

September 2, 2016

Mike Kirst, President
California State Board of Education
1430 N Street, Suite 5111
Sacramento, CA 95814

Via email only (sbe@cde.ca.gov)

Re: LCFF Equity Coalition Comments re: Developing an Integrated Local, State, and Federal Accountability and Continuous Improvement System etc. – September 2016 Board Meeting Item 1

Dear President Kirst:

We represent a coalition of civil rights, advocacy, community, parent, student and other organizations who have worked diligently on passage and implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). 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 of their local schools. As you know, in an effort to give life to these objectives, we have commented jointly multiple times over the last year regarding the State Board of Education's LCFF regulatory proposals and evaluation rubrics/accountability system items.

As an initial matter, we again wish to applaud the staff of the SBE and CDE for a great deal of hard work over the past year and for listening to many of the concerns expressed by the LCFF Equity Coalition in proposing key aspects of the path forward on California's next generation of state accountability. In particular, we wish to highlight and urge adoption of the following:

- An Equity Report within the top-level data display that prominently shows areas where there are significant equity issues and disparities in performance for student subgroups.
- A state standard under State Priority 6 which expect annual use and reporting of local school climate surveys in order to provide a broader measure of school climate.
- A working group to further explore school climate measurement approaches (including student, teacher and parent perceptions of school climate) and to identify tools, resources, and surveys that measure conditions of learning, implementation of state academic standards, access to broad courses of study, and the coordination of services.
- An interim framework for local standard-setting, data-collection and accountability around the Parent Involvement state priority largely in alignment with the June 2015 report recommendations of parent groups led by PICO California, Families in Schools, Parent Organization Network, Parent Teacher Home Visit Project and the Parent Teachers' Association.
- A College and Career Ready state indicator in the accountability system based on multiple-measures (including, when available, the State Seal of Biliteracy), thereby signaling that college and career readiness, not simply graduation, are expected ultimate outcomes of California's public school system.
- An English Learner Proficiency metric that is a composite going beyond simply test scores to include as well reclassification rates and Long-Term English Learner rates.

As well, we appreciate the recommendation of the SBE staff, in line with our request, to delay adoption of the revised LCAP template until the November SBE meeting to allow for greater stakeholder input and more time for consideration.

We look forward to continuing to serve as an important sounding board as the rubrics are further refined over the coming year. In the meantime, we make the following observations, comments and recommendations as to specific components of the proposed Evaluation Rubrics:

I. Support and Assistance to LEAs

Our Coalition has a serious concern with the relatively weak technical assistance (“TA”) proposed for *all* LEAs identified for TA in their first year of qualifying for such. All that is proposed is that county offices send each such LEA a letter identifying “the LEA’s strengths and weaknesses.” We expect a more robust role and delineation of that role for county offices in the support and assistance system. For example, there will surely be some LEAs in obvious and dire need of immediate support to improve. There is no need to wait an additional year to determine if action is needed. Accordingly, **we request that the SBE direct staff to identify for the November Board meeting an additional tier within the LEAs identified for first year TA whose performance warrants immediate, actionable TA by county offices of education (COEs).** The criteria for selecting the “immediate assistance” tier could turn on which LEAs are red in all or nearly all priority areas, for multiple subgroups, and whose disparity gaps are the largest.

Secondly, we recommend that not all of the TA offered to LEAs (whether in year 1 for our proposed “immediate assistance” tier, or year 2 or beyond) need be “individually designed technical assistance”.¹ **The SBE should direct staff to revise the Framework for Supporting LEAs and Schools for the November Board meeting to encourage county offices of education to provide similarly situated LEAs experiencing similar performance issues with similar subgroups to receive TA together.** By grouping together similar LEAs in need of similar TA, perhaps on a regional basis and perhaps pairing them with successful LEAs or academic experts, county offices should be able to provide TA more efficiently, enabling the counties to reach more LEAs in need of improvement and their students.

Thirdly, **we request that a revised November Framework memo elucidate more fully about the nature of COE involvement in technical assistance and the expectations of COEs in offering assistance and support, e.g., in years 1, 2, 3, etc.** We believe that the SBE needs to be more explicit on the COE role in the tiered system of intervention, especially in light of the failure of many COEs to effectively oversee and implement LCFF in the past two years. COEs would benefit from understanding the expectations of the State Board in terms of the kind of oversight and common practices in which they should be engaged, their role in developing and disseminating best practices, and the interplay of the role of COEs and the California Collaborative on Educational Excellence (CCEE).

II. Implementation Timeline for Various Critical Indicators

We appreciate the thought staff has given to establishing an effective and realistic timeline for fully implementing the State’s new accountability system. We are, nonetheless, disappointed to see many important indicators be years away from inclusion in the accountability system. We do not believe this is entirely necessary. **Indicator implementation can be meaningfully sped up by incorporating approved indicators in their first year of operation, i.e., when only “status” information is available, rather than waiting for an additional year until both “status” and “change” data exists.** A first year of “status” (*i.e.*, outcome) data will by itself meaningfully add to the continuous improvement judgments

¹ See Item 1 Memo at page 3 of 5 describing “Differentiated Assistance” (Level 2).

various stakeholders will be undertaking. Specific indicators this principle could be applied to (and our proposed new year for their initial use) include:

- CAASP ELA & Math Growth (2018-19)
- EL Proficiency -- ELPAC (pre-inclusion of reclassification and LTEL rates) (2018-19)
- Chronic Absenteeism (2018-19)
- revised College and Career Readiness (2018-19), and
- revised Local Indicators (2019-2020, to the extent they yield “status” and “change” data as revised).

