



LCFF and Requirements for Stakeholder Engagement

Question:

Under LCFF, what steps are districts required to take to gather input from parents, students and other stakeholders when developing their Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs)?

Short Answer:

LCFF establishes minimum legal requirements that districts must follow to seek and incorporate feedback from the community when developing their LCAPs. One requirement is that districts must establish parent advisory committees. Another requirement is that districts must “consult” with parents and guardians, students, and other stakeholders in developing the LCAP. Districts must also develop ways for the broader public to provide input on the LCAP as it is being developed and before it is adopted. Just complying with these minimums, however, is probably not enough to ensure appropriate and meaningful input from parents, students, and the community, so districts should consider additional approaches or strategies discussed in resources listed below.¹

¹ Additionally, promoting involvement of parents and guardians in decisions about programs that the district and individual schools offer, including the programs available to high-need students, is one of eight state priority areas under LCFF. There is also a state priority around student engagement, which can include strategies to involve students in decisions about their education. In their LCAPs, districts must identify goals for these priorities and actions to meet those goals. This requirement is separate from the minimum requirements for parent, student and public engagement in developing the LCAP. To meet this requirement, districts must take actions beyond the minimum requirements for engaging parents, students, and other stakeholders in developing the LCAP that are discussed in this document.

Background:

LCFF provides increased flexibility to school districts in deciding how to spend state education dollars, while establishing requirements for the minimum efforts that districts must make to seek input from parents, students, and other stakeholders in developing the local plans for using that funding. The fundamental premise of LCFF is that districts get increased flexibility from the state in how they spend state education money, and this flexibility must be accompanied by increased efforts to seek and incorporate feedback from the community in developing the local plans to use that money.

Under LCFF, each district must adopt a written Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) (or an annual update of an existing LCAP) before July 1 of each year that: (a) explains how the districts' use of LCFF funds is linked to goals and actions that the district must develop to address eight state priority areas; (b) shows how the district is increasing or improving services for its high-need students (low-income students, English learners, and foster youth) in proportion to the increased funding the state provides the district for those students; and (c) identifies any proposed use of the additional funds generated by high-need students on districtwide or schoolwide programs and explains why that use of funds is consistent with requirements established in regulations adopted by the State Board of Education. In their LCAPs, districts must also describe the steps they took to engage parents, pupils, and the community *and* how this engagement contributed to development of the LCAP.

The statute requires that LEAs *must* get input from parents, students, and other stakeholders in developing and adopting their LCAPs by doing, at least, the following:

- The school board *must* “consult with teachers, principals, administrators, other school personnel, local bargaining units of the school district, parents, and pupils in developing a local control and accountability plan” (EC 52060(g));
- The district *must* have a **Parent Advisory Committee (PAC)**, and the superintendent *must* present the draft LCAP to the PAC and *must* respond in writing to any comments from the PAC on the draft LCAP (EC 52062(a)(1));
- If the district has 15% or more English learner students, the district *must* have an **English learner parent advisory committee**, and the superintendent *must* present the draft LCAP to this committee and *must* respond in writing to any comments from it on the draft LCAP (EC 52062(a)(2)) (most districts will use their pre-existing District English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC) for this purpose);
- The superintendent *must* provide an opportunity for members of the public to provide written comments regarding the specific actions and expenditures proposed by the district in the LCAP or annual update (EC 52062(a)(3));
- The school board *must* hold at least one public hearing with an opportunity for public comment and recommendations regarding the specific actions and expenditures proposed in the LCAP or annual update (EC 52062(b)(1));
- The school board *must* adopt the LCAP or annual update and the district's budget at a separate public meeting, with an opportunity for public comment and recommendations on the LCAP (EC 52062(b)(2));
- LCAPs “must be consistent” with the instructional spending plans created by **School Site Councils**, which are school-level bodies consisting of 50% parents (including, at high schools and middle schools, student representatives) and 50% school staff and “shall identify and incorporate school-specific goals related to the state and local priorities” from the School Site Councils' plans (LCFF regulations, Title V, CCR § 15497).
- If 15% or more of the district's students speak a language other than English, the district must translate all written notices, reports, statements, or records provided to parents into that language (EC 48985).

These are the minimum requirements that districts must follow in developing and adopting their LCAPs. Districts can—and should—take additional steps to ensure they meaningfully engage the local community in the process.

