



California Statewide System of Support: How Key Initiatives are building capacity, sharing capacity, and providing coordinated support

Prepared for

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Lead Agencies Coordinate Support Across the System

The California Statewide System of Support (SSOS) is a pivotal component of California's public-school accountability and continuous improvement system. Under Education Code 52059.5, the California State Legislature established a single System of Support for local educational agencies and schools to build the capacity of local educational agencies to (1) support the continuous improvement of pupil performance within state priorities; (2) address gaps in achievement between pupil subgroups; and (3) improve outreach and collaboration with education partners to ensure that goals, actions, and services as described in school districts and county offices of education (COEs) Local Control and Accountability Plans reflect the needs of pupils and the community, especially for historically underrepresented or low-achieving populations.

There are currently over 30 Lead Agencies, Resource Leads, and Statewide Initiatives. These agencies have created numerous resources for COEs and LEAs to use, which have been compiled in a searchable [resource hub](#).

The ultimate goal of the Statewide System of Support (SSOS) is to provide coordinated, needs-based, and differentiated resources and support to LEAs that lead to improved services for all students evidenced by the closing of opportunity gaps and increased achievement.

This report is based upon data collected in spring 2024, including surveys collected from 169 County Offices of Education (COE) respondents providing feedback about the Geographic Lead Agencies, 128 COE respondents providing feedback about the Special Education Resource Lead Agencies, and 128 LEA/Community partner respondents providing feedback about the Community Engagement Initiative (CEI). Feedback about the Geographic Lead Agencies has been collected since 2020¹. Data about Special Education Lead Agencies has also been collected since 2020. This report reports data on new questions that were introduced during the first year of their new funding, in 2023-2024. This was the first year of CEI 2.0 which includes new Lead Agencies as well as a new cohort of districts.

“With the collaboration of the System Improvement Lead (SIL) we identified our process to visit (pre/during/post) our County Offices of Education which helped with the design of protocols and debriefs. Identifying our process, monitoring, and data collection we have a great foundation for the first year of the grant and it will set us up for success of year 2 and beyond.
— *Coordinator, Inclusion, COE*

“Collaboration has provided resources to my area that would not have happened without the Geographic Lead Agency connections. I feel my own leadership skills have grown due to watching others present and/or share information.
— *SELPA Coordinator*

“The relationship building in [my Geo area] has been key in terms of knowing who to reach out to for support and to feel comfortable in doing so. I appreciate the effort that has occurred in this area.
— *Director, Curriculum and Instruction*

¹ Please note that not all survey questions are asked of respondents each year, so comparison year will vary throughout this document.

Awareness of and Access to System of Support Agencies is increasing

A majority of COE staff that work with Geographic Lead Agencies are aware of and know how to access the support that the system offers. County offices report that Lead Agencies have been helpful in building their capacity to work effectively with their LEAs and provide universal and targeted/supplemental supports to LEAs.

- 91% of COEs reported that they are aware of the **services and resources** available through the SSOS (compared to 73% in 2023).
- 73% of COEs reported that they knew how to **access the services and resources** available through the SSOS (compared to 65% in 2023).
- 68% of COEs reported that the SSOS provides adequate services and resources to help their COE provide **universal supports** to their LEAs effectively (compared to 59% in 2023).
- 67% of COEs reported that the SSOS provides adequate resources to help their COE to provide **supplemental/targeted supports** (inclusive of Differentiated Assistance) to their LEAs effectively (compared to 54% in 2023).
- 79% of COE respondents report that their Geographic Lead or Special Education Resource Lead has **connected** them to other Lead Agencies for specialized assistance.

Lead Agencies within the System of Support work with thousands of LEA staff across the system by providing universal supports, trainings, and resources. In addition, hundreds of LEAs and Charter Schools work with a Lead Agency to provide targeted/supplemental or intensive supports in the form of attending cohort training, receiving coaching or technical assistance, or participating in a community of practice.

“ We had a goal of creating a regional community of practice for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) experts in the state. We were hoping to have 10% of the regions represented by the end of the year. We have actually done this for 100% of the regions.... so, we are working to enhance this goal and how we can get DIRECT support to families/districts so much faster than we originally thought. We also offered over 30 high

quality professional development opportunities to families/educators/advocates with over 500 people. Lastly, we assisted the SELPA Association in their annual ADR conference and were able to get over 40 parents to the conference, at NO cost to them. THIS was huge and provided so much access to parents that has never happened before.

