



Financial Aid Advising and California's Local Control and Accountability Plans

A Special Report for the College Access
Foundation of California

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Introduction

The College Access Foundation of California and its grantees are working to increase college access and opportunities for low-income and historically underrepresented students by providing knowledge, resources, and tools to realize this goal. Recent changes to how California funds K-12 education bring to the foreground college and career readiness as an explicit outcome. This paper provides background about California's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and offers suggestions for how the College Access Foundation of California and its grantees can collaborate with local educational agencies to infuse financial aid advising into district and site level plans that support college and career readiness support.

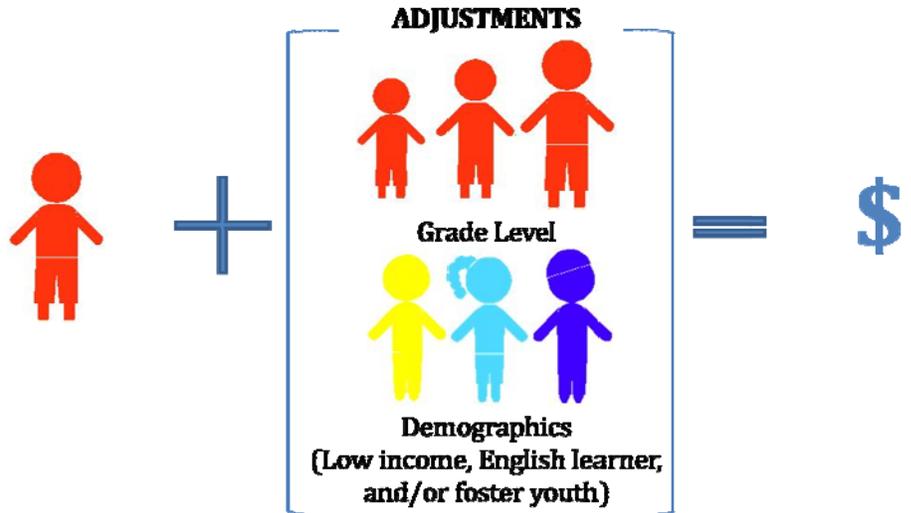
The Local Control Funding Formula

"Last year, I spoke about the principle of subsidiarity, a rather clunky word that nevertheless points to a profoundly important principle, namely that in our federal system there are separate layers of government, each with its own distinct responsibilities. The Oxford Dictionary defines subsidiarity as the idea that a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level."
- Governor Jerry Brown's 2014 State of the State Address

On July 1, 2013, California made a monumental shift in how it funds kindergarten through grade twelve (K-12) public education, with the introduction of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). Prior to the LCFF, California had one of the most complicated K-12 funding formulas, with over 60 different types of funding provided to local educational agencies (LEAs), which include school districts, charter schools, and county offices of education. The passage of the LCFF dramatically simplifies the way in which state resources are provided to LEAs by providing the same amount per student throughout the state with two adjustments:

- **Grade Level.** The formula provides additional funding per student for certain grade levels. For instance, to support reduction in class sizes in grades K-3 and college and career readiness for high schools, additional funds are provided.

- **Demographics.**
The formula recognizes that to achieve similar outcomes for all students, some students need additional supports and services. Additional funding is provided for students who are



low-income, English learner, and/or foster youth. There is a requirement that LEAs explain and demonstrate results for how this added funding supports increases or improvements in services and/or outcomes for such students.

The Local Control and Accountability Plan

In addition to changing how LEAs receive state and local funding, the LCFF seeks to add transparency and engagement to how LEAs plan, discuss, and implement budgets. All LEAs are required to develop and describe within their Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) how the LCFF resources are used to meet statewide expectations for student outcomes in the following state priorities.

<p>Pupil Achievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Performance on statewide standardized tests. » Score on Academic Performance Index. » Share of pupils that meet the requirements for entrance to the University of California and the California State University or complete career technical education sequences or programs. » Share of English learners that become English proficient. » English learner reclassification rate. » Share of pupils that pass Advanced Placement exams with 3 or higher. » Share of pupils determined prepared for college by the Early Assessment Program. 	<p>School Climate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Pupil suspension rates. » Pupil expulsion rates. » Other local measures.
<p>Pupil Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » School attendance rates. » Chronic absenteeism rates. » Middle school dropout rates. » High school dropout rates. » High school graduation rates. 	<p>Parental Involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Efforts to seek parent input. » Promotion of parental participation.
<p>Other Pupil Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Other indicators of pupil performance in required areas of study. 	<p>Basic Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Rate of teachers appropriately assigned and fully credentialed. » Pupil access to standards-aligned instructional materials. » Facilities maintained in good repair.
	<p>Implementation of State Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Implementation of State Board of Education-adopted academic content and performance standards for all pupils, including English learners.
	<p>Course Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Pupils access and enrollment in all required areas of study.

