

# OUR RIGHT TO RESOURCES

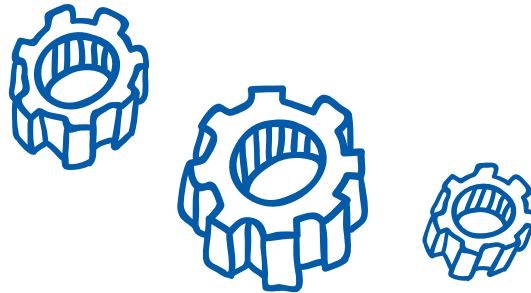
TOOLKIT



## HOW TO USE LCFF TO ADVOCATE FOR YOUR PRIORITIES

# IN THIS TOOLKIT

- 2 About the toolkit
- 3 What is the Local Control Funding Formula?
- 4 Timeline for LCFF Advocacy
- 6 Create an Advocacy Plan
- 7 How to Read the LCAP
- 8 Learn More About Your School District
- 10 Meetings with Decision-Makers
- 11 Public Comment at Board Meetings (Brown Act)
- 11 How to Conduct a Rally
- 12 How to File a UCP Complaint
- 13 Media Strategy
- 15 Resources



## ABOUT THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit explains how school districts work and provides a guide for students, parents, and community members to fight for the programs and services that are best for them and their communities. School districts must make their decisions with community input, which gives you and your community an opportunity to be heard.

This toolkit will focus on advocacy through the Local Control Funding Formula (“LCFF”). Under LCFF, there are rules that districts must follow when spending funds they receive for students who are low-income, foster youth, or English learners (“high-need students”). By using the steps in this toolkit, you can develop LCFF campaigns to win the resources you need for your school.

## WHAT IS THE LOCAL CONTROL FUNDING FORMULA?

After over ten years of advocacy from parents and community organizers, former California Governor Jerry Brown signed the Local Control Funding Formula in 2013. LCFF became the way the state decides how much money each school district receives and provides rules about how school districts may spend this money. Watch [this video](#) for a quick overview.

LCFF is a critical tool because it is designed to help high-need students succeed, give families decision-making power, and create schools of belonging and inclusion for all students. When it's working correctly, LCFF allows community members to learn how and why their school districts are spending their money, give feedback on how the money is spent, and force the district to spend the money the right way if it's doing something wrong.

School districts generally receive three types of funding through LCFF: **base**, **supplemental**, and **concentration** funds.

- The state provides school districts with a **base grant** for each student it enrolls. For example, if a district enrolls 100 students, it will receive 100 base grants. School districts may use them for almost all purposes, including for teacher salaries, electricity bills, staff training, and books and supplies.
- School districts receive a **supplemental grant** for each high-need student (low-income student, foster youth, or English learner) they enroll. The supplemental grant provides an additional 20% on top of the base grant.
- School districts receive a **concentration grant** if more than 55% of its students are in one of the three high-need student groups. The district receives a concentration grant for each student above the 55% level, and the grant provides 50% on top of the base grant.

## What are the rules for supplemental and concentration grants?

Districts must use supplemental and concentration (“S&C”) funds to support their high-need students with more or better services. Districts must show how they are doing that in a budget document called the Local Control and Accountability Plan (“LCAP”).

Districts with more than 55% high-need students may use their S&C funds on district-wide purposes but must show how such funds are “**principally directed**” and “**effective**” in meeting the district’s goals for high-need students. Districts with less than 55% high-need students must use these funds in the way that “most effectively” serves high-need students.

Districts must publish a spending plan called the LCAP every three years and must update it every year. Every year, the district must ask the community how it wants to spend its money. This provides you with an opportunity to fight for the things that are important to you and your community.

For more information about your participation rights under LCFF, see this [Student Voice Know Your Rights poster](#) from Californians for Justice. For parent participation and language rights under LCFF, check out this [Know Your Rights handout](#).



## TIMELINE FOR LCFF ADVOCACY

Every school district in the state has a timeline they need to follow when developing their LCAPs. Because budgeting decisions go through a series of steps and approvals, it is important for you to stay updated with the most recent funding information in your school district.

