

Getting Down to Facts III 2026

Successes, Challenges, and Opportunities in California Education Governance



Webinar
September 10, 2026

Welcome

GDTF III Objective:

Provide the best possible evidence on where CA's education system is, where it can go, and how to get there so that CA can be a model of excellence for all of our students

Across the studies, researchers found that California faces three systemwide challenges:

- Accountability and Alignment
- Balance Between State Guidance and Local Control
- Capacity

Thank you!



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Jenny and Gerald Risk
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Today's Speakers



Jeannie Myung
Stanford University

(Moderator)



Tye Ripma
Stanford University

Who Governs
California's Schools?
A Cross-State Map of
Supervision,
Administration, and
Implementation in
CA, FL, NY, and TX.



H. Alix Gallagher
Stanford University

The California State
Role in Supporting
District Capacity for
TK-8 Math
Improvement



Jason Willis
*University of the Pacific
and WestEd*

The Hidden, Guiding
Hand of Compliance in
California Schools

The Impact of
Intervention: LCAP, DA
and Effective Resource
Use

What is governance?

Governance

- refers to the structures and processes through which authority is distributed and decisions are made and carried out
- shapes priorities, allocation of resources and responsibilities, and who is held accountable
- influences but is distinct from policy

Map of California's TK-12 Education Governance System

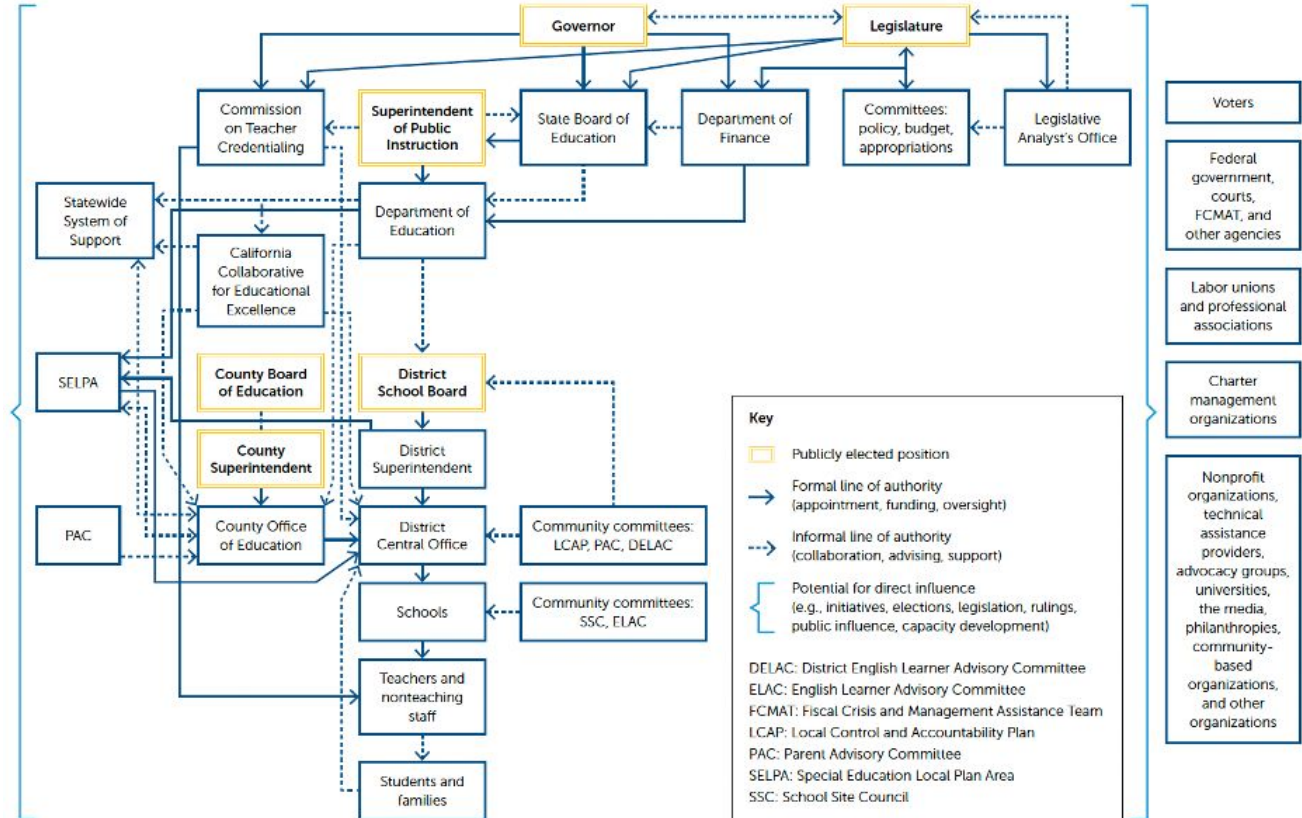
(Myung, Hough, and Marsh, 2025)

TK-12 Education Governance in California: Past, Present, and Future

Jeanne Myung
Heather J. Hough
Julie A. Marsh



December 2025



Assembly Bill 181: signed July 10, 2026, effective January 15, 2027

[Bills](#)

SB

AB 181: Education governance: State Board of Education: Superintendent of Public Instruction: Education Commissioner: State Department of Education: transfer of duties.