— Lead Agency Special Education Resource Lead

“ [Our **Geographic Lead Agency**] has worked hard to develop capacity and to create and distribute resources throughout our region. They do an exceptional job of maintaining

positive relationships, responding to the needs of our region, and therefore keeping doors open to improving systems.

— Director, Lead Agency

Lead Agencies Provide High-Quality Support and Professional Learning

Survey results indicate that Lead Agencies are providing professional development opportunities that COEs find useful, and results show that COEs have high satisfaction with their relationships with Lead Agencies, their learning, and their ability to apply that learning to support LEAs. Furthermore, Geographic Lead Agencies continue to build and facilitate trusting relationships with their COEs and among COEs in their regions. In addition, results indicate that these relationships have improved over time.

Trust and Relationship building

Building relationships across COEs and LEAs is important for a strong System of Support:

- 81% of respondents reported that their Geographic Lead Agency **understands** their COE's needs (similar to 79% in 2020); 95% reported they helped facilitate **trusting relationships**; and 83% reported they made them feel safe/comfortable for **brainstorming** solutions to difficult challenges.
- 92% of respondents reported that their Special Education Lead Agencies create a positive environment of trust and safety for their learning.

Professional Learning Opportunities

- 82% of respondents reported that their Geographic Lead Agency provides access to **high-quality professional learning opportunities** that enable the COE to support LEAs to improve student outcomes, similar to the 81% who reported this in 2020.
- 79% of respondents reported that their Geographic Lead Agency provides access to **technical assistance** that enables the COE to support LEAs to improve student outcomes similar to the 75% who reported this in 2023.
- 86% of respondents reported that their Special Education Lead Agency trainings are **tailored to their needs**.
- 93% of respondents reported that their Special Education Lead Agency was **responsive to their questions**.

The **California Coalition for Inclusive Learners (CCIL)** is a Special Education Educator Workforce Investment Grant Program (EWIG) that works collaboratively within the Statewide System of Support to build the capacity of local educational agencies (LEAs) across the state to create, design, and deliver professional learning opportunities for teachers and paraprofessionals in literacy development. CCIL developed a webinar series "[Through the Lens of UDL](#)" that explored designing learning experiences in a variety of contexts: physical learning environments, socio-emotional learning, and multiple content areas from Pre-K to high school.

Consistent, Sustained Support

- 84% agreed or strongly agreed that their Geographic Lead agency is available for **consultations** that enable their COE to support their LEAs, schools, and students effectively.
- 77% of respondents reported that their Geographic Lead Agency provides **ongoing support for implementation** of activities based on the professional learning or technical assistance they provide.
- 60% of respondents reported that their Geographic Lead Agency helps the COE **monitor the progress of their work** to support LEAs, schools and students.
- 94% of respondents reported that their Special Education Lead Agencies' **individualized coaching/support** from the Special Education Lead enhanced their learning.

High-Quality Resources

Respondents found tools to support universal and targeted/supplemental supports including Differentiated Assistance, improvement science, and supporting students with disabilities to be useful:

- 81% of respondents reported that their Geographic Lead Agency provides access to **high-quality tools or resources** that enable the COE to support LEAs to improve student outcomes similar to the 80% who reported this in 2023.
- 73% of respondents reported that their Geographic Lead Agency has provided resources or training to support my COE's work with LEAs in **using data to identify gaps** in the performance of students in different demographic groups similar to the 77% who reported this in 2023.
- 89% of respondents reported that their Special Education Lead Agency provided **tools and resources for implementation strategies** that they learned.

I used the **System Improvement Leads** (a Special Education Lead Agency) [website](#) to find continuous improvement tools for work with LEAs [and] to find additional data regarding the LRE status at the sites. This information assisted our COE team in the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) development, SPSA development and DA work.
— COE Administrator

The **California Dyslexia Initiative (CDI, 2020-2024)** developed universal educator resources, including videos, articles, webinars, professional development modules, and an annual conference to foster a deeper understanding of dyslexia and support students with learning difficulties. The goals of CDI were to build capacity within the Statewide System of Support to support school districts, County Offices of Education (COEs), and charter schools in providing early intervention and supports for students with specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia.