A lot can happen within a few months, so below is a timeline that summarizes the process each school district takes when developing their LCAPs. The timeline also shows what you can do at each stage to advocate and influence your school district's priorities and spending decisions.

### OCTOBER

Districts collect feedback from the community on goals and services in the current LCAP.

### JANUARY

Districts are revising their budgets for the coming year.

### MAY

Districts get updated information about their budgets for the next year.

In late May or June, school boards hold a public hearing on the LCAP and budget to receive community feedback.

### DECEMBER

Data for the previous year becomes available on the California Dashboard.

### MARCH - JUNE

Districts begin to share parts of LCAPs in meetings and on their websites.

**This is a critical time for advocates to make their concerns heard!**

### JUNE

Districts finalize their draft LCAPs and submit them to school boards.

The school boards must approve the LCAPs and submit to the County Office of Education (COE) by July 1.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

**Learn about the LCAP.** Build knowledge among students, parents and communities to understand how the district is spending its money and serving students. Team up with a local organization working on LCFF issues to host a presentation for your community. Find sample presentations: [aclusocal.org/RightToResources](https://aclusocal.org/RightToResources)

**Gather and understand student data.** Visit the websites on [page 8](#) to see how your district is doing. If information you want is not available online, you can submit a Public Records Act (“PRA”) request to the school district. For more information on why and how to submit a request, see [page 9](#).

**Listen and learn from your community.** Bring your own ideas and meet with others in your community to find out how their needs are being addressed in the current plan. This can happen through community forums, town halls, and other spaces to identify common priorities.

FALL / WINTER

FALL / WINTER

SPRING / SUMMER

### Join or attend a student or parent advisory committee

Districts create committees such as the Parent Advisory Committee (“PAC”) and District English Learner Advisory Committee (“DELAC”) and select members in September or October. Districts must listen to these committees’ concerns and recommendations, and hold public meetings, so you can participate even if you are not a member. Give input about what you would like your district to improve and align with others on priorities.

**Review the draft LCAP and give feedback at community meetings** to see if the district is spending on resources that truly help your students and community. To learn how to review an LCAP, see [page 7](#).

**Collaborate and build support for your campaign.** Gather students, parents, and other allies to discuss problems you found. Work with allies to spread the word about the solutions you would like to see in the LCAP. To learn how to strengthen your advocacy, see [pages 10-14](#).

**Contact your district’s policymakers.** Discuss concerns you have, such as illegal spending or lack of investment in a priority program or service with your superintendent, district staff, and board members. Find tips on [page 10](#).

**Get your message out.** Publicize your message through the media or social media. Learn more on [page 13](#).

**Take your message to the school board.** Mobilize at the board meeting and publicly oppose the LCAP by providing public comment or holding a rally. Learn more on [page 11](#). If you do not see the changes that you asked for in the LCAP, send a letter and ask to meet with board members to urge them to vote no on the LCAP. Find a sample letter: [aclusocal.org/RightToResources](https://aclusocal.org/RightToResources).

**File a complaint with the district.** If the district did not listen to your demands and adopts an LCAP with illegal spending, you can file a Uniform Complaint Procedure (“UCP”) complaint. To learn about UCP complaints, see [page 12](#).

**Send a letter to the County Office of Education** urging it not to approve the LCAP. Sample letters and complaints: [aclusocal.org/RightToResources](https://aclusocal.org/RightToResources)

**File a complaint with the COE.** If the COE approves an LCAP that includes illegal spending or fails to follow the approved state template, file a UCP complaint against the COE.

**Appeal your complaint to the California Department of Education.** If the district or COE rejects your UCP complaint, appeal it to the California Department of Education within 15 days. Learn more on [page 12](#).

SUMMER / FALL

## AUGUST

**August 15** The COE may approve the LCAPs or identify problems and ask questions about the districts’ LCAPs.

**August 30** (or within 15 days) School districts must respond to any questions or problems identified by the COE.

## OCTOBER

**October 8**  
The COE must approve the districts’ LCAPs.

## SEPTEMBER

**September 15** (or within 15 days)  
The COE provides recommendations for changes to the district’s LCAP.

The districts must consider proposed changes in a public meeting, and if necessary, adopt updated LCAPs.



