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Evaluation of California's Differentiated Assistance

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Executive Summary

Launched in 2017, California's System of Support is designed to help local education agencies (LEAs)[1] and their schools meet the needs of each student by building capacity to sustain improvement and by addressing disparities in student opportunities and outcomes. Differentiated Assistance (DA), or the technical assistance provided to LEAs that the state's System of Support has identified for underperformance, is a keystone of California's new accountability and support system.

In an effort to understand the impact of this accountability and improvement system on student performance, the legislature included funding for an evaluation of DA in the 2021 Omnibus Budget Bill.[2] The California Department of Education (CDE), in consultation with the State Board of Education (SBE) and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), selected WestEd to evaluate DA, its role in influencing district and county office of education (COE) support for academically struggling students, and its impact on the levels and distribution of student achievement across and within counties, districts, and schools.

WestEd's evaluation was conducted between April 2022 and November 2022. WestEd researchers used a mixed-methods design to address each research component. Methods included document review and process mapping; conducting individual and focus group interviews with district, county, state, and charter leaders and with school board members, teachers, and parents; surveying DA-eligible district and COE superintendents or their designees and COE staff who lead DA for their COE; and using a regression discontinuity design to estimate the impact of DA on student outcomes. This executive summary describes the evaluation's main findings and recommendations.

[1] LEAs refers to both school districts and county offices of education.

[2] Section 127 of the Education Omnibus Budget Trailer Bill (Assembly Bill 130, Chapter 44, Statutes of 2021) and Section 37 of Assembly Bill 167 (Chapter 252, Statutes of 2021), signed by the Governor on July 9, 2021, and September 23, 2021, respectively, provided funding for the California Department of Education (CDE) to contract for an independent evaluation of Technical Assistance (pursuant to California Education Code (EC), Sections 47607.3, 52071, and 52071.5), commonly referred to as Differentiated Assistance.

Evaluation Components Defined by the State

To evaluate DA in California, starting with implementation in the 2017/18 school year, the WestEd research team examined the following five elements of the system, which were named in the CDE's solicitation of proposals and were identified by the legislation authorizing this evaluation:

1. **Delivery of support to students with the greatest need**. Are the state's accountability structures for DA effectively delivering support to address needs identified by the California School Dashboard (generally referred to as "the Dashboard" in this report) and other relevant federal, state, and locally collected data? What are the common characteristics of DA across the state? What are the components of high-quality DA?
2. **Impact of DA on student outcomes**. Which students are benefiting most from DA?
3. **Alignment between the Dashboard, DA, and Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs).** In what areas is alignment between the Dashboard, technical assistance and support, and LCAPs already strong? In what areas are there opportunities for strengthening alignment?
4. **Alignment between state and federal accountability, regulatory, and support systems**. How well does the state's accountability structure complement federal accountability requirements and interventions?
5. **Challenges and opportunities**. What do system leaders report as the biggest challenges and opportunities with the current DA system? How can funding and support delivery be improved? The second part of this element is addressed in the main Recommendations section of this report (rather than the Findings section).

The findings and recommendations for each of these components are informed by feedback from education leaders and partner organizations from all levels of the system and all regions of the state.

Findings and Recommendations

Continue to Support and Strengthen the Technical Assistance Provided Through Differentiated Assistance

Both district and county leaders were generally positive about DA and its potential to improve student outcomes in the state, and county leaders overwhelmingly suggested that the state continue to support DA. A triangulation of data across different sources for this evaluation indicates that DA has room for improvement, particularly in some districts and counties, but that it is broadly supported by system leaders. Findings show early signs of improving student outcomes. WestEd's evaluation of the early impact of DA indicates that DA has a positive impact on student outcomes for the lowest-performing students as well as other students in

the district. Based on these findings, the research team recommends the state continue to fund DA and keep many of the current DA-related policies and structures in place while using lessons learned from these first years of implementation to further refine and improve DA.

Conduct a Post-Pandemic Impact Study

The disruptions in learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing needs and introduced new ones. Consequently, system leaders suggested evaluating DA again in future years to capture evidence of improvements and effectiveness post-pandemic. The impact analysis provides evidence that DA had a positive impact on multiple measures of student performance, but these positive results were not consistent across all years. Accordingly, the state should consider analyzing outcomes data from additional years to confirm that DA continues to positively impact student outcomes.

Extend the Period of Eligibility for DA From 1 Year to 2 Years

One area of agreement among district and county leaders across multiple data sources was that 1 year of participation in DA is insufficient for engaging in the deep improvement work necessary to improve student outcomes. Most leaders suggested that identification for DA should occur every 2 years, guaranteeing districts 2 years of support and time to move beyond an analysis of root causes of underperformance to the implementation of specific interventions. The research team recommends that identification for DA continue to take place each year, so that districts newly in need of support would not have to wait an additional year for eligibility for the technical assistance provided through DA.

Develop and Distribute Guidance on Best Practices for Providing DA

Findings from Element One ("Delivery of support to students with the greatest need") of this report include identifying several components of high-quality DA. The state, in collaboration with leading agencies and education partners (e.g., geographic leads, expert lead agencies, membership organizations), could use these findings as a springboard for developing and distributing guidance on best practices for providing DA.

Evaluate Local Capacity to Provide DA and Target State and Regional Supports Where Capacity Needs Are Greatest

As noted in this report, COE providers of DA tended to perceive DA services as high quality more often than did the district recipients of DA services. Furthermore, 1 in 10 LEAs reported low-quality or very low-quality support through DA. To ensure that all DA-eligible districts and COEs receive the support they need in order to improve student outcomes, the research team recommends that state and regional leaders collaborate to evaluate local capacity to provide and engage in DA and that state and regional supports are targeted where capacity needs are

greatest. DA providers should also create a feedback loop with districts to ensure that district needs are being met.

Incorporate Opportunities for Peer Learning Into the DA Structure

One of the most common recommendations from interviews and focus groups was to incorporate more opportunities for districts and counties to learn from the successes in other LEAs, particularly those with similar contexts, challenges, and focus areas to their own. Many DA providers and participants requested a statewide repository of success stories from COEs, districts, and schools (e.g., an effective literacy initiative or a model of a successful DA process) and of lessons learned. Participants had several ideas for pairing or grouping districts for support. For example, a CDE provider suggested matching demographically similar high-performing COEs with low-performing COEs. The state may want to consider working with counties to identify DA "bright spot" LEAs—those from across the state that have shown the most progress in improving student outcomes as a result of DA—and using some portion of funding for the System of Support for learning from these LEAs.[3]

Given Reported Variation in DA Quality, Allow DA Recipients to Access Funding for the DA Provider That Best Meets Their Needs

As illustrated in interviews and through survey data, not all DA-eligible LEAs have had a positive experience with DA and some declined to participate in the DA process. Data collected for this evaluation indicate that COE providers do not always have the capacity to provide the supports that LEAs believe are necessary to guide their improvement work and that some CDE DA providers lack capacity to provide context-specific DA.

DA-eligible COEs have the option of working with the CDE to provide DA, working in a consortium of COEs, or working with another individual COE to provide DA. Regardless of COEs' choices of DA providers, the CDE does not receive funding to provide DA. Although current California education code lays the groundwork for such flexibility for school districts[4]—that is, allowing them to independently choose their support provider—if they do not opt to work with their COE, they must pay for DA on their own and their COE continues to receive funding to

[3] WestEd is not able to provide data to identify these bright spot districts due to the confidentiality agreements—written into the contract with the CDE—which prohibit identifying individual districts or counties. However, a similar study focusing on bright spots could identify these bright spot districts and facilitate learning visits from other districts. The same approach could be taken with county DA providers that have effectively supported improvement in outcomes in the districts they support. Organizations such as the California County Superintendents may also play a role in supporting cross-county learning opportunities.

[4] California's education code already provides some flexibility for districts in choosing a technical assistance provider who meets district needs; however, this flexibility is limited by the fact that the COE must agree with the district's decision to choose another provider and the district does not receive any funding to hire the provider. As described in EC Section 52071(c)(2) and (3), a COE, "collaboratively" with the district, may secure outside experts or another DA provider to provide technical assistance to the district. Alternatively, the district may independently choose to work with a DA provider other than its COE but must bear the cost (EC Section 52071(f)).

provide them DA. (COEs may choose to provide districts with some of the DA funding, but this choice is entirely up to the COE's discretion.)

To enable districts to take advantage of the law's intended flexibility for them choose their own provider, the research team recommends that any district that opts out of support from its COE should have the option of applying to their COE to access the proportion of funds provided to the COE to provide that LEA with DA; the LEA must then use these funds to pay for an external technical assistance provider to support the district's improvement work or provide technical assistance to a consortium of school districts.

To address the challenge of CDE staff availability to serve as DA providers, the research team recommends that the state provide funding to CDE to provide DA to COEs. This funding should be based upon the number of COEs that opt to work with the CDE for DA, and funding should be increased or reduced based upon how many COEs continue to choose CDE as their provider.

Develop a Structure for DA-Eligible Districts Needing Multiyear Support

For sustainability of the system, it may make sense for some participants to receive a less in-depth, or different, version of DA. For example, many leaders in DA-eligible COEs believe that Dashboard metrics will identify them in perpetuity. Therefore, it does not make sense for them to repeat the same DA processes year after year. Some districts will also be identified for successive years (especially districts identified year after year due to high proportions of high-needs populations). The state should consider the probability of whether these districts or counties will ever move out of eligibility and whether it makes sense to change the eligibility requirements or structure of DA for LEAs that continue to be eligible (i.e., differentiating what support looks like based on how many years an LEA has been identified).

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many districts shared concerns that a substantial majority of districts will be identified for DA and that this number will overwhelm the system in terms of staff capacity to provide DA. Accordingly, system leaders recommended careful thinking about the sustainability of the accountability system. The WestEd research team recommends that the state work with the California County Superintendents and Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) to discuss strategies for supporting districts and COEs that are eligible for DA for more than 3 consecutive years.

Given the Lack of Federal and State Alignment, Study the Implications of Migrating to a Single Method of Identifying LEAs for Support

California's state leaders designed DA on the assumption that school districts should be the focus of efforts to improve student outcomes in district schools, and COEs should be the focus of efforts to improve student outcomes in county-run schools. In contrast, the federal accountability system identifies schools for improvement, and it provides supports directly to schools to drive improvement in student outcomes. The WestEd research team suggests that the state move to a single, coherent accountability and support system rather than just

strengthening alignment between the two current systems, thereby reducing duplicative improvement processes and reporting requirements. The team recommends that for moving to a single system, the state explore the possibility of using school-level eligibility under the federal accountability to identify districts and COEs for DA support from their COEs or other providers. For example, any district with a school(s) identified for Comprehensive School Improvement (CSI), Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI), or Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) could be eligible for DA support. This school-level identification could help with some of the structural barriers to identifying student groups for DA because of the lack of concentration of the student groups in school districts. Essentially, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) would become the identification system and DA would become the support system for eligible districts, counties, and schools. While this approach may not completely eliminate duplicative reporting systems, it could allow a stronger district-school connection in improvement work and in access to the supports provided through DA. It would also help advance state efforts to develop a single, coherent accountability and support system.

Revisit Eligibility Criteria for DA

Whether or not the state decides to proceed with this recommendation, the research team recommends a study of the metrics used as eligibility criteria for DA. Specifically, the team recommends a focus on understanding how opportunities for support might be targeted to districts serving student groups with *n*-sizes too small for eligibility and how the metrics used for identification may be privileging particular student groups and potentially reducing the opportunity for districts serving English learners and Black students to benefit from DA eligibility. School-level identification through ESSA may be one avenue for creating greater access to support across student groups. In studying eligibility criteria, the state may want to consider whether the metrics used for identification may lead to the perpetual identification of particular groups of students (e.g., students served in county-run schools).

The criteria used to identify charter schools for DA are currently different from the criteria used to identify school districts and COEs (see Appendix F), which sets a precedent for allowing for different criteria for eligibility for COEs. The state should explore how it might shift DA identification for COEs to ensure that eligibility effectively targets those with county-run schools requiring the greatest support.

Prepare for Support for Charter Schools

Findings from this evaluation indicate that DA-eligible charters have not yet received DA. The research team recommends that the state, DA providers, and charter and county membership organizations work together to prepare for DA identification under the new requirements beginning with the 2023 Dashboard, anticipating differences in the needs for support. The research team recommends (as an extension to the previous recommendation) that the state, as part of this preparation, consider using the federal criteria for identification for CSI/ATSI/TSI to identify charter schools for the same support that they would normally receive through DA.

That is, charter schools would not be identified based on separate DA-eligibility criteria, but charter schools identified under the federal accountability measures would automatically be eligible for DA supports from the COE, and the COE would be directed to align these supports with the CSI/ATSI/TSI process to the greatest extent possible. Since charter identification for underperformance already occurs at the school level, an additional identification for DA could cause duplication and confusion in the system.

Reduce Administrative Burden to Free Up System Leaders' Time to Focus on Improvement

Although not directly related to DA, one recurring theme from interviews with district, charter, and county leaders that bears mentioning is concern over the administrative burden of current reporting requirements. Specifically, system leaders noted that the amount of time they spend on reporting requirements for the use of state and federal one-time funds, in particular, reduces the amount of time they have available to focus on what they deem as more important improvement work in their systems—including DA. While it is important to plan for, strategize about, and report on the impact of the use of funds—particularly in collaboration with education and community partners—requiring these processes be done for specific funding sources in isolation not only creates administrative burden for system leaders but can also complicate efforts to align funding sources to support system priorities. Accordingly, the research team recommends that the state reduce duplicative reporting requirements (e.g., additional plans for new funding) and, when creating new accountability measures, remain cognizant of the administrative impact on LEAs. Furthermore, if the state plans to continue to collect data on COEs' DA approaches[5] (which the research team recommends, given the lack of any other information on differences in COEs' approaches to DA across the state), the state should work to make these data submissions more meaningful.

Next Steps

The WestEd research team will coordinate a set of listening sessions during which the team will present this report's key findings and recommendations. This final set of engagements will aim to provide the WestEd team and the state with insight on (1) how to adjust recommendations to account for needs and concerns expressed by system leaders and education partners and (2) how to communicate the report's findings and recommendations effectively to the public, including clearing up potential misconceptions.

[5] These data are collected via COEs' annual summaries of how they plan to support school districts, including DA activities, pursuant to EC § 52066(i).

Introduction

Launched in 2017, California's System of Support is designed to help local education agencies (LEAs)[6] and their schools meet the needs of each student by building capacity to sustain improvement and by addressing disparities in student opportunities and outcomes. The new system was intended to shift California's approach to accountability and improvement—from a top-down, centralized approach to a more decentralized, layered support system for LEAs, with support provided by technical assistance providers who understand the LEA's local context. Differentiated Assistance (DA), or the technical assistance provided to LEAs that have been identified for underperformance through the California School Dashboard, is a keystone of California's new accountability and support system.

In an effort to understand the impact of this accountability and improvement system on student performance, the legislature included funding for an evaluation of DA in the 2021 Omnibus Budget Bill.[7] The California Department of Education (CDE), in consultation with the State Board of Education (SBE) and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), selected WestEd to evaluate DA, its role in influencing district and county office of education (COE) support for academically struggling students, and its impact on the levels and distribution of student achievement across and within counties, districts, and schools. WestEd's evaluation was conducted between April 2022 and November 2022. This report summarizes the evaluation's main components and findings, and it concludes with a set of recommendations that are based on the findings.

Evaluation Components Defined by the State

To evaluate DA in California, starting with implementation in the 2017/18 school year, the WestEd research team examined the following five elements of the system, which were named

[6] LEAs refers to both school districts and county offices of education.

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in the CDE's solicitation of proposals and were identified by the legislation authorizing this evaluation:

1. **Delivery of support to students with the greatest need**. Are the state's accountability structures for DA effectively delivering support to address needs identified by the California School Dashboard (generally referred to as "the Dashboard" in this report) and other relevant federal, state, and locally collected data? What are the common characteristics of DA across the state? What are the components of high-quality DA?
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4. **Alignment between state and federal accountability, regulatory, and support systems**. How well does the state's accountability structure complement federal accountability requirements and interventions?
5. **Challenges and opportunities**. What do system leaders report as the biggest challenges and opportunities with the current DA system? How can funding and support delivery be improved? The second question listed in this element is addressed in the Recommendations section of this report (rather than in the Findings section).