COEs and LEAs are Building their Capacity

County offices report that Geographic Lead Agencies, Special Education Lead Agencies, and the Community Engagement Initiative have been helpful in building their capacity to work effectively with their LEAs and provide universal and targeted/ supplemental supports. These Agencies continue to provide high quality support and resources to County Offices of Education (COEs) and continue to facilitate collaborate spaces where COEs share and learn from one another. These County Offices are applying these lessons in their work with LEAs to positively support students and their families

- 66% of respondents reported that through their work with the Geographic Lead Agency, they have collaboratively built their organization's capacity to **provide universal support** to LEAs in their county, slightly less than the 72% who reported this in 2020.
- 73% of respondents reported that through their work with the Geographic Lead Agency, they have collaboratively built their organization's capacity to provide **supplemental/targeted assistance** to LEAs in their county similar to the 75% who reported this in 2020.
- 79% of respondents reported that the work that their COE has been doing with the Geographic Lead Agency is helpful in **building their capacity** to work more effectively with their LEAs similar to the 78% who reported this in 2020.
- Respondents reported that they felt confident, based upon their Special Education Lead Agency, in leading or guiding teams to **integrate special and general education personnel, policy, and procedures** (90%); to determine effective **instructional practices** (82%); to determine effective **social-emotional strategies** (85%); and to determine clear **next steps for implementing practice** changes at their school next year (79%).
- 80% of respondents reported that they received **evidence-based practices** for school improvement or instruction.
- Respondents reported that they felt confident implementing the following practices based on their Geographic Lead Agency training: Implementing **data inquiry practices** (73%), **establishing high-functioning improvement teams** (72%), **using improvement/ implementation science** to inform implementation (75%), and developing resources and technical assistance to **support Differentiated Assistance** (77%).

The **youth leadership sessions** at the **Peer Leading and Learning Network (PLLN)** helped ensure that the LEAs gain tools and skills from their work together that will allow them to enhance the service they provide to students.

- Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) participants reported gaining knowledge about effective community engagement practices from LEAs, including the following:
 - **Community engagement strategies** that have high impact on student outcomes (90%) compared to the 61% who reported this before their CEI engagement.
 - **Culturally, racially, and linguistically responsive community engagement** Strategies (83%) compared to the 51% who reported this before their CEI engagement.
 - Strategies to build **meaningful relationships with parents** (79%) compared to the 45% who reported this before their CEI engagement.
 - Strategies to build **meaningful relationships with students** (80%) compared to the 43% who reported this before their CEI engagement.

We developed a Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI)/Advanced Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) English Learner Community of Practice with district and school leaders from schools eligible for CSI or ATSI that have 3+ red indicators for students designated as English Learners. We have met six times throughout the year. The goal of this group is to improve dashboard outcomes for English Learner students in their system.

There are two sites committed to the multi-year journey of becoming an Open Access **UDL Showcase Site**, and two additional schools/districts that are in the exploration stage. One goal for Open Access is refining the current Coaching Model in their Tier II Targeted Supports so Open Access can provide groupbased coaching when LEAs/COEs/SELPAs are interested in training/coaching to build capacity with Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Assistive Technology, or Alternative Augmentative Communication within their own context/region.

“One of our LEAs worked with the System Improvement Lead (SIL) in the development of their Comprehensive and Improvement Monitoring plan during the 23/24 school year. They were then paired with **Open Access** to provide excellent Technical Assistance support. I have two LEAs paired with SIP for Technical Assistance support for their 22/23 CIM Plan implementation. The TA support has been EXCELLENT!!

— SELPA director

System Impact

The work of the Lead Agencies is impacting students throughout the state. LEAs have been able to implement practices and use tools and resources they have learned from their work with Lead Agencies.

The **Early Literacy Support Block Grant (ELSB)** supported more than 70 of the state's lowest-performing public schools in 3rd grade reading scores on the California achievement test. Working with the Expert Literacy Lead, these schools showed a positive and significant increase in scores on the state 3rd grade English Language Arts assessment and positive spillover effects for math performance among the focal grade 3 students.

The **Expert Literacy Lead** provided intensive, structured support. In year 1, they worked with ELSB schools to develop school-specific and community-informed Literacy Action Plans. These plans were based on needs assessments and root cause analysis and focused on access to high-quality literacy teaching, support for literacy learning, pupil supports, and family and community support. In subsequent years, the Expert Literacy Lead focused on promoting literacy practices through (1) monthly leader training, (2) monthly literacy coaches, (3) a 2-year course on literacy and language development, (4) Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) cycles, and (5) an Online Elementary Reading Academy. In the final year the Expert Literacy Lead provided support for sustainability and conducted site visits to each of the 70 schools.

Access the resources and tools developed by the Expert Literacy Lead [here](#).

The results based on scale scores indicate that ELSB eligibility increased ELA achievement by 14 percent of a student-level standard deviation (i.e., 0.14). Given that the annual reading-achievement gains of children between grades 2 and 3 are, on average, 0.60 standard deviations (Hill et al., 2008), this effect size associated with ELSB eligibility implies a gain of nearly a quarter of a year of learning.

