



March 8, 2023

The Honorable Nancy Skinner  
Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review  
Committee  
1021 O St., Ste. 8630  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting  
Chair, Assembly Committee on Budget  
1021 O St., Ste. 8230  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: California County Superintendents' Response to Governor's 2023-24 Budget**

On behalf of the California County Superintendents, representing the 58 county superintendents of schools, we applaud the Administration's dedication to maintaining investments in California's education system and to closing achievement and opportunity gaps for our students.

We remain dedicated to supporting our communities through our roles in the statewide system of support, whole child programs, county-operated program facilitation, and the recruitment and retention of a diverse educator workforce. In order to do so, we express our positions below on critical education issues that will come before the legislative budget committees.

**1. The goals behind the Equity Multiplier merit our support, but we urge refinements to related proposals.**

***We support the intent and goals of the Administration's Equity Multiplier.***

Ten years into the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), we owe our students the self-reflection necessary to ask how we can improve the LCFF to further improve student outcomes. We must call out policies that perpetuate racial disparities in schools and seek out policies that bring all students closer to equitable opportunities and outcomes.

We support the Administration's intent behind the Equity Multiplier proposal. The proposal is designed to close our state's persistent achievement and opportunity gaps through a combination of targeted funding, local planning, and improvement supports for local educational agencies (LEAs) with high-poverty schools. We appreciate that the proposal leans into the state's existing systems of support and accountability—namely the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), Differentiated Assistance, and the California School Dashboard—to ensure LCFF funding is being utilized in a targeted and effective manner. Likewise, we appreciate that the Administration has proposed to keep these changes within our existing system of funding, accountability, and System of Support, rather than establishing new programs that may undermine system coherence. The Administration's

goal of targeted support for students with the greatest need is the right one. We cannot continue to perform the same actions and expect different results.

***We urge additional resources to support the improvement efforts of LEAs and school sites to ensure resources are reaching our lowest performing student groups.***

Local educational agencies and school sites must have the tools and resources necessary to close achievement and opportunity gaps. The \$300 million Proposition 98 General Fund proposed for the Equity Multiplier is necessary, but not sufficient, to ensure improved outcomes for all student groups. Dramatic interventions are needed to address the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on students' learning and social-emotional needs. We urge the state to expand its investments in universal Level 1 resources provided by county offices of education so that every LEA, regardless of its location, can best serve diverse learners through high-quality universal instruction and research-based supports.

The concept of "Equity Leads" is an acknowledgement of this fact but duplicative of the work that the system is already designed to do. Addressing equity and racial disparities is not limited to the purview of the proposed Equity Leads. It is at the heart of every county office's approach to providing universal, Level 1, improvement supports and Differentiated Assistance (also known as technical assistance). Every county office of education should have the capacity to "analyze programs, identify barriers and opportunities, and implement actions and services to meet the identified needs of all students, including addressing racial disparities" (trailer bill Section 24, adding subdivisions (b) and (c) of Education Code Section 52073.4). The same is true for other entities within the System of Support. We ask the Administration and Legislature to invest in universal equity supports across the 58 counties in order to increase the success of the Equity Multiplier and close achievement and opportunity gaps.

***We look forward to additional conversations to ensure the proposed changes to the LCAP and Accountability Package will address the needs of our students, especially our lowest performing student groups.***

Any changes to the LCAP that fail to shorten, simplify, and increase public accessibility into the LCAP should be discussed thoroughly with practitioners, those closest to the work. They should only be favored when the benefit to students is transparently clear. Many of the proposed LCAP and Differentiated Assistance changes reflect current best practices. But to the extent any of the proposed changes create implementation obstacles for LEAs, school site leaders, and educational partners, we are hopeful that those obstacles will be addressed by the Administration and Legislature before the final budget is adopted.

We urge the Administration to consider the following recommendations per [our letter submitted to the state agencies](#) on March 8, 2023, where we expand upon our recommendations related to the Equity Leads and other refinements of the Accountability Package in "Requests" (2), (3), and (4).

## 2. Additional support is needed so that juvenile court and community schools can continue to meet the needs of their students.