The findings and recommendations for each of these components are informed by feedback from education leaders and partner organizations from all levels of the system and all regions of the state.

Evaluation Approach

WestEd researchers used a mixed-methods design to address each research component. Methods included document review and process mapping; conducting individual and focus group interviews with district, county, state, and charter leaders and with school board members, teachers, and parents; surveying DA-eligible district and COE superintendents or their designees and COE staff who lead DA for their COE; and using a regression discontinuity design to estimate the impact of DA on student outcomes. The following sections provide further detail on each of these methods.

Document Review and Process Mapping

The WestEd team conducted a document review of California education code, guidance manuals, publicly available financial reports, and other documents to analyze DA funding and service delivery. The document review was also used to create process maps that outline the

alignment between DA, the LCAP, and the Dashboard (see Appendix A for more information) and between state and federal accountability and support systems. These process maps were used during interviews with state leaders to help identify areas of alignment and misalignment between systems and policies.

Individual and Focus Group Interviews

To understand how DA has influenced district and COE support for students and to understand the alignment between DA and various state and federal policies, WestEd researchers conducted individual and focus group interviews with 80 participants, including CDE leaders, DA providers, and other education leaders and partners from all regions of the state. The WestEd research team also reached out to leaders from a range of membership organizations, education partnerships, and advocacy organizations to help with recruitment for interviews and to learn about their members' experiences with DA.

CDE leaders who were interviewed include DA providers and leaders who work directly on the Dashboard, the LCAP, the State System of Support, and implementation of the federal accountability system. Interviews were conducted with COE DA providers, leaders of COEs eligible for DA, district leaders in DA-eligible districts, charter school leaders, parents, school board members, and teachers.[8] Interviews were semistructured with questions aligned to the five components of the study and adapted for each role type.

Surveys

Between April 2022 and September 2022, WestEd researchers developed and administered three surveys to gather information about how DA is currently operating in the state, the strengths of DA, and areas for improvement. The first survey was directed to superintendents from COEs that provide DA; leaders from all 58 COEs responded. The second survey was directed to COE leaders in the 33 counties eligible for DA based on the performance of students in county-run schools; leaders from 31 out of 33 COEs responded. The third survey was sent to school district superintendents, regardless of whether their district had been eligible for DA. Responses were received from 409 leaders from 338 different California districts across 51 different California counties.[9] Across the 338 responding districts, 51 percent reported ever being eligible for DA. The responding districts ranged in enrollment from seven students to hundreds of thousands of students. The LEA survey data allowed the WestEd research team to compare answers on some questions between DA-eligible school districts and districts that have not been eligible for DA. Table 1 shows the response rate for each of the three surveys.

[8] The researchers also attempted to recruit classified staff and charter school board members to participate in interviews or focus groups, but members from these groups did not respond to the researchers' recruitment efforts.

[9] The research team included in its analysis the most complete survey response from a senior leader in each LEA.

Table 1: Survey Response Rate

	Number of responding COEs and Districts	Response rate
Differentiated Assistance–provider county offices of education	58	100%
County offices of education eligible for Differentiated Assistance	31	94%
School districts	338	33%

Impact Analysis

The research team employed a regression discontinuity design (RDD) to statistically estimate the causal impact of eligibility for DA on districts' subsequent student outcomes. The RDD is a quasi-experimental research method that can be used when access to a treatment is clearly defined by a cutoff; in this case, the performance thresholds for determining eligibility for DA. Although the underlying statistical model is complex (see Appendix B for more information), conceptually the RDD model uses the fact that observations close to either side of the eligibility cutoff—districts just barely eligible for DA and districts just barely ineligible—are not expected to differ meaningfully, except for access to DA. Comparing these districts mimics a randomized, control trial at the eligibility threshold, with DA eligibility representing the treatment variable.

The RDD model evaluates DA's impact on student achievement in a manner that separates cause from correlation, providing evidence that cannot be obtained via surveys, interviews, document reviews, or less rigorous quantitative methods. However, this benefit comes with its own set of limitations, which are discussed briefly below and elaborated upon in Appendix B.

- **The impact of DA can only be calculated for "marginally" eligible districts**. The analysis relies on the subset of districts with a single student group whose indicator status level in a given year is low enough that their indicator change level will determine whether the entire district is eligible for DA. The effect of DA cannot be calculated for districts with multiple student groups whose performance across multiple indicators makes them eligible for DA nor can the effect be calculated for high-performing districts whose scores are far above the DA eligibility threshold.
- **The impact of DA can be calculated only for standardized, statewide outcomes**. The analysis can calculate the effect of DA on pre-COVID, standardized, statewide outcomes, such as chronic absenteeism, English language arts and math performance, and suspension rates. The analysis is unable to assess the impact of DA on important facets of student development, such as task-persistence or conscientiousness or any other indicators of student performance or well-being that are not measured by

standardized tests. Post-COVID statewide achievement data were not available at the time of analysis.

- **The impact estimates are subject to statistical uncertainty**. As with any statistical procedure, the effect sizes produced in this report are subject to inherent uncertainty; they could be somewhat larger or somewhat smaller. Compounding this limitation is the fact that even though the number of students in the state is in the millions, the relevant "sample size" with respect to the impact of DA is merely the number of marginally eligible districts (only a few hundred). To emphasize this point, this report focuses on patterns of effects rather than specific effect sizes.

Within the bounds of these limitations, the research team evaluated the impact of DA on the achievement of students identified for support based on Dashboard measures in DA-eligible districts, along with the impact on all students in each of these districts. Similarly, the research team investigated whether DA affected only the indicators that led to DA eligibility or other measures of district performance as well. Through these mixed methods, the researchers conducted a summative evaluation that meets scientific standards of causal inference.

Findings

Element One: Delivery of Support to Students With the Greatest Need

Drawing from surveys, interviews, and an analysis of the criteria for eligibility for DA, this section examines whether the state's DA infrastructure effectively delivers support to address needs identified by the California School Dashboard and other relevant federal, state, and locally collected data. This section also identifies some of the common characteristics of DA across the state, perceptions of DA quality, and the components of high-quality DA. Finally, it provides a descriptive analysis of DA-eligibility data, including reflections from some LEA and COE participants on the criteria for eligibility for DA.

Common Characteristics of DA Across the State

Differentiated Assistance is a multifaceted intervention, with different reasons for eligibility in varying district and county contexts across California (and, in turn, different support services). However, support services do share some basic commonalities. For example, survey results indicated that a total of 3–6 staff members tend to support DA in each COE, with 2–3 COE staff members assigned to each DA-eligible district (Table 2). These COE staff tend to meet monthly or every other month with DA-eligible districts for a duration spanning 3–4 months to a year (Table 3). Notably, responses to the survey questions on these topics varied depending on whether the LEA or the COE was responding. When asked to offer state leaders a recommended length of eligibility for LEAs, both county and district leaders most often suggested 2 years of DA eligibility (Table 4).

Table 2: Reported Number of COE Staff Supporting DA and Assigned to Each DA-Eligible District

Total COE staff supporting DA	Percentage of COEs (*n* = 50)
1–2	12%
3–4	28%
5–6	20%
7–8	12%
9–10	6%
11+	22%
COE staff typically assigned to each DA-eligible district	**Percentage of COEs (*n* = 50)**
1	14%
2	26%
3	38%
4	12%
5	4%
6+	6%

Table 3: Reported DA Meeting Frequency and Duration

Frequency of meetings	Percentage of LEAs (*n* = 127)	Percentage of COEs (*n* = 50)
Weekly or bi-weekly	6%	2%
Once a month	28%	20%
Every other month	9%	20%
Quarterly	28%	14%
Did not meet on consistent basis	22%	6%
Other	7%	38%
Duration (months) of meetings	**Percentage of LEAs (*n* = 123)**	**Percentage of COEs (*n* = 50)**
Less than a month	11%	4%
1–2 months	13%	0%
3–4 months	25%	12%
5–6 months	11%	16%
7–8 months	8%	6%
9–10 months	5%	12%

Duration (months) of meetings	Percentage of LEAs (*n* = 123)	Percentage of COEs (*n* = 50)
11–12 months	2%	8%
Over a year	5%	4%
Met year round	11%	26%
Other	8%	12%

Table 4: Recommended Length of DA Eligibility

Recommended length of DA eligibility	Percentage of LEAs (*n* = 126)	Percentage of COEs (*n* = 50)
1 year	29%	10%
2 years	35%	34%
3 years	18%	28%
4 years	3%	4%
5+ years	6%	8%
Other	10%	16%

When asked how their COE has used the state formula funds that the county received to support DA, COE leaders most frequently indicated that the county developed or expanded Level 1 (preventative support for all districts) or Level 2 supports (DA) and trained internal staff in improvement science. The least frequently reported use of DA funds was providing grants to districts to support local improvement efforts (Table 5).

Surveyed district and county leaders both were also asked to describe the types of support that were provided for DA. Both groups most frequently reported similar types of supports—namely, local data analysis and root cause analysis, along with LCAP development and integration (Table 5). In interviews, DA providers and participants similarly most frequently reported support for DA teams' data analysis and data inquiry process, including the use of improvement science tools and methods. Some COEs noted that the state provided improvement science training to all COEs when DA first launched and that this training was valuable in preparing COEs to guide DA participants through continuous improvement processes.

In interviews, DA participants most frequently reported support from DA providers with activities such as

- compiling and visualizing Dashboard data and existing local data;
- collaboratively analyzing data and identifying key areas for deeper exploration;

- conducting root cause analyses, including using tools such as fishbone diagrams and collecting additional local data (e.g., through empathy interviews with school staff and students); and
- connecting these data, analyses, and findings to LCAP data and priorities.

There were, however, certain types of support that were more frequently cited by COE leaders than by district leaders. For example, COE leaders more frequently reported that systems analysis, integrating DA with other technical assistance the district received, and support for meeting the AB 130 Section 122 data requirements for 2021/22 were part of the DA they provided to districts (Table 5). A higher proportion of COE leaders (42%) than district leaders (16%) also indicated in surveys that DA was integrated to a great extent with the other technical assistance that was provided to the district to support students with individualized education programs (IEPs).

In interviews, some DA participants, though not all, described receiving support from their DA providers for phases beyond the data analysis and inquiry. Among those who did, participants described receiving support with activities such as

- generating change ideas and selecting evidence-based strategies to address identified needs;
- developing action plans;
- building educator capacity to implement change ideas (e.g., COEs provided training or coaching on instructional strategies); and
- engaging in Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles to test change ideas, monitor progress, and adjust implementation as needed.

One COE leader described that the COE, over the years of providing DA, realized that DA teams too often struggled with moving past the data inquiry phase and into implementation. The COE leader noted that "We're going through root cause analysis so that people might identify the problem, but we don't want to just admire the problem." As a result, this particular COE developed a DA process that braided "improvement science, implementation science, and equity work" and that focused on testing change ideas. Then, once changes that appear to be working have been identified, the next step is to begin "embedding [them] into the system."

Table 5: Types of DA Supports Reported by California COEs and Districts

How COE used state formula funds to support DA	Percentage of COEs (*n* = 54)	
To develop and/or expand Level 2 supports	67%	
To develop and/or expand Level 1 supports	65%	
To train internal staff in improvement science	63%	
To hire additional staff	61%	
To expand our PD offerings for school district staff	59%	
To provide grants to districts to support improvement efforts	13%	
Other	22%	
Type(s) of support provided as part of DA	**Percentage of LEAs (*n* = 124)**	**Percentage of COEs (*n* = 54)**
Local data analysis	65%	78%
Support for LCAP development	61%	82%
Dashboard analysis	59%	82%
Root cause analysis	54%	82%
Support connecting DA to the goals or actions in LCAP	52%	69%
Comprehensive needs assessment or facilitated self-assessment	44%	67%
Development of a theory of action for achieving improvement goal	36%	52%
Development of an aim statement for improvement work	32%	56%
Systems analysis	30%	67%
Support to engage in PDSA cycles	29%	61%
Support for integrating other technical assistance into DA	24%	63%
Summary of findings from the root cause analysis	23%	52%
Support for meeting AB 130.122 data requirements for 2021/22	22%	70%
Support for developing strategies to spread and scale the improvement approach	20%	43%
Use of driver diagrams or force field analysis	17%	43%
Subcontract with trainers or consultants to support LEA needs	14%	39%
Other	6%	17%

Potential Components and Characteristics of High-Quality Differentiated Assistance

Understanding the quality of DA is complicated, given the variation across so many factors, including the reasons for eligibility, types of support, roles of individuals involved, and frequency and format of meetings. With that said, the survey results provide a window into the different features of DA reported by DA recipients who believe DA helped improve outcomes for students. For example, across all district survey responses, the most commonly referenced members of local DA teams were the individuals leading LCAP development, the associate superintendents of curriculum and instruction, and the associate superintendent of educational services. The most frequently reported DA supports involved analyses of local data and Dashboard results, LCAP development support, and root cause analyses. But these DA common features were not the ones most associated with reported improvement, based on survey results.

As shown in Table 6, the districts that included other individuals on the DA teams—the chief business officer, human resources director, a researcher or data analyst, or at least one teacher—were more likely to agree that DA helped them improve outcomes for students. Similarly, responses that mentioned certain, less frequent types of DA support were linked with the highest proportions of recipients reporting that DA improved outcomes for students. These reportedly impactful activities included support to spread and scale improvement, to summarize root cause analysis findings, and to define the district's aims and improvement goals. These findings, although admittedly from smaller samples of district respondents, offer some suggestive evidence that DA teams should include members of the cabinet involved in the budget and staffing, along with those closest to the work—teachers. The responses also suggest that DA activities that move beyond data inquiry may lead to more fruitful improvement work.

Table 6: Types of DA and Levels of Agreement That DA Improved Outcomes for Students

DA team membership (number of responding districts)	Percentage of recipients reporting that DA improved outcomes for students
Chief business officer (30)	80%
Human resources director (21)	76%
At least one teacher (57)	75%
Researcher or data analyst (40)	75%
At least one principal (74)	72%
A community member or parent or caregiver (20)	70%
District superintendent (64)	69%

DA team membership (number of responding districts)	Percentage of recipients reporting that DA improved outcomes for students
District team members with expertise in special education (81)	68%
Deputy or associate superintendent for curriculum and instruction or educational services (75)	67%
Individual overseeing support for Comprehensive School Improvement and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement schools (55)	67%
Individual leading LCAP development (94)	67%
District team members with expertise in programs to support targeted student groups (91)	66%
Types of DA support (number of responding districts)	**Percentage of recipients reporting that DA improved outcomes for students**
Develop strategies to spread and scale an improvement approach (25)	91%
Summarize findings from the root cause analysis (28)	88%
Support to engage in PDSA cycles (36)	82%
Develop aim statement or support determining what the district hopes to achieve as a result of improvement work (39)	81%
Use of driver diagrams or force field analysis (21)	81%
Support for meeting AB130.122 local data requirements (27)	80%
Support for integrating other technical assistance into DA (29)	79%
Dashboard analysis (65)	77%
Comprehensive needs assessment or facilitated self-assessment (48)	77%
Systems analysis (33)	76%
Support connecting DA to the goals and actions in district LCAP (59)	75%
Local data analysis (74)	74%
Support for LCAP development (68)	74%
Subcontracted with trainers and consultants to support the needs of LEAs (15)	73%
Development of a theory of action or approach to improvement (42)	71%
Root cause analysis (60)	63%

Perceptions of DA Quality

District and COE representatives generally had positive perceptions of DA services. Ninety percent of district leaders and 93 percent of COE leaders agreed that their district or districts have been able to foster a meaningful partnership (that is, a positive and productive working relationship) with their COE. Similarly, most COEs and districts from the focus groups and interviews described having positive relationships with one another and viewing DA as a

supportive process. Throughout the focus groups and interviews, COEs and districts often identified the establishment of positive, trusting relationships between one another as both a factor that enabled more effective DA and a valuable outcome of engaging in DA. However, there was variation in LEA perception of DA quality across the state.