Session Year: 2025-2026 House: Assembly Latest Version Date: 2026-07-10

Current Status: **PASSED** ✓ (2026-07-10: Chaptered by Secretary of State - Chapter 66, Statutes of 2026.)



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Who Governs California's Schools? A Cross-State Map of Supervision, Administration, and Implementation in CA, FL, NY, and TX.

Tye Ripma & Susanna Loeb
Stanford University



Takeaway for today



California is unique among the four largest states in terms of the number of entities that hold statutory authority to make education decisions.

- Aligning leadership SBE–CDE addresses just on part of California’s governance system.
- This distribution may shape how the state pursues alignment.

“Who governs?” involves three components

COMPONENT	CORE QUESTION	LCAP EXAMPLE
SUPERVISION STATEWIDE DIRECTION	Who sets statewide priorities and oversight?	State Board establishes the accountability framework
ADMINISTRATION AUTHORITY UNDER STATUTE	Who makes binding statutory decisions?	County office reviews and approves the district LCAP
IMPLEMENTATION DELIVERY DISCRETION	Who designs and delivers support?	County offices and others design technical assistance

All four states distribute implementation decision rights

Selected core functions	California	Florida	New York	Texas
Fiscal monitoring and compliance	DOE; FCMAT	DOE	DOE	DOE
Academic standards, assessments, data systems	DOE; CTC; COEs; ETS; WestEd	DOE; Cambium	DOE; NWEA; BOCES	DOE; Cambium; Pearson
Programmatic monitoring, support, and improvement	DOE; CCEE; COEs; SELPAs	DOE, regional intermediaries	DOE; BOCES; teacher centers; IHEs	DOE; ESCs
Teacher licensing	CTC; LEAs; COEs	DOE; LEAs	DOE; LEAs; BOCES	SBEC; LEAs

California also Distributes Administrative Authority

Selected core functions	California	Florida	New York	Texas
Fiscal monitoring and compliance	DOE; COEs; SELPAs	DOE	DOE; State Comptroller	DOE
Academic standards, assessments, data systems	DOE	DOE	DOE	DOE
Programmatic monitoring, support, and improvement	DOE; CCEE; COEs	DOE	DOE	DOE
Teacher licensing	CTC	DOE	DOE	SBEC*

Management vs. Alliance-building in Distributed Governance

MANAGEMENT

Staff are internal to the organization or granted decision rights through contracts and grants.

Primary levers:

- contractual agreements,
- performance measures,
- funding conditions



ALLIANCE-BUILDING

Another public entity holds the relevant legal authority.

Primary levers:

- Guidance
- Shared information
- Common processes
- Negotiated priorities

Practical question: Who holds the authority or decision right, where does that authority come from, and what strategies can influence that entity?

Distributed governance requires different capacities

Centralized governance

- technical routines
- managerial routines
- rulemaking
- monitoring
- program administration

Distributed governance

- relational capacity
- political capacity
- information integration
- negotiation
- shared priorities

Potential areas for stronger alignment



Shared accountability frameworks

Clarify expectations and responsibilities across autonomous entities.

Information systems across entities

Surface implementation challenges and feed regional learning into state policy.

Coordination mechanisms

Use shared problem-solving forums, communities of practice, and shared data systems.

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The California State Role in Supporting District Capacity for TK-8 Math Improvement

H. Alix Gallagher
Stanford University



Towards a strong state role supporting districts: TK-8 math as a case study

Centering the user: district leaders

- Key to instructional improvement
- Their experience and needs should shape system that supports them



