder engagement. And while 34% reported that this was sufficient, 65% wanted at least a little more (Figure 17).

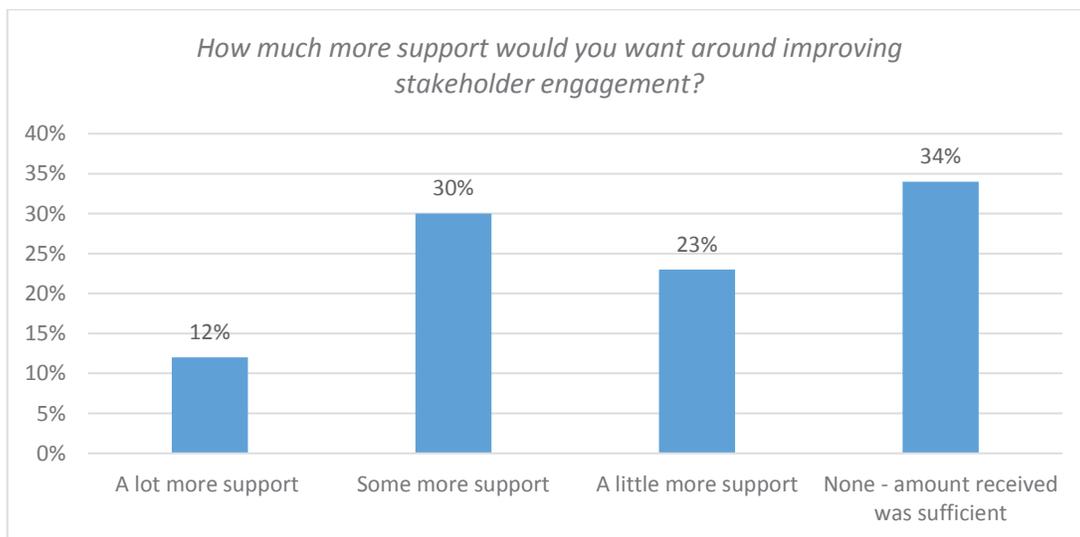


Figure 17. Superintendent Reports of Level of Support Desired Around Improving Engagement

Institutional Conditions

The broader institutional environment presented a final set of conditions shaping the ways in which stakeholder engagement unfolded in the districts. The primary factor here is the perception about proper roles for stakeholders.

In the first year of our research, we documented many instances in which the LCFF request to involve parents and community organizations in new roles conflicted with beliefs and taken-for-granted ways of

operating (Marsh & Hall, 2017). Reports of district leaders “protecting” their traditional roles and ways of thinking were common.

Some respondents in later years echoed these tensions. Leaders, for example, justified limiting the scope of engagement on the grounds that it was not parents’ appropriate role to collaborate on district funding or goals. As noted earlier, for example, an assistant superintendent in Kowen Forest took issue with parents thinking they should be “telling us what instructional strategies should we use, what we should be using.” Instead, this administrator believed parents should engage around “what outcomes do you want to see for your student? What opportunities do you want?”

Beliefs about “proper roles” may have also constrained engagement from the stakeholder perspective as well. For example, a white, higher income parent in Majura shores was not sure she was supposed to participate in LCFF:

Frankly, as someone, as an Anglo parent, when I was at the LCAP meetings I was almost like, wait is this not for Anglo parents? Because, it was focusing on foster children. It has all those different categories, foster children, children of socioeconomic lower status, English language learners, all this. I was like, "Oh, maybe I'm not supposed to be here." But, then the superintendent is like, "No, no, no, this is all community members."

While some respondents innocently viewed protective posturing as growing pains resulting from a policy asking for individuals to adjust their traditional ways of operating, others were less generous in their interpretations. In fact some viewed the previously mentioned claims that stakeholders were not interested in or capable of participating as assertions of power. These individuals—often external partners and parents—questioned the “paternalistic assumptions” about what parents are interested in and “capable of absorbing” and portrayed the decision to limit the scope of conversations as one of protecting district interests—a political strategy of “agenda setting” (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962) and illustration of power preventing issues from surfacing. Some believed the district intentionally avoided LCFF funding discussions because leaders wanted to maintain control over the budget. One intermediary observer reported that a case district “made decisions about funds before they even engaged the community. They weren’t the only ones [districts in the state] who did that ... They were trying to protect some of their fact-selling needs.”

This posturing and political strategizing may help explain the pattern of limited scope and one-way communication observed across most case districts over time. These institutional-political pressures may also account for the difficulties districts faced with recruiting and ensuring active participation from new players and traditionally quieter voices. In some of the outlier cases, however, we began to see shifts in this institutional-political environment where leaders were trying on new ways of thinking and interacting with community members in less district-directed ways.

Summary and Discussion

In the end, our evidence indicates variation in the implementation of the stakeholder engagement requirements of LCFF over time. More specifically:

WHO: Although district leaders reported improving outreach strategies over time and we found fewer cases of extremely narrow engagement, attracting participants—particularly nontraditional actors (non-parent community members, parents of EL, LI, and FY students)—was a challenge across districts and across years. Evidence from statewide surveys and cases indicate that districts struggled to directly involve and represent the interests of these nontraditional actors. We also observed the emergence of more representative forms of engagement and greater attention on student engagement over time. And each year, a minority of districts engaged in broader, more participatory forms of engagement.

HOW: Over time, many districts seemed to realize the limits of large, districtwide meetings and tried out new approaches, such as targeted engagement (often with existing advisory groups), school-level convenings, and informal engagement opportunities. They also reported improving their communication and engagement strategies each year. Yet, despite these efforts, we found a prevalence of shallow forms of engagement all three years—involving one-way conversations and a limited scope or focus of the engagement. This was particularly true in later years, when district leaders did not want to re-open conversations about a three-year plan after just a year or two. Yet, a minority of cases enacted deeper forms of engagement each year, engaging stakeholders in two-way dialogue, promoting conversation with data, investing in community members as partners, and focusing on the common good.

WHY: These patterns are best explained by a mix of local conditions related to individual stakeholders (fatigue, awareness, capacity), relationships of trust, organizations (history, capacity, work with partners) and broader institutional conditions (beliefs about appropriate roles).

Collectively the low levels of participation, particularly from underrepresented groups, and the limited opportunities for cross-stakeholder, two-way communication about broad priorities and needs raise critical questions about the democratic nature of LCFF engagement across the state and the efficacy of stakeholder engagement as a lever of change. Yet the conditions surfaced as important for the patterns we observed may indicate ways to improve stakeholder engagement in future years. We return to these implications in the final section of this report.

Ultimately, the choices made in the majority of case districts place district leaders in an arbitrating role, tasked with taking self-interested feedback from stakeholders and making final decisions on where to allocate limited resources. While central office administrators appear to play major roles in this process, we have yet to dig deeply into another important set of actors: school board members. As elected representatives of the community, they add another potential conduit for stakeholder input, possibly mediating the limitations observed in broader engagement efforts. We explore their role next.

V. School Board Participation in LCFF

The American school board has a long track record as a core public democratic institution (Alsbury, 2008). School boards continue to play a central role in democratic governance and in mediating between local community preferences and broader state and federal policy choices (Ehrensall & First, 2008; Iannacone & Lutz, 1970).

Over the past few decades, however, school boards have experienced diminished influence and eroding local control (Howell, 2005; Kirst, 2008). In addition, due to the increasing complexity of districts, the boundaries between the work of the board and the superintendent have become blurred (Land, 2002). This blurring has contributed to “role confusion” around where board efforts should be directed (Danzberger & Usdan, 1992; Mountford, 2008).

LCFF is regarded by some state leaders as providing an opportunity for school board members to exert greater influence over district decisions and resources, as decisions once made at the state level are now transferred to local elected officials who now sign-off on plans for allocating significant amounts of resources formerly tied up in categorical programs. The LCFF policy also in theory changes some of the accountability mechanisms facing school board members as they take on these new roles. One underlying assumption of LCFF is that greater transparency and community engagement will hold district leaders accountable for advancing equitable access to resources and equitable outcomes for all students. Some believe the transparency and greater role for stakeholders will motivate educators and board members to work hard to meet goals, because in essence “you’ve gone public,” as one study superintendent explained, and watchful citizens can take action when goals are not met (e.g., voting out the board).

In the current political climate, as the locus of reform increasingly shifts to the district level, Kowalski (2008) argues that school boards can offer leadership that revitalizes civic engagement in their communities by assuming a facilitative role which focuses on engaging all stakeholders. While the state statute’s only requirements specific to board members are that they consult with stakeholders in developing the LCAP, hold at least one public meeting, and formally approve the LCAP, might the school board take on an even greater, more facilitative role to ensure their constituents’ voices are heard in this process or that those not directly participating are being represented in some way? Or will school board members view LCFF’s requirement to engage stakeholders beyond simply “consultation” as an infringement on the responsibilities traditionally assigned to them as elected representatives?

To date, there is little systematic evidence on school board members’ responses to and involvement in LCFF. It is this gap and set of questions we take up in our second set of analyses. We asked: **What role have school board members played in LCFF generally and stakeholder engagement efforts in particular?** More specifically:

- How have board members participated in LCFF and LCAP development?
- What factors are associated with differences in board member participation?

We draw on case study and survey data to answer these questions. In summary, statewide survey and case study data indicate that school board members were generally approving the LCAP and attending formal board meetings, but were not actively participating in the broader stakeholder engagement activities. Qualitative analysis indicates three main conditions shaped board involvement in LCFF: perceptions about the proper role of board members, capacity/perceived lack of capacity, and leadership

of the board and/or superintendent. Overall, while board members appear to be fulfilling their required duties, there may be opportunities for them to do more to advance LCFF goals.

In what follows we first describe our analytic framework and process, and then present our findings and discussion.

Framework and Analysis

To answer these questions we started with an inductive approach, investigating how school board members and district leaders perceived of the board role and how they reported board members were involved in LCFF. As themes began to emerge, we also drew on theories of “sensemaking” that suggest individuals make meaning of new policies and experiences based on their prior understandings and frameworks (Coburn, 2001; Spillane et al., 2002; Weick, 1995). This literature also indicates that broader social, organizational, and professional contexts likely shape individuals as they seek to understand and enact policy. Applied to LCFF, school board members and their leaders in districts and schools likely develop shared understandings of LCFF in ways affected by the values, norms, and culture of a district, as well as their individual experiences leading and responding to state policy in the past.

For these analyses, we drew on qualitative data from 27 districts – ten visited in year 1, nine in Year 2, and eight in Year 3. Two districts were visited two years in a row; all others were visited once. Once again, these are not longitudinal case studies. Our intent is to look at general patterns across the three sets of cases studies in an exploratory way. Collectively these 27 districts provide important qualitative data to explore the nature of school board member roles in LCFF implementation. Given the variation in district context (see Table 2 above), these cases also allowed us to explore how different local conditions shaped the sensemaking and enactment of board roles. For example, our sample included a mix of case in which the broader community elects board members “at large,” representing the entire district community, as well as districts that elect board members to represent particular geographic regions within the district. One could hypothesize that these different structures could affect how board members elect to engage in this process. For example, a board member seeking reelection in a district with regional elections may be less concerned with broader stakeholder needs and interests, and seek to serve the needs of this narrow constituency.

To analyze these qualitative data we first coded all interview and document data, analyzing the reports of school board member involvement and related beliefs. Using these data, we then developed independent case memos to categorize the nature of school board member involvement. We then conducted a matrix analysis to systematically analyze patterns across all three years’ cases (Averill, 2002; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999) and factors associated with patterns (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In addition to the district characteristics identified in the first part of this report, we added factors potentially relevant to school board members – including the form of board elections (at-large versus regional) and superintendent beliefs. Whenever possible we triangulated findings among multiple respondents and data sources to strengthen the validity of our findings.

In addition to case study data, we drew on the LCFFRC superintendent survey provided statewide representative data on district leader perceptions of the role and involvement of school board members, as well as attitudes potentially shaping board member involvement. Together these data provide a broad understanding of school board member engagement in LCFF and the factors shaping their involvement.

Findings: How Board Members Engaged

Survey and case study data indicate board members were not consistently engaged in LCFF beyond approving the LCAP and attending formal board meetings. As Figure 5 illustrated earlier, superintendents statewide generally report school board members participated a moderate (43%) or great (30%) extent in the development of LCFF goals and resource allocation priorities in the 2016-17 school year.

When asked how they participated, we see a set of patterns that mirror those in the case studies we present next. As Figure 18 illustrates, nearly all superintendents report that school board members provided formal approval of the LCAP (96% reported board members did this a moderate to great extent) and participated in public board meetings to develop goals and resource priorities for the LCAP (75%). They were much less likely, however, to report that board members: Attended meeting(s) outside of the regular school board meetings devoted to developing or obtaining feedback on the LCAP (e.g., community meeting, LCAP advisory group meeting) (41%); served on a committee with non-board member stakeholders who provided input into LCAP development (33%); initiated or led meetings to solicit feedback from the community/stakeholders (18%); or helped write the LCAP (18%).