In focus groups and interviews, many CDE DA providers and DA-eligible COEs described a similar positive shift and relationship-building between one another. Expressing the value of these relationships, one CDE DA provider noted that COEs understand "that we're not here to crack the whip and say 'gotcha,'" and contrasted this orientation with local leaders' impressions of Federal Program Monitoring (FPM) visits. Likewise, a leader from a DA-eligible COE described how CDE DA providers "were just so valuable, and they just became part of our local team, too. It didn't feel like oversight from CDE" but instead like a partnership.

At the same time, the COE providers of DA tended to perceive DA services as high quality more often than did the district recipients of DA services (Table 7). For example, 82 percent of COE providers rated the overall quality of their DA as high or very high quality, compared to 54 percent of district leaders. The discrepancy was greater regarding improving outcomes for focal student groups; 74 percent of COE leaders and 43 percent of district leaders rated the quality of support as high or very high quality on this front (Table 7). Furthermore, as described in more detail in the Element Five section of this report (covering challenges and opportunities), 1 in 10 LEAs reported low-quality or very low-quality support through DA.

Thirteen California COEs were rated by all of their responding districts in surveys as providing high-quality or very high-quality DA overall. At the same time, there were 24 COEs that rated themselves as providing high-quality or very high-quality DA overall and for specific student groups, yet these same COEs also had one or more of their districts rate their DA services as less than high quality.

Table 7: Perceived Quality of DA Among California Districts and Counties

How would you rate the overall quality of DA provided to your district/that your COE provides to eligible school districts?	Percentage of LEAs (*n* = 124)	Percentage of COEs (*n* = 51)
Very low quality	5%	0%
Low quality	7%	0%
Neither high nor low quality	36%	18%
High quality	39%	43%
Very high quality	15%	39%

How would you rate the quality of support provided through DA for improving outcomes for targeted student groups?	Percentage of LEAs (*n* = 124)	Percentage of COEs (*n* = 51)
Very low quality	5%	2%
Low quality	9%	0%
Neither high nor low quality	44%	24%
High quality	34%	45%
Very high quality	9%	29%
How confident are you that the current structure of DA in California will reduce inequities in student opportunities and outcomes?	**Percentage of LEAs (*n* = 127)**	**Percentage of COEs (*n* = 44)**
Not at all confident	18%	5%
Not so confident	20%	9%
Somewhat confident	41%	41%
Very confident	14%	39%
Extremely confident	7%	7%

In surveys, all responding districts (whether they were ever eligible for DA or not) were asked to describe the capacity of their own district staff in key areas, from analyzing and using data to implementing improvement routines. They were also asked to describe the level of knowledge of their COE staff in areas ranging from math and ELA content to improvement science to the LCAP and Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). These ratings provided additional perspective on the environment surrounding DA in California. For example, districts with higher self-perceived district capacity and more knowledgeable COEs were no more or less likely to report having ever been eligible for DA. At the same time, districts that described themselves as having higher capacity or that described their COEs as having higher levels of knowledge across topics were more likely to report that DA helped their district improve outcomes for students.

In individual interviews and focus groups, many DA providers and participants expressed appreciation for DA's positive, supportive approach to accountability. Many focus group participants contrasted this approach to the more punitive approach of California's previous accountability system, called Program Improvement, and described how DA enables providers and participants to establish the trust and openness necessary for authentic improvement work. As one COE leader described, "Ensuring that people feel safe, that they can be vulnerable, that they can do an honest self-assessment of where they're at and where they need to be, allows for this improvement work to be really robust and meaningful, and not surface-level or aimed at compliance." Similarly, a district leader expressed that this new

approach "creates a system of authentic accountability, which will result in change, instead of high-stakes incentives to game the system."

Many DA providers identified the importance of helping DA participants understand—as early as possible in the DA process—that the DA approach was different from Program Improvement, and that the provider's role is to be a support provider, not a compliance monitor. Still, these DA providers reported that this mindset shift and relationship-building has taken time to develop. As one COE stated, the "unlearning of what people have deeply embedded, from what they experienced previously, cannot be underestimated." A few COEs from the focus groups reported that this shift is still a "work in progress" in some of their districts, and a few interviewed districts still reported viewing DA as a punitive compliance activity (discussed further in the Element Five: Challenges and Opportunities section of this report).

DA participants also described the value of having third-party facilitation of the analysis of their data. One district superintendent said, "as superintendent, if I were to be doing the facilitating and the guiding, it would be a little difficult to [also] be a thought partner." A COE DA provider echoed this idea, noting that "supporting leaders … so they step out of facilitation mode and participate fully, is really, really important to the process." Additionally, DA providers and participants noted the value of the provider as an outside—and thus possibly more objective—thought partner. One COE leader described how external COE leaders were better positioned to help challenge team members' assumptions when those assumptions were not supported by the data.

DA providers also described intentional strategies to help DA participants take ownership over their improvement work. For example, a COE leader shared how her staff made an effort not to be too heavy-handed in their facilitation because they wanted to ensure that DA team participants are the true leaders of their own system investigations. The COE leader explained "rather than us coming and saying, 'This is what we see, this is what we think it means,'" the COE staff will instead ask probing questions such as "what do we think about this trend or this pattern in the data?" Another COE leader described providing $50,000 to each district participating in DA, with the only stipulations being that the district must use it for efforts related to the student group that made the district eligible for DA and that the district must report on these efforts in its LCAP. The COE leader shared that this approach "really helped the team feel like they had something that was within their control" and seemed to empower them in leading the work.

As mentioned earlier, however, not all districts reported a positive experience with DA, particularly when they felt that their DA provider did not let them have control and ownership over the focus of their improvement work. For example, a few reported that they would have liked to connect DA to their existing improvement efforts and receive support to strengthen those efforts, but their DA providers tried to steer them toward something new and different. As one district explained, "We've been working a lot around equity, we're learning a lot, we're rethinking a lot. … It is a huge thing to tackle and it's going to take years. … We want to work

with an organization that is going to continue our work on equity because that's a path we're already on. We don't want to do something that's in isolation and feels disjointed."

DA Providers Serve as Accountability Partners

In interviews and focus groups, DA participants also described the value of DA providers as accountability partners—someone who, like a gym buddy, would keep them on track and ensure they made time for the necessary improvement work. One district shared that "it's like having a big brother or big sister with you, who's always saying, 'Hey, where are we?' So, their regular check-ins have been really helpful for us to stay on track and make more progress." DA providers and participants shared that this support was particularly important given the many urgent demands on district and school leaders' time (described at greater length in the Element Five: Challenges and Opportunities section of this report). One COE DA provider, who previously worked in district leadership, shared, "One thing that LEAs really struggle with oftentimes is having the protected time and space to dive deeply into reflections and analysis around the system that they're working within and cocreating every day. One thing that DA provides is a protected time and space to really do some systems thinking, some system analysis, keeping students at the center of those conversations."

Several DA participants and providers added that along with prompting them to carve out time for improvement work, DA providers helped participants maintain fidelity to a continuous improvement process. For example, one district noted the value of the process's "constant focus on analyzing and getting to the root of our problem, rather than trying to jump in and solve it" before determining how to do so effectively.

Some DA participants also described the value of various steps that DA providers took to prepare for DA team meetings, which helped save participants' time. For example, they described it as helpful when the DA provider scheduled the DA team meetings, compiled the district's data (which included public state data and sometimes also included local data housed at the COE or provided through data-sharing agreements), produced data visualizations for the team to study during the meetings, and came prepared with improvement science tools or other materials for the team to use during the meetings.

Several COEs and some districts also reported that participants found DA support so valuable that they requested to continue receiving similar continuous improvement support even after they were no longer eligible for DA. One district leader reported that their COE would not continue providing DA until confirming that the district was eligible for another year, but other districts and COEs reported that the COEs offer DA-level support, free of charge, to any district that requests it. When describing their Level 1 support, one COE shared, "I think if you were

observing, you might not know which district was [eligible for] DA and which one isn't, because the level and frequency of contact and collaboration is often exactly the same."

COEs frequently shared that as a result of DA, they have expanded and deepened their Level 1 supports—the support for all of the districts they serve—regardless of DA eligibility. For example, COEs reported having launched countywide initiatives based on the frequent challenges that arose for districts receiving DA. One COE said, "I think a lot of good has come out of [DA] because, as a county, we have pivoted to doing more countywide initiative work and that has brought everybody in. So, it doesn't matter if you're [eligible for] DA or not. Almost all of our districts are really deeply involved in some countywide initiatives around attendance and behavior." Some districts eligible for DA mentioned such countywide programs and trainings that focused on literacy, math, and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. Some participants described that they were able to extract a value from their COEs as a result of DA eligibility; for example, one district described receiving about $100,000 worth of free professional learning from their COE, whereas they typically have to purchase professional learning services themselves.

Individualized Support and LEA Context Knowledge

A key element of DA is that the state intended for it to be individualized to meet the needs of the eligible COE, district, or charter school. Throughout the focus groups and interviews, DA providers described ways in which they tailored support to meet the needs of participants, and participants shared individualized supports that they appreciated.

First, providers and participants noted the importance of having a provider who understands the participants' work and context. For example, DA-eligible COEs participating in COE consortia frequently expressed the value of receiving support from leaders who had firsthand experience working in the unique contexts of COE-run schools. As one shared, "It's very necessary, when trying to drive improvement for student outcomes, that you're working with people who understand your programs. And COE programs—the court and community schools—are so unique … that you have the shared common understanding of how your programs work and also the nuances of it."

Districts that did not have a positive experience with DA agreed that it is critical for providers to listen to understand participants' existing work, local context, and their specific student populations. They indicated that in the absence of such understanding, DA can feel more like a burden than a support. For example, one district described frustration that the COE lacked capacity to do site visits to get the feel for their programs: "Having never set foot on your campuses, [it's difficult to] integrate [DA] into the work that's already done, so you can see it live. I can sit in my office all I want and tell my principals what to do. They are not going to listen to me if I just send them emails and give them feedback. I need to … go to the school, I have to go into the classroom, I have to look at the student, I have to be in the environment. I have to support people all the way through the implementation and take some of the lift from them, so

that they can implement it." Regarding listening for understanding, another participant put it more bluntly: "It just seems like there is an end game that they need to get to instead of truly listening to address pain points and challenges, which … can't just be resolved in checking off the boxes and getting through a plan. It's not like a sitcom problem resolved in 20 minutes."

Another district with a negative experience with DA explained that providers could be more supportive in context if they considered "a more holistic view of the whole child … and the disproportionality of the needs of the students within our community as being very unique. And you can't just look at one singular data point to tell the whole story. … [Data] is an important piece, but it is one puzzle piece, it's not the entire puzzle. And so we found that there was a lot of teaching that we had to do in those meetings."

Several districts expressed that it made sense for them to receive support from their COE because their COE already worked with them on their LCAP, provided them with technical assistance in other areas, and was familiar with their work. Indeed, as described further in the Element Five: Challenges and Opportunities section of this report, the DA provider's ability to align the work with the DA participant's LCAP process was identified as extremely important, given the many demands on participants' time.

Many COEs and several districts also described COEs' efforts to adapt the technical qualities of the DA process based upon districts' needs; for example, some technical qualities adapted included individualizing the DA meeting frequency and/or meeting length, along with adjusting the activities and timeline based on the district's readiness to engage in improvement work. As one COE described, "That customization becomes really critical, that we can be nimble and responsive to each district and their needs and their context. Our support actually looks somewhat different depending on what district you're talking about." Furthermore, one district noted that their COE continued to adjust their support based on district feedback: "Every year that we're involved, they incorporate what our staff says was helpful and wasn't."

Differences Between Small and Larger California Districts

Of the district leaders who responded to surveys, 53 percent led districts with 2,500 students or fewer, while 47 percent led districts enrolling more than 2,500 students.[10] The research team explored differences in survey results between these two groups. Responses were generally similar among small and large districts, but they did differ is some ways (as shown in Table 8). One key difference related to the capacity of the local district office; small LEAs reported lower levels of local capacity. The types of capacity included the district's ability to analyze student data to identify areas for improvement, the district's ability to select strategies to address root

[10] California Education Code describes "small school districts" as those with an average daily attendance of 2,500 or fewer (https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=17251.&lawCode=EDC).

causes, and the district's ability to identify and guide effective instruction and share this knowledge with others (see Table 8).

Responding leaders from small and large districts also noted focusing on different student groups and Dashboard indicators from one another in their most recent LCAPs. Small districts less often indicated that they focused their LCAPs on college and career, on graduation rates, on suspension rates, on African American students, or on students in foster care, while more often focusing their LCAP on White students (see Table 8).[11] They were also less likely to report that they consulted the Dashboard and other data sources to determine their LCAP goals for the school year.

Larger districts more often reported ever being eligible for DA, but among those districts that experienced DA, small LEAs were the ones that more often rated DA as high quality overall. A higher proportion of small LEAs also reported that they would have preferred to have had more time meeting with their DA service provider.

The content and makeup of DA also varied between small and large districts. Small districts less often included on their DA team an individual with expertise in special education; a researcher or data analyst; the individual(s) leading LCAP development or support for Comprehensive School Improvement (CSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) schools; or a community member, parent, or caregiver (see Table 6 earlier in this report). Small districts were also less likely than large districts to report receiving support for root cause analysis or for LCAP development and integration. Smaller-sized districts also less often subcontracted with trainers or consultants for support.

Table 8: Differences in Survey Responses From Small and Large California Districts

	Percentage of small districts (≤ 2,500 students; *n* =181)	Percentage of larger districts (> 2,500 students; *n* = 162)
Reportedly ever eligible for DA	35%	68%
The local COE provided DA to the district in the most recent year the district was eligible for DA	39%	61%
Would have preferred to have more time meeting with DA provider	18%	6%
Rated DA as high quality overall	68%	44%
Rated district as having above-average local capacity to:		

[11] The differences in student demographic focus may be partly reflective of the different student demographics in small districts, and they may also reflect that *n*-sizes of some student groups are sometimes too small to appear on the Dashboard and to prompt DA eligibility, a point that is discussed further in the following pages.

	Percentage of small districts (≤ 2,500 students; *n* =181)	Percentage of larger districts (> 2,500 students; *n* = 162)
• Analyze student data to identify areas for improvement	50%	64%
• Select strategies to address root causes	40%	54%
• Identify and guide effective instruction and share this knowledge with others	47%	58%
Area(s) of student performance that were focused on in the most recent LCAP		
• College and career	41%	59%
• Graduation rate	32%	68%
• Suspension rate	41%	69%
• Chronic absenteeism	48%	44%
• English Language Arts	69%	61%
• Mathematics	76%	65%
Student group(s) that were focused on in the most recent LCAP		
• African American students	37%	63%
• American Indian students	10%	7%
• Asian students	6%	6%
• Filipino students	3%	4%
• Hispanic students	50%	42%
• Pacific Islander students	5%	6%
• White students	74%	26%
• English learner students	67%	70%
• Socioeconomically disadvantaged students	81%	69%
• Students experiencing homelessness	36%	46%
• Students in foster care	42%	58%
• Students with IEPs	55%	60%
Rated DA provider's coaching to select strategies to address identified root causes as above average	73%	47%
Types of DA support received:		
• Dashboard analysis	38%	62%
• Root cause analysis	42%	58%
• Written summary of findings from the root cause analysis	43%	57%
• LCAP development	44%	56%

	Percentage of small districts (≤ 2,500 students; *n* =181)	Percentage of larger districts (> 2,500 students; *n* = 162)
• Connecting DA to the LCAP goals and actions	44%	56%
• Subcontracted with trainers and consultants	35%	65%
DA team members included:		
• Individual(s) with expertise in special education	34%	66%
• Researcher/data analyst	26%	74%
• Individual who leads LCAP development	35%	65%
• Individual overseeing support for CSI/ATSI	30%	70%
• Community member or parent/caregiver	39%	61%

The general format of DA delivery did not appear to vary between large and small LEAs. There were no observable differences in the reported frequency of local data reviews or in the frequency, length, or duration of DA meetings. There was also little difference in the suggested length of DA. Additionally, large and small LEAs had similar perceptions of the knowledge of their COE staff.