94

Interviews of rep. sample of district leaders



32

Interviews of COE leaders, other providers and experts

12

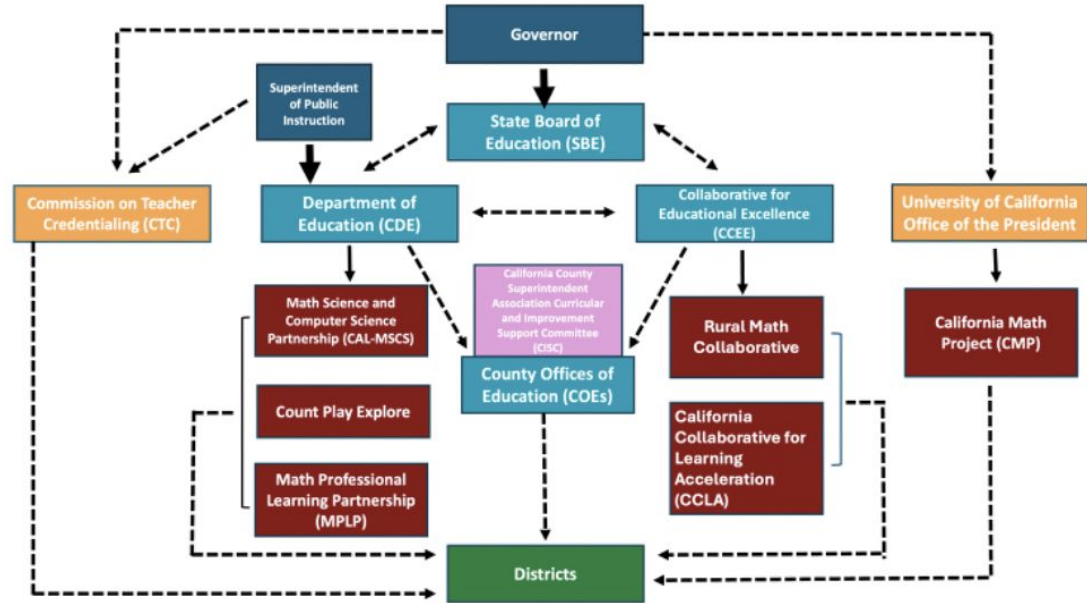
District site visits from our sample

	Small (5 or fewer schools)	Mid-sized (6 – 24 schools)	Large (25+ schools)	Total
LA and Inland Empire	3 districts	9 districts	3 districts	15 districts
Southern	2 districts	11 districts	5 districts	18 districts
Central Valley & Central Coast	4 districts	10 districts	3 districts	17 districts
Bay Area, Foothills, & Sierras	6 districts	11 districts	4 districts	21 districts
Northern	6 districts	11 districts	6 districts	23 districts
Total	21 districts	52 districts	21 districts	94 districts

How state entities support district TK-8 math efforts

California's governance structure has extensive delegated authority

"I still don't understand how the state organizes resources. They seem to be spread out between like 5 or 6 different entities, none of which seem to talk to each other.... That's kind of sad, because I know that people are working really hard to do all those things."

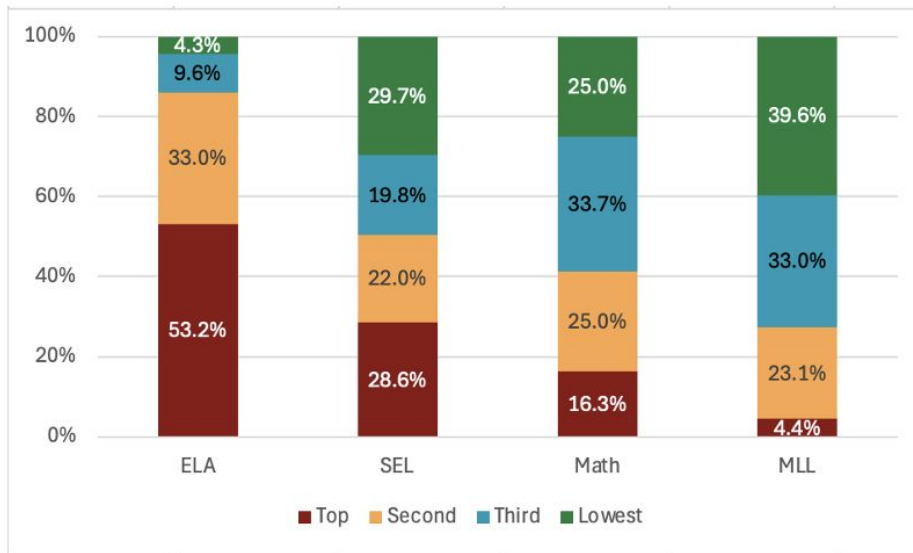


District priorities are diffuse; math is deprioritized

District leaders told us they value math, but a cacophony of initiatives compete for resources. They much more often prioritize literacy.

"I think that a big part of the challenge is time and capacity. There's only so much time in the day, and mathematics is competing with literacy, social-emotional learning, and everything else. We're constantly making tradeoffs."