Analysis:

Role of PACs and English learner parent advisory committees. Districts must have a PAC and, if at least 15% of the district’s students are English learners, must also have an English learner parent advisory committee. The district does not have to create a new PAC or English learner parent advisory committee if it already has parent advisory committees that meet the requirements for each committee under LCFF (EC 52063(a)(3) & (b)(2)).

The statute clearly requires that districts: (1) submit the draft LCAP to each committee and (2) respond in writing to any comments on the draft LCAP provided by those committees (which are described below).

PACs should also have a broader role in developing the draft LCAP and on the district’s overall process for seeking community input. The statute specifically states that the PAC’s purpose is to advise “the governing board of the school district and the superintendent” on “the requirements of this act,” which means to provide advice generally on how the district will implement LCFF. Because fulfilling that role requires more than simply commenting on the proposed LCAP, districts must involve PACs generally in LCFF development and implementation to comply with the statutory purpose.

Requirements for PACs. LCFF requires that PACs include “parents or legal guardians” of high-need students (low-income students, English learners, and foster youth). Beyond this, there are no specific requirements about **who must be on the PAC**. For example, there are no specific rules about how big the PAC must be, the percentage of PAC members who must be parents, or whether people other than parents can be members. Nonetheless, the strong majority of the people on the PAC should be parents or guardians of students. The legislature specifically required districts to establish *Parent Advisory Committees*, and establishing a committee in which parents and guardians are outnumbered or in which their voice is significantly diluted by other individuals would be inconsistent with the clear intent of the legislature. Additionally, other sections of the Education Code establishing committees that call for parent representation, including District Advisory Councils (EC 52852) and DELACs, require that parents or guardians make up at least a majority of the committee even though those committees are not specifically charged to serve as a *parent* advisory committee.

There are no requirements about the **how often the PAC must meet**. As noted, however, PACs should meet regularly enough and early enough in the school year to allow them to fulfill the requirement that PACs advise the school board and superintendent on LCAP development and implementation broadly speaking. The PAC cannot fulfill this purpose if it does not meet until district staff have already prepared the proposed LCAP. All PAC meetings must be open to the public and provide an opportunity for public comment.

If the district elects to use an existing parent committee as the PAC for LCFF, the district must continue to follow any requirements for that committee. For example, if the district elects to use the District Advisory Council as the PAC, the requirement that parents of students eligible for certain programs make up a majority of the District Advisory Council and be elected by parents will apply.

Requirements for English learner parent advisory committees. The statute does not provide any specific requirements for **who must be on the English learner parent advisory committee**. However, if the district uses its DELAC to fill the role of the English learner parent advisory committee (as most districts

likely will), it must comply with the requirement for DELACs that parents or guardians of English learners make up a majority of the committee (EC 52176). If the district does not utilize its DELAC, as with the PAC, a strong majority of the committee should be parents or guardians of English learner students to fulfill its role as an English learner *parent* advisory committee.

There are no requirements about the **how often the English learner parent advisory committee must meet**, although other statutes may have such requirements that would apply if the district relies on the DELAC to satisfy this requirement. All English learner parent advisory committee meetings must be open to the public and provide an opportunity for public comment (this remains true if the district uses the DELAC).

Requirements for School Site Councils (SSCs). SSCs are required by federal and state law to ensure that certain categorical pots of money (like federal Title I funds for low-income students) are spent according to a coherent and comprehensive instructional plan at the school-site level and in a way that aligns with the district’s comprehensive instructional plan. SSCs must, at each school site, consist of 50% parents selected by parents at the school (including, at high schools and middle schools, student members selected by students at the school) and 50% school staff (EC 52852). The State Board of Education’s LCFF regulations require that LCAPs “must be consistent” with the instructional spending plans created by School Site Councils (EC 64001). The Board’s regulations also specify that “the LCAP shall identify and incorporate school-specific goals related to the state and local priorities” from the Site Councils’ plans. (LCFF regulations, Title V, CCR § 15497 (Introduction, Section 2).) The regulations further advise that “the LCAP should be shared with, and input requested from, school site-level advisory groups (e.g., school site councils, English Learner Advisory Councils, pupil advisory groups, etc.) to facilitate alignment between school-site and district-level goals and actions.”

Other Avenues for Public Input, including Seeking Student Input. In addition to the parent advisory committee requirements, districts must: (1) consult *all* stakeholders, including parents, students, teachers, and other school employees, *in developing* the LCAP, (2) establish a process for the public to give written comments on the proposed LCAP or annual update before it is adopted by the school board, and (3) hold two public school board meetings, where members of the public can provide public comment, before adopting an LCAP or annual update.