Delivery of Support to Students With the Greatest Needs

Another key element of an effective accountability and support system is the ability to accurately identify those LEAs serving students with the greatest needs and then connect those LEAs to support for improving student outcomes. In addition, the system must limit the number of LEAs identified to a quantity that DA providers can effectively support (i.e., identification must be limited because DA provider capacity is, by nature, limited).

The size of student groups in each district plays a key role in determining which group or groups may prompt a district's eligibility for DA. State law requires that each indicator have at least 30 observations for each student group (or 15 for students in the foster system or experiencing homelessness) in order for that student group's performance to generate a color on the Dashboard. This requirement is meant to avoid allocating DA based on wild swings in performance among a small number of students. However, given the marked variation in district enrollment size and clustering of student groups across districts, the sample-size requirement makes it impossible for many districts to become eligible for DA for certain student group–indicator combinations. For example, only 30 percent to 40 percent of districts have a sufficient number of African American students to be rated for eligibility for their performance. As an even more extreme example, only 2 percent of districts have a sufficient

number of American Indian students to receive a score for graduation rate for that group. These figures reflect the inherent tension between the desire for a fine-grained analysis of performance on indicators by student group combinations and the need to account for small sample sizes. During focus groups and individual interviews, several DA-eligible district and COE participants noted that local data play a key role in enabling districts and COEs to identify which additional student groups should be prioritized in their LCAPs and improvement work.

Some DA-eligible district and COE participants also expressed concern about the identification criteria used for DA eligibility, based on their specific contexts. Notably, technical assistance specialists who support CDE, CDE DA providers, COE DA providers, and COE-run school leaders agreed that it does not make sense to use the same Dashboard metrics for COE-run schools as for other LEAs. For example, students may attend these schools for only a fraction of a year—sometimes for only a few weeks—and so it is difficult for the COE to have an impact on their outcomes (especially long-term academic outcomes such as A-G course completion for the College and Career Readiness Indicator or completing requirements for graduation). Additionally, students who enroll in COE-run schools due to a School Attendance Review Board referral are more likely to face barriers to attendance. According to some leaders, even if COE-run schools manage to substantially increase attendance, the Dashboard will still identify them as chronically absent compared to state standards. Several COE-run schools also pointed to the likelihood of never being able to exit DA eligibility for certain student groups and indicators. They argued that the standardized California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) scores are not an appropriate measurement of performance for their students.

DA-eligible COE and LEA participants also pointed to shortcomings of Dashboard identification:

- In some cases (in a small district, for example), just a few students may prompt DA eligibility.
- A COE leader was pleased that the Dashboard highlighted the needs of students with IEPs across the state but was worried that other student groups that are less frequently identified by the Dashboard still need support. Some noted that in circumstances such as these, the district has greater knowledge of which student groups need support and can include those student groups as a focus for its improvement work accordingly.
- A district leader pointed out that the chronic absenteeism of 10 children from migrant families led to DA eligibility, but a far greater number of students needed supports in other areas that were more likely to be improved.

Other participants—particularly from COE-run schools and very high-need districts—described that the Dashboard data were not useful because their low attendance, low academic achievement, and contextual challenges are so severe that it would be unrealistic for their students to "catch up" to state standards. More than valuing DA measures, these participants valued local measures tailored to their student populations to gauge student growth, attendance, and engagement, along with providing a more holistic picture of their individual

students, circumstances, and improvement efforts. They shared that such measures include data from formative assessments, social–emotional learning (SEL) surveys, student interviews, empathy interviews, and parent surveys.

Element Two: Impact of Differentiated Assistance on Student Outcomes and Other Indicators of System Progress

This section outlines findings on the impact of DA on student outcomes and other indicators of system progress. It also identifies differences in the impact of DA by student group and geographic location. This section draws primarily from the research team's quantitative analysis of student outcomes as well as from survey and interview data.

Student Outcomes: Results From the Quantitative Impact Analysis

In assessing the impact of DA on student outcomes, the research team used the same indicators—aggregated at the district-by-student-group level—that the state uses to assess DA eligibility: chronic absenteeism, suspension rate, college and career readiness, graduation rate, the English Learner Progress Indicator (ELPI), and scores on ELA and math tests. The team separately assessed the impacts of each DA assignment year, 2017 and 2018, on subsequent district performance. The 2018 and 2019 outcomes were used for the 2017 assignment year; only 2019 outcomes were used for the 2018 assignment year, as no Dashboard data were available for 2020 or 2021. The outcomes were standardized (across districts by year) to facilitate comparisons across the six indicators.

For the first set of analyses, which laid the groundwork for the causal impact analyses, researchers determined how frequently each student group—and each indicator—made districts eligible for DA. In these analyses, the student group that led to DA eligibility (or the group that brought the district closest to DA eligibility) is the focal group. The focal group is the one whose second-lowest indicator score determines DA eligibility. The second-lowest indicator score, rather the lowest, determines eligibility because if the second-lowest indicator score were to improve enough, then the district would only have one low-performance area, and two areas are needed for DA eligibility. This indicator, which determines DA eligibility, is referred to as the focal indicator. (See Appendix C for more detail.)

Every district has a focal group and focal indicator, whether that district is close to DA eligibility or not. In the first set of analyses, researchers sorted districts by whether it was possible for them to be eligible for DA given their status level on their focal indicator. Because Dashboard performance levels are determined by both the status (current-year performance) and change (change from the prior year) in student performance, a district whose status level on its focal indicator is low enough that its change scores may or may not make it eligible is labeled

"potentially DA-eligible."[12] In other words, "potentially DA-eligible" districts are either eligible for DA or are somewhat close to eligibility. Any district whose status level on its focal indicator is high enough that even the lowest change score will not assign the district to DA is labeled "far from DA eligibility."

Which Student Groups Most Frequently Made Districts Eligible (or Close to Eligible) for DA

Tables 9 and 10 have the number of districts in which each student group was the focal group for districts that are potentially DA eligible and districts that are far from DA eligibility based on 2017 and 2018 Dashboard data, respectively. These data indicate how frequently different student groups led to DA eligibility compared to other student groups.

Several patterns stand out. First, students with disabilities[13] are overrepresented as the focal group across all districts, especially in districts that are potentially DA eligible. Students with disabilities are the focal group in the plurality of districts in both years. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students and homeless students are also common focal groups for districts, and foster youth are a common focal group for potentially DA-eligible districts.

Table 9: Numbers of Districts in Which a Given Student Group Was the Focal Group in "Far From DA Eligibility" and "Potentially DA-Eligible" Groups, Based on 2017 Dashboard Data

Student Group	Far From DA Eligibility	Potentially DA-Eligible	Total
African American	16	12	28
American Indian	1	9	10
Asian	1	0	1
English Learner	42	15	57
Foster	1	42	43
Hispanic	40	4	44
Homeless	24	48	72
Pacific Islander	3	1	4

[12] This term is different from the districts that are "on the margins" of DA eligibility (i.e., those districts used for the RDD analysis) because the RDD focused only on districts that were very close to the margins—specifically, districts within approximately 0.3 standard deviation of the eligibility threshold.

[13] The research team refers to students here using the terminology used by the California School Dashboard. However, elsewhere in the report, the research team uses alternative, person-first terms such as "students with IEPs" and "students experiencing homelessness."

Student Group	Far From DA Eligibility	Potentially DA-Eligible	Total
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	117	14	131
Students with Disabilities	64	314	378
White	58	5	63
Total	367	464	831

Table 10: Numbers of Districts in Which a Given Student Group Was the Focal Group in "Far From DA Eligibility" and "Potentially DA-Eligible" Groups, Based on 2018 Dashboard Data

Student Group	Far From DA Eligibility	Potentially DA-Eligible	Total
African American	8	20	28
American Indian	1	9	10
Asian	2	0	2
English Learner	31	20	51
Foster	5	78	83
Hispanic	29	13	42
Homeless	8	112	120
Pacific Islander	0	1	1
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	77	52	129
Students with Disabilities	54	250	304
2+ Races	2	3	5
White	64	28	92
Total	281	586	867

Which Indicators Most Frequently Made Districts Eligible (or Close to Eligible) for DA

Tables 11 and 12 show the number of districts for which each indicator is the focal indicator based on 2017 and 2018 Dashboard data, again separated by the two categories of districts. The data indicate that ELA, math, and suspension rate were nearly equally likely to be the focal indicator in 2017, with graduation rate the least likely. Chronic absenteeism was added as an indicator in 2018 and is the focal indicator for the plurality of districts that year, followed closely by suspension rate; ELA and math are also commonly represented. College and career

readiness is not often the focal indicator, and graduation rate is almost never the focal indicator.[14]

Table 11: Numbers of Districts in Which a Given Indicator Was the Focal Indicator in "Far From DA Eligibility" and "Potentially DA-Eligible" Groups, Based on 2017 Dashboard Data

Indicator	Far From DA Eligibility	Potentially DA-Eligible	Total
ELA	170	86	256
Graduation	13	47	60
Math	141	93	234
Suspension	46	240	286
Total	370	466	836

Table 12: Numbers of Districts in Which a Given Indicator Was the Focal Indicator in "Far From DA Eligibility" and "Potentially DA-Eligible" Groups, Based on 2018 Dashboard Data

Indicator	Far From DA Eligibility	Potentially DA-Eligible	Total
College/Career	6	76	82
Chronic Absenteeism	70	174	244
ELA	65	79	144
Graduation	5	0	5
Math	67	81	148
Suspension	76	180	256
Total	289	590	879

[14] The infrequency of graduation rate as the focal indicator is due to two technical features of the data, not necessarily due to across-the-board higher performance in graduation. First, fewer districts have graduation rates because not all districts have high schools. Second, perhaps because of that first point, CDE in 2018 combined the graduation rate with chronic absenteeism into a single priority area for determining Dashboard eligibility. Consequently, if chronic absenteeism is the lowest indicator, graduation rate can't be the focal indicator, because it is no longer an isolated indicator; the student group with low performance in chronic absenteeism will need a second low-performing indicator, other than graduation rate, in order to qualify the district for DA.

Impact of DA on Low-Performing Indicators, Focal-Group Performance, and General-District Performance

To assess the impact of DA on the specific indicators on which it intends to focus (i.e., the two lowest-performing indicators), the research team used an RDD to examine the following:

- For the focal group: the impact of DA on the focal indicator
- For the focal group: the impact of DA on the focal group's lowest indicator
- For all students in the district: the impact of DA on the focal indicator
- For all students in the district: the impact of DA on the focal group's lowest indicator

To create a summary measure of district performance, the research team also assessed the impact of DA on a district's probability of being eligible for DA in subsequent years, both for the focal group specifically and for the district as a whole (i.e., for any other student groups). To examine whether DA's impact is different for large districts versus other districts, the research team also assessed DA's impact on the smallest 90 percent of districts (i.e., "non-large" districts) as well as its impact on all districts.

Impact of DA on Eligibility for DA in Future Years

Receiving DA reduces the likelihood that a district will be eligible for DA in the future, as can be seen in Table 13. For districts that became eligible in 2017, DA reduced the likelihood of future DA by 26 to 28 percentage points by 2019. The impact on those districts' eligibility for DA by 2018 (as an outcome), though not statistically significant, is about half as large, suggesting steady progress in overall district performance from 2017 to 2019. For districts that became eligible in 2018, DA reduced the likelihood of future DA eligibility by 20 to 22 percentage points by 2019. The results for non-large districts are similar to the results for all districts. Given that a district's eligibility or non-eligibility for DA can be considered an overall measure of district performance, this impact analysis found that DA had a positive impact on district performance.

Table 13: Change in Likelihood of Being Eligible for DA in Subsequent Years as a Result of DA, by Years of Data Analyzed, for All Districts

DA Eligibility Year	Outcome Year	Change in Likelihood of Eligibility in Outcome Year
2017	2018	-13%
2017	2019	-28%**
2018	2019	-22%**

** statistically significant

Table 14: Change in Likelihood of Being Eligible for DA in Subsequent Years as a Result of DA, by Years of Data Analyzed, for Non-Large Districts

DA Eligibility Year	Outcome Year	Change in Likelihood of Eligibility in Outcome Year
2017	2018	-13%
2017	2019	-26%*
2018	2019	-20%*

*** nearing statistical significance**

Next, the research team assessed whether DA had an impact on the probability that the district's focal group will lead to continued DA eligibility in future years, whether for the focal indicator or for any indicator. In these analyses, DA has little detectable impact. Tables D-2 and D-3 in Appendix D contain these mostly null results. The only statistically significant impact is a reduction of 18 percentage points in DA eligibility caused by the focal group for the focal indicator by 2019 as a result of DA assigned in 2017. These mostly null results indicate that focal groups in the comparison districts experience roughly the same increase in scores as the focal groups in districts receiving DA.

Impact of DA on Indicators of Performance

The impact of DA on the performance of the focal group is somewhat mixed, with some null results and some positive results. As displayed in Table D-4 in the Appendix D, the focal indicator improves for the focal group from 2017 to 2018 but has null results in terms of impact from 2017 to 2019 and from 2018 to 2019.

However, the lowest indicator for the focal group is bolstered by the 2017 DA year in both the 2018 and 2019 data (see Table 15). These positive results indicate that DA has a positive impact on the lowest-performing Dashboard indicators for the student groups that DA intends to support. (There is not a statistically significant impact of the 2018 DA assignment year on the lowest indicator for the focal group.)

Table 15: Change in Performance of the Focal Group's Lowest-Performing Indicator as a Result of DA, by Years of Data Analyzed, for All Districts

DA Eligibility Year	Outcome Year	Change in Performance (Measured in Cross-District Standard Deviations)
2017	2018	.63***
2017	2019	.53***
2018	2019	.20

*** strong statistical significance

Table 16: Change in Performance of the Focal Group's Lowest-Performing Indicator as a Result of DA, by Years of Data Analyzed, for Non-Large Districts

DA Eligibility Year	Outcome Year	Change in Performance (Measured in Cross-District Standard Deviations)
2017	2018	.73***
2017	2019	.73***
2018	2019	.10

***strong statistical significance

As displayed in Table D-6 in Appendix D, the results for all students show a fairly similar pattern, with a mix of null and positive results on the focal indicator and stronger evidence of a positive impact on the lowest-performing indicator. For non-large districts eligible in 2017, the results show modest improvements to the focal indicator by 2018 and by 2019. Additionally, for all districts eligible in 2018, the results show modest improvements to the focal indicator by 2019.

As displayed in Table 17, there is evidence of DA's positive impact on the lowest indicator for all students from 2017 to both 2018 and 2019, with effects in the range of one half of a cross-district standard deviation. There is not statistically significant evidence of DA in 2018 improving 2019 outcomes.

Table 17: Change in All Students' Performance on the Focal Group's Lowest-Performing Indicator as a Result of DA, by Years of Data Analyzed, for All Districts

DA Eligibility Year	Outcome Year	Change in Performance (Measured in Cross-District Standard Deviations)
2017	2018	.48***
2017	2019	.44**
2018	2019	.11

*** strong statistical significance
** statistical significance

Table 18: Change in All Students' Performance on the Focal Group's Lowest-Performing Indicator as a Result of DA, by Years of Data Analyzed, for Non-Large Districts

DA Eligibility Year	Outcome Year	Change in Performance (Measured in Cross-District Standard Deviations)
2017	2018	.50***
2017	2019	.46**
2018	2019	.13

*** strong statistical significance
** statistical significance

Variation by District and Student Characteristics

Given the relatively small number of districts that form the sample for these models (i.e., only the districts on the margins of DA eligibility), it is unlikely that analyses using student groups of this data set would have the statistical power to find any meaningful effects. This limitation left many interesting questions about the efficacy of DA off the table, such as whether turnover in district leadership weakens the effect of DA, and whether the effects vary by county or by other geographic differences. Assessing the impact of DA on the performance of most specific student groups—African American students, English learners, and others—also would not be likely to result in statistically significant results, since there were too few comparable districts that had each group as its focal group.

Nevertheless, two specific analyses are of sufficient interest to be noted here: effects for small districts and effects for districts in which the focal group is students with disabilities. Small districts report distinct experiences with DA in such a way that makes them a natural group for which to assess student achievement, and students with disabilities are the focal group in the overwhelming plurality of districts eligible for DA. When the sample is restricted to small

districts or districts in which students with disabilities led to DA eligibility, only a couple hundred observations are left near the assignment threshold for DA. Not surprisingly then, these analyses are statistically uncertain; most of the effects are not statistically significant (see Tables D-8 through D-11 in Appendix D). However, when looking at the pattern of effects, not district effects, there is no evidence that the effects of DA differ markedly for either small districts or districts whose focal group is students with disabilities.