Rank ordering four priorities: ELA, math, SEL, MLL



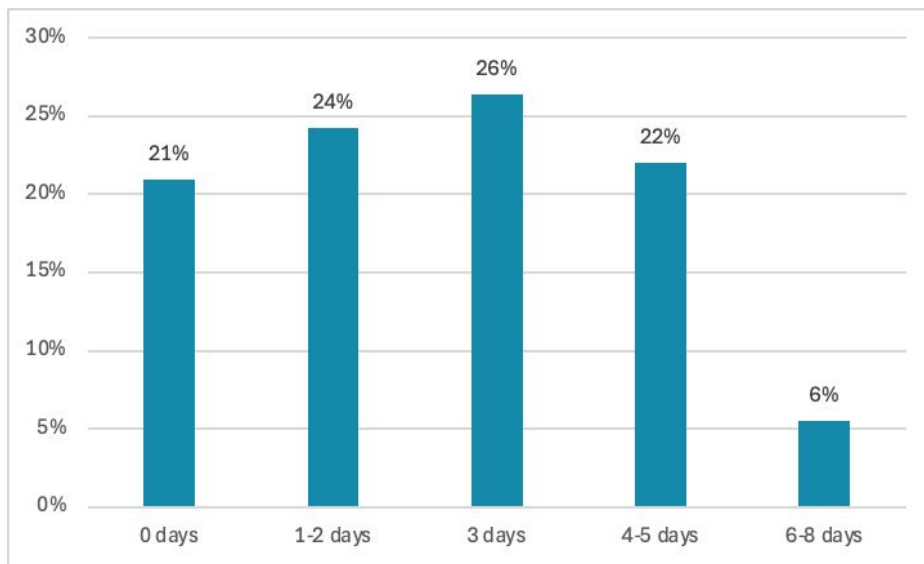
TK–8 math workforce capacity is uneven and often limited

- "Every teacher has their strengths and weaknesses, but I think that math, for some, wasn't necessarily their first or strongest subject, and so they've winged it for many years."
(District)
- Elementary teachers... "plan for four subjects a day, so now you're asking them to plan for the curriculum, plan for the teaching, and plan for the math content," (District)
- "A lot of [teacher candidates]... don't have that confidence in math... [I]n that preparation program, the faculty are doing their best,... [but there are] requirements, there's a lot of content they're trying to learn how to teach. And when they don't have a strong foundation to build on, it's really hard to do that." (State)
- "Every year there are bills introduced to... say teachers should also be doing this thing, and... that thing,...[T]hese things are all really...important. But we have to get educators through a program in a reasonable amount of time." (State)

Professional learning time for teachers is limited; more extensive and collaborative learning opportunities are often voluntary

- One in five districts offered no mathematics-specific professional development (PD) during the 2024–25 year.
- When mathematics PD was offered, it was almost always optional.

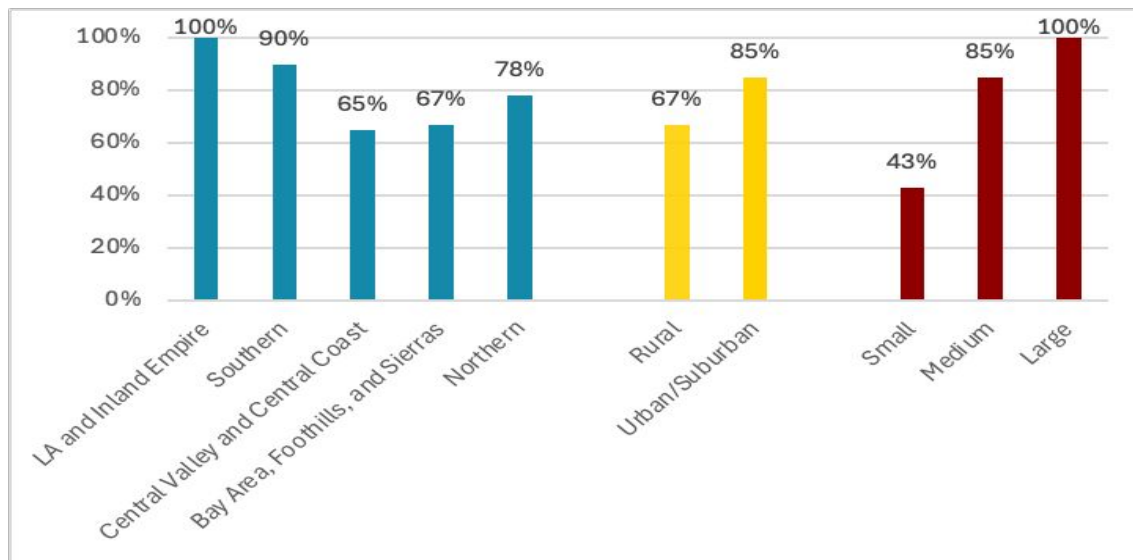
Distribution of districts by student-free days



Many districts are not staffed to provide instructional coaching in mathematics, especially for veteran teachers

Existing research points to instructional coaching as a promising approach for both novice and veteran teachers, but few districts organized staffing and teacher time to support widespread coaching for teachers in mathematics instruction.

