January 26, 2018

Sue Burr, Chair
California Collaborative for Educational Excellence

Via email only: Erika Barragan ebarragan@ccee-ca.org

> *Re: Item 3: Executive Director Search: Select executive search firm; process, including but not limited to development of job description, candidate profile, selection protocol and directing Fiscal Agent to execute a contract for such purpose*

Dear Chair Burr:

We represent a coalition of community, parent, student, civil rights and advocacy organizations which have worked diligently on passage and implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and its new multiple measures accountability system. LCFF creates an historic opportunity to focus resources on helping California's neediest students overcome the barriers they face in closing the achievement gap and graduating college and career ready. It also promises a new level of transparency and local engagement for parents, students, and community members in the design and improvement of their local schools. As you know, in an effort to give life to these objectives, we have participated in numerous stakeholder conversations and testified before the State Board of Education, Legislature, California Practitioners Advisory Committee (CPAG), and in local school board and community meetings.

We offer the following comments and recommendations concerning Item 3, the search for and selection of CCEE's new Executive Director (E.D.).

Initially, we congratulate Dr. Carl Cohn for leading the CCEE in its formation. We appreciate that Dr. Cohn has welcomed our coalition members and sought our input about how the system of support should be established, and that community engagement must be at the forefront of improvement activities. The foundation he has built will serve the organization well as it moves into its next critical phase.

Equity. With the official launch of the California Dashboard last December, the individuals and organizations that comprise the state's new system of support took its first steps. These first steps are happening even as we are paving the ground. As one of the agencies in this new system of support, it is critical that CCEE's E.D. have a demonstrated track record of honoring and focusing on the needs of our most vulnerable students. The job description and the messaging around the job search must emphasize the principle of equity. The individuals considered for the position must have a demonstrated record of commitment and focus on equity and its role in identifying, analyzing and closing achievement gaps for low-income students, English learners, foster youth, students of color, homeless youth, and students with disabilities.

Community engagement. CCEE's E.D. must be a role model in engaging with local educators and communities as part of decision making throughout the continuous improvement cycle. She or he must appreciate that sustained transformative local community engagement is as at the heart of LCFF's theory of change and, accordingly, must be encouraged and nurtured by the CCEE. LCFF requires local educational agencies (LEAs) to prioritize student engagement and parent engagement as State Priorities and integrate stakeholder and community engagement as a foundational component of shifting decisions and accountability to the local level (Education Code 52060(d)). These changes were a significant shift for LEAs, most of which were not prepared with the skill sets and practices necessary for authentic engagement and community-informed improvement. After four years of LCFF, researchers, community members, and equity advocates agree that community engagement remains a work in progress[1] and local continuous improvement has been stifled by the lack of capacity.

In addition, we believe these are important professional and personal qualities that the CCEE E.D. should have:

- Understanding and experience in closing achievement gaps
- Understanding the role of language and culture in academic achievement
- Knowing the research on high quality programs targeting unduplicated students and other student groups experiencing achievement gaps
- Experience working with community stakeholders in diverse communities
- Experience communicating with all community stakeholders—students, parents, caregivers, families, teachers, staff, and administrators
- Experience building capacities for systems change
- Knowledge of the history of LCFF's passage, its implementation and the role of the various stakeholders

Our coalition contributed to the search that resulted in Dr. Cohn's hiring. We request to be included in this next process.

Sincerely,

John T. Affeldt
Managing Attorney
Public Advocates Inc.

Shelly Spiegel-Coleman
Executive Director
Californians Together

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[1] Local Control Funding Formula Research Collaborative. (2017). *Paving the way to equity and coherence? The Local Control Funding Formula in year 3.*
http://www.edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/LCFFRC_04_2017.pdf

Jan Gustafson-Corea
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Cc: Dr. Carl Cohn, Executive Director, CCEE
     Michael C. Watkins, Santa Cruz County Superintendent of Schools, CCEE Vice-Chair
     Tom Torlakson, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, CCEE Member
     Tim Sbranti, CCEE Member
     Matthew Navo, Superintendent, Sanger Unified School District, CCEE Member
     Brooks Allen, CCEE Liaison/Legal Counsel, Marin County Office of Education

Greetings Dr. Cohn and CCEE Board Members,

Over the past several months, [Partners *for* Each and Every Child](#) has been working to advance stakeholder engagement in education policy decision-making—particularly for those communities that are impacted by the decisions. Based on many conversations with research, policy, and advocacy groups, as well as with CCEE, county and district staff, we have produced a set of recommendations for your consideration that highlight opportunities for guidance, engagement, and capacity building. We believe that these observations will provide important stakeholder perspective as you continue to guide a comprehensive system of school support.