Although the quantitative impact analysis did not allow the research team to identify differences between COEs or LEAs in different geographic regions, interviews and focus groups surfaced some differences, specifically among participants who did not have a positive experience with their COE DA provider. For example, these participants often responded that they felt isolated in their region and, in the absence of what they deemed sufficient provider capacity to support their needs, would have benefited from connecting with COEs and LEAs in other regions of the state. Other participants who did not feel supported by their COE provider explained that their LEA or school was different from others in the region in terms of student demographics or size, and that they would have appreciated knowledge, expertise, and guidance from local providers and/or participants from similar LEAs in other counties or regions of the state who understood their unique contexts.

Implications of the Impact Analysis

Despite the complexity of modeling the impact of DA and the challenges with statistical power, the impact analysis did yield some meaningful evidence that DA has a positive impact on student performance:

- On average, DA improves the performance for all students and for the focal group in marginally eligible districts, especially on the lowest indicators that lead to DA eligibility.
- On average, receiving DA leads to a reduction in future DA eligibility for marginally eligible districts.

These effects tend to be more evident for the DA provided in response to eligibility in 2017, for which impacts can be observed in two subsequent years (2018 and 2019). Given the limitations of the data set (which includes only pre-COVID data), researchers are unable to assess the longer-term impacts of 2018 eligibility. Overall, there are encouraging signs that the intervention is having a positive effect on a variety of quantifiable measures of improvement.

Student Outcomes: Findings from Focus Groups, Interviews, and Surveys

When asked on the survey whether DA has led to improvement in outcomes in their district, most district leaders (64 percent) reported that DA helped their district improve outcomes for

students. Similarly, a considerable number of focus group and interview participants reported that DA has improved or has the potential to improve student outcomes.

Some DA providers and participants mentioned specific outcomes for which they saw improvement—including attendance, suspensions, course completion, and academic performance—and for specific student groups. Others noted that after participation in DA, some districts' Dashboard data improved enough that they were no longer eligible for DA or were eligible for fewer student groups and indicators. As one COE DA provider described, "There's a handful of districts that have moved out of DA, or moved in and out, or reduced the number of eligibility criteria. If there were five indicators [that had made them eligible previously], now there are three indicators. If there were four student groups, now there's maybe one student group that's eligible for Differentiated Assistance. I think some of those things really point to some of the impact." These observations are consistent with the research team's quantitative impact analysis, which, overall, found that DA eligibility in one year made districts less likely to be eligible for DA the next year.

Several of these districts and COEs also provided examples of interventions or system changes that improved outcomes for targeted student groups. For example, two different COE DA providers described similar experiences with districts they supported. They said that the DA prompted the districts to discover a fixable systems issue that had been preventing students with IEPs from graduating with a diploma; instead, many students with IEPs had only been receiving certificates. According to one of the COEs, the district "found that there was a bottleneck between 6th and 7th grade where these kids, they were being placed or railroaded into a [certificate-track] system because of the way [the district] had designed their process. They analyzed it, fixed the process … and kids now are being challenged and being allowed to take courses that will lead to an actual diploma." Another COE provider shared numerous strategies that a district had implemented to improve chronic absenteeism and reduce suspensions for specific student groups. These strategies included intervening with students whose absences were headed toward chronic absenteeism, conducting home visits, increasing parent involvement, reexamining and calibrating school sites' criteria for suspensions, implementing restorative practices, building schoolwide capacity for Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions (PBIS), and having counselors hold reentry meetings for students following suspensions. According to the COE provider, the district saw marked improvement after implementation of these practices and was no longer eligible for DA for one of its two focal student groups.

When asked whether they believed DA had improved or had the potential to improve student outcomes, about a third of the focus group participants indicated they were "unsure" or "it was too early to tell," the second most common set of responses. In some cases, respondents explained that although they had seen improvement in student outcomes, it is difficult to determine whether any of this improvement—or how much of it—was linked to DA. For example, one district leader shared, "Has [DA] supported improvement? Absolutely. Is it the

main thing that created the improvement? I cannot confirm that." Another district leader similarly noted, "We had improved student outcomes. The degree to which I could attribute those to DA is questionable. I could not draw the nexus between the two."

In other cases, respondents shared that it is difficult to gauge whether DA has improved outcomes because DA was provided for only a short time before the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, several noted that the pandemic made it difficult to assess progress due to missing years of Dashboard data, the focus of their improvement initiatives shifting to urgent pandemic-related needs (including the shift to virtual learning), and declines in student outcomes resulting from the pandemic. As one district described, "For student improvement, COVID has really thrown a wrench in that. We didn't take the statewide CAASPP in 2020 or 2021, so last year was really like a new benchmark year." Another district similarly shared, "It's hard to tell, because we haven't had test data since we were in Differentiated Assistance. I'm not even sure you can use this year's assessment cycle as proof. For me, it's a baseline. Everything changed because of the pandemic."

In other cases, focus group participants expressed that they believe it will be difficult to gauge DA's impact until improvement efforts have had more time to take root, because systemic improvement work takes time to yield changes in student outcomes. For example, one district explained, "We've increased reading interventions. We are training all our K–3 teachers, hoping to improve Reading-First instruction. … We've just started … so it's a little too soon to say that it's working."

Other Indicators of System Progress

Increased Capacity

DA providers and participants described several ways in which DA has built the capacity of staff within their educational systems. One way is by providing guidance to district staff on how to use data to better understand their systems. For example, focus group participants who were DA providers or DA-eligible said that after digging into the district's data, staff gained a greater understanding of which students need more support and in which areas. Sometimes, these were student populations identified by the Dashboard, such as students with IEPs. In other cases, the student populations were identified through the staff's collection and deep investigation of local data. For example, a COE described leading a session in which they asked district administrators to review the names of all chronically absent students and look for patterns, and administrators were stunned by the results. They realized, "in this very rural community, it was their LGBTQ group of children that were under the radar. … They were the highest chronically absent group, but it would've never caught their attention, had they not done that [data dive]."

Some DA providers and participants also shared that DA has helped school and district staff adopt more open, improvement-focused mindsets. For example, one district described how DA prompted "a shift in culture, from our teachers' perspective … in a school district where they were pretty rooted in the way things had always been, that maybe it was time to change." Similarly, a DA provider described how as a result of the systems investigation and collaboration prompted by DA, "over time, the adults in the system have come to the place of reflecting on their own practice, and in some ways, seeing their own role in creating those barriers" that hinder student achievement. Several focus group and interview participants also shared that DA has helped general education staff take greater responsibility for the experiences and outcomes of students with IEPs.

In addition, COEs receiving DA through COE consortia described how they benefited from valuable opportunities with peers to learn strategies for improving outcomes in COE-run schools. As one COE described, "I feel like some of the COEs are light years ahead, and we're trying to catch up by going, 'Hey, how did you do that? And what were some of the obstacles?'" Another COE described that DA provided "not just collaboration, but I would say inspiration. Because when you're with a group of people who have similar programs … and other COEs have figured out ways to move the needle with student outcomes, you realize, 'Oh, that's possible.'" Another COE described not only gathering ideas of best practices from other COEs but also scheduling learning visits to see them in action.

Improved Practices, Processes, and Policies

Many DA providers and participants expressed that they believe DA has the potential to improve student outcomes because they have seen DA improve how their local educational systems operate. They shared examples of such systems improvements, including specific changes that directly impact students.

Several of these examples pertained to students with IEPs. For example, one district respondent described how after finding that teachers sometimes referred students to unnecessary interventions and exclusionary environments, the district established data-driven protocols to ensure that students received interventions only when appropriate for their needs. Two other district respondents described efforts to improve general education classroom support for students with IEPs, such as by helping teachers understand how to implement students' IEPs and by introducing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies. Other districts reported that DA's root cause analysis led them to discover—and rectify—policies that were unintentionally hindering outcomes for students with IEPs.

Several districts and COEs reported introducing disciplinary strategies that provide less exclusionary alternatives to suspension. Several also reported investing in the use of formative assessments to help teachers adjust their academic instruction throughout the year to better meet students' needs. DA providers and participants also described ways in which DA improved

school and district processes more broadly. For example, several said that DA prompted them to invest in much more robust data systems, including

- infrastructure for storing and accessing data;
- new methods for obtaining local data, such as conducting empathy interviews with students and staff;
- ongoing collection of additional types of local data, such as data on student engagement, social–emotional needs, and school climate; and
- establishment of ongoing routines for using data, such as examining progress data to monitor effectiveness of new programs and interventions.

In addition, DA providers and participants often reported that DA helped districts and COEs implement or improve systems for collaboration. They often described the multidisciplinary teams involved with DA; these teams featured district-level administrators, site administrators, teachers, counselors, special education staff, and English learner specialists. Some DA participants described how creating these diverse teams to collaborate on DA helped break down silos and improve staff members' understanding of how other parts of the system operate. For example, a DA-eligible COE shared how "there was a lot of realizations from folks that counseling at times works in a silo, and administration doesn't understand what's going on in the classroom, and the classroom certainly doesn't understand sometimes what's happening with administration." These silos, the COE explained, had led to some placement and scheduling decisions that negatively affected outcomes for English learners—this particular DA team's focal student group—which DA helped the COE discover and address.

Element Three: Alignment Between the Dashboard, Differentiated Assistance, and Local Control and Accountability Plans

This evaluation included a review of California Education Code pertaining to the Dashboard, DA, and LCAP to identify areas of alignment and misalignment in policy. Individual-interview and focus group participants were also asked to identify areas of alignment and misalignment between the Dashboard, DA, and the LCAP. The surveys also included several questions about alignment between the Dashboard, DA, and LCAP.

Alignment Reported Between DA and the Dashboard and Between DA and LCAP

Focus group and interview participants were asked whether they see three key elements of the state's accountability and support system—the Dashboard, DA, and the LCAP—as aligned or misaligned; they were also asked about how alignment could be improved. Respondents

generally reported that they see the Dashboard as aligned with DA because DA eligibility is based on Dashboard data. However, many reported seeing less-clear alignment between DA and the LCAP, leading to separate, potentially duplicative improvement processes.

Several DA providers and participants reported that they understand the theoretical link between DA and the LCAP; however, the two processes in practice are frequently not explicitly linked unless the DA provider makes an intentional effort to link them. DA teams described the following strategies as helping to promote linkages:

- Having the DA team—including the provider—review the district's LCAP before starting DA work and keeping in mind the district's current priorities and initiatives throughout DA
- Using the data collected and analyzed as part of LCAP development to also inform DA (and vice versa)
- Including the needs and potential actions identified through the DA process in the next LCAP update
- Having providers who support the district's LCAP development also provide DA (and vice versa)

DA providers and participants noted that the current timing of the annual Dashboard data release—which dictates the timing of DA—often presents a barrier to aligning DA processes with LCAP development. For example, although the root cause analysis and needs assessment from DA typically are not completed until the end of the school year, districts and COEs begin drafting their LCAPs during the first half of the school year and present it to various education partner groups throughout the second half of the school year. Consequently, DA findings and planned actions would only be able to inform the following fall's LCAP. DA providers noted that when DA became a multiyear process during the pandemic, the longer timeline facilitated alignment between DA and LCAP development, as DA teams were able to incorporate DA findings and planned actions into the following year's LCAP.

There was wide agreement that the lack of alignment between the LCAP and DA—coupled with the requirements of multiple plans and reporting requirements for sources of funding outside of LCFF—were impediments. Participants shared that it felt like "double the work." As one COE explained, agreeing with another, "I so appreciated the original intention behind LCFF and LCAP and these things fitting together. … I guess it's not a 'what can they do,' but maybe a 'stop doing.'… The more noise we add to the system, we distract people from this work."

A review of education code (see Appendix A) further highlights areas of alignment and misalignment between the three elements of the state's accountability and support system. An explicit connection between DA and the LCAP is not currently required for DA-eligible districts.

At the same time, survey results suggest that LCAP discussions are a part of local DA in many districts. Two of the five most prevalent types of DA support reported by districts and COEs in the surveys were for LCAP development and for connecting DA to the goals and actions in the district's LCAP (Table 5). Eighty percent of responding district leaders also indicated that the person who leads LCAP development for the district was directly involved in DA in the most recent year. And when asked about the extent to which DA contributed to changes in particular sections of the LCAP, 78 percent of district respondents indicated that the root cause analysis or needs assessment conducted as part of DA led to adjustments in LCAP actions and services, while 65 percent reported such changes in LCAP goals.

Element Four: Alignment Between State and Federal Accountability, Regulatory, and Support Systems

The evaluation also examined areas of alignment between the state and federal accountability, regulatory, and support systems. The findings in this section draw from an analysis of education codes and of data from interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

Duplication in Identification and Differing System-Level Monitoring and Support Bodies

DA providers and participants were asked about alignment between DA and federal accountability, regulatory, and support systems (i.e., CSI, TSI, ATSI) and between DA and the CDE's special education monitoring processes, such as the Compliance and Improvement Monitoring (CIM) process. Although only a few of the focus group and interview participants spoke about alignment between DA and federal accountability processes, most indicated that the two systems were mostly separate. According to some respondents, because the state accountability and improvement system came first before the federal system, there are certain design elements that do not match up. For example, a school's School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) now fulfills CSI-plan requirements but feels like it is "shoehorned in," as one respondent put it.

As required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the CDE uses student performance data to identify schools as eligible for CSI and TSI or ATSI (CDE, 2022a; CDE, 2022b) whereas DA identifies school districts for support. CSI eligibility is based on schoolwide performance whereas TSI and ATSI are based on individual student group performance; the CDE uses Dashboard data to determine eligibility for each program. LEAs with eligible schools receive funding to help their schools develop and implement plans to improve student outcomes; COEs also provide technical assistance for LEAs with CSI and TSI/ATSI schools. Appendix F outlines the criteria for identification for CSI, TSI, and ATSI, along with the criteria for identification for DA.

Several COEs reported that because their CSI, TSI, and ATSI schools are concentrated within DA-eligible districts, the COEs try to align the improvement planning processes as much as possible.

In fact, 76 percent of schools identified for CSI, TSI, or ATSI are in districts identified for DA. See Appendix E for a comparison of DA and ESSA assistance (CSI, TSI, ATSI).

Most DA-eligible districts (81 percent) have at least one school that is eligible for ESSA assistance. A smaller number of ESSA-eligible districts—but still constituting a majority (60 percent)—are already eligible for DA. These numbers show that although there is considerable overlap between eligibility in the two accountability systems, there is also some misalignment in identification between the systems at the district level. Furthermore, given that the nature of support for DA-eligible districts is considerably more time- and resource-intensive than for CSI, TSI, or ATSI schools, there is also a potential gap (which could be seen as an opportunity) to provide the same or similar levels of support to identified schools.

Table 19: Overlap Between DA-Eligible and ESSA-Eligible Districts and Schools

DA and ESSA Eligibility	Percentage
Share of DA districts that are also eligible for ESSA assistance	81%
Share of DA districts that are not eligible for ESSA assistance	19%
Share of ESSA districts that are also eligible for DA	60%
Share of ESSA districts that are not eligible for DA	40%

But some COEs reported that currently, it is not generally possible to combine the two processes into one because DA is district-level work while CSI, TSI, and ATSI focus on the school level and involve specific, prescriptive processes and documentation to meet federal requirements. Some COEs, however, described two similar, parallel processes that involved the same COE support providers, the same district leaders, and communication between the two teams, so the processes could work in tandem and inform one another. In these districts, DA focuses on school-level and districtwide improvements.

DA providers and CDE administrators identified the misalignment between the DA timeline and the CSI, TSI, and ATSI timelines as a substantial barrier to aligning the two processes. As one CDE administrator explained, DA identification occurs in December but CSI identification does not occur until January and LEAs do not receive their CSI funding until around May. As a result, CSI funds arrive too late to support implementation of strategies identified during the DA process until the following school year.