Percentage of districts with one or more TOSAs



What education leaders could do next

- 1. Set a few clear goals for students—and align the system to meet them.**
 - a. Focus on student outcomes, not process compliance
 - b. New initiatives are unlikely to succeed without parallel work to fix the system.
- 2. Make sure every district can get the help it needs to meet them.**
 - a. Re-envision the regional support structure
 - b. Approve a small set of HQIM, based on clear criteria
 - c. Build district capacity
 - d. Ensure sustained, high-quality PD.
- 3. Make sure new teachers are ready to teach.**



*California does not need new TK—8 math initiatives.
It needs a system with clear priorities, roles and
strong support for districts.*

Thank you!

Questions/Comments: agallagher@stanford.edu

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The Hidden, Guiding Hand of Compliance in California Public Schools

The Impact of Intervention: LCAP, DA, and Effective Resource Use

Jason Willis

WestEd and University of the Pacific



The burden signal comes from a rule-oriented workforce.

FINDING 1 | ORIENTATION

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02

Nearly nine in ten administrators selected a stance that operates within the rules.

89%

operate within
the rules

Flexible application



40%

Innovation within boundaries



28%

Strict compliance



21%

More rule-challenging



11%

+1.3 hours /
week

associated with moving from
the lowest to highest perceived
value rating for an activity

*Leaders appear willing to
invest time when they can
see the value.*

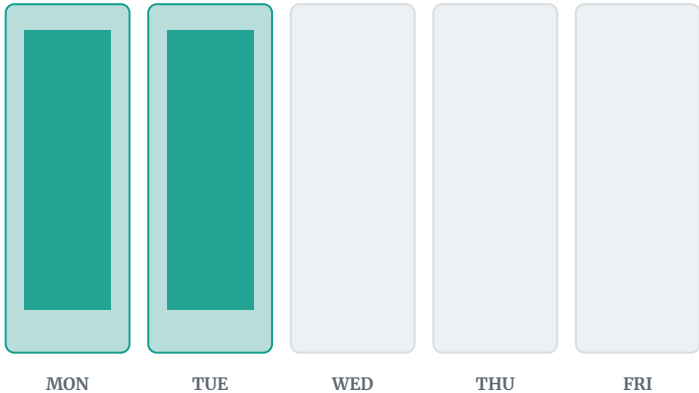
DESIGN STRAIN — NOT RULE RESISTANCE

Compliance has become a major operating condition.

Administrators reported roughly 20 hours each week—about 39% of a typical work week.



SHARE OF A TYPICAL WORK WEEK



≈ 2 full workdays

This is not peripheral paperwork. It is part of the operating system of district leadership.

Start with capacity and attention—not a sensationalized cost claim.

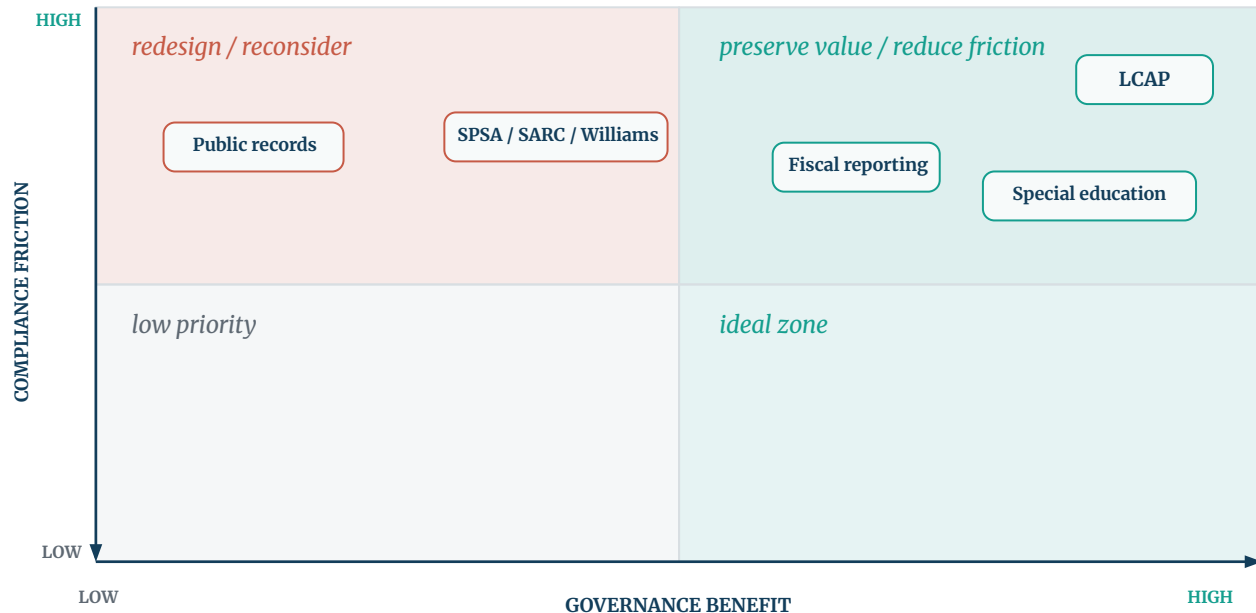
Compliance is not one thing.