## CREATE AN ADVOCACY PLAN

You have the right to advocate in your school district. Whether you advocate to ensure district funds are invested in resources that truly support all students or fight for more investments in school nurses and school social workers, advocacy is something anyone can do! Local advocacy is necessary to ensure school districts are held accountable to the students and families they serve. In this section, we will provide you with some tools, guidance, and samples of how you can engage your district on key issues affecting your school community.

Use the chart below to help organize your goals, who the key players are, and what you need to do to meet your goals.

<p><b>Goals</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What is the goal of your campaign?</li> <li>■ What change or win do you wish to accomplish?</li> </ul> <p><b>EXAMPLE:</b> Ensure school district invest more in restorative justice programs, to better support high need students. Shift money from law enforcement and security to increase investments in restorative justice.</p>
<p><b>Things to Consider</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What resources do you have or need?</li> <li>■ Any upcoming events or political decisions that might impact your campaign in a negative or positive way?</li> </ul> <p><b>EXAMPLE:</b> A strong group of students to advocate on behalf of their peers Upcoming selection of new Superintendents Two board member seats up for re-election</p>
<p><b>Constituents Allies Opponents</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Who cares about the issue enough to join your campaign?</li> <li>■ Who can help your campaign even though they are not directly affected?</li> <li>■ Who will actively organize against you?</li> </ul> <p><b>EXAMPLE:</b> <b>Constituents</b> are students and parents. <b>Allies</b> are educational justice organizations and teachers. <b>Opponents</b> are opposed to restorative justice in schools.</p>
<p><b>Targets</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Which individuals have the power to give you what you want?</li> </ul> <p><b>EXAMPLE:</b> Superintendents, Superintendent Chiefs of Staff, School Boards</p>
<p><b>Tactics / Activities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ What do you need to do to put pressure on your target(s) to meet your campaign goal and demands?</li> <li>■ What will help increase awareness of your campaign and build additional support?</li> </ul> <p><b>EXAMPLE:</b> Hold a forum or town hall, participate in an LCAP advisory committee, public comment during school board meetings</p>

## HOW TO READ THE LCAP

Each year, school districts must include parents, students, teachers, staff, and other community members in a planning process for how to spend its money to best serve students. At the end of the process, the district creates an “LCAP,” which should clearly describe what the district is doing and why, and whether those strategies are making progress for students, especially foster youth, English learners, and low-income students. The district must make progress in 8 state priority areas, including school climate, student engagement, parent involvement, and academic achievement, among others. This section of the toolkit is designed for individuals and groups that already have a campaign or issue in mind and are interested in using the LCAP as a tool to win that campaign.

When districts create their LCAPs, they must all use the same template. In 2020, the state created a new template, which is divided into 5 major sections. LCAPs can be hundreds of pages long, so if you already have an issue or concern in mind, the quickest way to find relevant information is to search the electronic version of each section for key words. The LCAP must be posted on each school district website, or you can also find it on your County Office of Education’s website after it is finalized and approved.

**Plan Summary:** This section summarizes the key features of this year’s LCAP and reflections from the prior year. It is helpful to look at what the district prioritizes and sees as its biggest strengths and weaknesses.

**Stakeholder Engagement:** This section describes how the district engaged stakeholders and the impact of that engagement. This section is helpful if you participated in the LCAP development process and would like to see if the District meaningfully considered and incorporated your feedback.

**Goals and Actions:** Like a strategic plan, this section provides the goals the district wants to reach and why, how progress on the goals will be measured, and actions designed to achieve the goals. Most of the information you need will be in this section, including a description of each action and the total funds budgeted and whether it is contributing to increased/improved services. If an action is listed as contributing to increased and improved services, the rules around S&C funding apply. There is also space to reflect on whether the planned actions were effective in the previous year and whether the district made any major changes from what was planned. You can also see whether the district is making progress on its goal by reviewing outcomes across several years. If you are concerned about how specific student groups are doing, be sure to ask your district to provide data for those student groups.