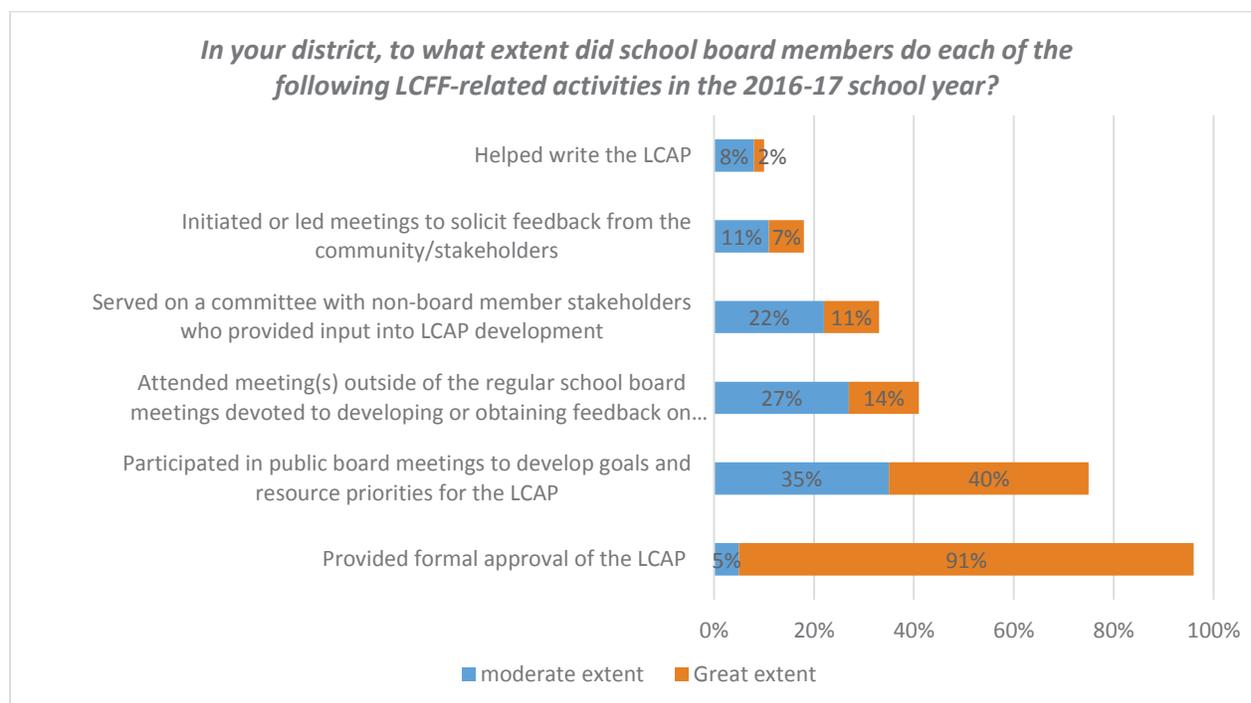


Figure 18. Percentage of superintendents reporting school board involvement in LCFF-related activities

Overall, superintendents also appear to be satisfied with the level of board member involvement. Very few reported receiving support from a variety of sources (e.g., County Office of Education, network partners, other districts) on how to involve school board members in the LCAP process (17%). Yet, of those receiving it, less than half report wanting more support in this area (5% want a lot more support, 12% some more support, and 26% a little more).

Case study data confirm a similar pattern of board member participation in LCFF. Across the three years of the qualitative study, explicit board involvement in LCFF as described by board members, superintendents, central office administrators and school site staff fell into four primary categories:

- Developing and/or monitoring community engagement efforts (n=10)
- Attending stakeholder meetings (n=5)
- Receiving periodic updates during board and committee meetings (n=8)
- Minimal to no further involvement beyond approving the LCAP (n=9)

Table 4: Patterns of School Board Member Involvement in LCAP Process

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	TOTAL
No. cases included in analysis	10	9	8	27
Developing/monitoring stakeholder engagement	6 Darra Newcastle Abba Eden Valley Croyden Uriarra	1 Mardsen Bay	3 Kowen Forest Lyneham O'Connor	10
Attending stakeholder meetings	2 Cotterdam Darra	1 Aspley	2 Kambah Cooper Plains	5
Receiving updates at board and committee meetings	2 Hornsby Union Leonard's Bay	2 Holt Broy Park	4 Kambah	8
Minimal to no further involvement beyond approving the LCAP	1 Tharwa	5 Page Cotterdam Charnwood Anisile Bornia Heights	3 Majura Shore Thorsby Anisile	9

Developing and/or monitoring community engagement efforts. In six of the ten districts studied in Year 1 board members participated in more than simply approving the LCAP to actually helping to develop and monitor the district's broader stakeholder involvement activities. This involvement ranged from helping in the design of engagement strategies to checking in with administrative staff on the progress of community outreach efforts and the tracking and documenting of feedback. In these districts, board members worked with district staff to ensure that stakeholders were involved and provided opportunities to give input in the LCAP process. The board president in Newcastle reported that the board regularly discussed at their meetings the district's efforts and how to improve them:

Once the LCFF was passed and it began, we were proactive. We had it on our agenda item on each meeting. What was new, what was required. We have very few reoccurring items and that was one. We discussed how we were going to get this different from what we were already doing—in terms of reaching the community. I'm a delegate to the state for my region. So I was getting information from CSBA. In the May meeting in Sacramento we had a panel meeting. Big

concern, will we be including the community appropriately? I brought the information back to the district. We structured our meetings, with the district, with tracking feedback from individuals (where it came from) because that had to be specific to their LCAP.

Another district board in Year 1 was similarly described as being involved in developing and supporting community engagement strategy from the outset: "A month after LCFF went into effect, the school board adopted a resolution outlining some of the parameters of this strategy." (external document, p. 3).

This type of direct oversight and development role was less prevalent in the cases in later years: one of nine districts in Year 2 and three of eight districts in Year 3. Once again, in these districts board members directly engaged in setting up and monitoring district stakeholder engagement strategies. A board member in O'Connor (Year 3) explained,

[W]e went through it [the process for developing the LCAP] and then they [district staff] asked us 'Okay, so how do you see this moving forward and how are we going to meet the requirement of having the parent input and the teacher input and the classified input?' And that's when we set up a kind of structure, of how we would go about taking this input and what we would do with it.

Another board member from Kowen Forest (Year 3) described his commitment to monitoring community involvement:

My feeling is I wanted to get the LCAP started. I wanted to make sure we have community involved. That's what I told our assistant superintendent and our superintendent is that make sure that we have stakeholders involved and the community stakeholders ... I always see the agenda and times that they are meeting with different people and different school sites.

Attending stakeholder meetings. There was less evidence of regular board attendance at LCFF/LCAP community engagement meetings or events, with only a handful of districts (5) across all three years describing even limited board participation. In Year 1, the Cotterdam superintendent commented, "there was a member that showed up [to LCFF meetings] several times, but our board was nowhere to be found, essentially, for the vast majority [of these meetings]." However, the superintendent also observed that that this one board member ended up being a good advocate for the community on the board: "The one that came several times—I think he actually was a pretty good advocate because he could say, 'Oh, no. That's exactly what they were saying, 'that he could be the truth-teller in the board.'" A board member in Cooper Plains (Year 3) also described minimal board participation in community meetings and observed: "We're not required or expected to go to those meetings, although I think one or two board members have gone to them."

Receiving periodic updates about the LCAP during board and committee meetings. Another way in which boards engaged in this process was through largely passive communication at board and board committee meetings. A review of district LCAPs in Year 1 indicated that a majority of case districts kept their boards informed on the LCAP process through standard monthly board agenda items (Marsh & Hall 2017). Across all three years, keeping boards informed on the LCFF/LCAP process ranged from pro *forma* updates (e.g., regular monthly agenda items on LCAP progress) to the more intentional involvement/education of the board. As one typical LCAP documented, "LCFF and LCAP presentations have been and continue to be regular agenda items at School Board meetings." (Holt, Year 2). Similarly, the Hornsby Union Superintendent explained, "As I went through the process with the staff, I kept the board apprised monthly. I put it as an agenda item and just shared where I was in the process ..."

However, in Marsden Bay, the superintendent and board jointly decided to come up with a monthly

theme for LCFF/LCAP update meetings in order to ensure that that the board and all key stakeholders had access to useful information throughout the year.

Minimal to no further involvement beyond approving the LCAP. In a handful of districts each year, we found minimal to no further involvement of school board members in the actual LCAP development beyond their required role of approving the LCAP. In these cases, the process of stakeholder engagement was developed and run by district staff. A central office administrator in Page (Year 2) indicated that the LCAP was generated with input from external stakeholders, but was not driven by the board: “It was mostly ed[ucation] services with a few people from business services, as well as representatives from our various stakeholder groups –site admin[istrators], parents, unions.” He further elaborated:

Inside the leadership team, we took our drive directions and created some specific goals that would fit with meeting the identified needs that stakeholders cited to us, as well as the needs we identified internally and those were amassed into some preliminary forms of draft LCAPs and from that we combined similar focuses to refine goals where there was overlap. And, of course, taking into consideration the budgetary considerations of what could we afford out of our budgeted LCAP and that's where we ended up with a draft that was able to go to board.

One board member in another district characterized the board’s involvement in the LCAP as a “stamp of approval” (Year 3, Thorsby Union). And although he believed that this was largely because there was trust among the board members that whatever the district had produced was aligned with what the board would want, he also indicated that he would like to be more involved in the development of the LCAP, saying “I don't want to be one of those stamp of approvals.”

Summary

While these are not longitudinal studies and we cannot make claims as to whether these patterns hold true across the state, it is nonetheless useful to consider the implications of the patterns observed. First, there was a notable decrease in the number of cases in which boards participated deeply in designing and overseeing stakeholder engagement strategies and each year there was a group of districts in which school board members were said to do little more than approve or provide minimal input into the LCAP or LCFF engagement process. One could argue that it makes sense that we see more involvement in the first year when the policy was new and districts were trying to figure out how to enact a new law. And if districts stuck to their plans over time and were succeeding in bringing in stakeholders, perhaps there was little need for the board to be involved, as the district staff were now in charge and leading successful efforts.

Yet, we know from the first section of this report that districts reported making significant changes to their stakeholder engagement strategies over time. We also know that districts struggled greatly to attract stakeholders, particularly nontraditional stakeholders, in these processes. As such, there could have been a role for board members to play. So what else explains these patterns? We explore this question next.

Findings: Factors Influencing Board Involvement

Although we initially hypothesized that type of board election could potentially shape the ways in which board members chose to participate in LCFF, it did not consistently relate to the type of engagement observed in our cases. Board members that were elected at large were just as likely to engage in somewhat shallow ways as board members in districts employing regional elections. We also detected no patterns between the type of board engagement and other district characteristics, such as size,

demographics, or community context. Our qualitative analysis, however, indicates three main conditions related to the patterns observed above: perceptions about proper roles, capacity, and leadership.

Perceptions about the proper role of school board members appeared to shape the nature of their engagement. Notably, in districts where board members helped develop and monitor stakeholder engagement strategies and in districts where many board members attended stakeholder meetings, we found a similar belief that in fact such activities were appropriate and within the purview of their job. The following representative statements from districts with more engaged boards illustrate these beliefs:

So I believed my role to be about the outreach to the communities be as broad and effective as possible.

-Board President (Darra, Year 1)

I would think it would be appropriate for the [LCFF] regs or the law to include school board members more in the outreach process. I don't think anything beyond that is appropriate."

-Board Member (Marsden Bay, Year 2)

That was one of my strong points, was make sure we have community involvement ... We try to help the community. That's what board members are for, to make sure we get the community involved ...

-Board Member (Kowen Forest, Year 3)

Conversely, in districts where we observed either no or limited board participation in developing strategies or attending community engagement meetings, we often heard beliefs that such activities were inappropriate or crossing the line of responsibilities reserved for district administrators. Others believed that board presence at LCFF meetings might intimidate community members or constrain dialogue. Again, in some cases these beliefs were quite prevalent: in Cooper Plains, a district with mixed board attendance at stakeholder meetings, we heard a similar message from multiple interviewees:

[The board is] essentially approving the document once it comes in but are they going to any of these meetings or giving input or trying to solicit? ... Maybe one or two went to one but I think the idea is the school board is a policy making group and I think if they get too in the weeds with the stakeholder process, it might change the dynamic, in my opinion. I think that they have to keep the 20,000 foot policy.

-Central Office Administrator (Cooper Plains, Year 3)

We have one or two board members that go to a lot of the events. Actually, mainly one. We even try to discourage him at times not to be so visible because people change. It's like reality TV. How you treat your kid is different when there's a camera right there. You're like okay. It's the same thing when people think, 'Wow. That's my boss or my boss' boss or whatever.'

-Board Member (Cooper Plains, Year 3)

I've read that board members just need to be cognizant of their role. Like your role would not be to try to direct the meeting. You would just be going as kind of an observer and try to make it clear. There's such a potential at, depending on the type of meeting, that your presence makes people nervous."

-Board Member (Cooper Plains, Year 3)

Even in a district in which the board played a strong role in ensuring broad and effective community outreach as described above, there was still hesitation about the extent to which board members should directly engage with stakeholders and to whether or not this would constitute a "conflict of interest":

And a couple of my colleagues did participate, but I did not think that would be my role, because ultimately I would have to be called upon to vote on the LCAP and to me that potentially leaves you open for charges of conflict of interest, or things like that.

-Board President (Darra, Year 1)

Interestingly, the statewide superintendent survey indicated similar variation in attitudes about the proper role of school board members. As Figure 19 illustrates, less than a third agreed that board members should *not* be directly involved in developing the LCAP. They were also evenly split on the perception that LCFF had given board members a stronger voice in resource allocation decisions.

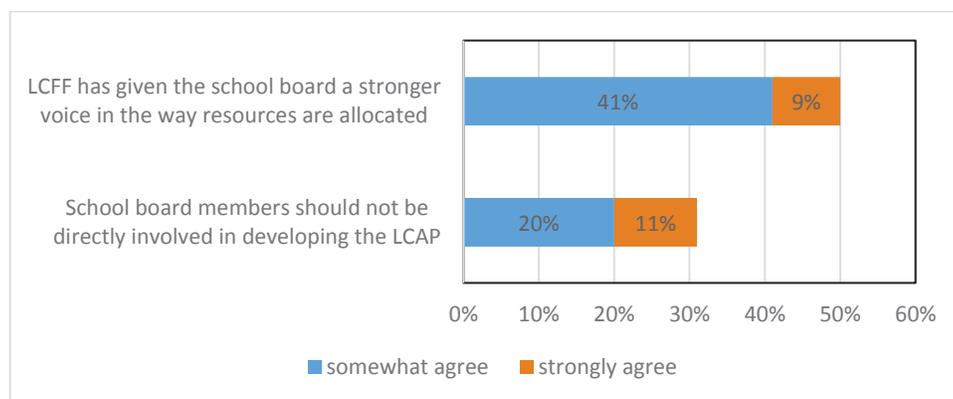


Figure 19. Superintendent Attitudes about Board Members and LCFF

One of the board members in a district where the board worked with district staff to ensure that stakeholders were involved in the LCAP process as referenced above (Newcastle, Year 1), credited the information she received from the CSBA as impacting the role and direction the board played in LCFF. A review of the LCFF Toolkit located on the CSBA's website outlines the role that boards should play in ensuring that the community is consulted and informed during the LCAP development process:

LCFF requires consultation. This section suggests board actions and decisions that should be made to ensure that consultation with parents and communities is well-planned and executed.¹⁵

Despite the emphasis on consultation, the CSBA's recommendations offer little guidance for direct board involvement in the stakeholder engagement beyond advice to "Clarify board members' role in the process." Similarly, the "LCFF FAQ" section on the California Department of Education's website references the "consultation" provision but does not specify this as a role specific to the governing board.