When focus group participants from DA-eligible districts shared their reflections on DA's alignment—or lack thereof—with special education monitoring processes, they consistently reported that the processes were duplicative. As one district described, "We did the exact same work and filled out two sets of action plans. … We tried to make the work as cohesive and working towards the same actions as we could, but it was a lot of duplicat[ion]." A notable

barrier to alignment is that DA is provided by COE staff whereas special education monitoring is conducted by the CDE; although the same COE staff can support both CSI and DA; this overlap of duties is not the case for special education monitoring and DA.

Variation by CSI and TSI Status

The research team also investigated whether the impact of DA interacts with schools identified in the federal accountability system. Under the state's implementation of federal rules, schools can be identified for overall low graduation rates, overall low performance (Title I schools only), or low performance for student groups. The research team evaluated two basic elements of the interaction between the systems. First, the team used an indicator of federal identification (either CSI or TSI) as an outcome in the DA impact analysis, revealing whether DA helped schools avoid the federal designations. Second, the team investigated whether this impact of DA was more or less beneficial to schools already identified for federal support. Neither case provided a statistically significant effect, reinforcing the qualitative findings that the systems are operating independently of one another. This finding does not suggest that the federal system is ineffective; a full impact analysis of the federal assignment rules on student achievement in California schools is outside the scope of this report.

Element Five: Challenges and Opportunities

This section provides an overview of the challenges and opportunities in the current model of DA that were identified by system leaders during focus groups and individual interviews and in the survey.

DA's Current Timeline, Typically January to May, Is Too Short to Support the Full Improvement Process

One of the most frequently identified barriers to DA's potential for improving student outcomes was the current, single-year timeline for DA. In a typical year, information on eligibility for DA is released in December. DA providers and participants said that DA teams typically begin meeting shortly after that—which is already halfway through the school year—and continue their DA work through the spring. This timing means that for many DA-eligible LEAs, DA work is confined to around 5 months. Through the survey, districts reported a similar timeline; when asked how many months they met with their provider for DA, 61 percent of districts reported meeting for 6 months or fewer, with 3 to 4 months being the most common response (reported by 25 percent of districts).

DA providers and participants frequently shared that this short timeframe enabled the DA team to complete only the data-inquiry and root-cause-analysis phase of the work. As one district explained, "In one year, we know what our problem is, but we don't really know what we're going to do about it, if it's working, or what we need to revise." Implementation of any new

strategies, many noted, would have to begin the following school year—and by that December, some COEs and districts would no longer be eligible for DA and therefore would not benefit from implementation support through DA unless their provider agrees to continue supporting them.

Indeed, according to focus groups, interviews, and survey results, most DA providers and participants supported extending DA to a 2- or 3-year timeline. For the survey question asking how long respondents would recommend LEAs should be eligible for DA—that is, how long they would receive DA support, once they are identified as eligible—the most frequent response was 2 years (34 percent of COEs; 35 percent of LEAs).

Table 20: If You Could Advise the State on the Length of Eligibility for LEAs, How Long Would You Suggest That LEAs Should Be Eligible for Differentiated Assistance?

Length in years	COEs (*n* = 50)	LEAs (*n* = 126)
1 year	5 (10%)	36 (29%)
2 years	17 (34%)	44 (35%)
3 years	14 (28%)	23 (18%)
4 years	2 (4%)	4 (3%)
More than 4 years	4 (8%)	7 (6%)
Other	8 (16%)	12 (10%)

Several DA providers and participants noted that the extension of 2019 DA eligibility ended up being a valuable test case for what DA could look like with a longer timeline. Some COEs also described treating DA as a multiyear process for districts that were eligible for multiple consecutive years prior to the pandemic. For example, one COE described working "with districts all spring following the Dashboard release regarding data, root cause analysis, and development of an aim statement, and then at least the next semester to execute one or more PDSA cycles to analyze the effectiveness of the work." The COE added that the 2-year cycle in place during the pandemic seemed like "perfect timing" to them and they would recommend it as the norm for DA.

Several districts echoed the notion that DA needs to allow time for longer-term implementation and progress-monitoring. One district suggested that if a district's Dashboard data no longer identified the district as eligible in the second year, "then that next year would look a little different than when you're actually trying to climb out of the hole. … It's like losing weight. You lost the weight, now you're going to maintain [your progress]."

Clear guidance on what the second, third, or further year of DA should look like would also alleviate a current challenge expressed by some DA participants. For those whose data do not

show much change from year to year—which was most frequently reported to be the case within COE-run schools—completing a root cause analysis similar to the previous year's may not be a productive use of time. Expressing frustration at this situation, one COE shared that their "data points are very similar to the previous year's data points … [so] with the time that we're doing for planning, execution, meeting, follow-ups, it's a lot of manpower and resources that are being spent" on what seems like a repetitive process. Directly connecting the data and inquiry phase of DA to the identification of specific actions and services in the LCAP may support greater alignment between the two components of the system and create a pathway for DA providers and participants to move beyond root cause analyses.

Limited Staff Time

Through the surveys, focus groups, and interviews, both DA providers and participants consistently cited limited staff time amidst competing priorities as a significant barrier to DA. Respondents most frequently referred to DA participants' limited time, but some reported that DA providers' limited time presented a challenge as well.

On one hand, many DA participants valued the DA provider's role as an accountability partner who helped them prioritize time for deep, systems-focused improvement work. On the other hand, DA participants and providers reported that when faced with competing district priorities, pandemic-related needs, and other urgent pressures, the ability to prioritize DA work was sometimes outside of participants' control. One DA-eligible COE shared, "I'm fine going to the table with my DA provider because I enjoy time working collaboratively with them. So, it was almost a gift. … But we canceled meetings a lot just because there was so much going on."

As multiple DA providers noted, DA participants were often called back to school sites to "put out fires." Focus group participants noted that these urgent matters included pandemic-related responsibilities and other day-to-day emergencies. In addition, one DA-eligible COE mentioned having to deal with wildfire-related challenges. Several DA participants also mentioned that a lack of available substitute teachers sometimes made it difficult for teachers to leave the classroom to participate in DA meetings.

A few DA providers and participants noted that making time for DA can be particularly challenging for leaders from small districts, as their administrators wear numerous hats. One COE described a district in which the DA lead is the superintendent and "that superintendent might also be the bus driver for the day and might also be serving lunches right before the meeting."

DA providers and participants shared that in order to participate in DA work, administrators have to work even longer hours beyond their already-long days. Suggesting a strategy to help DA participants prioritize making time for DA team meetings, several DA providers expressed the importance of conveying early on in the process that DA is not just "one more thing" that is being added to DA participants' plates. Rather, as one COE explained, DA intends to support the

work that participants are already doing to improve outcomes for students, and DA's goal is to help them "do it smarter and in a more systematic way."

Although limited time among DA providers arose as a challenge much less frequently than did limited time among DA participants, some DA providers did identify it as a challenge also, particularly in the context of small COEs. A few COEs shared that they currently have sufficient staff time to provide DA to all those who are eligible within their county but that they will need to hire additional staff when the number of eligible LEAs grows due to the addition of charter schools in 2023/24 and/or due to larger numbers of eligible school districts.

Overwhelming and Increasing Administrative Burdens

Throughout the focus groups and interviews, DA providers and participants consistently referenced the administrative burden of ever-increasing LCAP requirements and new pandemic-relief funding plans as major obstacles to finding the time to participate in improvement work. Many expressed concern that the LCAP has departed from its original intent as a strategic planning document and public communication tool, since it now requires so much content that it has become a compliance burden. One COE described that the LCAP has become "a catchall for everything that catches the interest of our legislature to throw more stuff in."

Another COE added, "In terms of the LCAP, I was really optimistic back in the day, as to what it could do. [But] it has become everything for everybody. … It really became a compliance document." Indeed, some districts' LCAPs are now hundreds of pages long; Los Angeles Unified School District's 2022 LCAP is 550 pages (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2022). As a result, as another COE described, the LCAP "has lost its focus on anything resembling a way to communicate with parents or the average family."

DA providers and participants said that they similarly viewed the numerous, separate pandemic relief and other one-time funding streams—each requiring its own reporting plan—as a step backward toward the compliance-heavy funding system that existed in California prior to the LCFF. Several used the terms "categoricals" in reference to the one-time funding streams and required plans. Leaders from two districts reported that their colleagues across other districts refer to this onslaught of reporting requirements as the "plandemic," an additional plague of administrative work at a time when districts are already dealing with extraordinarily high levels of on-the-ground needs.

Some DA participants noted that these administrative requirements are particularly burdensome for small LEAs and charter schools because they have the same reporting requirements as larger LEAs but fewer staff to complete those requirements. As one charter school leader described, "The amount of reporting has pulled us away from kids. … All of this is important, I get that. But the amount of different reports for all the different things, it's overwhelming and unbearable." This leader, who has been in education for three decades, said

they can "see why people are leaving the profession" due to the burnout from these reporting requirements and competing demands. Several other DA participants echoed the idea that the reporting requirements of the LCAP and other funding plans reduced the amount of time they could spend on work that would directly impact students.

Several DA providers and participants also mentioned the impact of a new component of DA, introduced by AB 130, Section 122. This component offered a list of local data that DA participants were instructed to examine in lieu of new Dashboard data while the Dashboard was on hold during the pandemic. Some DA providers noted the constructive intent of the Section 122 data list, as it offered guidance to districts and COEs on which data they could use for their improvement work during the pandemic. A few DA providers described their DA participants finding value in this guidance and deeply engaging with the data. However, other DA providers and participants described the Section 122 requirements as yet another burdensome compliance step that already-overtaxed DA teams did not need.

Some DA-eligible COEs and Districts Were Reluctant or Unwilling to Engage in DA

During focus groups and interviews, some DA providers and participants expressed the misconception that participants are not required by law to accept DA. According to statute, they are required to do so [EC § 52071(e)]. However, partly due to this misconception—and perhaps partly because there are no consequences for districts that do not follow this law, as one regional leader pointed out—some DA providers described having the burden of convincing DA-eligible COEs and districts to participate in DA.

One COE leader described telling each of their DA staff, "You've got 5 minutes to show [the districts] that you can be an asset to them." This leader explained taking this approach because "I know the CAOs [Chief Administrative Officers] and the directors, and they literally, within 5 minutes, will decide, 'Yeah, you're going to help me' or 'Actually, you're just going to drain my energy and my time.'" Several COEs described having buy-in from the superintendent as the deciding factor for how engaged the district would be in the DA process.

COEs described that in a few cases, districts either declined to participate or would have only minimal engagement in the process. CDE DA providers described a similar experience with the DA-eligible COEs they support; some were willing to engage but others were resistant.

Some DA Participants and Stakeholders Still View DA as Punitive

As described earlier, most DA participants reported viewing DA as positive and supportive, even if it took some time to adopt this perspective. However, a few district leaders described that they still view DA as a punitive, compliance-driven accountability system. One remarked that "Differentiated Assistance is a much gussied up, dressed up version of sanctions," explaining

that "I think being listed as in need of Differentiated Assistance, in and of itself, is punitive, because you carry the scarlet label of DA on your head."

As this district leader suggested, public perception of DA is also a challenge. Indeed, other districts described that although their DA teams took on an improvement lens and embraced DA, they found it challenging to communicate to their education partners, such as board members and community members, that DA support was positive rather than punitive.

DA-Eligible Charter Schools Have Largely Been Left Out of the Loop

In interviews with DA providers and charter school leaders, as well as communication with the California Charter Schools Association (CCSA), the research team did not hear of any charters receiving supports through DA. This suggests that charter schools have not yet received DA support or even communication from DA providers. This may be partly due to the fact that charter schools became eligible for DA only recently, starting in December 2019 (CDE, 2019)—just a few months before the pandemic prompted school closures.

In addition, there has been a statutory shift regarding which entity is responsible for providing DA to charter schools. For the 2019/20 school year, the charter school's authorizer (usually its school district) held this responsibility. However, effective January 1, 2020, the statute was amended so that the charter school's COE would hold this responsibility starting in future school years, except in the case of charter schools that began operating prior to July 1, 2020; these charter schools would continue to receive DA from their original provider until June 30, 2022 [EC § 47607.3]. In addition, charter schools' eligibility criteria, which differ from the criteria used for districts, mean that no charter schools—other than those that became eligible for DA in 2019—will be eligible until 2023 (CPAG, 2022). Thus, the launch of DA for charter schools coincided with the pandemic, a somewhat complicated shift in responsibility for who is to provide DA to charter schools, and a four-year pause in new eligibility.

Regardless, interviews with charter school leaders indicated a major gap with regard to introducing charter schools to DA. Charter school leaders reported receiving no information about DA other than that they had been identified as eligible; they did not know who was supposed to provide them with DA, what DA support would look like, or how to access it. Having had no orientation to DA, they also perceived DA as being punitive; as one charter school leader described, school administrators only knew that the school was "on the naughty list." The charter leader expressed bewilderment that the charter school received no follow-up information about DA support, exclaiming "Who does that? You don't do that in real education.

If someone's struggling on your campus with behavior, you don't just tell them they're being bad; you put something in place to support them into making changes and better choices."

DA Providers Vary in the Quality of Their DA and Their Content Expertise

Although many DA providers and participants described high-quality, individualized DA support (as described earlier in this report), not all districts reported having such a positive experience. Indeed, both DA providers and participants noted that DA providers across the state vary in their capacity to provide DA—varying both in the quality of their DA process facilitation and in their content expertise. In the survey, 1 in 10 LEAs (11.3%) reported that the overall quality of DA that had been provided to their district had been either low quality or very low quality. An additional 35.5 percent reported that DA had been neither high nor low quality. As noted earlier, reports on the quality of support provided through DA for improving outcomes for focal student groups were even lower, with nearly 14 percent rating the quality of support either low quality or very low quality and 43.6 percent rating the support neither low nor high quality.

Regarding process facilitation, a few interviewed districts reported that their COE's DA experience had little value and seemed to have a narrow, compliance-focused approach. For example, one district leader stated that their COE's involvement consisted of attending the district's existing improvement meetings so that the COE can "go through the motions of what [they] have to do for compliance." Another district similarly described their COE as having a "compliance agenda" and a "binary view of what Differentiated Assistance is." As a result, the COE directed the district to change its improvement goal from being focused on student engagement and sense of belonging—which the DA team had identified as the root cause of its chronic absenteeism issues—to a goal more narrowly focused on absenteeism data, which the district did not find meaningful.

Regarding content expertise, COEs and districts alike reported that COEs do not always have all the in-house content expertise to meet their districts' needs. Several COEs shared that in particular, the smaller, more rural COEs, which have smaller staffs, naturally do not have the same breadth and depth of expertise as larger COEs with larger staffs. One geographic lead serving several such COEs noted that the CDE and the CCEE had discussed this gap with the geographic lead in the past and, in response, the geographic lead provided additional training specifically for small COEs, covering both process-related topics (e.g., improvement science and implementation science) and frequent content areas of need (e.g., Universal Design for Learning).

Relatedly, a district and school-site leader expressed that their COE's support felt too remote and removed: "I just think it's hard the further away you get from the classroom. We're a step away from the classroom … and the county office is even farther away from the classroom and the state is even farther away from the classroom." Several informants underscored the

importance of providers visiting the school to understand "the reality of school" and gain a realistic understanding of what supports are needed.

Regardless, as one state leader explained, "The DA provider is not meant to be the content expert of everything. They're meant to be the connector" to appropriate resources and expertise. Such expertise may include other COEs, geographic lead agencies, expert lead agencies, state agency staff, or other outside content experts. However, districts reported a range of experiences with how helpful their COE was in connecting them to outside expertise. One district respondent, who described their COE as accommodating, said the COE acknowledged, "We know we can't [offer what you need], so you tell us what you want. We're going to guide you through continuous improvement. You figure out who it is that you want to bring in, and we will pay them to make that happen." Another district leader described that their COE was willing to bring in outside coaches with the expertise the district needed, but the district leader felt that the district needed to advocate for it, telling the COE, "You are getting X amount of dollars specifically for my district. I expect that to be funneled through to support my district, and these are the things that we need." Yet another district leader described that their COE was unwilling to hire outside experts to support the district; according to the district, the COE said they planned to keep all DA funds to build their internal capacity, so the district would need to pay for any outside expertise on its own.