We recognize that the CCEE is just one component of a full system, and thus our recommendations implicate the work of the CCEE as well as that of the County Offices of Education (COEs), and the Department (CDE).

Thank you for your leadership,

Molly Mauer
Hayin Kimner

Equity, Evidence, and Engagement

The Next Chapter of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)

January 2018

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Informing the Roles of:

The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE)

The California Department of Education (CDE)

County Offices of Education (COEs)

& Communities

THANK YOU

We appreciate our partners at the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) and the technical assistance providers and advocacy organizations who attended our November 2017 focus group ([click here for the agenda and meeting materials](#)[1]). Their perspectives and partnerships have informed the recommendations found herein.

- Pecolia Manigo, *Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network (PLAN)*
- Josh Daniels, *CCEE*
- Amanda Otte, *CCEE*
- Iishwara Ryaru, *CCEE*
- Socorro Shiels, *CCEE*
- Ana Tintocalis, *CCEE*
- Julian Heilig, *California State Conference—NAACP, CSU Sacramento*
- Taryn Ishida, *Californians for Justice*
- Shelly Spiegel-Coleman, *Californians Together*
- Efrain Mercado, *Children Now*
- Brad Strong, *Children Now*
- Felicia Jones, *Congregations Organized for Prophetic Engagement*
- Sarah Lillis, *Ed Voice*
- Carrie Hahnel, *Education Trust—West*
- Natalie Wheatfall, *Education Trust—West*
- Jonathan Klein, *GO Public Schools*

- Lisa Gilbert, *Kern County Office of Education*
- Cynthia Lenners, *Lake County Office of Education*
- Tara Kini, *Learning Policy Institute (LPI)*
- Adrian Sandoval, *Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF)*
- Margaret Olmos, *National Center for Youth Law*
- Michelle Francois Traiman, *National Center for Youth Law*
- LaShawn Chatmon, *National Equity Project*
- Derek Mitchell, *Partners in School Innovation*
- Katie Brackenridge, *Partnership for Children and Youth (PCY)*
- Liz Guillen, *Public Advocates*
- Sophie Fanelli, *Stuart Foundation*
- Tony Douangviseth, *Youth Together*

Special thanks to: the California State Conference—NAACP, Children Now, and Education Trust—West for their explicit feedback on this document.

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[1] http://partnersforeachandeverychild.org/wp-content/uploads/P4_CDE-CCEE-APDXAMaterials_013118.pdf

WHAT'S IN THIS DOCUMENT?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: LCFF AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

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- Increase Empowerment & Public Accountability

- Address Lack of Capacity and Support

EVIDENCE: TRACKING PROGRESS AND MEASURING IMPACT

- Define "Success"

- Aggregate Data to Identify Promising Practices and Interim Measures of Progress

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- Strengthen Relationships in Professional Learning

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MOVING FORWARD: POLICY AND BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: LCFF & Continuous Improvement

Who is Partners *for*? The mission of Partners *for* Each and Every Child (Partners *for*), a project of the Opportunity Institute, is to advance sound educational policies, attentive to matters of equity and responsive to the needs of at-risk, under-served, and politically underrepresented students. Since Fall 2017, we have been emphasizing the importance of stakeholder engagement as part of decision-making—particularly for those communities that are impacted by the decisions.