Capacity and perceived lack of capacity also contributed to these patterns. Often related to beliefs about proper roles was an underlying concern about the lack of capacity of board members to engage in either LCAP development or stakeholder engagement. These individuals worried that board member did

¹⁵ See <https://www.csba.org/GovernanceAndPolicyResources/FairFunding/LCFFToolkit.aspx>

not have the knowledge and experience to understand the complexities of LCFF. A county office of education administrator expressed this concern well:

It [the level of engagement and knowledge of school board members in the LCAP process] varies widely and again to be honest it varies widely because the education level of the board members varies widely. It can only go as deep as their own knowledge base can allow them to go. Some of them get lost in the details of this. It's a very complicated law and so a lot of them rely on their district offices explaining what's going on.

We heard similar views in several districts in which board involvement was mixed or absent. Referring to his board, the Cotterdam (Year 2) superintendent noted,

They are still tangentially involved, and part of that is not their fault because, again, they are in the same place the parents are as we are working our way. That way they will be very involved as we go forward but [we] have to build the system as we go. Part of the conversation doesn't make sense to them. In other words, they haven't seen that kind of data before. They don't know what it means or what to do with it

Another superintendent noted that board members were unfamiliar with collaborative processes and were more of an obstacle than substantive participant. As a result, this superintendent reported bypassing the board during the LCAP development process, “We just went past the board at a high rate of speed.”

Interestingly, in several cases where board members engaged relatively more deeply, we found evidence of purposeful attempts to build board capacity generally. In Kambah, for example, the superintendent and board spoke about work with an external organization. One board member reported,

He took the entire board, and the superintendent, and I think a couple of other cabinet members, took us across the country to network with other boards, similar challenges, urban. And we studied what went well, what went badly. I studied case studies of why superintendents crashed and burned, dynamics on the board. So we would learn to, learn our roles and what our focus needs to be here. So, when we came back, we developed those [district goals]. When we came back, it took us months, it took us hours, it took us a lot of facilitation from [the organization] and developed those [district goals]... That's the smartest thing we ever did.

In the case of Marsden Bay, whose board was composed of an unusual concentration of professionals with a direct knowledge of education policy, the board demonstrated a high degree of analysis and scrutiny in all aspects of the district's LCAP process. This even included the adoption of a board policy specific to the LCAP, as described below.

Leadership also played an important role. In three districts that had high levels of reported board involvement—in many ways outliers among the districts studied—leadership appeared to be central. In the case of Marsden Bay (Year 2), board leadership made the difference. In fact, the board created and passed a policy that required district staff to involve the board more in the LCAP. As the board member observed: “...[T]he way that the law's written, there actually is limited formal role other than to approve it [the LCAP]... but there's nothing preventing a board from passing a board policy like we did ...to basically require staff to involve the board more.”

In the other cases, the leadership of the superintendents made the difference. In O'Connor, board members had historically played important roles in developing the district's strategic plan. Spearheaded by the then-new superintendent, the strategic planning process was considered instrumental in creating the goals to which the LCAP resources were aligned. Board members in this district reported ongoing involvement throughout the LCAP development process. A consultant attributed this deep involvement to the superintendent: "Knowing [the superintendent's] boardsmanship skill, I think the board was deeply involved; I'm sure they were."

In Kambah, the superintendent made investing in the education of the board a priority and engaged them in the LCAP by integrating it with the budget development process. The district included budget development and therefore LCAP development in nine school board meetings. Board members were also involved in the development of the four broad goals that guided the general direction of the LCAP. The superintendent explained,

The stronger you make the board look, and the more you empower the board, the stronger you become as a superintendent. The stronger you can become as a superintendent, the stronger move you can make, and then the more credit you can give the board. The board feels better. The more they let you run, the more you can get done. It's a push-me, pull-you effect.

Summary and Discussion

In summary, school board members in our case districts appeared to play less direct roles in the actual stakeholder engagement beyond approving or giving minimal input into the LCAP in the majority of districts. We did however, find a small sample of districts in which board members embraced a more active role, helping district leaders develop and monitor stakeholder engagement activities or actually attending stakeholder events. Yet, these forms of involvement were far less common after the first year of implementation.

Combined with section I findings on the prevalence of relatively shallow and often not particularly broad forms of stakeholder engagement, the relatively little direct involvement of school board members in stakeholder engagement raises important concerns about the democratic aims of LCFF. Without a structured process pushing participants to consider the needs of all stakeholders and how to allocate resources in ways that promote the "common good" of the district, board members could have played important roles in weighing needs of interests groups and acting as "moral constituents" for individuals who were less vocal or not present (Guttmann & Thompson, 1996). Given reported district struggles to engage nontraditional and underserved stakeholders, might there have been ways for school board members to help bring such voices to the table? And if perceptions about proper role and capacity are inhibiting involvement, is there more that could be done to encourage meaningful board member involvement in this process? We return to these questions and implications in the final section of this report.

VI. Equity and Engagement

Many have suggested that a key goal of LCFF is to foster greater equity in education (Chen & Hahnel, 2017; Strauss, 2013). Equity, broadly understood as fairness or justice in societal conditions, is arguably a goal of both the resource allocation and stakeholder engagement provisions of the policy. Researchers have found persistent racial and socioeconomic disparities in the distribution of school funds (Morgan & Amerikaner, 2018). Scholars have also documented the ways in which students and families of

marginalized backgrounds—including low-income communities, people of color, and immigrants to the United States—are silenced or excluded in school and district decision-making (Ishimaru et al., 2016; Luet, 2015; Marsh, Strunk, Bush-Mecenas, & Huguet, 2015; Su, 2010). California’s LCFF aims to address inequity in resource allocation by offering additional funds to districts serving three traditionally underserved student groups: low-income students, English learners, and foster youth. The policy also challenges inequity in community engagement by urging districts to involve the students and families of these three targeted groups in decision-making about the use of LCFF funds.

Though LCFF may be described as an equity-oriented policy, “equity” is an ambiguous concept that can be defined in multiple ways (Stone, 2011). Scholars have suggested that local implementers’ beliefs, including beliefs about equity, shape policy enactment (Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002; Weick, 1995). Local district actors may have varying understandings of what is equitable, fair, or just, and these understandings may then inform how they decide to communicate with stakeholders and how they decide to spend LCFF dollars. Alternatively, the experiences of interacting with stakeholders and distributing LCFF funds might shape how district leaders think about equity. Finally, the perspectives of stakeholders may influence how dollars are spent; in fact, some have argued that the stakeholder engagement component of LCFF could hold districts accountable for equitable spending (Vasquez Heilig, Ward, Weisman, & Cole, 2014).

In this exploratory, qualitative component of our research, we examined how these three processes—stakeholder engagement, resource allocation, and conceptions of equity—relate to one another. We drew on data from the eight case districts from Year 3 to address the question: **How does the implementation of stakeholder engagement relate to the enactment of LCFF’s broader equity mandate?** Specifically, we considered:

- How did district actors define equity in the context of LCFF implementation?
- How did district actors describe their approach to allocating LCFF resources?
- What was the relationship between actors’ stakeholder engagement practices, conceptions of equity, and approaches to resource allocation?

The analysis for these three processes was conducted separately. One team of researchers examined the case study data for patterns in stakeholder engagement, guided by democratic theory (as described in Section IV). Another researcher separately analyzed these data to determine how district leaders described their resource allocation approaches. Finally, yet another researcher analyzed these data for how district leaders conceptualized equity, guided by literature on equity perspectives (e.g., Allbright et al., 2018; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Guiton & Oakes, 1995). We then looked across these three separate analyses to identify overall patterns.

Our data suggest that, in the enactment of LCFF, the three district-level processes of stakeholder engagement, resource allocation, and conceptions of equity may be mutually reinforcing. Leaders in the “outlier” districts—which featured notably broader and deeper engagement than most districts in our study—described strategic approaches to targeting resources based on student need, and they also had clear, coherent conceptions of equity. In contrast, leaders in “non-outlier” districts, or districts with the shallow and narrow engagement that characterized the majority of our cases, described efforts to allocate resources district wide (with the exception of one district that focused on maintaining historic spending patterns that preceded LCFF). Leaders in these “non-outlier” districts also presented either vague or competing understandings of equity.

In what follows, we first describe the literature that guided our analysis of equity conceptions, and we provide greater detail on our methods. We then present our findings regarding the patterns between

“outlier” and “non-outlier” districts. We conclude this section with a discussion of possible relationships among the three processes of community engagement, resource allocation, and equity conceptions.

Framework: Four Perspectives on Equity

To better understand how district actors (including central office administrators and school leaders) conceive of equity, we employed a framework of four prominent perspectives in the research literature: the Libertarian, Liberal, Democratic Liberal, and Transformative views (Allbright et al., 2018; Bulkley, 2013; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Guiton & Oakes, 1995). The first three perspectives represent foundational beliefs about equity and justice which have become institutionalized in American policymaking (Bertrand, Perez, & Rogers, 2015; Bulkley, 2013). The fourth perspective draws on critical theories (e.g., Freire, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Yosso, 2005), which challenge dominant cultural assumptions. The four perspectives are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5: Overview of Four Perspectives on Equity

	Libertarian	Liberal	Democratic Liberal	Transformative
Equity is...	Fair competition	Equal opportunity	Universal high performance	Freedom from oppression
Greater resources go to...	Gifted and advanced students	Disadvantaged students	Under-performing students	Marginalized students
Equity is achieved through...	A fair process to determine merit	Meeting needs to create a level playing field	Closing gaps to achieve universal high standards	Changing oppressive structures & promoting empowerment

In the Libertarian view, equity is understood as fair competition, with equal rules for all individuals regardless of background characteristics or social context (Mill, 2002; Nozick, 2013). Libertarians suggest that some students may access greater resources by demonstrating merit. For example, students with high test scores may be placed in a gifted program with higher quality teachers and materials. In a Libertarian perspective, students’ outcomes, such as test scores or college attainment, are expected to vary based on merit (Herrnstein & Murray, 2010).

A Liberal perspective asserts that, in order to provide a “level playing field,” resources should be distributed in ways that compensate for societal disadvantages. Students with equal levels of societal (dis)advantage should receive equal resources (horizontal equity), and students with greater disadvantages should receive greater resources (vertical equity; Rawls, 2009). The Liberal view emphasizes equal *opportunity* but not equal *outcomes*: Liberals expect that, once societal disadvantages have been accounted for, students’ outcomes will vary based on merit and not based on background characteristics. Some have noted that the Liberal view typically focuses on advantages associated with

socioeconomic status, with limited consideration of race and other intersecting identities (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

A Democratic Liberal stance prioritizes outcomes such as academic achievement or college attainment. In this view, equity means that all students meet a threshold of high performance, such as mastery of academic standards (Guiton & Oakes, 1995). In the Democratic Liberal view, resources should be distributed *adequately* to ensure that all students can accomplish these outcome goals (Odden & Picus, 2014). Democratic Liberals raise concerns about achievement gaps between socioeconomic, racial, and other social identity groups, and they advocate for resource allocation and educational processes that aim to close these gaps.

Finally, a Transformative stance defines equity as liberation, or freedom from oppression. From this perspective, equity requires disrupting oppressive structures and practices, empowering non-dominant communities, and challenging the beliefs and implicit biases that contribute to social stratification by race, class, and other intersecting social identities (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Garces & Gordon da Cruz, 2017). In addition, rather than focusing on ways that marginalized students and families are deficient, the Transformative view seeks to elevate the frequently unrecognized assets and “funds of knowledge” possessed by non-dominant students and families (Gonzalez et al., 1995; Yosso, 2005).

Although the LCFF itself does not include an explicit definition of equity, the differentiated funding of the reform reflects a Liberal orientation: districts serving students with greater needs, with needs defined as low-income, English learner, or foster youth status, receive additional resources to serve these groups. As the then-Senate President pro Tem commented at the signing of the legislation, “Our disadvantaged students deserve more resources to overcome the extra obstacles they face, and this formula does just that” (Office of Governor Brown, 2013). Furthermore, the LCAP requirements of setting outcome goals and articulating strategies to achieve these goals suggest a Democratic Liberal emphasis on universal high performance. Yet some have noted that the LCFF does not consider the Democratic Liberal principle of adequacy, or the provision of sufficient funds to support outcome goals (Chen & Hahnel, 2017; Humphrey et al., 2017).

Methods. As noted in Section III, the LCFF Research Collaborative conducted 27 district case studies over three years. In the third year (2016-2017), the LCFFRC specifically called out equity as a focus in their research design, asking interviewees about their definitions and enactment of educational equity. Accordingly, this section of the report uses the eight district case studies conducted in 2016-2017. Data sources, summarized in Table 6, include transcripts of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with district administrators and stakeholders (n=118).¹⁶ The interview and focus group protocols included questions about resource allocation decisions and the extent to which LCFF advanced equity in the district. When interviewees mentioned equity, researchers probed on the definition of the concept. Interviews lasted approximately one hour and were audio-recorded and transcribed. We also analyzed documents from each district, including district websites, LCAPs, and budgets (n=24). In reviewing district websites, we captured pages featuring the district’s mission and vision statements; superintendent’s messages; and strategic plans.

¹⁶ Focus groups, which included 2-4 participants, were counted as individual data sources. Two participants were interviewed twice individually; in these instances, we counted the two interview transcripts with the same participant as a single source. In the analysis for this section, we only used those interviews and focus groups which were audio-recorded and transcribed. These numbers differ from the overall numbers reported at the start of the paper because the previous analyses included notes from interviews and focus groups which were not audio-recorded or transcribed.

