



Building More Coherence Across California's Statewide System of Support

Findings, Progress, and Opportunities for Continuous Improvement

Prepared for

California Statewide System of Support
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The California Statewide System of Support (SSOS) is a pivotal component of California's public school accountability and continuous improvement system. The strength of California's Statewide System of Support is not simply the quality of individual initiatives, but how effectively they work together to improve outcomes for local educational agencies and ultimately students.

Under Education Code 52059.5, the California State Legislature established a single System of Support for local education agencies (LEAs) and schools to build the capacity of LEAs 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.

This comprehensive system leverages coordination, collaboration, and integration with various educational entities, including COEs, LEAs, and charter schools. The ultimate goal of the SSOS is to provide coordinated, needs-based, and differentiated resources and supports to LEAs that lead to improved services for all students, evidenced by the closing of opportunity gaps and improved student outcomes.

Lead Agencies, often situated within designated county offices, provide expertise, programs, and resources to empower local educators to leverage the wide variety of resources and supports at the universal, targeted, and intensive levels to help meet the needs of their individual LEAs.

RTI International is the external evaluator of the Statewide System of Support (SSOS). In this brief, we draw on data from surveys and interviews administered in 2026 to highlight the impact of the SSOS.



“ **Regional COE English Learner Specialist (RELS) and the Bay Area Geographic Leads Consortium (BAGLC), and English Learner Roadmap in Collaboration Across California (EPiCC)** collaborated to offer a series of professional development sessions for Multilingual Learner Shadowing to support the work of districts and sites in learning about how that practice can improve outcomes for Long-Term English Learner (LTEL) students.

Coordination: *Agencies intentionally share information, clarify roles, and learn from one another.*

59%

... of Lead agency staff believe that the Statewide Agencies are providing useful support to Lead Agencies in **clarifying roles and responsibilities**, compared to 29% in 2020.

75%

... of Lead and Statewide agency staff believe that the Statewide Agencies are providing useful support to Lead Agencies in **developing positive relationships**, which is similar to the 77% who reported so in 2020.

65%

... of Lead Agency and Statewide Agency staff believe that the Statewide Agencies and Lead Agencies they work with in the SSOS have a **clear sense of their roles and responsibilities**, compared to 27% in 2020.

QUOTES

“ Co-presenting with **California Includes** at a statewide conference [on] working with diverse families, the perspectives of each organization combined made the activities and resources included in the session more meaningful for the participants—the feedback received was that participants felt they could use the information right away as a parent or an educator, which leads to improved student outcomes.
—**Seeds of Partnership**

“ We have shared resources with other Geographic Leads and invited them to join some of our professional development opportunities. **Bay Area Geographic Leads Consortium (BAGLC)** has been a partner and participant in some of our ongoing courses.
—**Capital Central Foothill Areas (CCFAC)**

“ At times, our improvement targets overlap with those of other initiatives. We value collaboration with Technical Assistance partners whose specialized expertise helps strengthen our collective efforts.
—**California Early Childhood Special Education Network (CalECSE)**

“ This year, we've done a lot of work with **San Diego COE**, learning Implementation Science from them and creating an Improvement & Implementation Playbook incorporating what we've learned from them.
—**Geographic Lead Agency: Far North Partnership (FNP) (Shasta COE)**

“ I've partnered with another Lead Agency to co-facilitate student sessions focused on social-emotional learning and overall well-being. Being able to collaborate across agencies allowed us to bring different strengths to the table and better support students in a more well-rounded way. We worked closely to plan sessions, reflect on what was working, and adjust based on student needs and feedback. This made our sessions more engaging and responsive and helped ensure we were really meeting students where they were. Because of this collaboration, **we saw students become more engaged, more open in sharing, and more connected to the support systems around them.** It also strengthened how we work across agencies, making our support feel more aligned and consistent, which ultimately helps improve outcomes for students.

—**Community Engagement Initiative (CEI)**

Collaboration: *Agencies jointly design work around common goals and shared responsibilities.*

65%

... of Lead and Statewide agency staff believe that the State Agencies and Lead Agencies in the Statewide System of Support **invest the right amount of time in collaborative efforts**, compared to just 38% in 2020.

68%

... of Lead and Statewide agency staff believe that the Statewide Agencies are providing useful support to Lead Agencies in **building collaborative opportunities** with other Lead Agencies, compared to 71% in 2024.¹

QUOTES

“ We collaborated with **High Quality IEPs** to build a companion guide to parents' rights to ensure information is easily accessible for parents.

—**Pathways to Partnership Alternative Dispute Resolution**

“ [Geographic Leads] have worked closely with **21CSLA** in their regions to align the professional learning that is being offered by **21CSLA** with Geographic Region's goals.

—**21st Century California School Leadership Academy (21CSLA)**

“ **EmbraceAbilities** is collaborating with **CA MTSS** to support COEs and LEAs with the implementation of tiered supports for students with extensive support needs (ESN). The collaboration has extended our thinking about task analysis and differentiated teaching at all levels. We are jointly offering a learning series for COEs and LEAs.

—**EmbraceAbilities**

¹ The first survey was administered in 2020; some survey questions have been added since. Our comparisons are to the first instance of the question.