[The Achievement Effects of Scaling Early Literacy Reforms \(edworkingpapers.com\)](https://doi.org/10.26300/jnmt-2093)

Citation: Novicoff, Sarah, and Thomas S. Dee. (2023). The Achievement Effects of Scaling Early Literacy Reforms. (EdWorkingPaper: 23-887). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: <https://doi.org/10.26300/jnmt-2093>

The **Bay Area Geographic Lead Agency**, housed at the Santa Clara County Office of Education, along with the California Collaborative for Inclusive Practices and Attendance Works, facilitated the Chronic Absenteeism Network Improvement Community (NIC) project. Thirty-five participants from five local educational agencies (LEA) teams across the Geographic Lead area attended both the NIC and additional coaching sessions.

The NIC **helped build educator capacity** in understanding the reasons behind chronic absenteeism and how to address it. Participant proficiency with tools and strategies for addressing chronic absenteeism from the NIC sessions was assessed using pre- and post-tests. As only a subset of participants completed both surveys, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Participants' understanding of the root causes of chronic absences, the evidence-based strategies to address chronic absenteeism, and tools for developing a systemic approach to reduce chronic absenteeism increased greatly from no or limited knowledge to intermediate and expert knowledge.

What were NIC participants able to do with this new capacity? All five LEA teams reported implementing strategies, interventions, or tools learned from the NIC into their pilot studies or PDSA cycles. Four teams reported that their pilot studies had identified effective interventions for the target student group, **and each of these teams reported that they gathered data that demonstrated effectiveness.** Four of the five teams had plans to expand their pilot interventions.

There are over 836,000 students with disabilities in California schools. At the time of this project's initiation in 2021, only 10% were graduating high schools and college and career prepared. **The System Improvement Leads Innovating for Student Excellence Network** set out to accelerate the learning of students with individualized education programs (IEPs).

At the heart of an IEP is an education plan with goals and services designed to support the unique needs of students with disabilities. If IEP goals are high-quality and are being met, student learning is happening. The Innovating for Student Excellence Network reviewed hundreds of IEPs to get a baseline understanding of how often students met their IEP goals. Only 38.5% of IEPs goals were marked as met.

The team set a goal that 100% of IEP goals would be met.

The Innovating for Student Excellence Network reasoned that providing additional support and training to make sure that (1) IEP goals were high quality; (2) collecting data regularly to assess whether IEP goals were being met; and (3) conducting IEP meetings collaboratively with parents would provide the necessary conditions to accelerate student learning. Starting with a network of teams from six districts serving over 27,000 students with disabilities across 2 years, they created a process that has led to an increase in goal quality by 13% (to 86%) on their IEP goals quality scoring rubric and an increase in the percentage of IEP goals being met to over 56% (from that 38.5% baseline) within just 2 years.

The support included quarterly network meetings, network "huddles" between these meetings, and weekly coaching, which initially seemed daunting but serves to ensure the work continues at a high level. The System Improvement Leads Innovating for Student Excellence Network also worked with districts to create sustainable routines to maintain data collection and improvements. Please visit their site <https://systemimprovement.org/> to learn more about this network and to access their resources.

Appendix

Lead Agencies

Lead agencies build capacity and provide supports to entities or groups within California's education system. These Agencies ensure that there is (1) a clear point of contact for a school district or COE to seek supports responsive to a locally identified need; (2) a clear process and responsibility for agencies within the System of Support to work together to connect the school district or COE with relevant resources or avenues for assistance; and (3) improved visibility of the resources, expertise, and services available across the state through various agencies and state-funded initiatives to support student success. Lead agencies also work together, with the support of the statewide partners, to share and build capacity and increase coordination, collaboration, and integration between initiatives.

Geographic Lead Agencies work together to support and build capacity of county offices and school districts, by identifying existing resources to coordinate and calibrate support to LEAs.

Special Education Resource Lead Agencies build the capacity of LEAs to improve outcomes for Students with Disabilities and support their families, extend equity of access to high-quality technical assistance and resources statewide, and provide support to both LEAs with identified needs.

The Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) builds the capacity of school districts in effective models of community engagement, developing metrics to evaluate those models, having difficult conversations, building trusting relationships, and participating in the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) development process.

Other Lead Agencies:

21st Century California School Leadership Academy (21CSLA) offers high-quality, equity-centered professional learning and coaching for school and district leaders across California through regional academies.