Table 6: Data Sources

District	Total Data Sources	Documents	Interviews	Focus Groups
O'Connor	21	3	12	6
Kambah	25	3	22	0
Lyneham	22	3	15	4
Thorsby Union	13	3	9*	1
Majura Shore	9	3	5	1
Kowen Forest	15	3	14	0
Cooper Plains	23	3	20*	0
Anisile	12	3	8	1
Total	140	24	105	13

*One participant in each of these districts was interviewed twice; here we count this as one interview.

Note. Interviews included one participant; focus groups included 2-4 participants. Documents in each district include the district website, the 2016-17 LCAP, and the 2016-17 budget.

To minimize bias in our findings, different researchers conducted the initial analysis for district equity conceptions, for districts' resource allocation decisions, and for districts' stakeholder engagement. For the first sub-question (*How did district actors define equity in the context of LCFF implementation?*), interview transcripts, 2016-2017 LCAP goals, and district websites were uploaded to NVivo. We coded these data inductively (Saldaña, 2013) for beliefs regarding equitable inputs, processes, and outcomes; codes included "greater resources for greater needs," "teacher beliefs and biases," and "college access." We next developed a memo describing how data sources in each district defined equity, and created a matrix display (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) to summarize how many data sources¹⁷ expressed common beliefs about equitable inputs, processes, and outcomes in each district. We then identified how each of these beliefs related to the framework of equity perspectives described above, and we developed a figure to illustrate how many sources in the district expressed ideas associated with Libertarian, Liberal, Democratic Liberal, and Transformative stances (see Appendix D).

To answer the second sub-question (*How did district actors describe their approach to allocating LCFF resources?*), we first analyzed interview transcripts to determine how district actors described their resource allocation decisions, and we summarized each district's self-reported resource allocation approach in a memo. We then triangulated these findings by analyzing districts' LCAPs and budgets, looking for evidence to support or disconfirm interviewees' claims. We also included the main expenditures listed in the 2016-17 LCAPs and (when possible) categorized the expenditures as being principally directed towards all students or directed at specific subgroups.

Finally, for the third sub-question (*What was the relationship between actors' stakeholder engagement practices, conceptions of equity, and approaches to resource allocation?*), we first developed a matrix display that included summaries of districts' equity conceptions and summaries of their resource

¹⁷ Data sources included websites (all pages on the district website considered one source), LCAPs, budgets, focus group transcripts (each transcript considered one source), and interviews (two participants were interviewed twice; we combined these transcripts into a single data source for each participant).

allocation approaches (see Appendix E). In refining this matrix, we identified four patterns describing districts' equity conceptions and related resource allocation approaches. We then examined relationships between our equity conception and resource allocation findings and the stakeholder engagement findings presented in Section IV of this report. We developed a visual display mapping the eight case study districts on the democratic engagement framework, and we observed a relationship between the districts' equity and resource allocation patterns and the depth and breadth of their democratic engagement.

Limitations. It is important to note that our findings do not speak to causation: we do not suggest that a particular equity conception causes a stakeholder engagement strategy, nor that a particular equity conception causes a particular resource allocation approach. We also do not make definitive claims regarding the direction of influence among these three concepts: for instance, stakeholder engagement may shape district actors' equity conceptions, or vice versa, or perhaps they reflexively shape each other. As a qualitative, exploratory, multiple case study, our aim is to investigate how districts understand and enact these three elements of LCFF, and to identify potential relationships among these concepts (Yin, 2013).

Additionally, while we aimed to speak to key decision-makers and stakeholders in every district, we did not speak to every central office administrator and stakeholder, and it is possible that we may have missed perspectives that would have contributed to our findings. Furthermore, as advocates have noted (Chen, 2016), district budgets and LCAPs offer limited information regarding the use of funds for the LCFF targeted groups. For instance, a district may report their overall professional development expenditures and note that implicit bias training is part of this line item, offering only limited insight into how actual expenditures related to equity goals. Thus, we chose to focus our analysis on district leaders' descriptions of district resource allocation decisions. While we triangulated our findings across data sources, the lack of clarity in district financial documents sometimes limited our ability to link specific dollar amounts to reported allocations. Nonetheless, we were able to broadly confirm funding dedicated to actions and strategies that reflected districts' equity conceptions.

Finally, this study explores how district leaders (including central office administrators, board members, and school leaders) defined equity, approached resource allocation, and engaged stakeholders. We drew on interviews with parents, teachers, advocates, and other stakeholders to triangulate our findings regarding district leaders' perspectives, but we did not explore how these latter groups conceptualized equity in resource allocation or community engagement. We note that traditionally underserved students and families have knowledge and engagement approaches that often go unrecognized by district leaders (Barajas-López & Ishimaru, 2016; Ishimaru & Takahashi, 2017); thus, we suggest that future research could more deeply explore the perspectives of families and students regarding the conceptualization and enactment of educational equity.

Findings

Overall, our data suggest that the three processes of engaging stakeholders, allocating resources, and conceptualizing equity are related to one another, and that they may be mutually reinforcing. We found that the "outlier" districts—those districts with deeper and broader engagement practices than most districts in our study—also featured coherent conceptions of equity, and district leaders described strategically targeting resources based on perceptions of student need. In contrast, in "non-outlier" districts with relatively shallow and narrow engagement practices, district leaders voiced vague or competing conceptions of equity, and they described resource allocation approaches that either

prioritized district-wide spending or, in one case, maintained historic spending patterns established prior to LCFF. Table 7 illustrates these findings.

Table 7: Districts’ Patterns in Engagement Practices, Resource Allocation Approaches, and Equity Conceptions

	District	Engagement	Resource Allocation Approach	Equity Conceptions
Outliers	O’Connor	Broad/ Deep (Empower)	Primarily Strategic Spending	Coherent (Dem. Liberal, Transformative)
	Lyneham	Broad-Hybrid / Deep (Collaborate)	Primarily Strategic Spending	Coherent (Liberal)
	Kambah	Hybrid-Representative/ Shallow (Involve)	Primarily Strategic Spending	Coherent (Dem. Liberal)
Non-Outliers	Kowen Forest	Representative / Shallow (Consult-Inform)	Primarily District-Wide Spending	Vague (Liberal)
	Majura Shore	Representative/ Shallow (Consult-Inform)	Primarily District-Wide Spending	Vague (Liberal)
	Thorsby Union	Representative-Select / Shallow-Deep (Involve)	Primarily District-Wide Spending	Vague (Liberal)
	Cooper Plains	Representative / Shallow (Consult)	Primarily District-Wide Spending	Competing (Libertarian, Liberal)
	Anisile	Select / Shallow-Deep (Involve)	Maintaining Historic Patterns	Multiple (Liberal, Dem. Liberal, Transformative)

Figure 20 is a visual illustration of these findings using the democratic theory framework described in Section IV. In this figure, the boxes representing the three outlier districts fall in (or nearly in) quadrant 2, representing broad and deep engagement approaches. The black shading of these boxes indicates that these outlier districts also featured coherent equity conceptions and strategic resource allocation approaches. The boxes representing non-outlier districts appear in quadrant 3 (broad and shallow) or quadrant 4 (narrow and shallow). The gray, white, or dotted fill of these boxes represents our findings of vague or competing equity conceptions among district leaders, as well as resource allocation approaches of either district-wide spending or maintaining historic patterns.

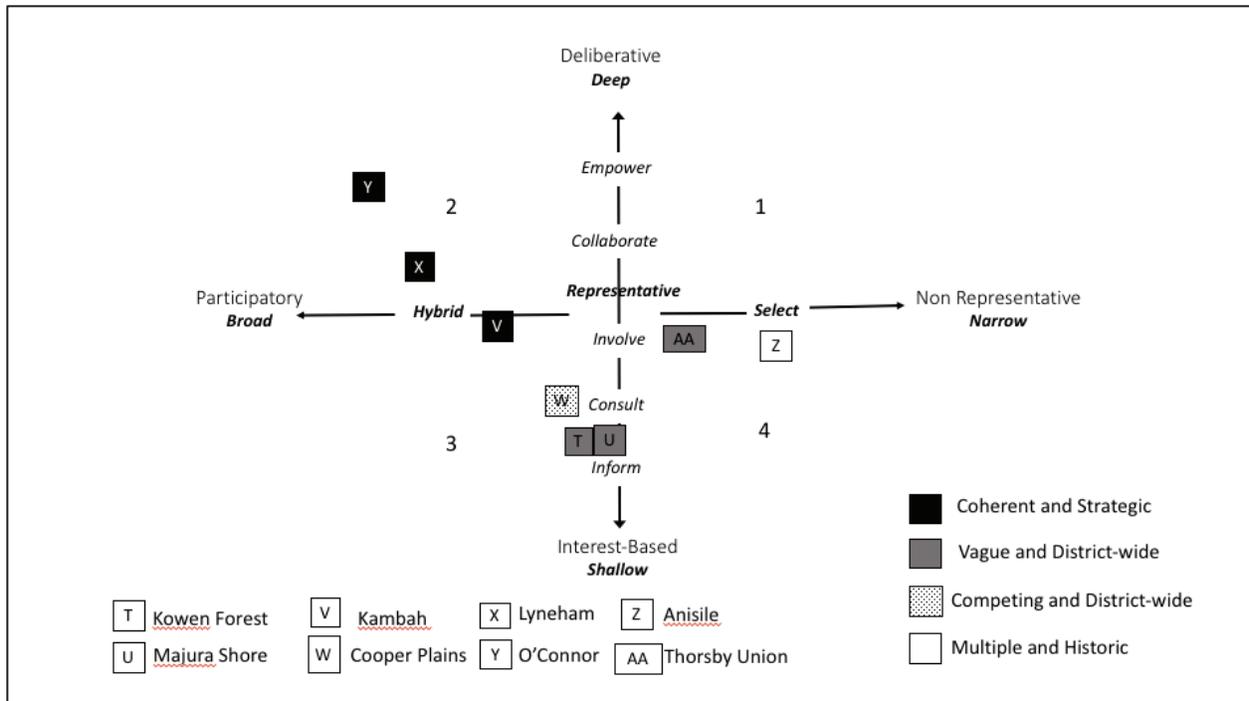


Figure 20. Illustration of Relationship Between Districts' Resource Allocation Approaches, Equity Conceptions, and the Depth and Breadth of Stakeholder Engagement.

In what follows, we review key differences in engagement practices between outlier and non-outlier districts. We then discuss how these two groups of districts differed in how interviewees described allocating resources, and in how district actors conceptualized equity.

Community Engagement in Outlier and Non-Outlier Districts

As illustrated in Table 7 and Figure 20 above, three outlier districts—O'Connor, Kambah, and Lyneham—used relatively broader and deeper engagement strategies than the other five case districts. We observed three key ways in which outlier districts' stakeholder engagement strategies differed from other districts and could be related to the processes of resource allocation and equity conceptions: 1) broad participation of stakeholders, especially among historically marginalized students and families; 2) emphasis on the common good rather than self-interest; and 3) engaging participants in reciprocal conversations. Next, we describe these three areas and explore how these stakeholder engagement practices might relate to the districts' resource equity approaches. We recognize that some of this description is included in Section IV above, but believe a brief description of these processes is worth repeating as we explore the relationship between engagement, resource allocation, and equity conceptions.

Participation of Stakeholders. Overall, the three coherent and strategic districts had greater participation among stakeholders in their LCAP processes than the other five districts in our study. Two districts—Kambah and O'Connor—were particularly focused on engaging historically marginalized students and their families. For example, in Kambah, district actors implemented focus groups with students in LCFF-targeted groups and students at varying levels of academic performance. A central office administrator described this effort:

We're reaching out to student groups at each of our high schools. We've sent invitations to EL and foster youth specifically; students, high performing, low performing. We wanted a mix and we're

doing student meetings at each of our high schools, comprehensive and not, and continuation schools, everything. Then we're going to create a student LCAP committee that will meet five times to dig a little bit deeper into each of the district schools and the money and how it all works together.

In O'Connor, participants described intensive outreach to communicate with African American and Latino families. An assistant principal explained,

[We have] dedicated people who are willing to do the leg work, and the foot work, and getting the word out to the community, you know ..."Okay, who's going out this Saturday to pass out fliers at the barber shops, and the beauty shops, and the Black owned businesses, and Hispanic owned businesses?" ... I go to the churches, I know several pastors and bishops in the community, and so I'll go to their churches, and ask them, "Could I make an announcement? Can we pass out some fliers?"

In contrast, interviewees in the five non-outlier districts reported struggles getting families to attend community meetings, and they did not mention outreach to students and families of LCFF-targeted or other historically marginalized groups. For example, a Thorsby Union administrator described the challenge of getting parents to attend community meetings: "I don't know what to tell you about the parents. It's unfortunate. ...last year, trying to get parents in here to even talk about the LCAP...my goodness, we got like a handful. I'm talking less than ten." Relatedly, a Cooper Plains parent noted that she was the only participant on key LCAP committees. She acknowledged that, as she was a stay-at-home parent who was fluent in English, there was a need for perspectives from parents of other backgrounds: "They could probably use more input from stakeholders like parents, not just having one parent ... It should be a parent that is working full-time, and a parent who speaks only Spanish or Korean."

Emphasis on the Common Good. In all three outlier districts, stakeholder engagement processes asked participants to make decisions for the common good of the district rather than asking about individual self-interest. In O'Connor, an administrator described a process of facilitating stakeholders to remind them of the common ground shared between parents and teachers: "We do a lot of sharing of ideas through meeting each other, to talk about 'Why are you here? What drives your interest in being involved with LCAP?' You got to find that common ground so that parents and teachers feel like, 'Okay. They're working for the same purpose.'"

Interviewees in Lyneham suggested that the district's strategic plan was used to maintain a focus on the district as a whole. One central office administrator noted, "Each [stakeholder] meeting's got its own flavor...but they all share strategic plan, moving the district forward to close the opportunity gap. Those themes run throughout that." Lyneham featured stark socioeconomic diversity; thus, in seeking the broad participation described above, the district encountered pushback from more affluent families who opposed the district's strategic resource allocation. The district used their strategic plan to explain their equity goals and justify their resource allocation decisions. In the words of a board member, "[Affluent communities] are often vocally bitter about the fact that they are receiving less funding...that's a tough thing to tell parents. 'Well, your kid went to preschool, and you and your husband have PhDs and [your child will] be just fine.' ...So then we get into the argument again and again, of equality versus equity, and no we don't give the dollars equally, because that's not actually equitable."