FINDING 3 | VALUE AND FRICTION

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04

Governance benefit and administrative friction can coexist.



The key distinction

An activity can be governance-relevant and still be implemented through a high-friction process.

The matrix is a redesign screen—not an abolition map.

Preserve the governance purpose. Remove avoidable friction.

The paradox inside the compliance week.

An hours-weighted decomposition leans toward burden—but value and friction can occupy the same activity.

20 HOURS



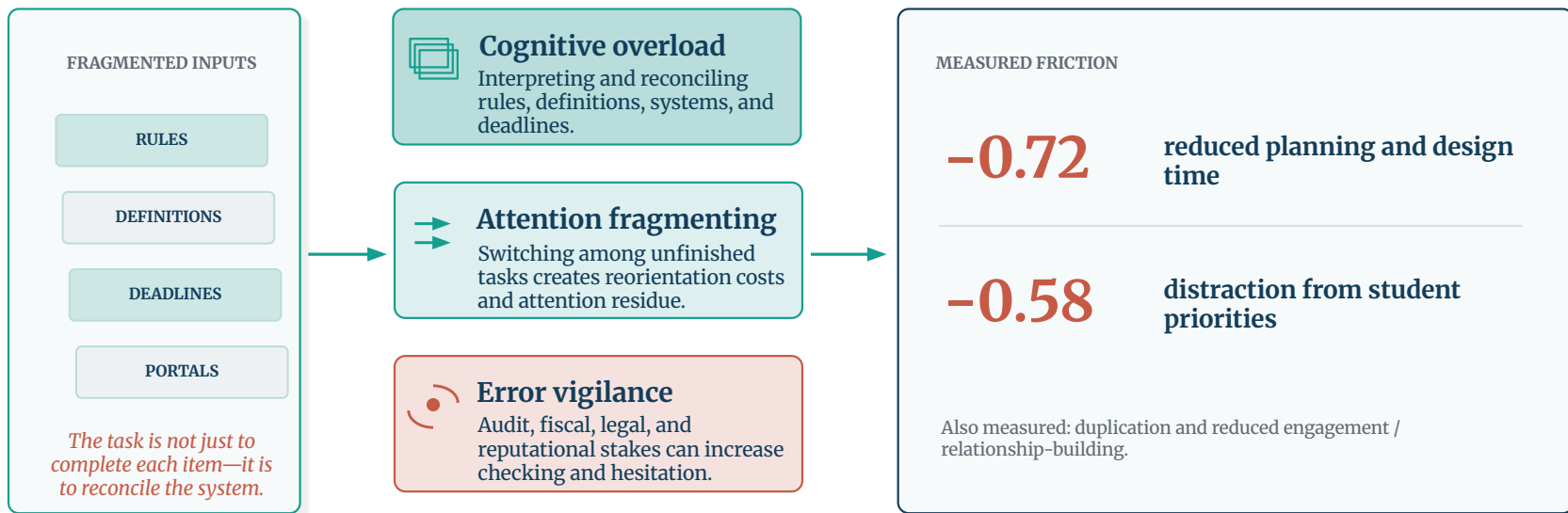
19 activity clusters



58% is an estimate of friction embedded in the work—not work that can simply be eliminated.

Incoherence is not neutral.

The survey measures lost planning and focus; broader research suggests how the friction may operate.



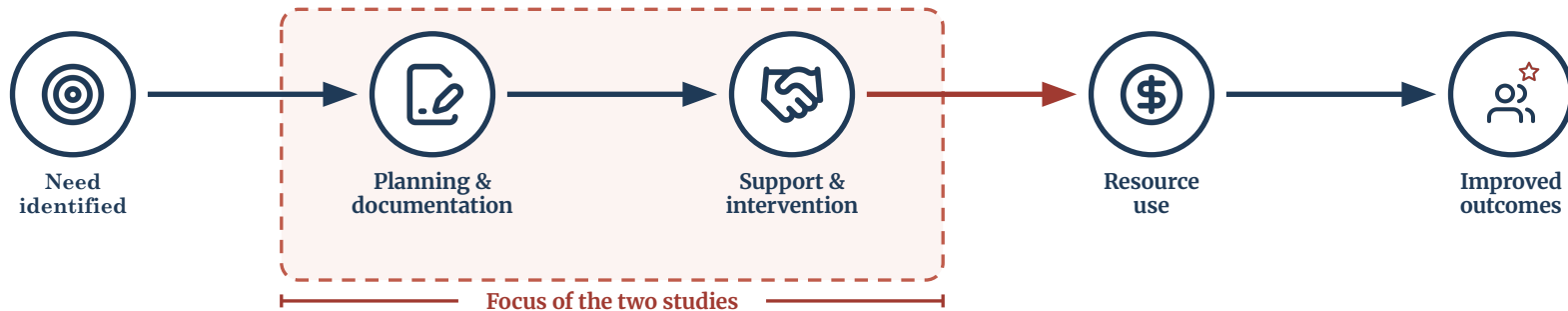
The report may still be accurate and on time—while consuming more capacity than the clock records.