Staff appropriately followed precisely this approach in establishing performance categories for the College and Career Indicator² and initially for the SBAC ELA & Math Academic Indicator.³

In addition, as concerns the EL Proficiency indicator specifically, it is not clear from the staff memo that there is no interruption in having an EL Proficiency indicator in place while the revised indicator is being developed and the State transitions from the CELDT to the ELPAC assessment. We ask that the SBE make clear with staff at the Board meeting that there will in fact be an EL Proficiency indicator in operation consistently through to adoption of the fully revised indicator in 2019-20 (which will use ELPAC scores, reclassification and LTEL rates). Specifically, *we recommend the State, at a minimum, utilize 2016-17 CELDT data for the 2017-18 Rubrics and, consistent with our recommendation here, use ELPAC “status” data in 2018-19 to ensure that there are no years when an EL Proficiency Indicator is absent.*

Finally, as to the revised Local Indicators, which are not slated for operation until 2019-20, **we urge the SBE to direct staff to require LEAs to report Local Indicator data in their Rubrics for 2017-18 and 2018-19 even if such are not used for accountability purposes at that time** as a means of enhancing local transparency and acclimating stakeholders to the Local Indicators.

III. College and Career Readiness as a State Indicator

We strongly support the proposal to create a College and Career Indicator (CCI) and have it operate as a state indicator in the rubrics. We applaud the SBE for moving up the timeline to operationalize this concept to the initial rubrics adoption slated for September, and we commend SBE and CDE staff who have worked diligently to further refine and flesh out the details of the CCI since July. We recommend the following change to the proposed initial CCI and the following recommendations on the planned revisions to the CCI in the coming years:

- **11th grade test scores should qualify as “prepared” on the CCI only if students satisfy CSU requirements.** The latest version of the CCI model, presented in the Agenda materials, sets too low a bar for being considered “prepared” based on 11th grade test scores/Early Assessment Program (EAP) and represents a step backwards from prior versions. In this new August 2016 model, a student would be considered “prepared” by simply scoring a Level 3 (“standard met” or formerly known as “conditionally ready”) on both English Language Arts and math. In contrast, the July 2016 version provided that a student would be considered “prepared” if he or she scored Level 3 and passed approved 12th grade courses in both subjects (and would be considered “well prepared” if he or she scored Level 4 “ready”/“standard exceeded” on both subjects).

We don’t believe the new proposal is sufficiently rigorous, and it is inconsistent with California State University (CSU) requirements that a student who scores Level 3 must take and pass an approved

² See Item 1 Memo, Attachment 2 at page 5 of 6.

³ See Item 1 Memo, Attachment 2 at page 3 of 6.

12th grade course in order to be eligible for credit-bearing courses in that subject area, without needing to pass a placement exam. The latter condition should be added to the CCI as well.

- **Commit to adding the “well prepared” CCI performance level when the CCI is revised.** We are pleased that CDE has recognized the importance of setting a goal of both college and career readiness by providing that a student shall only be deemed “well prepared” if there is evidence that he or she is both college and career ready. Still, we believe it is critical that the State Board eventually adopt a “well prepared” performance level, in order to truly implement the goal of college and career readiness and set district and school sights higher than just meeting sufficient benchmarks to qualify students as “prepared.” We encourage the State Board to prioritize adopting a “well prepared” performance level by the time the revised CCI is adopted.
- **Incorporate the revised CCI into the accountability system by 2018-19 rather than 2019-20.** The SBE should set the goal of incorporating the revised CCI into the accountability system by 2018-19. Given the substantial work done under SB 1458 (Steinberg) since 2012, this work is already far along and should be capable of implementation sooner than 2019-20.
- **Consider adding Grade Point Average (GPA) as a metric within the CCI.** High school GPA has been shown to be the strongest predictor of college level course success. The California Student Aid Commission already effectively collects grades to calculate GPA for most high school seniors, and GPA was included in July 2016 Agenda materials as one of several “Elements that Need Further Data Analysis “ for the CCI. However, GPA is not identified in the timeline presented in the Agenda materials for the September meeting as an additional data point to be considered for the CCI. It should be.
- **Establish a work group of stakeholders on college and career readiness.** CDE staff stated their intention to convene a work group at the July SBE meeting, but a work group is not included in the timeline presented in the Agenda materials, while work groups on school conditions and climate and the English Learner Indicator are specifically referenced. A work group on college and career readiness should be created as well.