The focus on the common good was particularly evident in how district actors engaged with collective bargaining units: O'Connor and Kambah administrators both described using their equity conceptions to challenge union requests, while in Lyneham, district actors cited union support for Liberal equity as a key factor supporting their resource allocation approach. Notably, in Kambah, the teachers' union opposed some of the district's resource allocation strategies, such as additional instructional time in low-

performing schools. The Kambah union refused to participate in the LCAP process, narrowing the breadth of the district's stakeholder engagement.

Developing Participants' Capacity for Reciprocal Conversations. Actors in the three outlier districts described efforts to develop individuals' capacity to understand district policies and engage in reciprocal decision-making conversations (as opposed to unidirectional communication where district actors present information). In Lyneham, district actors invited parents into reciprocal dialogue by asking open-ended, accessible questions, rather than presenting lengthy budget documents. The district also supported parents, especially those of historically marginalized groups, in feeling comfortable approaching school leaders and asking how the targeted staffing was being used to benefit their children. A central office administrator explained,

[We encourage parents to] ask two questions [of school sites], "Who are the supplemental providers and what do they do?" ... If the principal can't answer, then as a parent you know you got to start pushing on them because we pretty much spend all of our supplemental money on staff. ... The parents have been pretty responsive...especially some of the parents who have been the most hard to get involved in the traditional system. You know, they're immigrants, they're not English speakers. How do they feel enough authority to go to a school and say, "How are you serving my kid?" Basically asking, well, "who is it and what do they do" They can get around that.

In O'Connor, district actors intentionally supported reciprocal dialogue in stakeholder meetings, inviting students and parents to share their perspectives and seeking to provide all stakeholders with the opportunity to be heard. Moreover, O'Connor invested in developing parents' and students' capacity to interpret data in order to better understand needs across the district. A consultant working with the district described these efforts:

There's very much an openness to help to educate everyone to get to the point in which they are able to ask the right and tough questions about why is their data getting better or why is it not getting better and I think they really want to educate those people who are coming so they can be a valuable partner versus creating an opportunity just to hear from you. ...It's amazing how much time they are willing to put in to do that and the commitment to it.

As a result of these practices, participants in O'Connor reported feeling that their voices were valued and that dialogue with district leaders was reciprocal rather than one-way. A teacher explained, "Everybody feels valued [in LCAP meetings]. I know I was sitting with parents and their voice was just as valuable as the Assistant Superintendent's voice. The student's voice was just as valuable as the teachers."

Of course, the efforts to build stakeholder capacity to engage in the outlier districts were not without challenges. In Kambah, for example, there was disagreement over how effective these efforts were: several members of community-based-organizations critiqued the district for failing to build parents' capacity or engage in reciprocal conversations. Nevertheless, the overall pattern was one of conscious efforts on the part of district leaders to enable stakeholders to understand information and engage as equals.

In contrast to outliers, non-outlier districts tended to use more unidirectional approaches to engaging stakeholders, and they did not invest in stakeholders' capacity for decision-making or data use. For instance, board member in Anisile described district actors "briefing" stakeholders with only a short period for input at the end of the meeting:

A lot of administrators ...they're still bureaucrats....the format of briefing people and then spending maybe 15 minutes at the end towards soliciting input and everything and capturing it and never really getting back. ...Then you wonder why parents zone out and say, "Well, gee, I'm out at this point."

In Kowen Forest, the teachers' union president expressed frustration at the unidirectional nature of LCAP meetings: "What [district administrators] consider consultation is so broad as to be meaningless. ...The presentations are...just presentational from me to you, and the input is 'so what do you guys think?' I mean, that's not authentic input." These examples illustrate a pattern among the vague, multiple, and competing conception districts: unidirectional rather than reciprocal conversations, with families and other stakeholders asked to respond to district ideas rather than engage in a substantive partnership.

Resource Allocation in Outlier and Non-Outlier Districts

Our analysis of the case districts' resource allocation focused primarily on their use of supplemental and concentration funds, as reported by district officials and confirmed through analysis of 2016-17 LCAPs. While there were a number of common expenditures reported across the majority of districts (e.g., counselors, afterschool supports, intervention specialists, professional development services), we found some important differences in strategies articulated in outlier versus non-outlier districts. Overall, the outlier districts tended to strategically target resources to subgroups of students, while non-outlier districts either focused on district-wide initiatives to reach all students or continued to allocate funds based on past spending patterns. Below we outline the different targeted strategies used by the outlier districts and then summarize the approaches to resource allocation used by the non-outlier districts.

Strategic Resource Allocation in Outlier Districts. Data from the three outlier districts suggested a focus on targeting resources based on perceptions of student need and clear theories of action for how to address inequities within the districts. While these districts may have distributed a portion of their funds for district- or school-wide initiatives, they were also deliberate in linking their resource allocation to specific strategies targeted at student subgroups. For example, Kambah targeted their resources toward strategies intended to *improve student outcomes based on data*. Multiple interviewees referenced a multi-million dollar program that provided additional funding to a significant number of high needs elementary schools in the district. Students at these schools received extended learning time and teachers were provided additional professional development and pay. A principal described the benefits of the program in her school community:

[It] has allowed us to do a couple of things. One - really leverage our professional learning time ... That really gives an opportunity for teachers to dig in to student assessment, be able to analyze that assessment, plan, develop, collaborate, work in space, and to identify root causes for student performance growth and increase but also identify areas of gaps and then design instruction to meet those needs. ... When we look at how that impacts the additional instructional minutes, that has allowed us to really identify students and provide not only interventions but enrichment pieces as well. And that again, is based on the data, so that in a consistent cycle, five days a week for our children.

Similar to Kambah, O'Connor's resource allocation prioritized *data-driven initiatives* and officials were diligent about keeping their allocations student-focused and responsive to stakeholder requests. Based on student and parent input, for example, the district added another period to the school day to provide more time for a broad course of study to students needing interventions. The LCAP Director also described how outcome data influenced changes to the 2016-17 LCAP.

The only thing we added in our LCAP this year, we continued with all the things we were doing, but we added more programs and support for our special education students and our African American kids. Because, that was what they saw. It's not about, "Oh, I need more money for this." No, it's about the gap that we discovered ... when we analyzed the data.

O'Connor's resource allocation strategy also emphasized targeting spending to build stakeholder capacity, especially for those from non-dominant communities who were not traditionally engaged in

district decision-making processes. The district funded a number of support structures—personnel, activities, and trainings—to build parent capacity and engagement. They also specifically targeted African American student engagement; the district allocated significant funds for cultural proficiency training intended to improve teachers’ understanding of students’ backgrounds and culture and reduce disparities in African American suspension rates. O’Connor officials used their high number of low-income students as a justification for spending on programs that targeted gaps in achievement and engagement for different racial/ethnic groups. As the LCAP Director explained, “It’s no longer about being Black, or being Hispanic, ... so most of our goals [are] around our low income students. Because, those low income kids come in different colors and shapes.... The programs or things that we put in place is to address all our kids, and not just African American, but we call them out, because we have an achievement gap for African American kids.”

Lyneham’s resource allocation reflected a very deliberate strategy of *allocating additional staff* to schools with high unduplicated student populations—a strategy that provides greater resources to students identified as high-need—but, unlike strategies articulated in Kambah and O’Connor, was not based on student outcome data. Lyneham distributed over 80% of their supplemental funds directly to schools based on their percent of unduplicated students, which resulted in some classroom and administrative positions being redistributed from schools with low unduplicated populations to those with high counts of unduplicated students. According to the 2016-17 LCAP, 60% of their supplemental dollars were allocated for additional classroom staff, 15% for additional site administrators, and 10% was provided directly to schools in the form of flexible dollars. The district’s theory of action was clearly linked to a belief that quality teaching is the key to improving student outcomes. Endorsing their focus on staffing, the superintendent explained, “The best training and the curriculum in the hands of the wrong individuals isn’t going to make a difference for kids.” In order to support teacher development, the district also allocated base funds for a newly designed teacher growth and development system, which includes the use of peer evaluators and coaches, creates a professional pathway model, and links pay to performance.

Lyneham differed from Kambah and O’Connor in that they did not have a high percentage of unduplicated students. The district relied on their strategic plan that emphasized closing opportunity gaps and the state’s focus on equitable spending to justify their targeted spending. Lyneham also used LCFF base funds to support investments for all schools, including academic counselors in all secondary schools. Several interviewees noted that these investments and an overall perception of adequate funding helped ease the sense of loss for schools that experienced cuts in administrative staff.

Primarily District-Wide Spending in Four Non-Outlier Districts. Four districts in our sample tended to allocate funds centrally in a manner that promoted horizontal equity of resources within the district. These distributions may have been influenced by districts’ perceptions of resource (in)adequacy and/or their percentages of unduplicated students. In contrast to the outlier districts, district officials did not consistently articulate deliberate strategies guiding allocations, but rather a conglomeration of various additional supports and interventions. While in each case there were targeted programs for subgroups of students, the overall spending patterns were oriented to improving district-wide opportunities for all students.

Non-outlier districts tended to use funds to support additional support staff (e.g., counselors, tutors) after school and summer programming, intervention and enrichment resources and materials, and, in some cases, restored programs lost during the recession. In Kowen Forest, they restored the music program for all grade levels, increased the number of certificated tutors, and expanded summer programs in response to parent feedback. They also funded academic coaches that work with EL students and a program for migrant tutoring. In Cooper Plains, the majority of LCFF supplemental and concentration dollars went toward district-wide investments in professional development and additional

district-level staff, such as instructional coaches. The district also provided several types of counselors, support personnel, and programs associated with academic and social-emotional development. They also expanded PE and the arts for all students, increased athletic programming in middle schools, and covered exam fees (AP/PSAT/SAT) for all students. As one administrator said,

We have two communities that are quite different. The needs in [North Cooper Plains] are quite different from the needs in [South Cooper Plains]. And so when you take a look at creating equity across the district [you have to have awareness of] those differences and ... implement district wide programs that will be effective for both sides of our community.

These districts' allocations reflected a Liberal orientation toward equity in that they saw the perceived needs of students *within* their districts as requiring equal inputs. However, district officials also voiced the need for vertical equity *between* districts and expressed gratitude for LCFF funds that helped equalize their spending with neighboring districts and provided extra resources for their targeted students. Officials in Thorsby Union, for example, framed the LCFF funds as critical to the district's survival; the district was faced with declining enrollment and a countywide open enrollment policy, which made competition for students difficult. As a district financial officer noted,

For us, basically, our money is staying stagnant because the money's going up per kid, but we're losing enough kids that we don't have any gains in money. ... And I have to justify the specifics of our budget and how it doesn't compare to other districts now, unlike in the past where everything was comparable.

While the district officials felt pressure to balance the budget, one principal noted that LCFF had provided needed supports for students, "We have a high population of students from trauma and the LCFF dollars and the LCAP has helped us provide counseling services. We have a behavior intervention specialist on staff now."

Maintaining Historic Spending in One Non-Outlier District. In distributing LCFF dollars, one district (Anisile) maintained historic spending patterns, which included "line items" directed towards the community's two major racial groups. According to the district chief financial officer, about 77% of the district's supplemental and concentration funding was "committed" to previously adopted positions or programs, many of which had been historically funded by categorical programs. "Those are all the stuff that we've put in the LCAP. When you're saying, 'What's committed?' For example, we have a counselor at every elementary, that's supplemental. We don't have to do that. So that's what we did." As evidenced in this quote, the concept of "supplemental" is taken to mean that it is extra – beyond what is needed to run a school. In that sense, police officers (school safety) were also considered supplemental supports, as well as tutoring services, expanded technology, AVID, and some professional development. The district also distributed a significant amount to school sites based on their percent of unduplicated students and provided schools with a categorical handbook to guide this spending. The chief financial officer noted that the LCAP basically served "a categorical function." A teacher confirmed that during LCAP engagement sessions it seemed that "[schools] had programs that were already in place that the district had an interest in keeping going."

As part of their efforts to maintain previously committed funds, our data suggest that district leaders preserved "line items" directed at African American and Latino students respectively. Interviewees reported that these line items were a response to competing demands from African American and Latino community members in the district. The Anisile superintendent explained that, prior to LCFF, African American community leaders had successfully organized and advocated for programs targeting African American students. This work eventually resulted in a district department focused on targeted improvement and an African American task force and parent advisory council. The superintendent pointed to a report created by the task force that "[has] driven the [equity] work" in Anisile. However,

the district's responsiveness to the African American task force and related program expenditures caused members of the Latino community to raise concerns about their students' needs and demand equal funding. As the teachers' union president explained:

We have ... [the] African-American portion of the community, and then we have our Latino portion of the community, and it's become kind of like a posturing between the two groups with the districts as to, How do we get resources? How do we get what we need to meet the achievement needs of our students, and get our scores to increase? ... The African-American group had themselves really well-organized, they had their own task-force that they put together, they did a whole bunch of research, they came up with their own report ... And then, on the [Latino] side it was kind of like, "Oh, well they're doing this over here. What is the district doing for us to provide this type of research?" And so, then you had some knee jerk reactions happening at the district level around that ...

District actors' responses to these constituents resulted in continuation of line items supporting both of these subgroups in the 2016-17 LCAP, although district officials expressed a desire to move away from this line item approach to equity and toward more data-driven efforts to ensure appropriate and equitable services for all subgroups.

Summary of patterns. In sum, data from the three outlier districts indicated that, not only did these districts have especially broad and deep engagement practices, but they also strategically allocated resources based on perceptions of student need. In contrast, most of the non-outlier districts prioritized district-wide spending, and one non-outlier district focused on maintaining historic spending patterns.

Equity Conceptions in Outlier and Non-Outlier Districts

In the three outlier districts (O'Connor, Kambah, Lyneham), we heard clear, coherent definitions of equity across interviewees and in district documents. When discussing equity, outlier district interviewees explained that their definition was shared throughout the organization; for example, a Lyneham principal suggested that anyone who disagreed with the district-wide understanding of equity work elsewhere: "I think that it's easy for me to say what I'm saying because I believe in it, but it's also the belief system at central office level as well...why would you be in education if you don't believe in using the money for a needy group of kids? ... Maybe you aren't a good fit for our district, and good luck. Somewhere else."