### **Increased or Improved Services for Foster Youth, English Learners, and Low-Income Students:**

This section describes how a district plans to provide more or better services to foster youth, English learners, and low-income students who bring additional money to the district to meet their needs. The district must identify all districtwide or schoolwide actions that it claims are positively impacting high-need students in this section. The district must also explain how the needs of high-need students were prioritized in designing the action. That means high-need students uniquely benefit from the action—more than other students. In addition, the district must explain how the action is effective in meeting the goals for these students. This is also an important section to review for advocacy because you can use the district’s justification, or lack of justification, to show that its spending is not legal and advocate for a more effective service to meet student needs. For more information, see the letter and complaint templates:

[aclusocal.org/RightToResources](https://aclusocal.org/RightToResources)

**Expenditure Tables:** The expenditure tables show how much money the district spends on each action, including how much the district planned to spend and what it actually spent. If you want to see how much money is spent on different items or for specific student groups, this is the place to look.

## LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT

To support your campaign, you should learn more about how your district is doing so that you can use that information to support your arguments. For example, if your district suspends high-need students or students of color at high rates, you should reference those numbers if you are fighting for restorative justice or other practices to change the culture at your schools. This section describes several online tools that will provide information about your district.

### The California Dashboard

<http://www.caschooldashboard.org/>

Color coded charts make it easy to see which sub-groups of students are not performing well in different ways.

You can also see these reports by school to see which schools are doing better or worse on different indicators. For an individual school, you can also review the sub-group data for that school only by clicking on the school from the Schools Five-by-Five grid.

### Data Quest

<https://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

Dataquest provides more data, but in a less user-friendly format. For example, Dataquest can be used to review expulsion rates, chronic absenteeism for high school, suspensions by offense category, and various other reports that are not available on the California Dashboard. Dataquest can also be helpful to view metrics across multiple years and to separate by grade span, gender, charter versus non-charter, and type of suspension.

Keep in mind that it may take more than a year to see measurable progress on a goal. Also keep in mind that percentages can vary wildly from year to year for subgroups that are very small. However, if things keep getting worse year after year, or if outcomes for certain groups like high-need students remain poor even if outcomes are improving for other students, that is a sign that the action is not working.

### ACLU SoCal Education Justice Tool

[aclusocal.org/edjustice](http://aclusocal.org/edjustice)

The ACLU of Southern California publishes an online data tool that allows community members to determine how many school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and school nurses each district has. You can access a feature of the school that lists and shows the thousands of schools across California that have police but lack one of the four school-based health and mental health positions by clicking here. The tool also provides information about whether districts provide enough arts access. Finally, the tool provides data about how much each school district is arresting students or referring students to law enforcement.



## Other Helpful Data Sources

### California Healthy Kids Survey Dashboard

<https://calschls.org/reports-data/public-dashboards/>

### Core Survey Dashboard

<https://dashboard.coredistricts.org/public/core>

These two sites provide school climate survey data. You can also ask your district to provide the data from school climate surveys on their own websites. This is a best practice that Oakland Unified follows.

### The Education Data Partnership

<https://www.ed-data.org>

The Education Data Partnership user-friendly charts on student-to-staff ratios, teaching diversity and experience, and demographics, among other indicators, and allows for easy comparison of schools and districts.

### School Accountability Report Cards

<https://sarconline.org/>

This site provides information about student outcomes, facilities conditions, teacher credentialing, amongst other things at the district and school level.

### Submit a Public Records Act (“PRA”) Request

If the information you are looking for is not available from the sources above, you can submit a PRA request with the district.

The California Public Records Act requires that school districts provide most, but not all, records to the public when requested.

Any person or entity may request information. Districts do not need to create new documents for you but they do generally need to produce documents they already have which respond to your requests. Documents that school districts must produce include: memos, emails, presentations, data, audio recordings, agendas, proposals and contracts, and bulletins. Districts may refuse to produce: personal or medical

records if disclosure is an unwarranted invasion of privacy, investigative records, pending lawsuits, attorney-client privileged communications, and student records.