Engagement & LCFF This ideal of democratic participation lies at the heart of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). As State Superintendent Torlakson and State Board of Education President Kirst wrote in their October 2, 2017 letter to superintendents:

> *Rather than top-down, transactional exchanges … the new system favors teams of local educators engaging with their communities to tailor approaches to specific needs… [S]takeholders must be authentically engaged and transparency must be a top priority. Ensuring that each student has the support they need to succeed is a collective responsibility we all share.*

Equity, Evidence, & Engagement The logic of engaging stakeholders that are most affected by the work—and whose buy-in, contribution, and engagement is critical to success—also holds true for the continuing design and evolution of California's accountability and continuous improvement systems. **To that end, the next chapter of the LCFF must address:**

- **Equity**: implementing an equitable approach to providing continuous improvement support;

- **Evidence**: tracking progress and measuring impact; and

- **Engagement**: specifying who and how to engage as part of the continuous improvement process

The Roles of California State Leaders & Community
In November 2017, Partners *for* facilitated an advocacy and technical assistance focus group to hear from the voices and perspectives of organizations that have been working explicitly to support districts and schools to better meet the needs of California students and families ([click here for the agenda and meeting materials](#)). While some organizations are formal partners with the state, the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) or county offices of education (COE), all the participants are engaged in the implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula and increasing the effectiveness of the Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs) as a continuous improvement tool that explicitly reflects community voice. Partners *for* has also participated in conversations specific to the work of the CCEE (December 2017), as well as with policy, research, and advocacy partners including Policy Analysis in California Education (PACE), Education Trust—West, Public Advocates, National Center for Youth Law, Children Now, and Californians for Justice.

> "
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> "

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Our Recommendations The following observations are informed by these partnerships.

Overall, we recommend that **there must be a clearer understanding of the distinct and overlapping roles and relationships between the California Department of Education (CDE), COEs, the CCEE, districts, and schools**.

This means:

1) **Clarifying and strengthening implementation guidance, roles, and expectations** for the CCEE, counties and districts;

2) **Expanding capacity-building tools and partnerships to strengthen meaningful engagement** in LCAPs and continuous improvement efforts, particularly with community, advocacy and family groups; and

3) **Providing designated resources and guidance to support districts' stakeholder engagement** responsibilities.

> " There must be a clearer understanding of the distinct and overlapping roles and relationships between the California Department of Education (CDE), COEs, the CCEE, the LCAP Parent Advisory Group, districts, and schools. "

Moving Forward In consideration of the Governor's 2018-2019 Budget and its noteworthy investment in the system of support (with major funding for LCFF, the counties, and CCEE), we are eager for the state to create an effective and transformative system that prioritizes equity, makes best use of local and state resources, builds and repairs trust between schools, districts and community, elevates stakeholder voice and partnerships, and strengthens a culture and practice of continuous improvement.

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EQUITY: EQUITABLE APPROACH TO SUPPORT

Have Both Urgency and Patience for Change

There is an important tension between the time that it takes to affect transformative change in schools, and the immediate needs of students, particularly in schools and communities who have been consistently and systematically underserved. And while building capacity around decision-making, and transforming habits and cultures of schools and communities are long-term commitments, there must be clear evidence of immediate effort and progress along the way.

Similarly, to have a better understanding of the work of the CCEE and related capacity-building efforts, legislative representatives and voters need to know about the realities of school improvement, the resources that are required to make measurable impact, the progress that has been made thus far (as well as areas for improvement), and short term and long term expectations.

Recommendations

Even though the state is hesitant to articulate "consequences" for persistently struggling districts, there must be a consistent response (including providing more support and resources) that emphasizes equity, strong leadership and building capacity for district change. The state must acknowledge and underscore the urgency for change, the need to engage stakeholders early and often, and identifying short term and long term strategies needed to address educational inequality. The state could:

- **PROVIDE TARGETED GUIDANCE**: Building upon statute, the **CDE should specify the accountability conditions that warrant immediate and responsive action**—using multiple measures, and extending beyond just the "reds" of the dashboard or the bottom 5% as identified per CA's ESSA plan.

    o **State guidance should include expectations for struggling schools around their school improvement and stakeholder engagement activities and timelines** (e.g. notifying families), as well as identifying the state resources and supports that they will have access to, and/or need to improve.

    o **All schools and districts should engage stakeholders in conducting a root cause analysis and developing a measurable theory of change**. Especially important for schools and districts identified for support, a theory of change should include school transformation activities and serve as a framework for their LCAPs. Resulting LCAPs should specify how immediate actions (e.g. programs, resources, or processes) lead to sustainable, and meaningful change. By participating in this process, stakeholders will understand the program and policy rationales, and will contribute to decisions about developing, choosing, or refining metrics around intermediate outcomes.