In contrast, data from three of the non-outlier districts (Kowen Forest, Majura Shore, Thorsby Union) suggested a vague consensus around Liberal equity principles, but there was no evidence of a formally articulated, coherent equity vision. Data from one non-outlier district (Cooper Plains) revealed two competing conceptions of equity, and in the final non-outlier district, we heard multiple individual-level understandings, but found no evidence of a district-wide equity conception (see Appendix D for a table detailing how many sources reported various equity perspectives in each district).

While the three outlier districts all featured a coherent equity vision, there was variation in the conceptions themselves. In the following, we describe the equity conceptions in each of the three outlier districts. We then discuss the patterns of vague, competing, and multiple conceptions observed in the non-outlier districts.

Democratic Liberal and Transformative Equity in O'Connor. Understandings of equity in O'Connor were informed by both Democratic Liberal ideals of universally high outcomes as well as Transformative beliefs in inclusive and socially just processes. Eleven of 20 sources defined equity through outcomes, including both high overall achievement and the closure of outcome gaps among racial and socioeconomic groups, reflecting a Democratic Liberal view. An assistant principal, who also manages a district-wide parent engagement program, explained this outcome focus:

The goal for all of our [parent organizations] is to make sure students are successful. So when they looked at the data, and they saw how our Black and Brown kids were struggling, and there's still that achievement gap, it is still huge, the literacy rates are still low ... We need these [parent organizations], and there's a purpose, ...student achievement, student success.

Twelve sources in O'Connor described equitable processes that aim to disrupt the influence of societal oppression by changing educators' beliefs and practices. These processes included helping educators to better understand the experiences of students of color and students in poverty, building inclusive school environments that celebrate students' home cultures and languages, and using restorative justice to challenge the broader societal criminalization of African American boys and men. A parent described the importance of changing teacher beliefs and implementing restorative justice as equitable processes:

Restorative justice because we're such a diverse community...the teachers have to understand that cultural difference. And if we didn't grow up in it, we need to be educated in how to deal with the differences. I think that's going to impact that pipeline to prison that a lot of our African American boys...are facing.

Democratic Liberal Conception in Kambah. In Kambah, district leaders' equity narrative emphasized their focus on improving outcomes for targeted students. In Kambah, 13 of 24 sources defined equity as meeting outcome expectations, including scores of "proficient" on state tests, English learner redesignation, and high school graduation. For instance, the website explicitly defined equity as high school graduation and college and career readiness, and Kambah's data analysis department, which tracks progress towards such outcome goals, was framed as promoting equity and access. When asked how the district promotes equity, the superintendent described this department's efforts: "the equity and access database ... we want to increase our AP numbers and the number of kids [passing AP exams]. Well, that's an indicator for us, but we have five sub-elements to that, and they all matter. Or redesignating a student fluent English proficient, there's five sub-elements for that that we track." This emphasis on tracking student outcomes to raise overall achievement demonstrates the district's driving Democratic Liberal equity conception.

Liberal Conception in Lyneham. Lyneham's coherent, Liberal definition of equity was formally stated on district documents and was named in every interview and focus group: all 21 sources defined equity as the need-based distribution of inputs, with more resources going to students in targeted LCFF groups. The superintendent summarized this conception, "Here we talk about giving each student what they need, not an equal amount of money or service or dollar. It's really about providing for every student, what they need to be successful."

In contrast to the other two outlier districts, Lyneham had a limited focus on equitable outcomes, suggesting a relatively minor influence of the Democratic Liberal view. Ten of 21 sources mentioned varied desirable outcomes, such as meeting grade level expectations, passing AP classes, or completing college preparatory course requirements, but our data did not reveal clear, consistent outcome goals across sources, and sources did not emphasize closing outcome gaps between social groups. Two district actors argued that the district's consideration of outcomes was inadequate: in the words of the teachers' union president, "We can plan and implement all the inputs ...but the capacity to analyze the outcome in a way that's meaningful in opposed to a broad snapshot of the district ... is far beyond us."

Vague Liberal Conceptions in Three Non-Outlier Districts. In three districts—Thorsby Union, Majura Shore, and Kowen Forest—actors expressed general Liberal ideas regarding equity. However, we did not find evidence of a clear, district-wide equity vision. In all three districts, sources mentioned beliefs that equity included the equal (horizontal) distribution of some resources, such as ensuring that all students have textbooks, and the differentiated (vertical) distribution of other resources in order to meet each student's individual needs. For example, illustrating a belief in vertical equity, the Thorsby Union

superintendent explained, “We really do focus on equity in the district with all students, providing different teachers in different areas and counselors and behavior intervention specialist, community liaisons and lots of programs. We’re trying to meet every child’s need.” Similarly, the Majura Shore superintendent described differentiating resources based on need: “Overall, I think the LCFF is revolutionary in recognizing that serving certain children requires more resources. Equity doesn’t mean equal.” Demonstrating a belief in horizontal equity, a Kowen Forest central office administrator defined equity as:

We’re all the same. Doesn’t matter what you do, where you come from or anything. We all get the same education...Music now is at every grade level, where in the past was just at the high school. [More students are] able to join sports ...There’s technology in every classroom ... Chromebooks for all kids.

The mix of horizontal and vertical equity beliefs reported in all three districts aligns with the Liberal view of equity: differentiating resources based on student need and providing equal resources to students of equal need.

Interviewees in these three districts also described a belief in vertical equity *between* districts in California, arguing that districts with low-income populations should receive greater resources from the state, while also distribute resources equally (horizontally) within the district. In the words of the Kowen Forest superintendent,

When I look at equal opportunities for kids it should never depend on where you’re born, on if you should be able to have what everybody else has in life. ... our kids deserve to be able to walk down the street with [a musical] instrument in their hands and equity has been given [through LCFF] when you think of that. Because there’s other areas of town, in [wealthier districts] that they don’t have to worry about instruments. ...Here, it’s tough sometimes for our kids to have a coat on their back. ...Governor Brown got it right, some of the other districts may not agree because their funding hasn’t increased, maybe even decreased. But in [Kowen Forest] it helped us tremendously.

Competing or Multiple Equity Conceptions in Two Non-Outlier Districts. In Cooper Plains, our data suggested the presence of two competing equity conceptions drawing on Libertarian and Liberal views, respectively. In Anisile, we did not find evidence of a district-wide equity conception, but we heard multiple individual-level beliefs about equity.

Actors in Cooper Plains articulated dual equity conceptions regarding inputs, drawing from both Liberal and Libertarian perspectives. Sixteen of 22 sources expressed a belief in providing greater resources for students with greater needs, aligning with the Liberal principle of vertical equity. These beliefs were presented as individual rather than organizational definitions. The Cooper Plains superintendent said, “And *to me*, correct me if I’m wrong, I’ve told my board members, *I* don’t define equity as equal. If I gave everybody a pair of glasses, that’s equal. But equity is I give you glasses because you need glasses” (emphasis added). An administrator described the challenge of convincing other district actors to support this definition: “I think that’s a hard thing for some people, and in some of the trainings we’re doing...around equal and equity being, something being equal and something being equitable. There is this piece that if one student gets it, everyone should get it...it’s really hard to shift some of those kind of deep seated beliefs.” Interestingly, 10 sources in Cooper Plains presented both this view and a competing definition of equity as equal resources for all, described below.

Fourteen Cooper Plains sources expressed equity as equal resources for all students, relating to the Libertarian and Liberal emphases on horizontal equity. Notably, 13 articulated the need to equalize resources between schools with and without Title I funding, suggesting a Libertarian perspective of equal

resources for all students, regardless of socioeconomic background. District actors noted that non-Title I schools still served sizable populations of LCFF-targeted students (in all of Cooper Plains' non-Title I schools, at least 30% of the student body were unduplicated students). To address the lack of Title I funding in middle-class schools, the Cooper Plains superintendent explained, "[with]LCFF we try to equalize." A principal echoed this point:

[LCFF] seems like reverse equity, because the [middle-class neighborhood] side is not Title I. So, when people think of equity they think of the underserved...But then you come to living in the [middle-class neighborhood] side, our students are just as in need as the students in [the working-class neighborhood]. ...So in terms of equity I feel that that is being balanced by giving more to the [middle-class neighborhood] that has been done in the past so that it can equalize itself.

In Anisile, while no clear equity conception emerged in our data, there was some evidence of Liberal, Democratic Liberal, and Transformative perspectives. For instance, two of 11 sources argued that students with greater needs should receive greater resources, and the LCAP argued for equal distribution of high quality teachers, suggesting some influence of Liberal horizontal and vertical equity principles. Additionally, as mentioned above, two sources suggested that a report on African American student outcomes led the district to target funding towards African American students: district actors' receptiveness to this report suggests the influence of a Democratic Liberal focus on student performance. Five sources briefly mentioned Transformative processes, including inclusive school climate and discipline reform, and another five sources named varied Democratic Liberal outcome goals, including college access, academic achievement, closing achievement gaps, and high school graduation. However, these mentions of processes or outcomes was often vague and lacked specificity. For example, a central office administrator described a need to promote "belonging" as a counter to racist and anti-immigrant political discourses, but noted that the district did not yet have strategies to accomplish this:

With the [2016 presidential] election, we see it in so many different places about this issue of belonging. ...[So should we] send out a memo out to all the teachers, effective immediately, you will love and care and encourage kids or you'll be fired? That ain't going to happen ... I always tell people, "You can't mandate love."... So then how do you build strategies that helps people with that piece?

Overall, there is some evidence of Liberal, Democratic Liberal, and Transformative views in Anisile, but their influence was limited and not consistent district-wide. Two district actors described plans to promote Democratic Liberal perspectives in the future. For example, a board member suggested that a move towards Democratic Liberalism would help mitigate conflicts between stakeholder groups advocating for funding:

This is where I've been taking this.... Before you reiterate another contract ...you're going to perform that performance evaluation and see whether or not that money was effectively spent...These are the kinds of things that are going to change the culture... It will take the people's mind off of just money and "it goes to me"...

Thus, while the Democratic Liberal perspective appeared to play only a minor role in the district during the time of our study, such conceptions may play a greater role in the future.

Discussion of Patterns across Engagement, Resource Allocation, and Equity Conceptions

In the eight Year 3 case districts, we observed consistent patterns of relationships among community engagement efforts, resource allocation approaches, and conceptions of equity. In the three outlier districts, we found 1) evidence of broad and deep engagement, 2) strategically targeted resource

allocation, and 3) coherent understandings of equity. Our data suggested that non-outlier districts had 1) relatively narrow and shallow engagement, 2) resource allocation approaches that emphasized district-wide spending or maintaining historic patterns, and 3) vague, competing, or multiple conceptions of equity.

While we cannot confirm causal relationships among these three processes, theorists have posited that individual beliefs, social structures, and material practices have a reflexive relationship, meaning that they continually inform and shape one another (Roth & Lee, 2007; Scott, 2008). Our exploratory analysis suggests that, in the enactment of LCFF, the three processes of community engagement, resource allocation, and equity conceptions may be mutually reinforcing. Below, we describe a few of the possible ways that these phenomena might influence and inform each other.

Engagement shaping resource allocation and equity conceptions. First, the breadth and depth of engagement efforts in the outlier districts may have contributed to these districts' decisions to strategically target resources, and may have informed the districts' coherent equity vision. The engagement of students and families of historically marginalized communities in reciprocal dialogue may have supported resource allocation and equity definitions that addressed the needs and perspectives of those groups. For example, district actors in O'Connor suggested that students' concerns regarding elective access in middle school were instrumental in the decision to move to an eight-period day, allowing English learners and other students in intervention classes the opportunity to participate in electives. Further, a common good framing pushes individuals to step outside of their own interests, to consider the experiences of others in the community, and to identify needs and priorities across the district. By pushing participants to consider the greater good, leaders in O'Connor, Lyneham, and Kambah may have supported the consideration of strategies that benefitted some groups over others. With a common good framing, it becomes difficult for participants to push for equal distribution of resources across the district

Conversely, narrower and shallower engagement efforts in the non-outlier districts may have prevented opportunities to develop strategic resource allocation approaches or coherent equity understandings. Without the participation of individuals in high-need groups, it may have been easier for district leaders to bypass discussions of targeted funding or common equity visions, and to make allocation decisions in the interests of those who were at the table. Without representation, traditionally marginalized groups may not have known that the LCAP was an opportunity to influence district policy. This may have been the case in Cooper Plains, where parents and students from Title I schools had minimal participation in stakeholder conversations, and the district primarily allocated resources district-wide. Further, without a common good framing and only one-way sharing of information, it becomes easier for participants to push for equal distribution of resources across the district, as in the cases of affluent parents in Lyneham or collective bargaining units in O'Connor and Kambah. More interest-based conversations may have informed the district-wide spending patterns observed in Majura Shore, Thorsby Union, Kowen Forest, and Cooper Plains.

Equity conceptions influencing engagement and resource allocation. Additionally, districts' equity conceptions may have shaped engagement practices and resource allocation approaches. Perhaps the outlier districts' coherent conceptions motivated district leaders to conduct broad outreach to diverse stakeholders, and to allocate resources in ways that aligned with underlying equity principles. For example, a strong vision of Transformative equity in O'Connor may have informed deliberate efforts to include the voices of students and families of color in decision-making, as well as targeted spending to address racial bias in instruction and discipline. Valuing the voice of marginalized individuals is quite consistent with an equity conception that aims to change oppressive structures and further empowerment among marginalized groups.

A coherent equity conception may also have facilitated the “common good” framing that outlier districts used in their engagement practices. By pushing participants to consider an equitable greater good, leaders in O’Connor, Lyneham, and Kambah may have supported the consideration of strategies that benefitted some groups over others. With a common good framing, it becomes difficult for participants to push for equal distribution of resources across the district, as in the cases of affluent parents in Lyneham or collective bargaining units in O’Connor and Kambah.