After you submit a PRA request, the district must provide a response within 10 days (or with a 4 day extension). However, the district is not required to actually produce the documents within that time period. They must produce the documents “promptly” once they determine the records may be disclosed.

You can find a sample PRA request and further instructions here:

[aclusocal.org/RightToResources](https://aclusocal.org/RightToResources)

## MEETINGS WITH DECISION-MAKERS

To make change in your schools, you will likely need to meet with the decision-makers in your school district. Often, these individuals are elected (like school board members) or appointed (like the superintendent) to their roles. Building and maintaining positive relationships with key decisionmakers is often one of the main methods to hold decision-makers accountable to the needs & demands of those they are supposed to represent.

When preparing to schedule meetings with any of your school district's decision-makers, know that they will probably ask other staff who are directly involved in developing and implementing policies to participate. Below are a few tips to help you coordinate successful meetings with decision-makers:

### Schedule your meeting:

- When requesting a meeting, identify yourself and any organization or coalition you may represent.
- Offer dates and timeframes to meet that are convenient for you and those in your organization or coalition.
- Let them know why you want to meet and set a date by when you would like to hear back from them.
- Keep in mind that your meeting may end up being scheduled with a staff member of your decision-maker's office. Though not ideal, it is still an important opportunity as it is their job to communicate with their supervisor what is discussed in the meeting.



### Prep session with those who are attending the meeting: Before the meeting, it is helpful to check-in with others who are attending to:

- Develop an agenda to help everyone stay on track during the discussion.
- Divide up roles and responsibilities and make sure each person knows what role they'll play in the meeting.
- Roleplay the talking points you want to discuss during the meeting.

### During the meeting:

- Answer questions to the best of your ability. If you do not know the answer, simply say you can get back to them after the meeting.
- Make your "ask." Have the most important question you want the decision maker to answer ready. For example: "Can we count on you to...?"
- Don't forget to take good notes that you can share back with the rest of your group. This will also help you keep the decision-maker accountable in the future to what they said during the meeting.

### Follow-up:

- Send a thank-you email or note to their office, then check in on any commitments they made.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT AT BOARD MEETINGS (BROWN ACT)**

One very effective way to be heard by your school district is to speak at school board meetings. While you can feel free to speak at any board meeting, there are two particular board meetings you should target: (1) the board meeting where school staff first introduce the LCAP to the board between April and June and (2) the board meeting where the board votes to approve the LCAP, usually in June.

You have a right to speak at any board meeting. School board meetings are governed by a law called the Brown Act, which makes sure that the public has full access to the way local governments make decisions.

### **Under the Brown Act school districts must:**

- Take all formal actions and make all formal decisions at a public meeting
- Provide prior notice of public meeting and an agenda:
  - Generally, the agenda must be posted at least 72 hours before meeting
  - Materials considered during the meeting must be publicly available (including the LCAP)
  - The board cannot consider items not listed on the agenda
- Members of the public must be allowed to provide comment on any item
- Communication about any formal action that involves a majority of members of the body cannot occur outside of a public meeting

### **Practical tips:**

- While all districts must follow the rules above, they may also create their own additional rules. Check your district's website to understand the procedures.
- Usually you need to show up early and put your name down on the speaker list or grab a speaker card to make sure you can speak.

- Comments are usually restricted to 2-5 minutes, so make sure your statement is short, clear, and strong.
- There is strength in numbers – gather friends, family, and other partners to share the same message.
- Sometimes board meetings are recorded and sometimes they are not. If they are not, you may want to record audio or video or take notes to keep a record.

## **HOW TO CONDUCT A RALLY**

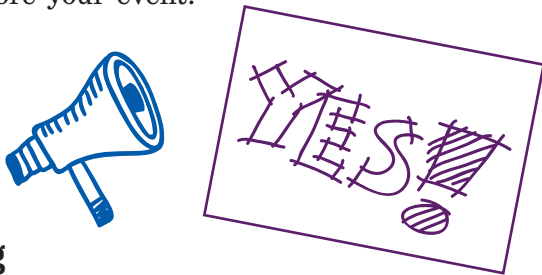
Another effective way to bring attention to your LCAP advocacy efforts is through a rally or other similar mobilization. People gathering publicly over a specific cause can affect public opinion and alter the thinking and decisions of decision-makers like board members or the superintendent.