IV. Incentivize “Green” Performance, Not Just “Red” Avoidance

By setting cut scores for each indicator, the SBE is implicitly setting expectations for performance. However, we believe these expectations can be more explicit. We have read in past board items and heard in meetings that the State’s goal is for schools and districts to achieve the “green” performance category. If this is the case, we do not believe that expectation is clearly communicated, either in the memos or in the proposed top-level display. We believe the state should more clearly and directly communicate its goals for status and change, and for performance overall. For instance, the top-level display could signal that its goal is for districts to achieve a graduation rate of 90% or higher.

And while communicating the goal will encourage districts to reach for it, we believe the state can do more to incentive growth toward “green” and beyond. As it stands now, the system largely incentivizes districts to escape the “red” category. We believe the SBE can more effectively balance incentives and consequences at both ends of the color spectrum. For instance, the SBE could recognize districts that reach “green” or “blue” for traditionally undeserved subgroups of students, in keeping with the CDE’s task force on accountability recommendations.

V. Suspension Rate State Indicator

We strongly support the inclusion of suspension rates as a state indicator, and we look forward to working with the Board to broaden the measurement of school climate by adding measures from school climate surveys (student, parent and teacher) that in combination with suspension rates will more accurately reflect the school climate state priority.

That said, we have a few technical recommendations. While the overall suspension rate state indicator should be based on both in-school and out-of-school suspensions, **we strongly encourage the Board to break down the suspension rates to separate in-school and out-of-school suspensions in one of the drill down menus in the evaluation rubric dashboard.** Research shows that there is a significant difference between the two types of suspensions in terms of the negative impact that the suspension has. *Also, we would encourage the SBE to revise its methodology for calculating suspension rates so as to avoid creating unintended biases and conflicting state vs. district performance standards.*⁴

VI. Working Group Transparency and Representation

Moving forward, a fair amount of important work will be taking place through the various working groups (school climate and conditions, EL Proficiency, Technical Design Group, CPAG, possibly CCI). We would request that SBE and CDE ensure and increase transparency around these bodies along the lines as has been done with CPAG. For example, staff should identify for stakeholders when and where meetings are taking place, whether they are open to the public and should publish agenda, minutes and recordings of proceedings.

In terms of representation on these working groups, we particularly emphasize the importance of local community representation on the school climate and conditions work group, dedicated as it is to input on the development of the many critical local indicators. We applaud the CDE's appointment of CFJ E.D. Taryn Ishida, an expert in student engagement and climate issues from the student perspective. Nonetheless, **we believe there should also be a parent and a community-based representative on the school climate and conditions working group to round out the body's expertise, and we urge appointment of such.**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to continuing working with the State Board of Education to realize the full promise of LCFF for our neediest students.

Sincerely,

⁴ Rather than calculating a single districtwide average of suspension rates by grade span, the SBE should combine the results of grade span analysis, calculating elementary, middle and high school ratings and then combining those three ratings weighted by enrollment. As the data clearly illustrates, there are differences in suspension rates by grade range with middle schools having the highest, and elementary schools the lowest. Relying on a district average ignores this fact and may create unfair comparisons because districts that serve different grade configurations (elementary districts serve K-5 or K-8, some high school districts serve 7-8 and some serve K-5, some unified districts have feeder elementary districts and some do not). The proposed rating will be biased based on the grade ranges served. The same proposed methodology should be examined for all indicators, as this point can apply more broadly than only to the suspension rate indicator.

John Affeldt
Managing Attorney
Public Advocates Inc.

Kevine Boggess
Director of Youth Organizing
Coleman Advocates for Children & Youth

Lauren Brady
Directing Attorney – Statewide Education Rights Project
Public Counsel

Ginna Brelsford and Geoffrey Winder
Co-Executive Directors
Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network

Jan Gustason Corea
CEO
CABE

Oscar E. Cruz
President & CEO
Families In Schools

Nayna Gupta
Staff Attorney
ACLU of California

Deborah Escobedo
Senior Attorney, Racial Justice-Education
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights

Jesse Hahnel
Executive Director
National Center for Youth Law

Betty Hung
Policy Director
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | Los Angeles

Taryn Ishida
Executive Director
Californians for Justice

Alex Johnson
Executive Director
Children's Defense Fund California

Brian Lee
California State Director
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

Sergio Luna

Lead Organizer, Education for Liberation Campaign
PICO California

Kenneth Magdaleno

Executive Director
CLEAR (Center for Leadership, Equity and Research)

Pecolia Manigo

Executive Director
Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network

Araceli Simeón

Project Director
Parent Organization Network

Ryan J. Smith

Executive Director
The Education Trust-West

Shelly Spiegel-Coleman

Executive Director
Californians Together

Samantha Tran

Senior Managing Director,
Education Policy Children Now

Arturo Ybarra

Executive Director
Watts/Century Latino Organization (WCLO)

cc: Members, California State Board of Education
Karen Stapf Walters, Executive Director, California State Board of Education
Judy Cias, Chief Counsel, California State Board of Education
David Sapp, Deputy Policy Director and Assistant Legal Counsel
Nancy Brownell, Senior Fellow, Local Control and Accountability
Michelle Magyar, Local Control Funding Formula
Jeff Bell, Department of Finance
Cathy McBride, Governor's Office
Jannelle Kubinec, Director of National, State and Special Projects, WestEd