In contrast, the absence of clear equity visions in the non-outlier districts may have allowed for more interest-based conversations, which in turn may have informed decisions to provide equal resources for everyone. We can imagine that without a coherent equity vision of any kind, it may be cognitively difficult to even consider structuring engagement in ways that emphasize the common good. This might explain why Anisile responded to African American and Latino parent advocates with separate meetings and competing “line items,” rather than facilitating a community-wide discussion about how to best support students and address racial inequities.

Resource allocation influencing equity conceptions and engagement. Finally, the allocation of resources may have shaped how district leaders thought about equity and approached stakeholder engagement. For example, in O’Connor, district leaders chose to invest resources in building the capacity of stakeholders and educators to engage in reciprocal dialogue; these decisions may have led to deeper and broader engagement practices, and may also have expressed or reinforced the idea that engagement was a high priority in the district.

We could also imagine that decisions to allocate resources would communicate and affirm conceptions of equity. For example, when Lyneham district leaders allocated additional staff for schools serving high populations of targeted students, these actions may have strengthened their belief that equity means providing greater resources for students with greater needs. In this sense, resource allocation might be a way for districts to “practice what they preach,” building a sense of integrity between conceptions of equity and policy decisions. In contrast, the decision to allocate resources district-wide in Cooper Plains may have undermined more Liberal ideas, contributing to the competing understandings of equity we observed.

Summary and Discussion

Our exploratory analysis indicates that the three processes of community engagement, resource allocation, and equity conceptions may be mutually reinforcing. The outlier districts’ approach of targeting resources based on perceptions of student need seems to align with the LCFF’s design of offering additional funds for districts serving targeted student groups. Moreover, the outlier districts’ broad and deep engagement, particularly among traditionally marginalized students and families, arguably mirrors the LCFF’s requirement for “meaningful” community engagement. Thus, if policymakers wish to promote the equity intent of the LCFF, it may be helpful to consider how district actors’ beliefs about equity, community engagement practices, and resource allocation approaches are intertwined. We return to these issues in the next concluding chapter.

VII. Conclusion and Implications

In summary, this report addressed an inter-related set of questions about the stakeholder engagement provisions of California’s Local Control Funding Formula. Below we provide a summary of the key research findings followed by a discussion of the implications for future policy and research.

R1: How have districts interpreted and implemented the LCFF requirement for democratic engagement over time?

Statewide data indicate strong support for LCFF and its equity goals, as well as for the specific stakeholder engagement components of the policy. Evidence on implementation of the engagement activities, however, is mixed:

- **WHO:** Districts have struggled to attract participation in LCFF/LCAP related activities, particularly among non-parent community members and traditionally underserved individuals. More than half of superintendents statewide reported that 1) the level of engagement encountered was average or poor, 2) it was difficult to obtain input from parents/guardians of the LCFF-targeted foster youth, low-income students, and English learners, and 3) activities tended to be dominated by a few stakeholders in ways that impeded “balanced representation of stakeholders’ interests.” Case study data echoed these findings, illustrating in a more fine-grained way the challenges of attracting widespread participation from all relevant stakeholders, particularly “nontraditional” actors. On a positive note, district leaders reported improving outreach strategies and making more of an effort to include student voices. We also found fewer cases of districts narrowly defining their involved stakeholders to a select, non-representative few. Aside from a few outlier districts, most case districts failed to achieve highly participatory processes and in many cases deliberately chose more representative forms of engagement.
- **HOW/WHAT:** Statewide, superintendents reported using a variety of strategies to engage stakeholders with the vast majority using surveys and various convenings. There were also fairly consistent reports that hosting broad meetings such as LCFF-specific community meetings did not yield particularly useful feedback or high levels of stakeholder participation. Instead, communicating with existing advisory groups (e.g., PTA, DELAC) was viewed as more productive by many superintendents. Case study data also indicate shifts away from broad LCFF-specific district meetings to focus on single stakeholder group meetings and meetings at school sites and in more informal settings. Cases also indicate that despite these changes and learning over time, the majority of districts engaged in more shallow forms of engagement in which the scope of discussion was quite limited and conversations were unidirectional (receiving information, giving feedback based on self interest).
- **WHY:** Several key conditions contributed to these patterns. While superintendents statewide perceive a lack of interest on the part of stakeholders, polling data indicate that the majority of voters are in fact interested in contributing to school and district decisions around goals and resources and would like to be more involved. Instead, our data suggest that a host of other conditions may be contributing to the low participation in LCFF-related activities and the shallow nature of these interactions with the district, including conditions related to individual stakeholders (lack of awareness, fatigue, limited capacity), relationships of trust (between districts and community, unions and districts), organizations (lack of capacity) and broader institutional pressures. Conversely, districts demonstrating deeper and/or broader forms of engagement appeared to benefit from not only greater capacity and levels of trust, but also a history of community engagement, strategic plans, and assistance from external organizations and partners.

R2: What role have school board members played in LCFF generally and stakeholder engagement efforts more specifically?

Survey and case study data indicate that board members were not consistently engaged in LCFF beyond approving the LCAP and attending formal board meetings at which the LCAP was discussed and approved. Aside from a small group of districts, in most cases board members were much less likely to participate directly in LCFF/LCAP stakeholder meetings and while they may have done so in the first year, they were less likely to help develop or monitor district stakeholder engagement efforts. Three key conditions appeared to explain these patterns. First, there was considerable debate about the proper role of board members – in case districts with very limited board participation district administrators and board members often believed that anything beyond approving LCAP and attending board meetings would be inappropriate. In other cases, district leaders believed board members lacked the knowledge and experience to participate in LCAP development or stakeholder engagement efforts. Finally, leadership –either on the part of the board or superintendent—appeared to facilitate the cases in which board members were more involved in LCFF activities.

Combined with earlier findings about low levels of participation and representation of nontraditional stakeholders, the limited role of school board members presents a potential missed opportunity to enhance the democratic aims of LCFF. Without broad stakeholder representation in LCFF activities and without a structured process pushing participants to consider the needs of all stakeholders and how to allocate resources in ways that promote the “common good” of the district, board members could have played important roles in weighing needs of interests groups and acting as “moral constituents” for individuals who were less vocal or not present (Guttmann & Thompson, 1996).

R3: How does the implementation of stakeholder engagement relate to the enactment of LCFF’s broader equity mandate?

Overall, we find important relationships between how district leaders engaged stakeholders in LCAP development, how they chose to allocate LCFF resources, and how they thought about equity. The “outlier” districts demonstrated greater breadth and depth in their engagement practices, were more strategic in targeting funds based on perceptions of student need, and reported clearer, more coherent beliefs about equity. In contrast, non-outlier districts had more narrow and shallow engagement practices, mostly spent funds on district-wide initiatives, and had either vague, competing, or multiple understandings of equity.

Our findings suggest that these three processes may be mutually reinforcing. For instance, by encouraging participation of historically underserved families, focusing LCAP discussions around the common good of the district, and developing participants’ capacity for two-way conversations, leaders in the outlier districts may have created the conditions conducive to a consideration of the needs and perspectives of targeted groups. In districts with limited participation and a focus on more one-way communication and self-interests, one might imagine how decisions get made to allocate resources evenly across a district or maintain the status quo. Additionally, leaders’ ideas about equity may shape their choices around stakeholder engagement and resource allocation. For example, holding strong Transformative views may have pushed some district leaders to invest in outreach and two-way conversation with underserved community members, and to invest resources in efforts to disrupt racial biases in educational practice.

We note that the outlier districts’ strategic resource allocation and deep, broad engagement practices appear to align with LCFF’s implicit equity goals. Considering the potentially reinforcing nature of these

three phenomena, policymakers may wish to consider how to support districts in developing all three of these aspects of LCFF enactment.

Implications for State Leaders

Ultimately, our findings raise important questions about the democratic nature of these efforts and the extent to which they reflect the “meaningful engagement” and enactments of equity intended by state policymakers. They also highlight potential leverage points to enhance engagement and equity in the future. Below we highlight some recommendations for state leaders defined broadly to include policymakers, associations, and other statewide organizations.

Improve public awareness of LCFF and its equity goals. The lack of awareness conveyed by voters suggests a need for more communication about LCFF, its purpose, and the value of participation. The variation in equity conceptions we uncovered in our Year 3 cases also indicates that not everyone has embraced the Governor’s understanding that “Equal treatment for children in unequal situations is not justice.” Might there be opportunities for the state, state associations, statewide organizations, and the media to better disseminate information not just to parents and educators, but also to the broader public?

Clarify the purpose of engagement and consider adjustments. Issues of fatigue raise questions about the sustainability of these activities over time. Is there a need to conduct the same level of engagement each year? While repeated participation may enhance democratic skills and dispositions of individuals (Fung, 2003), it may also lead to the fatigue we observed. Similarly, district administrators’ decision to narrow the scope and not reopen deliberations year after year suggest a need for better communication about the purpose of annual engagement of the community and more discussion among state leaders as to the value of repeated engagement each year. Should annual engagement opportunities revisit goals and strategies each year? Should expectations around engagement be different after the first and fourth years?

Help build district capacity to engage stakeholders in meaningful ways. Prior to LCFF, district leaders were not traditionally tasked with engaging the community on such a wide scale and in this way. Limited district capacity to organize and facilitate these efforts indicate an ongoing need for more support and more models—particularly in ways that support culturally relevant strategies for engagement. The addition of \$13.3 million to the 2018-19 California budget to support a network of districts and capacity-building around community engagement is a step in the right direction (Fensterwald, 2018). Future investment with this endeavor and others could involve disseminating information about promising practices, supporting trainings in community engagement, and partnering with intermediary organizations to reach traditionally disenfranchised groups. Further, organizations such as the California School Boards Association (CSBA), the Association of California School Administrators, and the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association could play a role in building the capacity of district and school leaders. It would be particularly important to build understanding of the tradeoffs inherent in decisions around how to structure engagement and the ways in which such choices may perpetuate power imbalances and/or limit the realization of democratic goals. For example, the common strategy of seeking involvement at single stakeholder group meetings (e.g., DELAC, PTA) and using pre-existing representative groups offers the advantage of ensuring involvement of knowledgeable and committed individuals. Yet it also limits stakeholders’ ability to build a common understanding of district needs and priorities and may provide greater power to the “usual suspects” who may not represent the needs of traditionally disenfranchised individuals or the target groups of LCFF. This type of engagement may also disempower the community because they are not privy to the requests made by differing groups and empower the district who becomes the sole holder of stakeholder input. Shifting to school-

level deliberations present another set of dilemmas: while perhaps able to attract wider participation, these convenings leave individuals looking out for their interests and not those of the district broadly. As research on other participatory reforms have shown, smaller-level deliberations may not assist district officials with making tradeoffs that must occur when faced with limited resources (Fung, 2003) and may further blur the focus on equity. Information and training about these dilemmas and tradeoffs are important to share with district leaders as they plan and revisit their engagement activities annually.

Help build local political capacity. Since its inception, state leaders have touted LCFF as a way to move politics from the state to the local level, and free up local districts from the stronghold of powerful organized interests that have long dominated Sacramento policymaking. Governor Brown has repeatedly emphasized his belief in this principle of subsidiarity, or the idea that matters should be handled at the local level. “We want the activists, the parents, the teachers to go to their local boards and put pressure on them,” he said last year, “They can drive their own cars, park in the local parking lots and argue there” (Calefati, 2017). Yet, our research indicates that not everyone is racing to participate, has the car to get there, the awareness that they can, or the understanding of how and why to participate. We are also seeing that politics at the local level can still advantage certain groups over others, and that traditionally underrepresented stakeholders at the local level may lack the political know-how and resources to engage on an even playing field with the louder, more organized voices. These findings suggest a significant need for building local political capacity. Here again we suggest an important role for intermediary organizations who in the outlier districts played critical roles in ensuring that quieter voices were represented and heard.

Clarify roles, provide support and incentivize deeper involvement of board members. As for school board members, our research indicates several avenues for improvement. Mixed views on the appropriate roles for school board members and reports of limited capacity suggest opportunities for intervention. What exactly is meant by the LCFF statute’s language that a governing board shall consult with stakeholders? Is it truly a conflict of interest for board members to attend stakeholder engagement meetings? Would it get in the way of dialogue or potentially facilitate dialogue, particularly as it relates to advancing the needs of student target groups? What additional knowledge and skills are necessary for school board members to engage in meaningful ways in LCAP development, new demands of the budgeting process and stakeholder activities? Given our findings that superintendents may in fact be satisfied with the current level of school board participation in LCFF activities and in some cases resisting greater involvement, the onus for answering these questions and providing support falls on the CSBA and state leaders.

In fact, this recommendation already has strong support from the internal research conducted by CSBA. In a 2017 CSBA survey of nearly 200 board member leaders serving in the Association’s Delegate Assembly (DA), approximately three quarters (73%) reported that “a clear definition of the board role in the LCAP process would help them be more involved in the LCAP” (Briggs et al., 2017, p. 2). Authors of this report concluded that “with greater guidance about their roles, more encouragement from superintendents, and examples of other districts’ approaches ... boards and staff could readily improve the collaborative development of effective LCAPs” (ibid).

In addition to improving communication about appropriate roles and training members to contribute more substantively to the LCFF process, state leaders might consider ways to encourage board members to take active roles in broadening and deepening the stakeholder engagement efforts in their district. For example, if district LCFF meetings fail to attract participation or representation from particular stakeholder groups, might board members help with outreach or network with local community leaders to bring in those underrepresented voices? State policymakers and association leaders might also consider ways to motivate shifts in board members’ current orientations in ways that advance the

democratic goals of LCFF, for example, by providing awards or public recognition for notable board member involvement in LCFF.

Support deeper thinking about equity and how that relates to engagement. If targeted resource allocation is a goal of LCFF (i.e., providing greater resources to those with greater needs), it may be helpful for state leaders to consider how to develop local leaders' understandings of equity and approaches to engaging stakeholders. Part of this support can come in the form of clearer communication around the equity intent and building an understanding that equity is not the same as equality, as noted above. Yet there may be other strategies worth pursuing. In two of our districts, strategic plans—developed with stakeholder input—were influential in constructing and maintaining clear conceptions of equity. Policymakers and other state leaders or associations may wish to consider ways to support districts in developing such plans. Regarding engagement, it may be helpful to highlight the ways in which engagement can reinforce the equity goals of LCFF, specifically by including representatives of historically marginalized students and families; centering LCAP engagement on the common good; and engaging students and families in reciprocal, data-based conversations.