Below is a quick guide of things to consider before, during and after hosting such an event.

### **Before**

- Decide if a rally is the best course of action for your campaign. Are there other things you can do that will help advance your campaign before committing the resources needed to host a large-scale event?
- If you determine a rally is the next best step, convene your lead supporters & allies and develop your objectives and a “Day of” logistics plan.
- Identify a location and set a date & time for your rally and make sure to choose a public place that will be seen by the public and decisionmakers.
- Research if the location requires a permit, an application, or has any fees. You want to do everything possible to ensure your rally is not shut down before getting your message across!
- Create a schedule or “agenda” for the day of the rally to ensure everything goes smoothly and you give speakers enough time to talk.

- Assign roles for day of the rally (e.g. media spokespeople, peacekeepers to coordinate the crowds, emcee, chant leaders, photographer, interpreter, technology crew, legal observers, set-up/clean-up crew, police/media liaisons, timekeeper, etc.).
- Prep and print talking points/topline messaging so that anyone who shows up to the rally knows what the event is about.
- Advertise your event through social media, word of mouth, presentations, phone calls, etc.
- Create posters, signs, banners, and t-shirts that can be distributed to attendees on the day of your rally.
- Alert the media! Outreach and provide a media advisory to media outlets (both local reporters and journalists who are familiar with the issue you are focused on) a few days before your event.



### During

- Gather all your materials (bullhorns, chant sheets, food, water, PA system, signs/banners, t-shirts, petitions, translation equipment, first-aid kits, trash bags, etc.) and head to your rally location for set-up.
- Ensure all assigned roles are filled and start your rally/festivities!

### After

- Follow up with attendees (if you had a sign-up sheet) to thank them for their support and make your “ask” of them for further engagement.
- Debrief the rally with your coalition or allies to figure out what went well and what could have gone better.
- Archive media coverage for future use.

## HOW TO FILE A UCP COMPLAINT

If your district’s LCAP has illegal spending, such as S&C funds on law enforcement, or if your district did not consult with community or parent committees when developing the LCAP, you can file a Uniform Complaint Procedures (“UCP”) complaint. In most cases, you must file the complaint first with the district, but you can also file it with the County Office of Education if it approves an illegal LCAP. Each district and COE have their own procedures, which are usually available on their websites. The complaint form is simple, and you do not need a lawyer to file one. A sample UCP complaint is available here: [aclusocal.org/RightToResources](https://aclusocal.org/RightToResources)

The district has 60 days to do an investigation and prepare a written decision, unless you agree to give them more time. If the district denies your complaint, you can appeal to the California Department of Education within 15 days by sending your complaint to [lcff@cde.ca.gov](mailto:lcff@cde.ca.gov) and explaining why the district is wrong. For more information about UCP complaints, you can review the samples and other resources available here:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/cp/uc/aclusocal.org/RightToResources>

## MEDIA STRATEGY

Reaching out to the media or developing your own media can be a powerful way to achieve your goals. From outlining your needs through the perspective of those directly impacted or just reminding people of the next meeting, representing the work in media is a crucial tool. The media and public pressure can also help convince decision-makers like school district staff or school board members.

### Social Media

Choose the social media platforms that make the most sense for the targeted demographics. Make sure you define what your goals are for your social media strategy (reach, video views, engagement, etc.). It is important to understand that social media is a “pay-to-play” platform and that your organization may need to invest in social media ads to reach more people in your district. Find the school district and school board members on each social media platform and direct your messages to them. Encourage your friends and allies to send messages to them as well.

### Facebook

- Keep it short and sweet: most Facebook users skim their newsfeeds, so they are most likely to look at content that is brief and concise. Facebook posts up to 40 characters generate the most engagement.
- Photos and images are the most attractive content on Facebook, with 87% interaction rate from page followers.
- If you are using a Facebook page, post regularly to keep people engaged. You can use the Facebook scheduling tool to schedule content throughout the week or assign posting privileges to others.
- Every time a person shares, likes, or comments on posts, they are made visible to their Facebook friends. Encourage others to share and like your posts.