DA-eligible COEs also reported that the level of DA quality varied based upon the provider. COEs working in consortia of COEs consistently reported effective DA processes and access to the content expertise they needed, including insight specific to COE-run school contexts. Some of the COEs receiving DA support from the CDE, while still describing their experiences as positive, described their DA support as less valuable. These COEs shared that they viewed DA meetings and site visits more as opportunities to show the CDE their programs and provide feedback than as opportunities to learn from the CDE. Technical assistance specialists who support CDE and CDE DA providers also perceived CDE DA providers' strengths as different from those of COEs that provide DA to other COEs. They perceived that CDE DA providers are most valuable as process facilitators and as state representatives who can answer technical questions (e.g., clarifying legislation) and potentially connect COEs to other relevant offices at the CDE. They also shared that CDE DA providers seemed more helpful to small COEs than to large, high-capacity COEs.

Key Costs Include Building Provider Capacity and Implementing Identified Strategies

Overall, focus group and interview participants did not emphasize challenges related to funding, but some did mention specific funding-related barriers and opportunities. For providers who offered recommendations regarding resources, they expressed the need for continued funding because providing in-depth DA support is time-intensive work requiring staff with expertise to provide hands-on support. Several providers mentioned that they continue to

provide DA-level support to districts that are no longer eligible for DA, because districts have requested it. However, they do not receive funding for those districts once the districts are no longer eligible. Providers noted that they have also invested resources into providing Tier 1 preventive support. There was consensus among providers and participants alike that funding should increase as the list of those eligible for DA grows, and especially after COEs become responsible for providing DA to charters in 2023/24. Existing education code does assure that such funding will be provided; EC § 2575.2(b) specifies the formula for apportioning DA funding based on the number of eligible LEAs.

Districts were far less concerned about the costs to participate in DA (which were mainly the costs of staff time) and were more concerned about the lack of funding for implementation. For example, some participants wished for direct funding for the interventions or initiatives that they had begun as a result of DA or to continue work that was already underway and aligned with the goals of DA. Additionally, rather than wanting funds for training to build COE capacity, some participants would prefer to receive funds to build capacity within their own district; they believe this would ensure that the work continues for the long term beyond DA eligibility.

Participants reported that the direct costs for participating in DA were minimal. Most frequently, participants reported that they hired subs so that teachers could participate on DA teams and/or they provided stipends for teachers on instructional leadership teams whose responsibilities included involvement with DA.

Inconsistent Staffing

Both DA providers and participants shared that DA teams' work sometimes experienced setbacks due to inconsistency in terms of which staff were on the teams. When new staff joined the DA team or a new DA provider stepped in, the team generally had to spend valuable time reorienting the new staff to the team's work. In particular, DA providers cited turnover among district leadership as a significant challenge, as district leadership played a key role in prompting the rest of the district's staff to engage with DA; if new leaders did not prioritize DA, the rest of the DA team's engagement was at risk. A district leader also pointed out that because the systemic changes that can emerge from DA—for example, mindset shifts among educators, new district policies, new instructional strategies—require consistent backing from leadership, school and district staff who are used to high levels of turnover may be more resistant to changing their practices.

Turnover or inconsistency among DA provider staff was less frequently reported as a challenge than turnover or inconsistency among DA participants, with the exception of CDE DA provider staff. CDE DA providers and technical assistance specialists who support CDE cited turnover among members of the CDE DA provider team as a challenge. The CDE did not receive funding to hire dedicated staff whose main responsibility is to provide DA, so the CDE staff members who provide DA have other job responsibilities that take the majority of their time. The demands of these other responsibilities have led some CDE staff to step away as DA providers

and bring other CDE staff in to fill their places. However, one CDE DA provider shared that diligent documentation of each DA team's work has been helpful for reducing the disruption when new staff come in and noted that this strategy could help other DA providers from outside the CDE as well.

Limited Engagement With Education Partners

Focus groups of parents, teachers, and school board members shared their experiences and perceptions of education partners' involvement in DA, and they suggested that authentic engagement remains an area for growth. Because not all education partners may be familiar with DA and districts may not use the terminology of "DA" when engaging with education partners, the research team also asked focus group participants to speak about their districts' improvement work and about education partner involvement in the work, more generally.[15] Participants in these and other interviewed groups mentioned that when districts bring education partners' voices into DA, they often do so through existing processes, such as LCAP engagement processes, rather than trying to engage education partners twice and sharing similar data and similar requests for input each time.

Parent focus group participants shared that although their districts offer opportunities for family and community input—such as LCAP stakeholder engagement sessions—they viewed these opportunities as superficial and inaccessible to some parents. For example, parents from multiple districts shared that materials and input sessions did not consistently have translation services available. Some shared that when data are presented, parents may not understand the data, and virtual engagement opportunities can be inaccessible to parents who have limited experience with computers. Parent focus group participants reported that outside of these organized input sessions, when parents voice their concerns to school administrators, administrators often dismiss their concerns and make the parents who are seen as persistent "troublemakers" feel unwelcome. The focus group parents shared that they had worked with some school administrators who were much more open to feedback than others, but they believed that school administrators feel pressure from district administrators to silence parent concerns.

Teacher focus group participants similarly expressed that they desired greater opportunities for input in district improvement efforts. They shared that the main way in which the district engages teachers is through school-level staff meetings to examine student performance data, including Dashboard data. Some teachers shared that during these meetings, data are presented in a way that makes teachers feel like they are being blamed for students'

[15] Although the sample sizes of the education partner focus groups were too small to be considered representative of education partner views across the state, some strong themes emerged from the conversations. Each participant represented a different district; there was no overlap between the districts represented across the three types of education partner focus groups.

underperformance. The focus group teachers reported that they were not offered opportunities to provide insight into student needs or offer potential strategies during their district's improvement work, and they wished that they had been offered such opportunities.

The school board member focus group participants reported that they felt their districts were successful in their efforts to engage families and community members in DA and other improvement work. The school board members were familiar with their districts' DA efforts, although they noted that their districts did not use the term "DA" when engaging education partners as part of DA. They also reported that in order to avoid survey fatigue and overwhelming families with too many repetitive requests for input, their districts leveraged the LCAP development process to solicit input for DA. School board member focus group participants also shared many specific strategies that their districts used to maximize community engagement, including among hard-to-reach families and the families of students whose performance made the district eligible for DA. Although these school board members' accounts suggest that some districts do have robust engagement processes, the inconsistency between their experiences and those reported by the parent and teacher focus group participants suggests that meaningful engagement with education partners remains a major gap for other districts.

Recommendations

Continue to Support and Strengthen the Technical Assistance Provided Through Differentiated Assistance

Both district and county leaders were generally positive about DA and its potential to improve student outcomes in the state, and county leaders overwhelmingly suggested that the state continue to support DA. A triangulation of data across different sources for this evaluation indicates that DA has room for improvement, particularly in some districts and counties, but that it is broadly supported by system leaders and shows early signs of improving student outcomes. WestEd's evaluation of the early impact of DA indicates that DA has a positive impact on student outcomes for the lowest-performing students and other students in the district. Based on these findings, the research team recommends the state continue to fund DA and keep many of the current DA-related policies and structures in place while using lessons learned from these first years of implementation to further refine and improve DA.

The System of Support was implemented beginning in 2017 and the development of a statewide improvement structure is still in early implementation. Nevertheless, survey and interview data suggest that system leaders have built capacity over the last 5 years to support and carry out improvement efforts in schools and school districts across the state. This improvement work takes time and COVID-19 interrupted some of the improvement work

occurring through DA and introduced additional system needs. The findings from this report support continuing DA and monitoring its impact on system capacity and student outcomes.

Conduct a Post-Pandemic Impact Study

The disruptions in learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing needs and introduced new ones. Consequently, system leaders suggested evaluating DA again in future years to capture evidence of improvements and effectiveness post-pandemic. The impact analysis provides evidence that DA had a positive impact on multiple measures of student performance, but these positive results were not consistent across all years. Accordingly, the state should consider analyzing outcomes data from additional years to confirm that DA continues to positively impact student outcomes.

Due to the pandemic, the state did not use student outcomes data from the 2019/20 and 2020/21 school years to assign Dashboard performance colors or DA eligibility, and student outcomes data from the 2021/2022 school year were not available in time for analysis for this study. The research team recommends that the state conduct an impact analysis of student outcomes data for the years after the COVID data interruption to understand whether DA leads to a longer-term positive impact on student outcomes. Ongoing impact studies in the years to come, either funded by the state or by philanthropy, can help inform continuous improvement in the system.

Extend the Period of Eligibility for DA From 1 Year to 2 Years

One area of agreement among district and county leaders across multiple data sources was that 1 year of participation in DA is insufficient for engaging in the deep improvement work necessary to improve student outcomes. Most leaders suggested that identification for DA should occur every 2 years, guaranteeing districts 2 years of support and time to move beyond an analysis of root causes of underperformance to the implementation of specific interventions. The research team recommends that identification for DA continue to take place each year, so that new districts in need of support would not have to wait an additional year for eligibility for the technical assistance provided through DA. The research team recommends that a change to the timeline for identification is aligned with LCAP and CSI timelines; this way, the improvement work conducted for DA is reflected in district and county LCAPs and school-site plans. Furthermore, the team recommends setting the expectation that once DA becomes a 2-year process, all DA providers should support DA participants with integrating their DA strategies and efforts into other improvement plans (including the LCAP) and existing improvement efforts.

Develop and Distribute Guidance on Best Practices for Providing DA

Findings from Element One of this report include identifying several components of high-quality DA. The state, in collaboration with leading agencies and education partners (e.g., geographic leads, expert lead agencies, membership organizations), could use these findings as a springboard for developing and distributing guidance on best practices for providing DA. Based on the findings of this evaluation, such best practices include the following:

- Strategically recruit DA team members from across divisions, roles, and levels of the system, such as the chief business officer, special education staff, EL staff, site principals, and teachers.
- Host intentionally designed introductory meetings to onboard DA teams to the process, which would include introducing DA as a type of positive support to advance the LEA's priorities, setting expectations for DA participants, and previewing activities involved.
- Gather input from education partners (e.g., teachers and families), not only during the root cause analysis but also for considering potential strategies and supporting implementation.
- Develop a timeline of activities and goals for DA teams, with improvement work continuing beyond the end of the school year.
- Actively and consistently work to align DA activities with the LCAP and LCAP development processes of each DA-eligible LEA. Examples noted by system leaders during this evaluation include the following:
    - Have the DA team, including the provider, review the district's LCAP before implementing DA—and keep in mind the district's current priorities and initiatives throughout DA implementation.
    - Use the same data collected and analyzed as part of LCAP development to inform DA (and vice versa).
    - Include the needs and potential actions identified through the DA process in the next LCAP update.
    - Have the individuals who support the district's LCAP development also provide DA (and vice versa).
- Utilize any existing work or results of technical assistance that DA-eligible LEAs have already received for students with IEPs (e.g., leveraging results from the CIM process, coordinating with TA providers from the SELPA, and so on).

Evaluate Local Capacity to Provide DA and Target State and Regional Supports Where Capacity Needs Are Greatest

As noted in this report, COE providers of DA tended to perceive DA services as high quality more often than did the district recipients of DA services. For example, 82 percent of COE

providers rated the overall quality of their DA as high or very high quality, compared to 54 percent of district leaders. The discrepancy was greater regarding improving outcomes for focal student groups: 74 percent of COE leaders and 43 percent of district leaders rated the quality of support as high or very high quality on this front. Furthermore, 1 in 10 LEAs reported low-quality or very low-quality support throughout the DA process.

To ensure that all DA-eligible districts and COEs receive the support they need in order to improve student outcomes, the research team recommends that state and regional leaders collaborate to evaluate local capacity to provide and engage in DA and that target state and regional supports are directed to where capacity needs are greatest. DA providers should also create a feedback loop with districts to ensure that district needs are being met. This is especially critical given the gaps, on average, between COE perceptions of the quality of their support provided through DA and district perceptions of the quality of support. Where there are gaps in capacity, state leads can be utilized to provide additional support. The System of Support includes funding for state leads to provide supports for COEs and districts beyond what is currently being provided by DA providers. Findings from this study seem to indicate that these additional supports are not being leveraged consistently. The state has recently made changes to the terms for geographic lead agencies in an attempt to clarify this support role. Additional efforts may be necessary to both communicate the availability of supports through the state leads and to ensure that those supports are being leveraged by local leaders.

Incorporate Opportunities for Peer Learning Into the DA Structure

One of the most common recommendations from interviews and focus groups was to incorporate more opportunities for districts and counties to learn from the successes in other LEAs, particularly those with similar contexts, challenges, and focus areas to their own. Many DA providers and participants requested a statewide repository of success stories from COEs, districts, and schools (e.g., an effective literacy initiative or a model of a successful DA process) and of lessons learned. One COE shared an interesting strategy: As part of the DA process, they look for the "bright spots" (e.g., higher-performing classrooms or grade levels) within each of their districts eligible for DA. They then examine those bright spots as part of the DA process to determine what may be replicated. In an example they described, this approach involved sharing what a specific grade-level team was doing differently from other grades. This COE valued this asset-based approach, which has "celebration built in from the start."

COEs that were part of consortia greatly valued the opportunity to collaborate and learn from other COEs, and geographic leads have provided some opportunities to collaborate regionally. But there were also requests for statewide DA support networks.

Participants had several ideas for pairing or grouping districts for support. For example, a CDE provider suggested matching demographically similar high-performing COEs with low-performing COEs. The state may want to consider working with counties to identify DA "bright spot" LEAs—those from across the state that have shown the most progress in improving

student outcomes as a result of DA—and using some portion of funding for the System of Support to support learning from these LEAs.[16] A participant shared a related idea: "We could form a network of similar districts [across the state] working together [and] have a facilitator to build capacity for our improvement process, so that we can all go back to our districts and run our improvement process and then come back together and share ideas with each other. If we did that, I would be so happy." DA providers also requested a statewide "resource hub" with vetted resources relevant to DA, such as handbooks and toolkits, so that providers do not need to reinvent the wheel.

Although the confidentiality agreements in this evaluation do not allow the research team to identify bright spot districts or counties, this report can provide information on those elements of DA correlated with district perceptions of improved student outcomes on the survey. These elements are discussed in the report section titled "Potential Components and Characteristics of High-Quality Differentiated Assistance" and summarized in the recommendation regarding guidance on best practices for DA providers.

Given Reported Variation in DA Quality, Allow DA Recipients to Access for the DA Provider That Best Meets Their Needs

As illustrated in interviews and through survey data, not all DA-eligible LEAs have had a positive experience with DA and some declined to participate in the DA process. Data collected for this evaluation indicate that COE providers do not always have the capacity to provide the supports that LEAs believe are necessary to guide their improvement work and that some CDE DA providers lack capacity to provide context-specific DA. In interviews, participants who did not have a good experience with DA suggested discontinuing it. The research team recommends continuing efforts to build COEs' and the CDE's capacity to provide DA and allowing LEAs to access funds to support greater choice in DA providers.

DA-eligible COEs have the option of working with the CDE to provide DA or working in a consortium of COEs or with another individual COE to provide DA. Regardless of COEs' choices of DA providers, the CDE does not receive funding to provide DA. Although current California education code lays the groundwork for such flexibility for school districts[17]—that is, allowing

[16] WestEd is not able to provide data to identify these bright spot districts due to the confidentiality agreements—written into the contract with the CDE—which prohibit identifying individual districts or counties. However, a similar study focusing on bright spots could identify these bright spot districts and facilitate learning visits from other districts. The same approach could be taken with county DA providers that have effectively supported improvement in outcomes in the districts they support. Organizations such as the California County Superintendents may also play a role in supporting cross-county learning opportunities.

[17] California's education code already provides some flexibility for districts in choosing a technical assistance provider who meets district needs; however, this flexibility is limited by the fact that the COE must agree with the district's decision to choose another provider and the district does not receive any funding to hire the provider. As described in EC Section 52071(c)(2) and (3), a COE, "collaboratively" with the district, may secure outside experts or another DA provider to provide technical assistance to the district. Alternatively, the district may independently choose to work with a DA provider other than its COE but must bear the cost (EC Section 52071(f)).

them to independently choose their support provider—if they do not opt to work with their COE, they must pay for DA on their own and their COE continues to receive funding to provide them with DA (COEs may choose to provide districts with some of the DA funding, but this choice is entirely up to the COE's discretion).