Essentially, the LCAP serves as the LEA's narrative spending plan. Ideally, the LCAP describes the linkage between needs, goals, anticipated outcomes, and the use of resources to address statewide expectations related to college and career readiness.

LCFF Design Principles

The LCFF legislation spans over 100 pages, with great detail on how to operationalize the formula and changes to LEA planning. While daunting in length, the legislation maintains a sharp focus on four design principles that provide a helpful framework to ground thinking, analysis, and planning related to local implementation under the LCFF.

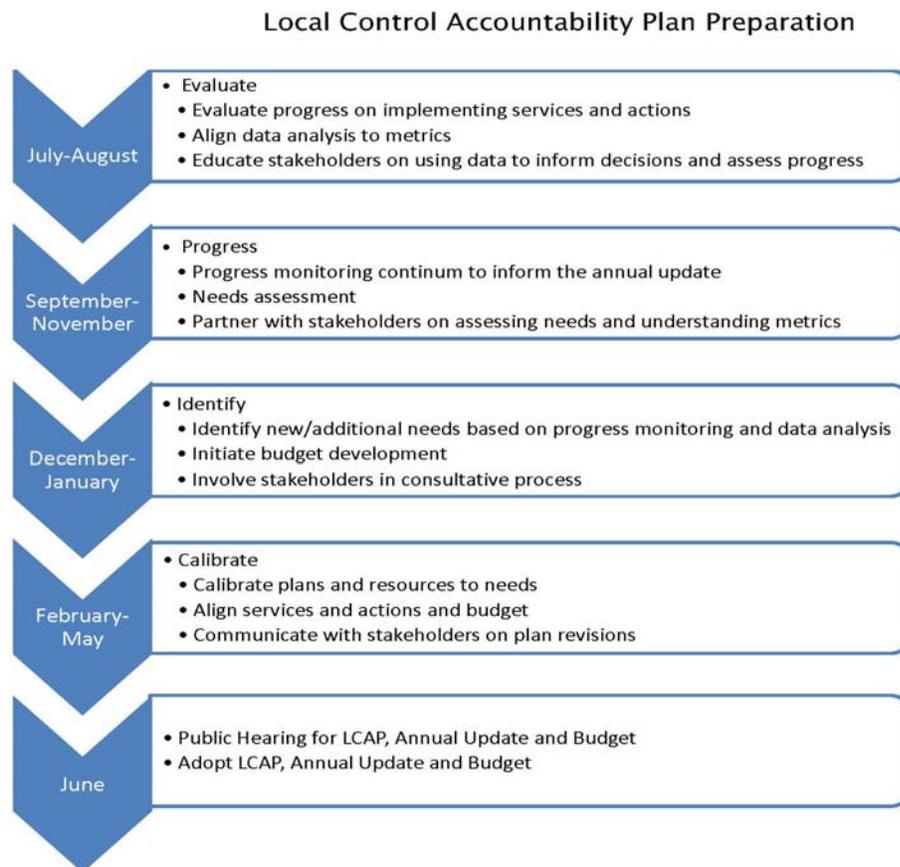
Simplicity and Transparency. As noted earlier, the LCFF changes California from having the most complicated to one of the simplest funding formulas. Simplicity is a helpful condition to support transparency. The LCAP is meant to be a document that reflects a simple, yet complete story of needs, goals, services, and investments, which will yield positive outcomes for students. The LCAP should contain the big picture, include important facts, support further inquiry, and provide a logical reflection of how resources are used to support positive student outcomes.

Equity. The LCFF has also changed California's funding formula to provide funding based on current students and their needs. The LCAP requires analysis of data, goals, services, and expenditures that reflect the needs of all students, especially those with additional needs. The LCAP calls for a clear understanding of what is provided to ALL students. Information about what is provided for students with additional needs, based on income, language ability, family circumstance, and other factors, is also expected to be clear and evidenced in services and expenditures.