### Twitter

- Use the right hashtags: creating your own hashtags can be hard, so you can do some research to identify popular hashtags that align with your advocacy goals. Once you settle on a hashtag, be consistent and use the same hashtag for all of your campaign posts.
- Make it visual: you can get 150% increase in retweets by just attaching images.
- Twitter is a great way to interact directly with elected officials, who are often highly active on the platform.
- Very effective for real-time commentary on an event (school board meeting, training, protest etc.) In fact, many people (including journalists) may rely on your Twitter content to understand what happened at a meeting.

### Instagram

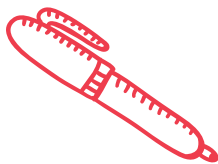
- Take advantage of the Instagram Stories feature. By using Stories, you have access to fun features like filters, polls, music clips, animated gifs that can increase engagement.
- As much as possible, use high quality, people-centric images.
- Make sure you use hashtags so that your content can be discovered.

### Op Eds

An op-ed is an opinion piece (usually in a newspaper) written by local citizens, organization leaders, experts, or others who are knowledgeable about an issue. They can sway public opinion about an important issue. They can run anywhere from 300-700 words, and most often a biographical paragraph or two accompanies the piece.

## Tips for writing an impactful and memorable op-ed:

- **Own the opinion:** know what the outcome of the op-ed is and how you want to sway or reinforce the reader's thinking and beliefs. Take a strong position.
- **Make it timely:** an op-ed is strongest when it ties to very recent news events.
- **Illustrate the issue:** it is a good idea to start with a story that personalizes the issue.
- **Aim correctly:** think about who reads the paper, who reads that section of the paper, and who reads about the issue you're addressing. It might help make decisions about the kinds of words you use or stories you tell.
- **Back it up:** opinions need evidence and support. Work statistics, numbers, and data into your op-ed in an interesting and compelling way.
- **Follow all the rules:** know the basics (not using passive sentences) and rules (stick to one subject).
- **End with action:** tell your readers to support something.
- **Use keywords in your blog posts:** you want to make sure new readers are able to find your blog online.



To try to publish an op-ed, write out a draft and submit it to your local newspaper. The newspaper's website will have instructions on how to do that. Sometimes, local newspapers give community members an opportunity to publish opinion pieces through either their executive editor or their politics editor. They may offer support to you if you have an idea and rough draft.

## Blogs

A blog is a tool that can help develop an online presence, attract leads, and engage with an audience.

- **Choosing a platform:** free blogging platforms have templates you can personalize (Tumblr, Blogger, WordPress).
- **Choosing a domain name:** your domain name (or URL) is your address on the web; choose one that is short, memorable, and descriptive.
- **Make it easy to share your blog:** expand your blog on social media, encourage readers to share posts after they've read them.
- **Why blog?** Blogging can expand your reach and impact as an advocate; storytelling and sharing as connection.
- **Best practices:** having consistent content/being reliable to your readers; creating a posting schedule.
- **Types of blogging:** microblogging (Tumblr), photo sharing/photojournalism, reporting, video blogging, op-eds.
- Reach out to other blogs to see if you can contribute as a guest author.

## Press

- Reach out to your local newspaper and see if they are interested in running a story. Find out which reporter covers education-related issues and send them a tweet or email. Try to make your pitch as interesting as possible!
- You can find out which reporter has covered a topic in the past by using Google to search for recent news coverage.



## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**Families in Schools's A Parent's Guide to School Funding**

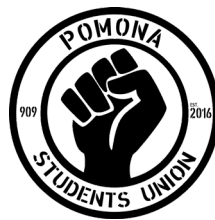
**Public Advocates's #WeMakeLCFFWork LCFF resources webpage**

**United Way Los Angeles & CLASS Coalition's Parent Engagement Toolkit**

**Ed Justice Tool**

**ACLU California's My School My Rights Know Your Rights resources for students**

**ACLU**  
AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION  
FOUNDATIONS  
California



**PUBLIC  
ADVOCATES**  
MAKING RIGHTS REAL