Simply forming a PAC and English learner parent advisory committees and submitting the proposed LCAP to those committees for comment is not enough to meet these statutory requirements. The district must consult with all stakeholders, *including students*, in developing the LCAP, so it must establish other processes to get input from students and it must ensure that there is sufficient opportunity for all parents to provide input in developing the LCAP. The district must also develop a process for the entire community to provide input on the proposed LCAP and should also seek broader input while developing the proposed LCAP or annual update.

Best Practices for Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement. A number of groups have developed materials with recommended practices to promote meaningful parent, student, and community engagement in developing the LCAP. Those resources can be accessed at:

- http://www.healthhappenshere.com/what_can_districts_do_improve_communications_community_outreach
- http://www.healthhappenshere.com/lcff_parent_involvement
- http://www.healthhappenshere.com/lcff_student_engagement

Conclusion. To comply with LCFF’s legal requirements and to demonstrate to the community that its efforts at engagement are authentic, districts should actively try to get input from all stakeholders in the community in multiple ways, in addition to responding to the written comments from the parent advisory committees. Districts should also communicate clearly what standards they will use in evaluating that input and deciding how incorporate it into the district’s proposed LCAP.

(Last updated March 31, 2014)

Frequently Asked Questions about Community Engagement Requirements

Parent Advisory Committee (PAC)

Q: My district says it will form an “LCAP advisory committee.” Is this the same as the PAC?

A: Maybe. The specific name of the committee is less important than how it operates, specifically its membership and its role. PACs must include a strong majority of parents/guardians. The PAC also must include parents/ guardians of low-income students, English learners, and foster youth. Additionally, the PAC must be involved in advising the district on LCFF implementation and must be given the opportunity to submit written comments about the proposed LCAP and the district must respond in writing to those comments. If the committee does not meet these requirements, the district will have to create another committee (or use an existing parent committee) to comply with the PAC requirement.

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Q: My district has formed an advisory committee in the fall that was made up mostly of school district employees like teachers and administrators and members of community and business groups. Is this okay?

A: This advisory committee does not satisfy the requirement to have a PAC because a strong majority of the members of the PAC must be parents or guardians of students. The district must form another committee to comply with LCFF’s requirements for the PAC. It is possible that the district plans to create a separate PAC and will use the “advisory committee” that was formed in the fall as a way of consulting with an array of stakeholders in developing the proposed LCAP, which is a separate legal requirement.

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Q: My district formed an advisory committee in the fall that came up with written suggestions for the LCAP in January, before the district had released a draft LCAP. The district says that the advisory committee will not meet again. Is this okay?

A: This advisory committee does not satisfy the requirement to have a PAC because the district must submit the proposed LCAP to the PAC and respond to any written comments. The district must form another committee to comply with LCFF’s requirements for the PAC. It is possible that the district plans to create a separate PAC and will use the “advisory committee” that was formed in the fall as a way of consulting with an array of stakeholders in developing the proposed LCAP, which is a separate legal requirement.

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Q: My district says it will not form a PAC and will instead seek input on the draft LCAP from the entire community. Does that comply with the statute?

A: No. Districts must establish a PAC that includes parents/guardians, give the proposed LCAP to that committee for comments, and respond in writing to any comments it receives from the parent committee.

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Q: My district says it will not form a PAC because it already has a DELAC that includes parents and will submit the LCAP to the DELAC for comment. Does that comply with the statute?

A: No. The statute clearly requires that districts have two separate committees—a PAC and a English learner parent advisory committee—and respond in writing to any comments they receive from *each* committee about the draft LCAP. An existing DELAC may serve as the English learner parent advisory committee, but the district must establish a separate PAC.

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Q: My district is forming a PAC that includes people other than parents. Is that okay?

A: The PAC must include a strong majority of members who are parents or guardians of students in the district, and it must include parents or guardians of high-need students. Beyond that, the statute does not prohibit the district from including other people on the committee.

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Q: My district formed a PAC, but it does not include any parents of low-income students or English learners or guardians of foster youth. Is that okay?

A: No. The PAC must include parents or guardians of high-need students.

English Learner Parent Advisory Committee

Q: Does my district have to form an English Learner Parent Advisory Committee?