Performance. The LCFF and the LCAP are about performance through local decision-making. The state has identified priority areas, which it expects will guide local analysis and decisions about how to address needs and demonstrate improvement. Improving student performance is central to the LCFF and emphasized throughout the LCAP.

Flexibility to Support Effective Decision-Making. Flexibility is an essential element of the LCFF. Flexibility allows for resource allocation choices that align to local needs. Flexibility is not permission to do just anything; it is the vehicle to pursue what is needed based on locally determined priorities and needs.

Local governing boards are required to review and approve the LCAPs by June 30 of each year. LEAs then transmit their locally approved LCAP and budget for review. County offices of education review school district LCAPs and budgets, the California Department of Education reviews county office of education LCAPs and budgets, and charter school authorizers review charter school LCAPs. The work to develop, implement, and monitor the LCAPs is ongoing. Awareness of the flow of the LCAP development activities is important to understanding how to support and inform the identification of needs, establishment of goals, and inclusion of services. Following is a sample LCAP timeline.



The above timeline is not dictated by law, but reflects the time necessary to support quality planning. There are a few critical activities to be aware of in this process:

- **Needs Assessment (Fall to Early Winter).** Each year LEAs should engage in a comprehensive needs assessment process based on consideration of state and local priorities. This process will help assess progress towards implementing the LCAP as well as inform updates and changes to the plan. The state priorities identify 23 metrics

that should be considered as part of the needs assessment, but other data related to college access and opportunity may be helpful to consider.

- **Goal and Outcome Development (Winter).** The LCAPs should include goals that address how needs are met, with a clear sense of expected outcome over time. Given that the LCAP is a three-year plan to which a new year is added each planning year (i.e., a three-year rolling plan), goals should be broad and inclusive of multi-year expectations.
- **Identification of Services (Winter and Early Spring).** Services describe the investments that will be made to achieve goals. Determining what services to include in the LCAP should involve consideration of how human capacity will be deployed or managed to meet identified needs and the type of programs and projects that will form the basis of these services.
- **Stakeholder Engagement (Ongoing).** Authentic stakeholder engagement is a critical activity throughout the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the LCAP. LEAs should consider input to inform identification of needs, contributions from partners (including families and community assets) to support implementation, and ongoing feedback to assess the implementation's quality and completeness.

LCAP Linkages with Financial Aid Advising

*"[My school's] graduation rate is important, but I need to be asked if I know how to get into college. That's where I need help."
- High School Senior from Oakland, CA*

WestEd completed an informal scan of 19 LCAPs from districts reflecting California's diversity based on their size, type (elementary, high school, and unified), demographics, and region. This scan revealed a range in how LEAs approached their LCAPs, which was not too surprising considering that each plan should reflect local needs, priorities, and styles of communicating. However, while variation was certainly the norm, goals coalesced around several themes.

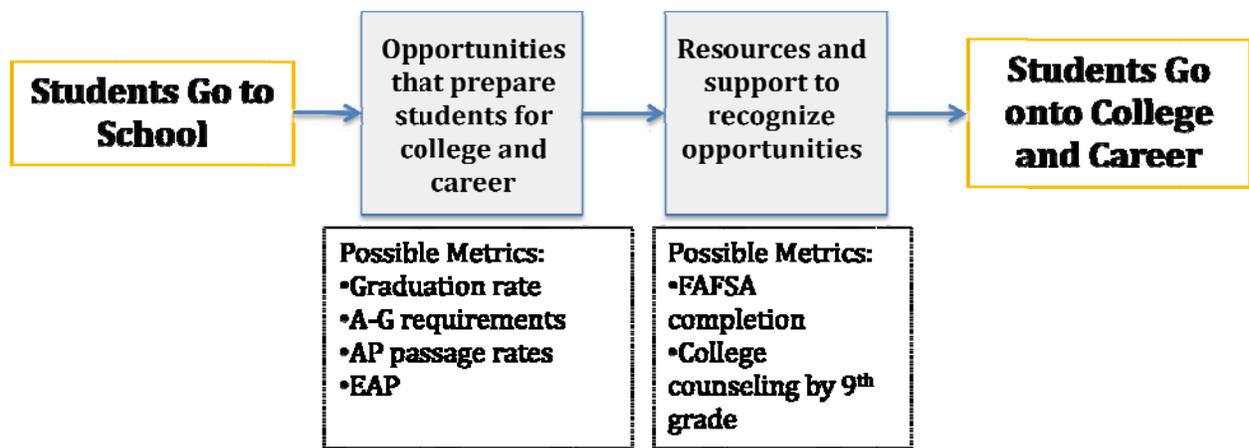
Goals from WestEd's Scan of 2014-15 LCAPs	N=19
<i>Increase student achievement (e.g., graduating college and career-ready, 21st Century skills, A-G completion rates, API scores)</i>	19
<i>Increase parent engagement</i>	16
<i>Improve school climate and culture</i>	12
<i>Increase student engagement (e.g., after-school programs and activities)</i>	8
<i>Implement Common Core State Standards</i>	7