The students served by juvenile court and community schools (JCCS) often face unique barriers to academic achievement and social-emotional well-being. This proposal brings greater equity to these students by ensuring access to robust services and supports.

The volatility and insufficiency of JCCS resources creates perennial financial uncertainty for student programs, dedicated teachers, mental health professionals, and other support staff. Additionally, juvenile court schools face new challenges serving the educational needs of students (non-graduates and graduates) who will be supported in their county of origin due to the realignment of the Department of Juvenile Justice (Ch. 337, Stats. 2020).

Juvenile court and community schools are funded exclusively on the basis of current year average daily attendance (ADA). An attendance-based funding model underserves JCCS students in three ways. First, funding based on ADA is designed to incentivize keeping students in a program, rather than proactively help students return to their comprehensive campuses. Second, funding based exclusively on ADA is not appropriate for specialized programs with unpredictable enrollment levels that fluctuate throughout the school year. Third, JCCS programs recruit and retain highly specialized teachers, paraeducators, counselors, and mental health professionals, who we employ throughout the year, regardless of fluctuating attendance levels.

***We request the Administration and Legislature augment the COE base grant for those who operate these critical programs.***

A revised funding model will protect high-quality programs from annual funding disruptions by providing sufficient and predictable resources. The state should invest in our students in juvenile court and community schools, so they gain the academic, career readiness, and social-emotional skills necessary to succeed. We recommend that this augmented funding model include a minimum level of funding for the juvenile court and community schools to operate, and then also receive funding on the greater of a three-year rolling average. This would protect the programs from annual funding disruptions by providing stable and predictable resources.

## 3. We applaud the Administration's dedication to the investments in Whole Child programs.

Research shows that students are most engaged with their learning when their social-emotional, physical, and safety needs are met. County Offices of Education understand that schools are at the center of this model, serving as hubs of the community, and connectors to social, health, and other supportive services.

We support the Administration's commitment to Whole Child programs, including the California Community Schools Partnership Program, Expanded Learning Opportunities Program, Universal Meals, and others.

***We request the Administration and Legislature not delay funding for the California Preschool, Transitional Kindergarten, and Full-Day Kindergarten Facilities Grant Program.***

The shortage of appropriate facilities for early learning programs creates a barrier to Universal Transitional Kindergarten implementation. This program is vital to ensuring that all local educational agencies have the appropriate facilities necessary to serve existing Transitional Kindergarten students, as well as those who are newly eligible.

***We encourage the Administration and Legislature to address the need for additional early learning educators.***

Under current law, credentialed teachers assigned to a Transitional Kindergarten classroom must have at least 24 units in early childhood education or child development by August 1, 2023. (Education Code § 48000.) While we acknowledge the unique needs of Transitional Kindergarten students, this requirement results in a barrier to access for educators interested in teaching these classrooms, and the state will need thousands more of these teachers in the coming years. We recommend that the Administration and Legislature delay the implementation of this requirement, due to the rapid expansion of Transitional Kindergarten.

***We oppose the proposed staff qualification requirement for Transitional Kindergarten proposed in the trailer bill.***

While a TK teacher must be credentialed and have units in early childhood education or child development, this proposal would require the second adult in a TK classroom to meet specified requirements such as a teaching credential, participating in an apprenticeship or residency, or participating in the Classified School Employee Teacher Credentialing program. By creating a barrier to entry for those interested in working in these classrooms, this proposal would create difficulty in both recruiting and retaining these positions. The existing relationship between teachers and paraeducators in Transitional Kindergarten programs is successful in serving these students. Teachers are required to hold credentials appropriate for delivering instruction to our youngest learners and lead instruction in the classroom. Paraeducators provide support to their classroom teachers ensuring the full scope of children's needs are met. This proposed policy change would make it increasingly difficult to employ early learning staff and delay the implementation of Transitional Kindergarten.

#### **4. Fulling funding the LCFF COLA supports high-quality learning and services for students.**

We support the Administration's budget proposal to fully fund the statutory cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for LCFF for school districts, county offices of education, and the categorical programs outside of the formula, including special education. In an environment of rising inflation and pension contributions, a fully funded COLA is essential in ensuring that LEAs may sustain high-quality learning support and student services for schools.