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EQUITY: EQUITABLE APPROACH TO SUPPORT

Have Both Urgency and Patience for Change—*Continued*

Recommendations, continued

STRENGTHEN POLITICAL WILL: **The state should work with partners to regularly convene local elected officials and staff** to hear from districts, counties, researchers, and advocacy **partners** to better understand the LCFF/ LCAP continuous improvement landscape and partnerships, measures and evidence of interim progress, the need for stakeholder and community voice and empowerment to drive accountability for equity, and their legislative roles and responsibilities to support a long-term commitment to district and school transformation.

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EQUITY: EQUITABLE APPROACH TO SUPPORT

Increase Empowerment & Public Accountability

The feeling of alienation from decision-making is not new, especially for students, parents and families in low-performing schools and districts. And counter to the democratic intentions of subsidiarity and local control, the implementation of LCFF and LCAPs have largely continued the habits and protocols of "accountability" as a compliance exercise between schools, districts, counties, and the state, instead of a means to empower communities to contribute to and demand change that meets the needs of their students.

Now that 228 Districts have been recently identified as in need of support, the level of urgency articulated by the state could help to encourage (difficult) community conversations at the district level, and provide local communities with clearer opportunities to advocate for specific needs and contribute to their district's improvement work.

Recommendations

To elevate a focus on equity and realize the democratic intents of the legislation, a comprehensive system of accountability and improvement must consider the following.

- **VALUE PARENT/FAMILY VOICE:** Within LCFF, engagement is a formal responsibility of district staff and an "opportunity" for parents to be a part of a decision-making process that was otherwise limited to school and district leaders. It is important to recognize parents and families as formal partners in the LCAP process in advance of submission; opportunities to engage, however, must recognize, value, and accommodate the competing priorities of parents and families. In short, **to meaningfully engage parents and families, districts and schools need to develop strategies, timelines and resources that prioritize and meet the needs of their community.**

- **PRIORITIZE ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: Districts that are identified by the state as needing improvement support should be directed to engage stakeholders as part of their LCAP revisions and in designing and implementing their improvement activities**. Districts should explain who they have engaged and why, to demonstrate that stakeholders who are most impacted by their challenges are included in designing and implementing a response. This may mean that districts work with additional stakeholder groups, that were not a part of the initial LCAP development.

- **INCLUDE STAKEHOLDERS IN LCAP APPROVAL: District LCAP approval might include a regional, peer-review process that includes community and family advocacy partners** (learning from the district and school pairings of the CORE Districts, as well as the work of the CCEE Content Library Review process) and include an assessment of the robustness of the district's stakeholder engagement efforts.

EQUITY: EQUITABLE APPROACH TO SUPPORT

Increase Empowerment & Public Accountability—*Continued*

Recommendations, continued

- **STRENGTHEN COUNTY CONNECTIONS:** The state should **encourage counties to develop strong, long-term relationships with local community and family groups.** Those advocates are well-positioned to help counties with their capacity building efforts by helping to build trust with families and school communities, and can also serve as critical thought partners in assessing progress of schools and districts, understanding regional assets and strengths, and shedding light on persistent equity challenges.

- **DEVELOP TOOLS AND RESOURCES:** The state should work with **community organizations and early-adopter counties and districts to develop guidance, tools, and best practices around LCAP stakeholder engagement** timelines and practices, including opportunities for data review with stakeholders, developing draft LCAP materials for feedback before submission, and metrics for measuring interim and long term progress.

EQUITY: EQUITABLE APPROACH TO SUPPORT

Address Lack of Capacity and Support

While the CCEE was developed as an important resource in the implementation of LCFF and the dashboard, its Professional Learning Networks (PLNs) and pilots have created an "opt-in" system of support, resulting in an uneven distribution of capacity-building resources and confusion about the support role of counties, and the relationship between the CDE, the CCEE and the counties.