Every plan included in the LCAP scan had a goal related to student achievement, with most providing a specific reference to college and career readiness. While the metrics associated with the state priorities do not explicitly call out financial advising or completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid Form (FAFSA) and Cal Grant applications among the metrics associated with the LCFF, such metrics can complement those identified by the LCFF to assess needs and impacts related to college and career readiness. Following are strategies in the LCAP that the College Access Foundation of California grantees and others can use to reflect the role financial aid has in students' ability to enroll in college after high school graduation.

Introduce Metrics to Recognize Financial Readiness

Over a quarter of the metrics associated with the statewide expectations for the LCFF have a direct relationship to college readiness:

- Share of students that meet requirements for the University of California and California State University or complete career technical education sequences or programs.
- Share of pupils that pass the Advanced Placement (AP) exam with a score of 3 or higher.
- Share of pupils determined prepared for college by the Early Assessment Program (EAP).
- Graduation rates (middle and high school).
- Pupils' access and enrollment in all required areas of study (i.e., A-G requirements).



The availability of meaningful college and career advising, including support to pursue financial aid, while not explicitly recognized among the identified metrics, can be added as a locally identified metric that supports the overall goal of college and career readiness.

Introducing such metrics can be useful to a more complete assessment of needs and identification of services and actions that will result in the intended goal of college and career readiness. School sites and community partners can help their districts with developing and monitoring the LCAPs by sharing data that include metrics, such as a FAFSA completion and access to college counseling, as complementary to those identified within the LCFF legislation.

Student Voice

Engagement of stakeholders, including emphasis on how the needs of all students-- notably low-income, English learners, and foster youth--are met is central to the LCFF and the LCAP development. Early impacts of the LCFF include new and varied strategies for gaining input from students, families, and community stakeholders regarding needs, ideas for action, and expectations. College Access Foundation of California grantees are uniquely positioned to gather insights from students and those who support them in their quest to access a college education. The voice of students can help clarify needs, goals, and expectations to get at the heart of what is needed to truly support access to college.

Connection Between Site-Level Planning and the LCAPs

When districts develop their LCAPs, they are required to consider site-level plans and how they may inform and relate to district-level goals and services. College Access Foundation of California grantees can work with school sites to identify needs and strategies to support college access that are captured in school-level plans (commonly referred to as

the Single Plan for Student Achievement). Each site's plan should describe how it uses state and federal resources to achieve site-identified goals. While not required, sites may include other resources, such as local grants or partnerships with community-based organizations, as contributing to meeting site goals. In other words, site plans can be used to recognize and communicate important initiatives, such as partnerships and/or direct grants to support college readiness. Including such details in site plans can help districts fully recognize the importance of partnerships and opportunities for further investments.

Lighthouse Examples

Under the LCFF, districts have new-found flexibility to invest in areas that contribute to improved student outcomes aligned to state and local priorities. The experience of College Access Foundation of California grantees to provide support and resources to improve opportunities to college through pursuit of financial assistance are examples of potential investments that districts can make to complement other strategies to support college and career readiness. Grantees can gather and communicate data about the level of investment, types of activities, and tangible results from these initiatives. Furthermore, given the three-year planning horizon reflected in the LCAPs, planning for continued investments with the LCFF funds to sustain or expand activities seeded by the College Access Foundation of California should be considered when creating or revising the LCAPs.

Mapping a Course with the LCAP

The process of creating the LCAPs is and remains a learning experience for LEAs. During this upcoming year, LEAs will mature further in their understanding of the LCFF and how the LCAP can be a meaningful tool to determine, share, and implement priorities for student success. The projects and initiatives supported by College Access Foundation of California grantees logically complement their LEA's goals and priorities. Formally recognizing the connection that financial advising has to college and career readiness can be a positive step towards fully articulating effective strategies and programs to achieve this important goal.