



Making Sense of California's System of Support for School Districts

A Note to the Field from Executive Directors Dr. Wesley Smith, ACSA and Peter Birdsall, CCSESA

Beginning this week the state will identify school districts where county superintendents must provide differentiated “technical assistance” to districts that have not improved student group performance within two or more of the eight LCFF state priorities. The approach to differentiated assistance is premised on a collaborative approach of “doing with districts,” because it is more likely to lead to sustained improvement. School districts are the primary drivers of the type of technical assistance and support they receive.

Requirements in LCFF statute – The shalls:

- County superintendent of schools shall provide differentiated assistance, which is defined to include, “among other things,” any of the following:
 - (1) Identification in writing of the school district’s strengths and weaknesses relative to the LCFF priorities, including a review of effective, evidence-based programs or practices relating to the school district’s goals.
 - (2) Assignment of an academic expert or team of experts, including soliciting that another district within the county partner with the school district to assist in identifying and implementing effective programs that are designed to improve the outcomes for all student groups; or
 - (3) Request that the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) provide advice and assistance to the school district.
- In consultation with their county office of education, school districts ultimately determine whether to modify existing programs or services or to receive additional support, including from providers other than county offices of education, as part of differentiated assistance.

Options and flexibility for districts – The mays:

- Differentiated assistance may entail connecting school districts to other districts or assistance providers with relevant expertise and capacity.
- Districts may determine modifications to local goals, actions and services, if any, through the LCAP process.
- Districts may choose or hire a support provider for additional support or services addressing the underlying need(s) they identify through the review of data.
- When reviewing the data, the school district and county office of education may identify areas of need beyond the indicators and student group(s) that led to eligibility for differentiated assistance or underlying causes for those performance issues that the school district is not already addressing.
- There is no statutory requirement to develop a new “improvement plan” since differentiated assistance exists within the LCAP process.
- Unlike prior accountability systems, the law does not require districts identified for differentiated assistance to send notification letters to parents and guardians.
- Districts not identified for differentiated assistance may seek support from the county office of education, the CCEE or other entities; however, districts are responsible for paying for the support if they request it.

If school districts or COEs need additional support, want to address any difficulties they are encountering or have a difference in opinion on what differentiated assistance means, please contact:

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