California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP) supports schools' efforts to partner with community agencies and local government to align community resources to improve student outcomes. The CCSPP is supported by a System of Support that includes a Lead Technical Assistance Center (TAC), eight Regional TACs, and multiple COEs.

California Coalition for Inclusive Literacy (CCIL). The CCIL Project provides universal, targeted and intensive support and resources for all educators in the area of Universal Design for Learning. Working collaboratively with the Statewide Systems of Support to build the capacity of LEAs across the state by providing professional learning opportunities for teachers and paraprofessionals in the area of universal design for learning to improve inclusive practices for all pupils, including pupils with disabilities, in general education settings.

California Dyslexia Initiative (CDI) builds capacity in the SSOS to provide early intervention services for students with specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia, identifies effective models for identification and treatment of specific learning disabilities, and delivers professional development on evidence-based instruction and strategies informed by research. This grant-based initiative was completed in spring 2024.

California Early Childhood Special Education Network (CalECSE) enhances outcomes for California's youngest children with disabilities across agencies by removing obstacles to successful educational transitions, assessments, and programming access.

CA MTSS Multi-Tiered System of Support provides resources, professional learning opportunities, and funding for LEAs to align academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports to serve the whole child.

California PBIS supports local educational agencies that have an identified area of need around behavior impacting their state performance plan indicator results.

Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant (CLSD). Seven grantees, known as the Literacy Lead Agencies (LLAs), work to build expertise in the priorities identified in the State Literacy Plan through multi-year small-scale pilot projects with local districts. Each LLA is building professional learning networks and providing technical assistance to increase local capacity in implementing effective literacy instruction.

Count Play Explore supports a statewide early math initiative that includes the developing, identifying, and distributing of early math resources, professional learning and coaching for educators, and mathematical learning opportunities for children.

Early Literacy Support Block Grant (ELSB). The Expert Lead in Literacy supported grantees to build statewide professional learning networks and provide technical assistance to increase statewide capacity in implementing effective literacy instruction. Support from the Expert Lead concluded in November 2023. Local Educational Agency grantees will continue this work through June 2024.

Equity Leads. The Equity Leads will support LEAs in addressing racial disparities and enhancing educational opportunities and outcomes. The Equity Leads will also enhance resources for educator development and track the effectiveness of local control and accountability plan goals, specifically aiding schools that benefit from Equity Multiplier Funding.

Effective Language Acquisition Programs Educator Workforce Investment Grant (ELAP) develops and delivers professional learning opportunities which support the implementation of effective language acquisition programs for English Learner students, which may include integrated language development within and across content areas, bilingual and biliterate proficiency, and building and strengthening capacity to implement the EL Roadmap Policy.

Expanded Learning Opportunities provides funding for afterschool and summer school enrichment programs for transitional kindergarten through sixth grade.

Expert Lead in Literacy supports LEAs with schools eligible for the ELSB Grant Program to identify which strategies, programs, or services would be most appropriate for their local needs through a root cause analysis and a needs assessment.

Learning Acceleration System Grant (LASG) provides evidence-based professional education for educators that can support learning acceleration for California's diverse pupil population, particularly in mathematics, literacy, and language development.

Reading Instruction and Intervention (RII) Grant, Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant (CLSD) develops and provides preparation for educators to become literacy coaches and reading and literacy specialists.

Regional COE English Learner Specialists (RELS) provide technical assistance within assigned regions, equipping LEAs with resources and tools to support the development, implementation, and evaluation of strategies that ensure all typologies of English Learner students have the resources needed to succeed. The work of the RELS is informed by the [California English Learner Roadmap Policy](#).

Seeds of Partnership. *Seeds of Partnership* is a project that supports educators, administrators, department of education staff, parent center directors/staff, technical assistance partners, families, and young adults with disabilities across California. They provide training, learning and support tools, as well as parent and professional resources in the areas of family engagement, alternative dispute resolution, early learning, youth leadership/self-advocacy and compliance and improvement monitoring. They also provide statewide support and coordinated technical assistance to the Family Empowerment Centers and Disability Council, as well as collaborate with regional, state, and national partners.

Supporting Inclusive Practices (SIP) is designed to assist LEAs to (1) improve educational results and functional outcomes for students with disabilities; and (2) ensure that LEAs meet State Performance Plan program requirements specific to Least Restrictive Environment.

Universal PreK is an early learning initiative with the goal of expanding access to prekindergarten programs across California through the mixed delivery system the year before Kindergarten.