Given the state's limited resources and an overwhelming need for district support around the Dashboard, it is critical that the state articulate a clear structure of support for districts and schools. Specifically, the state, the CCEE and county offices must present a plan that clarifies their differentiated roles and responsibilities, and addresses how they will work independently and together to provide training, develop resources and facilitation guides, and curate a library of promising practices. For instance, will the CCEE support or train counties to be improvement specialists instead of compliance monitors?

In addition, districts and schools most in need of support are also often, the least likely to know who to turn to for support, let alone fully engage in an improvement process. These districts and schools often know their major barriers to improvement, but cannot proactively and productively engage because of a lack of staff capacity or leadership, limited resources and competing priorities, or feeling overwhelmed by daily crisis management.

For other struggling districts, while there is great benefit in doing an in-depth root-cause analysis to understand the local context, there is a need to couple local voices and perspectives with accessible guidance and resources that can address their challenges—i.e. learning from other similar districts or capacity-building organizations, instead of having to reinvent a set of solutions or strategies.

Such crowd-sourcing efforts will be instrumental to more equitable distribution of support. And with the December 7th release of the new California Dashboards and the reality that 228 districts (25% of all districts in the state) were identified as in need of improvement, with at least one of their student groups ranked among the worst performers, it is unclear that the state (or county offices) have the capacity to provide meaningful support to meet all their needs. There is urgency to clarify how these communities can access resources and guidance.

There may also be cases where other districts—one of the 75% that has not been identified for needing improvement—may not self-select to identify their problems of practice, because they are not considered to be "struggling" according to the Dashboard, or they have significant equity gaps with student groups that aren't an explicit LCAP priority, e.g. foster youth and justice involved youth. Without additional "intrinsic motivation" to go beyond compliance mandated reform, or new resources to invest in changes, some Districts might opt for the status quo, and "if we get worse, the state will help us.'

EQUITY: EQUITABLE APPROACH TO SUPPORT

Address Lack of Capacity and Support—*Continued*

This points to an opportunity for the state to provide incentives and supports for improvement that are broader and more accessible than just relying on "accountability" and funding as pressure points to drive change.

Recommendations

To address challenges of building district capacity for continuous improvement as part of the LCAP process, and to extend and clarify the scope of support resources, the state might:

- **SEPARATE COMPLIANCE AND SUPPORT**: To address challenges of building district capacity for continuous improvement as part of the LCAP process, and to extend and clarify the scope of the CDE, CCEE and counties, the state might consider **differentiating and distinguishing between compliance, approval, and support roles.** There might be an opportunity to use existing networks or protocols, e.g. CPAG or CCEE Content Library Reviewers, to support a regional, peer-reviewed process for LCAP approval, which would allow counties to do more in-depth capacity-building, based on LCAP analyses (without an approval role). As "neutral" facilitators, counties would be able to support deep diagnostic processes with and for districts as they identify capacity-building priorities.

- **DEVELOP QUALITY STANDARDS FOR SUPPORT PROVIDERS**: **Create a LCFF/LCAP technical assistance map or rubric** that outlines priority areas and implementation expectations and standards for all providers (either county offices or outside organizations), including support around equity data review and analyses, root-cause analyses, and stakeholder engagement. In addition, providers can specify areas of content expertise to meet the teaching/learning needs of struggling schools, e.g. English Learners, foster youth, justice-involved youth.

- **DEVELOP A RESOURCE LIBRARY**: **Work with technical assistance and capacity-building organizations**—e.g. school districts, universities, county offices of education—**to create a curated library** of LCAPs, program models, promising implementation practices, and capacity-building resources that can help inform the improvement efforts of other districts.

- **MATCH RESOURCES TO NEEDS**: **Provide personalized "librarian support" for districts and schools so they can easily find the resources they need**, without having to dig in without direction, and learn from the successes and challenges of similar schools and districts.

- **INCENTIVIZE PEER LEARNING**: **Allocate resources, or create match-opportunities to incentivize resource and learning partnerships** that include funding or staffing to literally increase the capacity of districts and schools to engage in continuous improvement work.