**5. The educator workforce staffing shortage remains a critical impediment to transforming our public schools.**

***We recommend that further efforts and investments be made to strategies to recruit and retain high quality educators and staff in our schools.***

We appreciate the significant investments made in educator workforce programs over the past several years. Nevertheless, persistent staffing shortages remain. These staffing shortages have been exacerbated by both the COVID-19 Pandemic, as well as the influx of new transformational education programs such as Universal Transitional Kindergarten, Expanded Learning Opportunities Program, and the Art and Music K-12 Education Funding Initiative, all of which require substantial increases in the number of educators and staff. Staffing shortages are prevalent across California but are acutely felt in small and rural communities, resulting in inequities throughout the 58 counties. We look forward to engaging in discussions with you about how we can recruit and retain teachers and staff throughout the state.

***We support the Administration's proposed amendments to the Golden State Teacher Grant Program.***

Expanding programmatic eligibility to include those enrolled in child development permit programs is a great first step towards addressing the early learning educator workforce shortage. In addition, the amendment to change the required number of service years to three years at a priority school or four years at any public California school will help expand the impact of this program.

**6. Despite economic challenges, maintaining commitments to the current year budget is vital to the fiscal health of schools and sustainability of existing programs.**

***We urge the Administration and Legislature to reconsider the reduction to the Arts, Music, and Instructional Materials Discretionary Block Grant (Block Grant).***

As the proud home of the California County Superintendents Arts Initiative, we believe that the visual and performing arts are an integral part of a comprehensive curriculum and are essential for learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The proposed cut to the Block Grant will pose major problems to LEAs, many of which have already worked with their communities to develop plans for these discretionary funds. This retroactive cut will disrupt the commitments made throughout the state.

Furthermore, while the infusion of funds from Proposition 28 (2022) provides an additional revenue stream for arts and music programs, these funds are highly restrictive. Proposition 28 funding cannot be used for many of the programs and expenditures made with the Block Grant. Therefore, maintaining current funding for the Block Grant funds is still critical.

**7. The Governor has prioritized special education funding, but we oppose required minimum expenditures by special education local plan areas.**

The county superintendents appreciate the Administration's focus on improving academic and social-emotional outcomes for students with disabilities. Alongside the state, we will continue to support building integrated and coherent systems and access for students with disabilities to inclusive, highly-quality, universally designed, standards-based learning.

We support the proposed 8.13 percent COLA to state special education funding. We also support the proposal to post the local plans submitted by each special education local plan area (SELPA) to the CDE's website.

We oppose the proposed minimum allocation by a SELPA to their member LEAs in the 2023–24 fiscal year. The minimum allocation is based on the amount allocated in the 2022–23 fiscal year, plus inflation, which, unadjusted for attendance levels, would result in many SELPAs having to reduce local set-asides for regionalized services. In places where LEA enrollment is declining, the data indicate that the SELPA may be forced to allocate more funding to LEAs than the SELPA receives from the state. This effect is particularly pronounced due to the interaction of ADA protection policies from during the COVID-19 pandemic, which have now ended.

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We thank you for your consideration of our views. To contact the California County Superintendents regarding this letter, please feel free to contact Derick Lennox ([dlennox@cacountysupts.org](mailto:dlennox@cacountysupts.org)).

Sincerely,



Derick Lennox  
Senior Director, Governmental Relations and Legal Affairs  
California County Superintendents

Cc: Honorable Anthony Rendon, Assembly Speaker  
Honorable Toni G. Atkins, Senate President pro Tempore  
Members, Assembly Budget Committee  
Members, Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review  
Assembly and Senate Republican Offices of Policy  
Ben Chida, Chief Deputy Cabinet Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom  
Nichole Munoz-Murillo, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom  
Brooks Allen, Executive Director, California State Board of Education  
Chris Ferguson, Program Budget Manager, California Department of Finance  
Amber Alexander, Assistant Program Budget Manager, California Department of Finance