“ As Equity Leads, we have worked alongside **21st Century California School Leadership Academy (21CSLA)** and the **Community Engagement Initiative (CEI)** to support stronger, more equity-centered leadership and community engagement across our region. Through shared learning, coaching, and collaboration, we help districts/sites create more inclusive and responsive practices for historically underserved students. This partnership helps us stay aligned, deepen our impact, and keep equity at the heart of the work.

—**Equity Leads: Genuine Empathy Nurturing Intellect for Underserved Students (GENIUS)**

“ **Count Play Explore/Early Math (CPE)** and **California Mathematics, Science, Computer Science (CAL-MSCS)** have intentionally been collaborating over this past year. Our teams sit on one another's advisory/steering committees. This supports alignment across the two initiatives and supports the success of the work. CPE coordinated with CAL-MSCS to build working relationships between the CPE and CAL-MSCS teams; share each initiative's priorities, areas of focus, and approaches to professional learning; and explore opportunities for collaboration and alignment. Together, the teams drafted a joint vision and set of guiding principles to inform the initiatives' collective work, which will be refined and shared with larger partner groups later in the year.

—**Count Play Explore/Early Math**

Integration: *Agencies align strategies, expertise, and resources to produce coherent supports and measurable results.*

85% ... of Lead Agency and Statewide Agency staff believe that their **agency is integrated into the Statewide System of Support.**

77% ... of Lead and Statewide agency staff feel that **my organizational activities are aligned with those of my fellow lead agencies/statewide partners** compared to 54% in 2020.

55% ... of Lead and Statewide agency staff believe statewide partners (CCEE, CDE, SBE) and lead agencies have a **shared understanding of what success looks like** compared to 32% in 2020.

36% ... of Lead and Statewide agency staff believe statewide partners (CCEE, CDE, SBE) and lead agencies have a **shared understanding of how success will be measured** compared to 9% in 2020.

QUOTES

“ **Supporting Innovative Practices (SIP)** intentionally integrates and collaborates with multiple Statewide System of Support and Special Education Technical Assistance projects to ensure coherence, alignment, and amplification of resources for districts. SIP partners with **Open Access** to deepen implementation and ensure alignment with evidence-based inclusive practices, with the **System Improvement Leads (SIL)** project to strengthen system coherence and continuous improvement, and with a range of statewide technical assistance partners

and resource leads—including **Pathways to Partnership (ADR)**, **Diagnostic Center/DR Access**, **CAPTAIN**, **California PBIS**, **CA Includes**, **High Quality IEPs**, and **California Early Childhood Special Education Network (CalECSE)**—to increase awareness, access, and coordinated implementation. This approach ensures districts experience the SSOS as integrated rather than siloed and supports sustainable, aligned efforts to improve outcomes for students with disabilities.

“ **System Improvement Lead (SIL) and Seeds of Partnership** collaborated throughout the year to create the State Performance Plan (SPP) summary series, a handout for families and communities to better understand special education data. We also co-designed a webinar on this topic. Working together with SEEDS has improved our ability to integrate family voice into our resource design and reach broader audiences.

“ **SoCal SOS** developed a logic model to improve outcomes for ELs, LTELs, and students with disabilities. Partnering with **Regional EL Specialists (RELS)** in Regions 9 and 10 and with **System Improvement Leads (SIL)** has enabled us to build capacity across COEs.
—**Geographic Lead Agency: Southern California System of Support (Riverside & San Diego COEs)**

By facilitating connections between state, district, and school leaders, Lead Agencies are strengthening cross-agency collaboration and enhancing the capacity of local educators to drive meaningful change in their schools and districts.

“ **EmbraceAbilities** partnered with the **Supporting Inclusive Practices (SIP)** Project to align professional learning, technical assistance, and systems-change efforts with SIP's established expertise in inclusive practices and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Together, we presented a LA County-wide Inclusion Symposium that brought together educators, administrators, and cross-sector partners.
—**EmbraceAbilities**



“ When supporting partner districts engaged in Differentiated Assistance, alignment with the **California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE)** has allowed us to integrate community engagement strategies directly into instructional improvement planning rather than treating engagement as a separate initiative. This has ensured that community voice, especially from historically underrepresented families, actively informs decisions about curriculum, resource allocation, and student supports. This collaboration directly supported districts in building internal coherence so that engagement efforts were not isolated but instead tied to measurable student outcomes such as attendance, school climate, and academic progress.
—**Community Engagement Initiative (CEI)**

“ We collaborated closely with **Open Access: Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** who plan and host the annual UDL Summit. Both agencies coordinate efforts, share expertise, and align resources to support high-quality professional learning focused on inclusive instructional design. This collaboration allowed us to bring together educators and leaders from across California to explore practical tools, strategies, and systems that reduce barriers to learning. By strengthening educators' capacity to design inclusive instruction, the Summit supported improved access and outcomes for students across diverse classrooms in California.
—**California Coalition for Inclusive Learning (CCIL)**

The Statewide System of Support is continually evolving as new initiatives, partners, and priorities emerge. Rather than expecting every initiative or partnership to move uniformly along the continuum, we use it as a guidepost for reflection, continuous improvement, and intentional relationship building. Different initiatives will engage at different points based on their purpose, maturity, and context. By using the continuum to identify opportunities for stronger coordination, collaboration, integration, or interdependence where they add value, we create a more coherent, responsive, and effective system of support for California's LEAs and, ultimately, better outcomes for students.