- **ALIGN OPPORTUNITIES AND RESOURCES**: **Leverage additional state resources for capacity-building around increasing supports** for specific student populations. For example, the Foster Youth Services Coordinating program (AB 854) supports the coordination role between districts and child welfare agencies, to align the Foster Youth Services program with LCFF.

EVIDENCE: TRACKING PROGRESS & MEASURING IMPACT

Define "Success"

The ultimate goal for California's accountability system is to realize better outcomes for all students and schools, especially in closing the achievement gap for students and student groups. But to that end, how does successful implementation of LCFF support that goal? What does success look like in the short-term and long-term? And how can the state directly and indirectly support that process of change and improvement?

Specifically, with regards to the CCEE, we know that the goal of their capacity-building supports is not just to create better LCAPs as district compliance artifacts, but to use LCAPs as a process guide and illustration of evidence-based planning and continuous improvement. LCAPs could also be used as evidence to monitor progress and impact over time, especially for those Districts that are identified by the CDE as in need of improvement support according to annual Dashboard performance.

However, since positive impacts on student level outcomes would likely not be measurable for at least a few years into implementation, the CDE, CCEE and county offices should work together to provide consistent and aligned guidance around interim measures of progress to help school communities know that they are headed in the right direction. By collecting and aggregating data about interim measures of school and district progress could inform the metrics by which we can better understand the efficacy of various capacity building efforts provided by the state, such as the CCEE.

SBE's Accountability Goals
- Strengthen teaching and learning
- Increase the individual capacity of teachers and school leaders
- Increase the institutional capacity of schools, districts, and state agencies to continuously improve
- Carefully phase in policy changes as state and local capacity grows
- Consider federal accountability requirements relative to the new state system once established.

SBE's Guiding Principles
- Articulate the state's expectations for districts, charter schools and county offices of education.
- Foster equity.
- Provide useful information that helps parents, districts, charter schools, county offices of education and policymakers make important decisions.
- Build capacity and increase support for districts, charter schools and county offices.
- Encourage continuous improvement focused on student-level outcomes, using multiple measures for state and local priorities.
- Promote system-wide integration and innovation.

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EVIDENCE: TRACKING PROGRESS & MEASURING IMPACT

Define "Success"—*Continued*

Recommendations

Measures of progress and success, across the full system of support, should reflect the State Board's Accountability Goals and Guiding Principles (see sidebar, as presented to the CCEE Board, as part of an Update on New Accountability System and Evaluation Rubrics Development, 12/5/17). In defining what "success" looks like, especially for the CCEE and other capacity-building efforts, the state should:

- **DEVELOP MEANINGFUL MEASURES: Metrics should be easily accessible to the community**, including parents and student advocates. Providers, like the CCEE, COEs and other organizations working directly with districts and schools, should consult with community advocates and families in the design of success metrics to ensure that they reflect the accountability goals and priorities of students and families, and their experiences as partners in school improvement.

- **TELL A COHERENT STORY OF CHANGE**: Metrics of success for capacity-building organizations (including COEs and the CCEE) should **clearly align to a continuous improvement theory of change**, with metrics and benchmarks that build capacity of districts and schools to guide planning, technical assistance, and assessment of quality implementation.

- **APPLY BEST PRACTICES: Choose measures of success that align to continuous improvement principles and best practices**, such as engagement, leadership, culture of learning and improvement, and other adult behaviors. Such measures should be used across all Professional Learning Networks to provide a consistent approach to identifying and refining activities that are part of a comprehensive system of support.

EVIDENCE: TRACKING PROGRESS & MEASURING IMPACT

Address Data to Identify Promising Practices and Interim Measures of Progress

The current work of CCEE's Professional Learning Networks (PLNs), Professional Learning Exchanges (PLXs), and county and district pilots is a valuable preliminary source of data around what might be "working" within the new LCFF context of accountability and continuous improvement. This data should be further mined in partnership with community and family partners to better understand how it reflects (and serves to refine) the CDE's theory of change around continuous improvement, and its goals of equity and engagement.