Two studies reveal a translation problem.

SYNTHESIS | TWO STUDIES

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California sends specific accountability signals, but the path to local action and results is not always legible.



STUDY 1 | COMPLIANCE

What the system consumes

Time, duplication, lost planning, distraction, and reduced engagement across the chain.

STUDY 2 | LCAP / DA

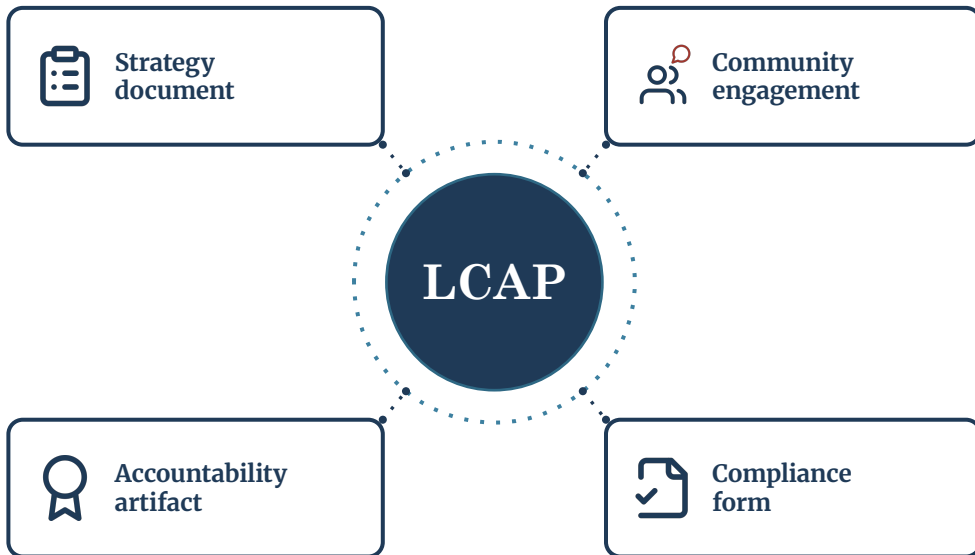
What the support mechanism changes

No clear independent shift at the eligibility margin on the measured planning and subsequent-performance outcomes.

Together they raise a design concern. They do not prove that burden caused the DA finding.

LCAP: one instrument, too many jobs.

California's central planning instrument still matters—but it is being asked to perform multiple functions at once.



- Administrators often still view the LCAP as governance-supporting.
- At the same time, the process generates substantial friction.
- It is simultaneously a planning, engagement, accountability, and compliance tool.
- That makes it harder to use for local improvement.

“

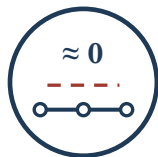
The state's central planning instrument is doing too many jobs.

At the eligibility margin, DA shows no clear stand-alone effect.

The analysis does not detect a distinct shift on four measured planning and subsequent-performance outcomes.

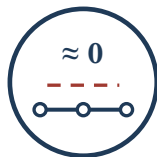
CAUSAL ESTIMATE NEAR THE ELIGIBILITY THRESHOLD

01 Later DA eligibility



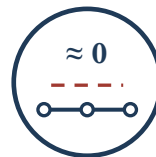
No clear independent effect detected

02 Number of LCAP actions



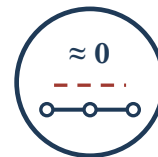
No clear independent effect detected

03 Planned per-pupil action expenditures



No clear independent effect detected

04 Subsequent performance



No clear independent effect detected



DA may shape planning at the margin, but the analysis does not find a large causal shift in these outcomes.