A: It depends on what percentage of the student body is English learners. If 15% or more of the district's students are English learners, the district must have an English Learner Parent Advisory Committee to comply with the requirements of LCFF

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Q: More than 15% of my district's students are English learners, but the district says it will not form an English Learner Parent Advisory Committee because the PAC includes parents of English learners. Does that comply with the statute?

A: No. The statute clearly requires that districts have two separate committees—a PAC and a English learner parent advisory committee—and respond in writing to any comments they receive from *each* committee about the draft LCAP.

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Q: My district is forming an English Learner Parent Advisory Committee that includes people other than parents. Is that okay?

A: The English Learner Parent Advisory Committee PAC must include a strong majority of members who are parents or guardians of English learner students. Beyond that, the statute does not prohibit the district from including other people on the committee.

Using Existing Committees as PAC or English Learner Parent Advisory Committee

Q: My district is not creating a new committee for the PAC (or English Learner Parent Advisory Committee) and is going to use an existing group instead. Is that okay?

A: It depends. LCFF allows districts to use existing committees, but only if they meet the requirements for the parent advisory committee under LCFF. For PACs, this means the existing committee must include a majority of parents and must include parents of high-need students to be used as the PAC. For English learner parent advisory committees, this means that the existing committee must include a majority of parents of English learners.

Membership on the PAC or English Learner Parent Advisory Council

Q: My district is creating a new PAC (or English Learner Parent Advisory Committee). Do the members have to be elected by parents or can they be appointed by the district?

A: LCFF does not address whether the committee members are elected or appointed. But because most other advisory committees require election of parent members and LCFF is premised in meaningful parent input in developing the LCAP, districts should allow for elections of parent members of any newly created PACs or English Learner Parent Advisory Committee.

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Q: My district has decided to use an existing committee as its PAC (or English Learner Parent Advisory Committee). Do the members have to be elected by parents or can they be appointed by the district?

A: It depends. If the district uses an existing committee, it must comply with any legal requirements for that existing committee. The rules for many existing advisory committees that have parent members require that parent members be elected by other parents (e.g., District Advisory Councils and District English Learner Advisory Councils).

Student Engagement Requirements

Q: What are the requirements for districts to seek input from students while developing their LCAPs or annual updates?

A: The district must “consult with” students in developing the LCAP. There are no specific requirements for how that should occur, but the district must have some specific process in place to seek input from parents.

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Q: I don’t know if my district is getting input from students. How can I tell if it complies with this requirement?

A: The process for consulting with students will probably look different from district to district, but each district must be able to identify formal steps that it took to seek student input. If you do not know what those steps are, you should ask your district to explain how it will comply with this requirement.

Finding Information about How the District Will Comply with Stakeholder Engagement Rules

Q: I don't know about the advisory committees my district has created or other ways to provide input on the LCAP. What should I do?

A: Districts should be transparent about how they will comply with LCFF's requirements for stakeholder engagement in developing the LCAP, including clearly saying which groups will serve as the PAC and English learner parent advisory committee (if one is required), how members in those parent advisory committees are selected, and any other process or efforts the district will use to seek public input and consult with stakeholders in developing the LCAP. Clarity about the different ways the district will seek public input—and the standards the district will use in deciding how to use that input in developing the LCAP or annual update—is important to ensure that LCFF implementation is successful.

If you would like more information to determine how your district plans to comply with the legal requirements for the PAC, you should submit a written request asking the district to identify the committees that it has established or will use to develop the LCAP, the committees that it has established or will use to satisfy the statutory requirements for the PAC and DELAC, and what other avenues for public input the district will establish to consult with stakeholders and ensure meaningful public engagement in the LCAP process.

Translation Requirements

Q: Are there any requirements for districts to translate documents related to LCFF implementation or their LCAPs into languages other than English?

A: Yes. If 15% or more of students enrolled in a public school speak a primary language other than English, all notices, reports, statements, and records sent to the parents of those students must be in English and the other language (EC 48985). Because LCFF requires that districts consult with parents in developing the LCAP, they must translate any materials that they distribute publicly while developing their LCAPs into languages spoken by 15% or more of the students in any of their schools.

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Q: I attended a public meeting where my district distributed materials about LCFF and/or its LCAP development process, but they were available only in English. Is that okay?

A: No, if your district has a school with 15% or more of its enrollment that speaks a primary language other than English.

(Last updated March 31, 2014)