Recommendations

The CDE, CCEE and COEs should examine the experiences and data from existing professional learning and capacity-building efforts (including those from past initiatives, e.g. School and District Assistance and Intervention Teams) as part of strengthening the current roles that are part of the system of support. Specifically, examining cautionary tales and best practices would support the state's efforts to:

- **DEMONSTRATE PROGRESS**: **Help to clarify expectations on how districts and schools "behave" and move through the stages of continuous improvement,** including process benchmarks that can validate or inform the CCEE's theory of change. Such benchmarks will be instructive to shaping new, high-quality capacity-building efforts.

- **RECOGNIZE EQUITY CHALLENGES**: **Reveal recurring equity themes** that emerge across district and schools' root cause analyses and improvement processes.

- **BUILD A TOOLBOX**: **Build a library of methodologies and facilitation protocols and tools** for data analysis and root cause analysis, including promising practices for engaging families and community in the process.

ENGAGEMENT: WHO & HOW TO ENGAGE

Prioritize Meaningful Engagement

Community, family and student leaders were at the forefront of designing and advocating for LCFF and LCAPs to recast accountability as a local responsibility to—and process for—students, families and community, not a compliance exercise for state and federal decision-makers. The assumption was that the local education community—students, families, educators, and advocates—were the most knowledgeable about the needs and strengths of a school, and most invested in its success. By meaningfully engaging them in the decision-making process—that is, conducting equity analyses, determining priorities, allocating resources, and assessing impact—school communities would be strengthened, and students would be better served. This logic presumed that districts and schools already had the skills, capacities and resources to work effectively with community partners and families. However, without clear guidance, expectations, funding, and tools for how to democratize decision-making processes and practices, most districts relied on their prior habits of engagement (or disengagement).

Partners *for* has been conducting analysis of how states and districts have been responding to opportunities to engage their communities, with specific attention to how they are establishing systems for ongoing dialogue with school leaders, practitioners, parents, students, and advocates. We found some common threads among efforts to include in policy decision-making, which we write about through five "promising practices" for engagement that are useful to consider in the context of LCFF implementation (Read more in: *Process and Protest*, www.partnersforeachandeverychild.org/process-and-protest/).

Recommendations

To develop and strengthen practices and cultures that prioritize meaningful engagement in decision-making, the state should:

- **REPRESENTATION: REACH THE UNREACHED:** Prioritize the needs, participation, and leadership of communities that have historically been marginalized and underserved by political decision-making processes.

- **TRANSPARENCY: SHOW YOUR WORK** Make your decision-making process transparent: all communities should be able to easily see when and how to participate, as well as how participation is valued and has real impact.
  - As part of their LCAPs, **encourage Districts to document district resources and community partnerships** used in stakeholder engagement efforts, including costs for community meetings, staff time, translation and interpretation, and development of materials.
  - **Similar to the CCEE's efforts to describe the "seasons of LCAP," create a sequence/series of capacity-building topics and activities for districts and schools identified for support through the CA dashboard,** including coaching for equity, engaging community, repairing and rebuilding trust, and conducting a root cause analysis.

ENGAGEMENT: WHO & HOW TO ENGAGE

Prioritize Meaningful Engagement—*Continued*

Recommendations—Continued

- **SUSTAINABILITY: STICK WITH IT** Engagement efforts must begin at the earliest planning stages, continue throughout implementation in structured, regular ways, and occur at all levels.

  o **Require all CCEE Professional Learning Networks (PLNs) to include engagement as an integral and embedded part of continuous improvement.** This means making explicit efforts to: prioritize outreach to underserved groups in stakeholder engagement plans, prioritize transparency in ongoing stakeholder engagement efforts, make deliberate efforts to continue stakeholder engagement activities and continue receiving and incorporating feedback from these groups, partner with external organizations to amplify and extend stakeholder engagement efforts; use parallel processes to highlight areas of broad agreement

  o **Examine the real costs incurred in meaningful engagement efforts** and use cost analyses to **guide state resource allocations and set-asides**—e.g. using Title I and Title IV funds—to specifically fund engagement efforts—and in refining LCAP budgeting tools and templates so Districts adequately allocate resources and staff to support meaningful engagement.