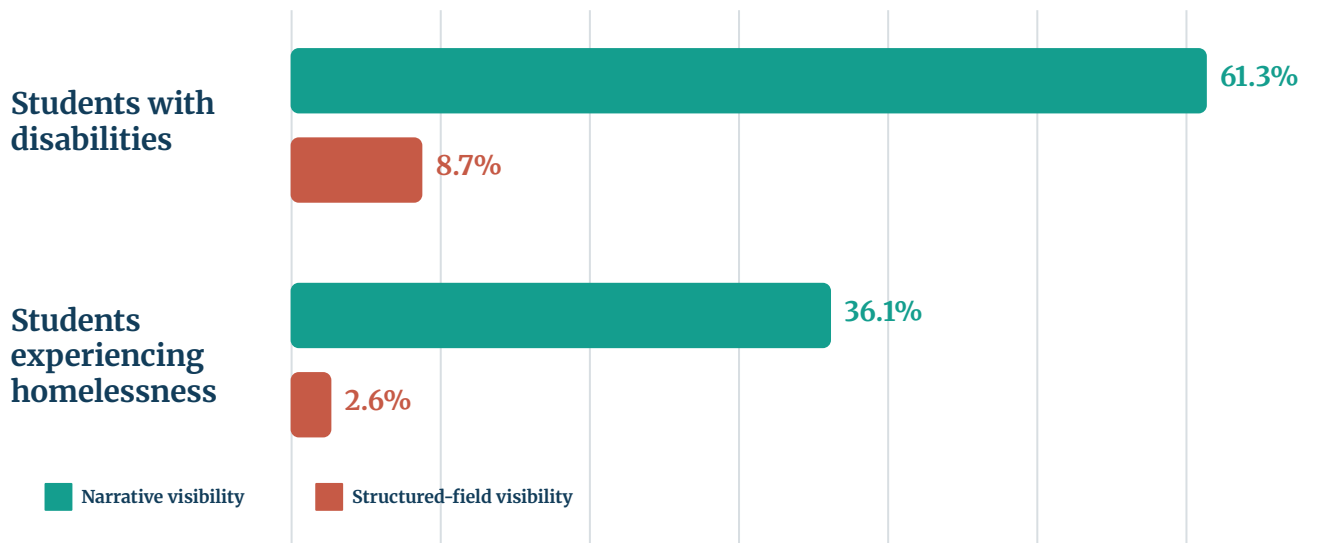


The most consistent audited spending differences are concentrated in pupil services and special education.

What the form can encode shapes what the system can see.

Some student groups appear frequently in narrative text but rarely in the formal beneficiary field.

SHARE OF DISTRICT-YEAR OBSERVATIONS



THE DESIGN LESSON

The standard field is organized around unduplicated-pupil logic.

It materially under-records some groups that districts discuss in narrative text.

UNDER-RECORDING ≠ IGNORING

A stronger instrument makes the relationship among need, intended beneficiary, action, and resources easier to encode and review.

California is beginning to change the architecture.

POLICY UPDATE | SEPTEMBER 2026

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11

Progress is real—but fragmented and unfinished as of September 9, 2026.

ENACTED

SB 374

IDEA Addendum removed; statutory “report on reports” extended thru 2026.

AB 126

Beginning with the 2026 Dashboard, DA eligibility is determined every three years; assistance lasts at least three years.

AB 181

State education governance shifts in 2027, changing who owns CDE administration and implementation.

GOVERNANCE CONTEXT

PASSED THE LEGISLATURE — AWAITING GOVERNOR ACTION

AB 2008

Standard grant-report template; prepopulation; four-year sunset discipline for new LEA plans and reports.

AB 2496

SARC duplication review; removes selected SARC elements and the fixed February 28 LCAP update deadline.

IMPLEMENTATION

SBE LCAP revision drafts
CDE eTemplate /
myCDEconnect
2026 Dashboard + DA
release: Oct. 15

The direction is promising: fewer one-off products, more reuse, clearer cycles, and stronger ownership of implementation.

Status current as of September 9, 2026.

THE NEXT PHASE SHOULD TEST DESIGN—NOT JUST BURDEN.

NEXT RESEARCH | FROM DIAGNOSIS TO DESIGN

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12

The first study made the workload visible. The next studies should establish what is duplicative, what works, and what can be redesigned without weakening safeguards.

01

MAP

Compliance architecture

Crosswalk discrete activities, information elements, timelines, audiences, and legal purposes. Build a prospective legislative burden screen.

02

VALIDATE

Perception performance

Test whether reported value and friction predict plan quality, timeliness, audit findings, usability, and governance outcomes.

03

TEST

Reform effectiveness

Pilot prepopulation, common definitions, shared calendars, consolidation, and risk-based oversight—then measure burden and accountability quality.

NOW UNDERWAY An activity-level California compliance architecture: discrete activities, mapped by timing, frequency

SUBTRACT • REUSE • ALIGN • VERIFY VALUE

Less duplicate proof, stronger accountability.

CLOSING | THANK YOU

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What the two studies add up to—and where the work goes next.



Compliance is an operating condition.

Roughly 20 hours of administrator time each week—about two full workdays of district leadership capacity.



The support architecture is not yet a clear signal.

At the eligibility margin, DA shows no clear stand-alone effect—and the LCAP is being asked to do too many jobs.



Redesign the proof architecture—not the purpose.

Subtract, reuse, align, and verify value—streamline the proof without weakening safeguards.

SUBTRACT • REUSE • ALIGN • VERIFY VALUE

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Jason Willis

WestEd | University of the Pacific



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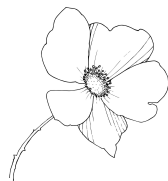
linkedin.com/in/jason-willis-0326686

Preserve the governance purpose. Remove avoidable friction.

Q and A



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