



California's New Local Control Funding Formula

FOSTER YOUTH PROVISIONS: NEXT STEPS FOR STATE AGENCIES

The State has a unique legal responsibility to ensure the well-being of foster youth, yet their educational outcomes are significantly worse, even when compared with their low-income peers. With the passage of the new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), California became the first state to hold itself accountable for improving the educational outcomes of students in foster care.

The potential of this groundbreaking new law will go unfulfilled unless and until the State, via the California Department of Education and the California Department of Social Services, takes concrete steps to ensure schools districts have the information, guidance and assistance necessary to achieve the objectives of this legislation. Specifically:

1 Ensure school districts know which of their students are in foster care and which adults are responsible for supporting their educational success.

In order for school districts to improve the educational outcomes of students in foster care, they must have accurate and timely information. Specifically, they must know which of their students are in foster care, and the identity of key adults responsible for supporting their educational success, such as the student's child welfare worker, caregiver and education rights holder. The LCFF amended Education Code 49085 to require the California Department of Education (CDE) to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) pursuant to which it will provide school districts this information weekly.

Recommendation: The California Department of Education and California Department of Social Services develop, make public and execute a plan for quickly implementing all provisions of Education Code 49085.

2 Encourage districts to develop specific supports tailored to foster youth.

As has been documented recently in the Invisible Achievement Gap¹, a report released by West Ed that compares state child welfare and education data, foster youth have a unique set of educational needs and require tailored educational supports. School districts should be encouraged to provide such supports by including items in their Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) template specific to foster youth. This would mirror the approach the state has adopted for English learner students.

¹ http://cftl.org/documents/2013/IAG/Invisible_Achievement_Gap_Full_Report.pdf. October 2013.

Recommendation: State Board of Education adopt local control and accountability templates that require local education agencies to describe the educational supports they will provide foster youth, which supports are specific to foster youth and designed to meet their unique educational needs, and how delivery of these supports will be coordinated with the other agencies serving these children, such as county child welfare, county office of education and county mental health.

3 Clarify that supplemental and concentration funds should be used on programs and supports specific to foster youth.

The Local Control Funding Formula represents a paradigm shift for school districts. Districts are receiving supplemental and concentration funds in proportion to the number of low-income, English-learner and foster youth enrolled. EC §§ 42238.02, 42238.03. These funds must be used to provide increased or improved educational services to these sub-groups of students. EC § 42238.07

Recommendation: California Department of Education issue guidance clarifying that districts should use supplemental and concentration funds to provide foster youth the unique educational services and supports they need to succeed in school.

4 Make training and technical assistance available.

Many school districts have little experience developing or implementing programs specific to foster youth and will likely require substantial technical assistance in this area. School districts are also likely to have important questions as they begin providing additional supports to individual foster youth.

Recommendation: The State ensure districts receive the support they need by ensuring individuals, organizations and local education agencies with expertise in improving the educational outcomes of students in foster care are available to provide training and technical assistance.

5 Rely on Proven and Promising Strategies.

Over the past decade a number of districts, schools and community-based organizations have developed programs where students in foster care have “beat the odds” and succeeded in school.

Recommendation: California Department of Education provide information to districts on programs that have improved the educational outcomes of foster youth.