

Stakeholder Engagement in LCFF

— LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS BASED ON EXPERIENCES SO FAR —

Stakeholder engagement is central to the vision for how California's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), with its Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), can improve outcomes for K-12 students.

Two core ideas of LCFF related to engagement are:



Shifting resource decisions to local communities will result in decisions that better reflect local contexts and needs, leading to better outcomes for students.



Public understanding of and contributions to school district goal and budget decisions will serve to hold district leaders accountable for distributing resources equitably.

In a study published as part of *Getting Down to Facts II*, researchers find strong support for those ideas and mixed evidence on implementation. Most districts currently fall well short of the state's vision but the exceptions suggest leverage points for improvement.

"Most districts are complying with the letter of the LCFF policy but not the full spirit of democratic engagement ... Districts do appear to be learning from and improving their practices over time."

Engagement, equity, and resource allocations are related

Three processes appear to be mutually reinforcing:

- The breadth and depth with which district leaders engage stakeholders in LCAP development.
- Clarity and coherence in district leaders' beliefs about equity.
- More strategic targeting of funds based on perceptions of student need.

Some districts have created positive conditions for improving equity by encouraging the participation of historically underserved families, focusing LCAP discussions around the common good of the district, and developing participants' capacity for two-way conversations.

Conditions that constrain engagement:

Most districts struggle to attract LCFF/LCAP participation, particularly among non-parent community members and traditionally underserved individuals. The research identified four key barriers that involve stakeholders in ways that are more shallow.

1

Community members may have limited awareness, fatigue related to engagement activities, or feel like they can't participate in a meaningful way.

2

A lack of trust might exist between district leaders and stakeholders.

3

Districts lack a prior history of community engagement or a well-established strategic planning process.

4

District leaders' beliefs and "taken-for-granted" ways of operating conflict with the idea of increased parent and community involvement.

"...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."

Leverage points for improvement:

Both district leaders and the public want to make stakeholder engagement work and some practices show promise.

1

Most district leaders express support for LCFF stakeholder engagement components.

2

Public polls show support for LCFF goals and 84% of voters with children want to engage with local education decisions.

3

Superintendents say communicating about LCFF through existing advisory groups, at school sites, and through informal means is more productive than broad community meetings.

4

Districts that enacted deeper forms of engagement:

- engaged stakeholders in two-way conversations,
- focused on collective interests that would benefit the district as a whole,
- expanded the data provided to stakeholders about programs, services and budgets, and
- invested in the skill and knowledge of community members as partners.

5

Districts that work with external partners can enhance both district and community capacity for engagement.

6

Local school board members could participate more fully in engagement, helping weigh the needs of interest groups including those that are under-represented.

“Transparency and open sharing of data drove the engagement process and priority-setting in this district.”

Policy goals to support meaningful engagement:



Improve public awareness of LCFF and its equity goals.



Clarify expectations for engagement related to frequency and purpose.



Build district capacity to conduct stakeholder engagement in meaningful ways.



Build community members' capacity to engage in local decision making.



Clarify the role of school board members and incentivize deeper engagement.



Support deeper thinking among local leaders about the meaning of equity and how it relates to meaningful engagement.

“...more than 60% [of voters with children] said they wanted to be involved in setting goals and reviewing progress made by their public schools and/or deciding how to allocate resources ...”