By considering these actions and investments, state leaders may bring districts closer to achieving the democratic and equity goals embodied in LCFF.

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Appendix A: State Statute and Regulations

	<p>Education code 52060(g), 52062, Amended by Stats. 2013, Ch. 357, Sec. 42. (SB 97), 2013 Education code 15495</p>	<p>Regulations and LCAP Template of 2014</p>	<p>Regulations and LCAP Template of 2018 (California Department of Education, 2016)</p>
<p>WHO should be involved</p>	<p>“A governing board of a school district shall consult with teachers, principals, administrators, other school personnel, local bargaining units of the school district, parents, and pupils in developing a local control and accountability plan.”</p> <p>“The superintendent of the school district shall present the local control and accountability plan or annual update to the local control and accountability plan to the parent advisory committee” and the “English learner parent advisory committee” established pursuant to Section 52063, if applicable, for review and comment.”</p> <p>“The superintendent of the school district shall notify members of the public of the opportunity to submit written comments..”</p> <p>“A governing board of a school district shall hold at least one public hearing to solicit the recommendations and comments of members of the public regarding the specific actions and expenditures proposed to be included in the LCAP or annual update to the LCAP...”</p> <p>“A governing board of a school district shall adopt a local control and accountability plan or annual update to the local control and accountability plan in a public meeting. This meeting shall be held after, but not on the same day as, the public hearing held pursuant to paragraph (1). This meeting shall be the same meeting as that during which the governing board of the school district adopts a budget pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) of Section 42127.</p> <p>“Consult with pupils,” as used in Education Code sections</p>	<p>“Meaningful engagement of parents, pupils, and other stakeholders, including those representing subgroups identified in Education Code section 52052, is critical to the LCAP and budget process.”</p> <p>“The LCAP should be shared with, and input requested from, school site-level advisory groups, as applicable (e.g., school-site councils, English Learner Advisory Councils, pupil advisory groups, etc.) to facilitate alignment between school-site and district-level goals and actions. An LEA may incorporate or reference actions described in other plans that are being undertaken to meet the goal.”</p> <p>Applicable stakeholders defined as: “parents and pupils, including parents of unduplicated pupils identified in Education Code section 42238.01; community members; local bargaining units; LEA personnel; county child welfare agencies; county</p>	<p>“Meaningful engagement of parents, students, and other stakeholders, including those representing the student groups identified by LCFF, is critical to the development of the LCAP and the budget process. <i>EC</i> identifies the minimum consultation requirements for school districts and county offices of education as consulting with teachers, principals, administrators, other school personnel, local bargaining units of the school district, parents, and pupils in developing the LCAP.” Minus local bargaining units, charter schools have the same requirements.</p> <p>“The LCAP should be shared with, and LEAs should request input from, school site-level advisory groups, as applicable (e.g., school site councils, English Learner Advisory Councils, student advisory groups, etc.) to facilitate alignment between school-site and district-level goals and actions. An LEA may incorporate or reference actions described in other plans that are being undertaken to meet specific goals.”</p> <p>Applicable stakeholders defined as: “parents and pupils, including parents of unduplicated pupils and unduplicated pupils identified in EC Section 42238.01; community members; local bargaining units; LEA personnel; county child welfare agencies; county office of education foster youth services programs, court-appointed special advocates, and other foster youth stakeholders;</p>

	<p>52060, 52066, and 47606.5, means a process to enable pupils, including unduplicated pupils and other numerically significant pupil subgroups, to review and comment on the development of the LCAP. This process may include surveys of pupils, forums with pupils, pupil advisory committees, or meetings with pupil government bodies or other groups representing pupils.”</p>	<p>office of education foster youth services programs, court-appointed special advocates, and other foster youth stakeholders; community organizations representing English learners; and others as appropriate.”</p>	<p>community organizations representing English learners; and others as appropriate.”</p>
<p>WHAT (focus/purpose)</p>	<p>“The superintendent of the school district shall notify members of the public of the opportunity to submit written comments regarding the specific actions and expenditures proposed to be included in the local control and accountability plan or annual update to the local control and accountability plan, using the most efficient method of notification possible. This paragraph shall not require a school district to produce printed notices or to send notices by mail. The superintendent of the school district shall ensure that all written notifications related to the local control and accountability plan or annual update to the local control and accountability plan are provided consistent with Section 48985.”</p>	<p>State Priorities: (A) Conditions of Learning, (B) Pupil Outcomes, (C) Engagement and stakeholders should be provided with timely quantitative and qualitative data/metrics related to these priorities and used by the local education agency to inform the LCAP goal-setting process.</p> <p>State Priorities: Priority 1: Basic Services Priority 2: Implementation of State Standards Priority 3: Parental Involvement Priority 4: Pupil Achievement Priority 5: Pupil Engagement Priority 6: School Climate Priority 7: Course Access Priority 8: Other Pupil Outcomes Priority 9: Expelled Pupils – COEs Only Priority 10: Foster Youth – COEs only</p>	<p>stakeholders should be provided with timely quantitative and qualitative data/metrics related to these priorities and used by the local education agency to inform the LCAP goal-setting process.</p> <p>State Priorities: Priority 1: Basic Services Priority 2: Implementation of State Standards Priority 3: Parental Involvement Priority 4: Pupil Achievement Priority 5: Pupil Engagement Priority 6: School Climate Priority 7: Course Access Priority 8: Other Pupil Outcomes Priority 9: Expelled Pupils – COEs Only Priority 10: Foster Youth – COEs only</p> <p>“The stakeholder engagement process is an ongoing, annual process.”</p> <p>Community engagement should “inform the development of the LCAP and the annual review and analysis for the indicated LCAP year.”</p> <p>“.. EC section 48985 specifies the requirements for the translation of notices, reports, statements, or records sent to a parent or guardian.”</p> <p>From Appendix B: Guiding Questions</p>
<p>HOW it should operate</p>	<p>“The superintendent of the school district shall respond, in writing, to comments received from the parent advisory committee” and “the English learner parent advisory committee.”</p> <p>“The superintendent of the school district shall notify members of the public of the opportunity to submit written comments regarding the specific actions and expenditures proposed to be included in the local control and accountability plan or annual update to the local control and accountability plan, using the most efficient method of notification possible. This paragraph shall not require a school district to produce printed notices or to send notices by mail. The superintendent of the school district shall ensure that all written notifications related to</p>	<p>Meaningful and involved engagement in developing, reviewing, and supporting implementation of the LCAP and budget. There is an expectation of authentic engagement that leads to a multifaceted and communitywide effort to support a productive, student-oriented learning community. (California Department of Education & West Ed, 2014).</p> <p>“Describe the process used to consult with parents, pupils, school personnel, local bargaining units as applicable, and the community and how this consultation contributed to</p>	<p>“The stakeholder engagement process is an ongoing, annual process.”</p> <p>Community engagement should “inform the development of the LCAP and the annual review and analysis for the indicated LCAP year.”</p> <p>“.. EC section 48985 specifies the requirements for the translation of notices, reports, statements, or records sent to a parent or guardian.”</p> <p>From Appendix B: Guiding Questions</p>

<p>the local control and accountability plan or annual update to the local control and accountability plan are provided consistent with Section 48985.”</p> <p>“A governing board of a school district shall hold at least one public hearing to solicit the recommendations and comments of members of the public regarding the specific actions and expenditures proposed to be included in the LCAP or annual update to the LCAP. The agenda for the public hearing shall be posted at least 72 hours before the public hearing and shall include the location where the local control and accountability plan or annual update to the local control and accountability plan will be available for public inspection. The public hearing shall be held at the same meeting as the public hearing required by paragraph (1) of subdivision (a) of Section 42127.”</p> <p>“A governing board of a school district may adopt revisions to a local control and accountability plan during the period the local control and accountability plan is in effect. A governing board of a school district may only adopt a revision to a local control and accountability plan if it follows the process to adopt a local control and accountability plan pursuant to this section and the revisions are adopted in a public meeting.</p> <p>“Consult with pupils,’ as used in Education Code sections 52060, 52066, and 47606.5, means a process to enable pupils, including unduplicated pupils and other numerically significant pupil subgroups, to review and comment on the development of the LCAP. This process may include surveys of pupils, forums with pupils, pupil advisory committees, or meetings with pupil government bodies or other groups representing pupils.”</p>	<p>development of the LCAP or annual update. Note that the LEA’s goals, actions, services and expenditures related to the state priority of parental involvement are to be described separately in Section 2. In the annual update boxes, describe the stakeholder involvement process for the review, and describe its impact on, the development of the annual update to LCAP goals, actions, services, and expenditures.”</p>	<p>“What information (e.g., quantitative and qualitative data/metrics) was made available to stakeholders related to the state priorities and used by the LEA to inform the LCAP goal setting process? How was information made available?”</p> <p>“How has stakeholder involvement been continued and supported? How has the involvement of these stakeholders supported improved outcomes for pupils, including unduplicated pupils, related to the state priorities?”</p>
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Appendix B: Case Study District Characteristics

Cases	Geographic Region	Enrollment	Urbanicity	Proportion of EL Students	Proportion of LI Students	Proportion of Unduplicated Students	Electoral Process
Abba River (Y1)	Mid	<10,000	Suburban	50%-75%	>75%	>75%	By-district
Cotterdam (Y1) (Y2)	South	25,000-50,000	Large City	25%-50%	>75%	>75%	At-large
Croyden (Y1)	North	<10,000	Rural/Town	<25%	50%-75%	55%-74%	At-large
Darra (Y1)	North	25,000-50,000	Large City	<25%	50%-75%	55%-74%	By-district
Eden Valley (Y1)	South	>50,000	Large City	25%-50%	>75%	>75%	By-district
Hornsby Union (Y1)	North	<10,000	Rural/Town	<25%	50%-75%	55%-74%	At-large
Leonards Bay (Y1)	North	<10,000	Rural/Town	<25%	50%-75%	55%-74%	By-district
Newcastle (Y1)	Bay	<10,000	Suburban	25%-50%	25%-50%	>75%	At-large
Tharwa (Y1)	Bay	10,000-25,000	Suburban	25%-50%	25%-50%	25%-54%	At-large
Uriarra (Y1)	Bay	25,000-50,000	Suburban	<25%	<25%	25%-54%	At-large
Anisile (Y2) (Y3)	South	>50,000	Large City	25%-50%	>75%	>75%	At-large
Aspley (Y2)	North	<10,000	Rural/Town	<25%	>75%	>75%	By-district
Bornia Heights (Y2)	Bay	<10,000	Suburban	<25%	<25%	<25%	At-large
Broy Park (Y2)	Mid	25,000-50,000	Large City	<25%	50%-75%	55%-74%	By-district
Charnwood (Y2)	North	<10,000	Large City	25%-50%	>75%	>75%	At-large
Holt (Y2)	South	25,000-50,000	Suburban	25%-50%	>75%	>75%	By-district
Marsden Bay (Y2)	Bay	10,000-25,000	Large City	<25%	25%-50%	25%-54%	At-large
Page (Y2)	South	10,000-25,000	Rural/Town	50%-75%	>75%	>75%	By-district
Cooper Plains (Y3)	South	10,000-25,000	Suburban	<25%	50%-75%	55%-74%	At-large
Kambah (Y3)	Mid	>50,000	Large City	<25%	>75%	>75%	By-district
Kowen Forest (Y3)	Mid	<10,000	Rural/Town	25%-50%	>75%	>75%	By-district
Lyneham (Y3)	Bay	25,000-50,000	Large City	<25%	25%-50%	25%-54%	By-district
Majura Shore (Y3)	Bay	<10,000	Rural/Town	25%-50%	50%-75%	55%-74%	By-district
O'Connor (Y3)	South	10,000-25,000	Large City	25%-50%	>75%	>75%	At-large
Thorsby Union (Y3)	North	<10,000	Suburban	<25%	>75%	>75%	By-district

Source: Ed-Data (<https://www.ed-data.org>). Data for cases included in more than one year are from initial research year.

Appendix D: Patterns in District Equity Conceptions

Pattern	District	Libertarian	Liberal	Democratic Liberal	Transformative
Coherent Democratic Liberal Conception	O'Connor	1/20 sources	9/20 (Congruent with Democratic Liberal)	10/20	9/20
	Kambah		9/24 (Congruent with Democratic Liberal)	13/24	7/24
Coherent Liberal Conception	Lyneham		21/21	10/21 (limited; lack of specificity)	2/21
Vague Liberal Conception	Thorsby Union		4/12	1/12	
	Majura Shore		6/8	4/8 (limited; lack of specificity)	
	Kowen Forest		10/16	4/16	
Competing and Multiple Conceptions	Cooper Plains	12/22	17/22	7/22 (limited; lack of specificity)	3/22
	Anisile		3/11	4/11 (limited; lack of specificity)	6/11 (limited; lack of specificity)

Text within cells reports the number of sources reporting ideas associated with this perspective out of the total number of data sources. Shading indicates the strength of this conception's influence on the district. Black shading indicates strong influence; dark gray shading indicates moderate influence; light gray shading indicates limited influence; and the absence of shading indicates no influence.

Appendix E: Resource Allocation Approaches and Equity Conceptions

Patterns in Resource Allocation Approaches	Patterns in Equity Conceptions			
		Coherent Conceptions	Vague Liberal	Competing and Multiple Conceptions
	Primarily Strategic Spending	Coherent and Strategic O'Connor (DL, T, L) Kambah (DL, T, L) Lyneham (L)		
	Primarily District-wide Spending		Vague and District-Wide Thorsby Union (L) Majura Shore (L) Kowen Forest (L)	Competing and District-Wide Cooper Plains (LN, L)
Maintaining Historic Patterns			Multiple and Maintaining Historic Patterns Anisile (L, DL, T)	

Notes: Letters in parentheses after district names indicate the equity conceptions that had a strong (in bold) or moderate influence: Transformative (T), Democratic Liberal (DL), Liberal (L), Libertarian (LN).