- **COLLABORATION: MAXIMIZE YOUR RESOURCES** Work with outside partners to strengthen your engagement efforts. This can add resources, staff, intellectual capital, and new perspectives

  o **Model engagement principles and practices by including community leaders** as part of capacity-building efforts; what districts do is sometime less important than HOW they do it, especially in the first few years of implementation.

  o **Encourage and actively reach out to local, state and national groups to support community leadership of and participation in LCAP processes,** including designing and implementing root cause work to identify underlying issues of inequity. LCAP rubrics could include assessment of engagement practices (including targeted outreach to traditionally marginalized communities) as part of the approval process.

  o **Work with community partners to design and build capacity** around decision-making tools that are accessible for a community audience—e.g. LCAP 101, family friendly budgeting, data analyses, translations of key documents.

- **ALIGNMENT: DOUBLE DOWN** Aggregate and analyze community feedback from separate and parallel efforts to identify areas of agreement, amplify the voices of the underserved, and build support for reform

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ENGAGEMENT: WHO & HOW TO ENGAGE

Strengthen Relationships in Professional Learning

At the November 2017 convening of technical assistance and advocacy groups, participants reflected on the experiences of Kern and Lake County and were asked to consider why those continuous improvement efforts seemed to be working. The overwhelming response—*relationships*. In contrast to the sometimes adversarial or hierarchical relationships of previous accountability regimes, the work of Kern and Lake underscored the importance of investing in repairing and building trust, peer learning (and at times, peer pressure), and creating opportunities for formal and informal connections amongst educators, community, and decision-makers. In modeling the type of relationship-building leadership and processes through intensive professional learning sessions, county facilitators hoped that the habits and practices would "trickle down" to support an improvement culture amongst principals and teachers.

Recommendations

The CDE can help support strong, capacity-building relationships by emphasizing the importance of counties, districts and schools to:

- **REBUILD AND SUSTAIN LEARNING RELATIONSHIPS**: **Working in regular and close partnership with community, family and student advocacy groups** to strengthen professional learning efforts;

- **LISTEN TO AND LEARN FROM the community is a first step in rebuilding and deepening trust.** Strong facilitation to support an inquiry-based, trusting environment is instrumental to effective professional learning activities;

- **BUILD COUNTY LEADERSHIP**: **Supporting county offices of education to invest in personal relationship building** with district and school leadership, to get to know the unique assets and needs of school communities;

- **CONSIDER A HUMAN CAPITAL STRATEGY**: **Supporting professional learning networks that focus attention on developing and sustaining highly effective district and school leaders**; while personnel turnover is sometimes needed for "culture shift," chronic turnover makes continuous improvement efforts difficult.

MOVING FORWARD: POLICY & BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

Capacity-building and continuous improvement strategies are a welcome departure from traditional approaches to standards-based accountability—i.e. large-scale, top-down interventions. Instead of outsider identification of failure, continuous improvement relies on internal reflection and analysis of underlying complex challenges, relevant goal setting, and a commitment to building greater professional capacity to shift practice towards sustained positive change.

The CDE and the SBE have embraced this commitment to continuous improvement as a foundational element across the components of its accountability strategy. For instance, there is wide consensus that *all* of California's schools and districts—even beyond the 25% of districts that have been identified under the initial LCFF accountability measures—need to invest in continuous improvement activities and meaningfully engage stakeholders as partners and decision makers in the process. Furthermore, the ongoing State Board conversations around the thresholds for identification of the bottom 5% of schools, as required by the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA), suggest that nearly every single school in the state has to closely examine the outcome disparities of particular student groups and consider how their policies, systems and practices must shift in order to get better results.

Now with the Governor's proposed budget—$3 billion to finish funding the Local Control Funding Formula, $55 million to county offices to provide support to identified districts, $4 million in competitive grant funds for select counties to provide training and guidance to other counties, and $6.5 million to the CCEE—the stakes to get a system of support right are high.

The state must take this opportunity to listen and learn from its community and its partners as it considers how to create and strengthen a system that is transparent, impactful, and intentionally focused on equity.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- **Process and Protest: Have State Engagement Efforts Been Meaningful?**

  o **Promising Practices: Summary**

- **Meaningful Local Engagement Under ESSA: A Handbook for LEA and School Leaders**

- **Engage for Equity: A Toolkit for School Communities on ESSA**