To enable districts to take advantage of the law's intended flexibility for them to choose their own provider, the research team recommends that any district that opts out of support from its COE should have the option of applying to their COE to access the proportion of funds provided to the COE to provide that LEA with DA; the LEA must then use these funds to pay for an external technical assistance provider to support the district's improvement work or provide technical assistance to a consortium of school districts. In addition, the CDE should be required to monitor the number of LEAs that opt out of support from the COE to better understand where greater capacity-building support may be needed. The state may also want to consider requiring LEAs to demonstrate after 2 years that they have made measurable progress toward improvement with the TA provider or consortium in order to continue working with them if they remain eligible for DA.

To address the challenge of CDE staff availability to serve as DA providers, the research team recommends that the state provide funding to CDE to provide DA to COEs. This funding should be based upon the number of COEs that opt to work with CDE for DA, and funding should be increased or reduced based upon how many COEs continue to choose CDE as their provider.

Develop a Structure for DA-Eligible Districts Needing Multiyear Support

For sustainability of the system, it may make sense for some participants to receive a less in-depth, or a different, version of DA. For example, many leaders in DA-eligible COEs believe that Dashboard metrics will identify them in perpetuity. Therefore, it does not make sense for them to repeat the same DA processes year after year. Some districts will also be identified for successive years (especially districts identified year after year due to high proportions of high-needs populations). The state should consider the probability of whether these districts or counties will ever move out of eligibility and whether it makes sense to change the eligibility requirements or structure of DA for LEAs that continue to be eligible (i.e., differentiating what support looks like based on how many years an LEA has been identified).

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many districts shared concerns that a substantial majority of districts will be identified for DA and that this number will overwhelm the system in terms of staff capacity to provide DA. Moreover, additional years of eligibility make it more likely that LEAs will become eligible for intensive intervention, or "Level 3" assistance. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction, with approval from the SBE, can identify districts as eligible for Level 3 support if the districts (1) have three or more student groups[18] whose performance meets eligibility criteria for 3 out of 4 consecutive years, and (2) have already

[18] If a district has fewer than three student groups, then all of its student groups must meet eligibility criteria.

received technical assistance from the CCEE but the CCEE recommends additional intervention (EC § 52072). However, the system may soon have far more districts qualifying for both DA and Level 3 support than DA providers and state agencies, respectively, have the capacity to support. Accordingly, system leaders recommended careful thinking about the sustainability of the accountability system. The WestEd research team recommends that the state work with the California County Superintendents and Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) to discuss strategies for supporting districts and COEs that are eligible for DA for more than 3 consecutive years.

Given the Lack of Federal and State Alignment, Study the Implications of Migrating to a Single Method of Identifying LEAs for Support

California's state leaders designed DA on the assumption that school districts should be the focus of efforts to improve student performance in district schools and COEs should be the focus of efforts to improve outcomes for students in county-run schools. In contrast, the federal accountability system identifies schools for improvement and it provides supports directly to schools to drive improvement in student outcomes. The WestEd research team suggests that the state move to a single, coherent accountability and support system (rather than just strengthening alignment between the two current systems) and thereby reducing duplicative improvement processes and reporting requirements. For moving to a single system, the team recommends that the state explore the possibility of using school-level eligibility under the federal accountability to identify districts and COEs for DA support from their COEs or other providers. For example, any district with a school(s) identified for CSI, ATSI, or TSI could be eligible for DA support. According to the research team's analysis, using the federal criteria for eligibility would have resulted in 108 additional districts being identified in 2019. If this is too many additional school districts for providers to support, the threshold for eligibility for DA could be adjusted (for example, for larger districts, two or more schools would need to be identified for CSI, ATSI, or TSI). The shift would mean that districts would be identified for schools in need of improvement overall and for schools in need of improvement for specific student groups. This school-level identification could help with some of the structural barriers to identifying student groups for DA because of the lack of concentration of the student groups in school districts. Essentially, ESSA would become the identification system and DA would become the support system for eligible districts, counties, and schools. While this approach may not completely eliminate duplicative reporting systems, it could allow a stronger district-school connection in improvement work and access to the supports provided through DA. It would also help advance state efforts to develop a single, coherent accountability and support system.

Revisit Eligibility Criteria for DA

Whether or not the state decides to proceed with this recommendation, the research team recommends a study of the metrics used as eligibility criteria for DA. Specifically, the team

recommends a focus on understanding how opportunities for support might be targeted to districts serving student groups with *n*-sizes too small for eligibility and how the metrics used for identification may be privileging particular student groups and potentially reducing the opportunity for districts serving English learners and Black students to benefit from DA eligibility. School-level identification through ESSA may be one avenue for creating greater access to support across student groups. In studying eligibility criteria, the state may want to consider whether the metrics used for identification may lead to the perpetual identification of particular groups of students (e.g., students served in county-run schools). If this turns out to be the case, the state may want to consider adjusting the metrics for identification or adjusting the types of support provided to these districts and COEs (see section on the recommendation to "Develop a Structure for DA-Eligible Districts Needing Multiyear Support").

The criteria used to identify charter schools for DA are currently different from the criteria used to identify school districts and COEs (see Appendix F), which sets a precedent for allowing for different criteria for eligibility for COEs. The state should explore how it might shift DA identification for COEs to ensure that eligibility effectively targets those with county-run schools requiring the greatest support.

Prepare for Support for Charter Schools

Findings from this evaluation indicate that DA-eligible charters have not yet received DA. The research team recommends that the state, DA providers, and charter and county membership organizations work together to prepare for DA identification under the new requirements, beginning with the 2023 Dashboard and anticipating differences in needs for support. The research team recommends (as an extension to the previous recommendation) that the state, as part of this preparation, consider using the federal criteria for identification for CSI or TSI/ATSI to identify charter schools for the same support that they would normally receive through DA. That is, charter schools would not be identified based on separate DA-eligibility criteria, but charter schools identified under the federal accountability measures would automatically be eligible for DA supports from the COE; then, the COE would be directed to align these supports with the CSI or TSI/ATSI process to the greatest extent possible. Since charter identification for underperformance already occurs at the school level, an additional identification for DA could cause duplication and confusion in the system.

Additionally, COEs do not necessarily have strong relationships with charter schools currently (and noted as much in their interviews). Accordingly, the research team recommends that COEs plan for early outreach to charter schools to introduce them to DA and start building positive relationships. COEs will also need to understand charters' contexts, priorities, and challenges, which points to the benefit of coordinating DA implementation for charters with California's charter membership organizations. These organizations were a part of early planning groups for

the System of Support but may have had less involvement in discussions about DA in recent years.

Reduce Administrative Burden to Free Up System Leaders' Time to Focus on Improvement

Although not directly related to DA, one recurring theme from interviews with district, charter, and county leaders that bears mentioning is concern over the administrative burden of current reporting requirements. Specifically, system leaders noted that the amount of time they spend on reporting requirements for the use of state and federal one-time funds, in particular, reduces the amount of time they have available to focus on what they deem as more important improvement work in their systems, including DA. While it is important to plan for, strategize about, and report on the impact of the use of funds—particularly in collaboration with education and community partners—requiring these processes be done for specific funding sources in isolation not only creates administrative burden for system leaders but can also complicate efforts to align funding sources to support system priorities. Accordingly, the research team recommends that the state reduce duplicative reporting requirements (e.g., additional plans for new funding) and, when creating new accountability measures, remain cognizant of the administrative impact on LEAs. Furthermore, if the state plans to continue to collect data on COEs' DA approaches[19] (which the research team recommends, given the lack of any other information on differences in COEs' approaches to DA across the state), the state should work to make these data submissions more meaningful. For example, the state should ensure adequate details are provided on the approaches, so that the information can be used to make comparisons across COEs. As noted earlier, the WestEd research team also recommends that, to the degree possible, the state reduce duplication between DA, CSI, and special education monitoring and reporting processes. For example, the CDE could (1) map out the timelines and inventory the reports required for each accountability system, (2) determine whether any required reports could be combined, and (3) communicate internally to determine whether CDE-conducted accountability processes can be coordinated or combined.

Next Steps

The WestEd research team will coordinate a set of listening sessions during which the team will present this report's key findings and recommendations. This final set of engagements will aim to provide the WestEd team and the state with insight on (1) how to adjust recommendations to account for needs and concerns expressed by system leaders and education partners and (2)

[19] These data are collected via COEs' annual summaries of how they plan to support school districts, including DA activities, pursuant to EC § 52066(i).

how to communicate the report's findings and recommendations effectively to the public, including clearing up potential misconceptions.

Appendix A: Summary and Comparison of Education Code Statutes Regarding the LCAP, Dashboard, and DA

To inform the research team's analysis of the alignment between the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) process, the Dashboard, and Differentiated Assistance (DA), the team gathered and summarized the sections of California Education Code (EC) that most closely pertained to these three key elements of California's accountability system. Bolded emphases were added by the research team to highlight key pieces of information.

These summarized sections led to the development of process maps and Table A-1 (at the end of this appendix) and informed the development of interview protocols used for this evaluation.

Education Code Sections Pertaining to the LCAP

Section 52060 describes key features of the LCAP for school districts:

- **LCAP Timeline**: Effective for **3 years**, must be updated by **July 1** each year.
- State Priorities for LCAPs:
  - Priority 1: Basic
  - Priority 2: Implementation of State Standards
  - Priority 3: Parental Involvement and Family Engagement
  - Priority 4: Student Achievement
  - Priority 5: Student Engagement
  - Priority 6: School Climate
  - Priority 7: Course Access
  - Priority 8: Pupil Outcomes

Later, Section 52066(d)(9) and (10) describe the additional two priorities for **County Offices of Educations' (COEs') LCAPs**:

- Priority 9: Coordination of Instruction of Expelled Pupils (COEs Only)
- Priority 10: Coordination of Services for Foster Youth (COEs Only)

- Data should be reported "in a manner consistent with how information is reported on the California School Dashboard."
- **Stakeholder Engagement for LCAP Development**: Must consult with "teachers, principals, administrators, other school personnel, local bargaining units of the school district, parents, and pupils."
- **Local Priorities**: May identify local priorities, goals for those priorities, and method for measuring progress toward those goals.

Section 52062 describes school districts' **required process for adopting** LCAPs and LCAP annual updates (LCAP/annual updates):

- Present to the **Parent Advisory Committee (PAC)** for review and comment, and respond, in writing, to their comments.
- Present to the **English Learner Parent Advisory Committee (ELPAC)** for review and comment, and respond, in writing, to their comments.
- Notify the public of the opportunity to submit written comments regarding the plan's actions and expenditures.
- Review schools' **School Plans for Student Achievement (SPSAs)** and ensure the actions in the LCAP/annual updates are consistent with strategies included in the SPSAs.
- Consults with **Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)** admin(s) to ensure that actions for students with individualized education programs (IEPs) are included in the LCAP/annual updates and that the actions are consistent with the SELPA's annual assurances support plan.[20]
- Hold at least one public hearing to solicit the public's recommendations and comments regarding the LCAP/annual updates' actions and expenditures.
- Adopt the LCAP/annual updates during a public board meeting.
- Revisions may be adopted while the plan is in effect, but they must undergo the same process above.

Section 52064 describes the **content of the LCAP/annual update template**. It states that each school district, COE, and charter school must use the template.

[20] This is a new, fourth SELPA plan (in addition to each SELPA's local plan, budget plan, and service plan) that will be required starting July 1, 2023. Its purpose is to demonstrate how the SELPA and its participating agencies are coordinating with one another to improve outcomes for students with IEPs.

The content includes:

- **Goals** (annual goals for all students and each student group, with regard to state priorities)
- **Actions** (to achieve the above goals)
- **Expenditures**: Summary table(s) with budgeted expenditures. Format must include (1) expenditures for all actions broken down by personnel versus nonpersonnel expenses, and (2) expenditures for each action, broken down by type of funding (LCFF, other state, local, and federal).
- **Increased or Improved Services**: Summary table(s) with all the actions and expenditures that lead to increased or improved services for unduplicated pupils.
- **Supplemental and Concentration Funds**: An estimate of these funds and an estimate of the percentage by which the district, COE, or charter will improve or increase services for unduplicated pupils.
- **Progress Update**: Update on progress toward current plan's goals; review of any changes to applicability of the goals; assessment of the actions' effectiveness; any changes to the actions, expenditures, or quality improvements; and update on implementation of actions.
- **Plan Summary**: with general info about the district, COE, or charter; highlights of the LCAP/annual updates; and reflection on annual Dashboard data and other local data.
- **Stakeholder Engagement Summary**: Summary of stakeholder engagement process and how it influenced LCAP/annual updates.
- **Concentration Grant Staffing Details**: Those receiving concentration funds must demonstrate how the funds will be used to increase staffing at school sites with over 55 percent unduplicated students as compared to other school sites.

The state's LCAP template instructions should specify that school district, COE, and charter schools should:

- Focus the LCAP/annual updates' goals, actions, and expenditures on one or more **state priorities**.
- Include specific actions related to serving **EL students** (for those with "numerically significant" numbers of EL students).
- **For those eligible for differentiated assistance**:[21] Include a **goal to improve the performance of any specific student group(s)** that made them eligible.
- **For those with Dashboard performance disparities between schools**:[22] If a district or COE has a school that receives the two lowest Dashboard performance levels (colors)

[21] A new requirement; these instructions must be added to the LCAP template by January 31, 2022.

[22] A new requirement; these instructions must be added to the LCAP template by January 31, 2022.

for all but one state indicator for two consecutive years and the district's or COE's performance level for all students is at least one performance level higher on all indicators, then the district or COE must include a goal focused on reducing the disparity between that school's performance and the district's or COE's performance as a whole.

Other notes on **development of the LCAP template**:

- **Revisions**: Revisions to the LCAP template must be approved by the State Board of Education (SBE) by January 31 before the fiscal year during which the template is to be used.
- **Attempt to minimize duplication of effort**: "In developing the template, the state board shall take steps to minimize duplication of effort at the local level to the greatest extent possible."

Section 52064.1 describes the **LCFF Budget Overview for Parents**, which each district, COE, and charter has had to produce annually since July 1, 2019. The section details exactly which information must be included in the overview.

Section 52064.3 describes **the IDEA Addendum to the LCAP**, which the SBE must adopt by January 31, 2025. The addendum will focus on improvements in services for students with IEPs.

- If, through California Department of Education's (CDE's) state monitoring and enforcement of IDEA (per 34 CFR 300.600), CDE determines a district, COE, or charter must create an improvement plan, then the district, COE, or charter will have to complete the IDEA Addendum.
- On an annual basis starting July 1, 2025, each applicable district, COE, or charter will develop **the IDEA Addendum "in conjunction with" the LCAP/annual updates** and submit it attached.
- Info from the **IDEA Addendum doesn't need to be incorporated into the LCAP**: "Nothing in this [EC] section requires a school district, charter school, or county office of education to include items from the IDEA Addendum in their local control and accountability plan."

Section 52065 describes the requirement for the **public posting of LCAPs** on school districts' websites (including for the LCAPs of districts' charter schools), COEs' websites, and the CDE website.

Section 47606.5 briefly describes **charter schools' responsibility to create LCAPs**, referencing Section 52064.

Section 52066 first describes **COEs' responsibility to create LCAPs**, mostly repeating the content from 52060 (on district LCAPs), with the addition of the two COE-specific priorities.

But starting at Section 52066(i), the section describes COEs' responsibility, starting in the 2018/19 fiscal year, to create an **annual summary of how they will support their districts and**

schools through the system of support. (Note: Single-district COEs are exempt.) This summary includes:

- How they will **support districts' continuous improvement**, including through **collaboration** with CCEE, CDE, and Lead Agencies
- How they will **support districts eligible for technical assistance**
- One or more goals related to each of the following:
  - Reviewing districts' LCAPs
  - Providing technical assistance to those eligible
  - Providing other related support to districts and schools
  - Supporting districts in developing and implementing the IDEA Addendum to the LCAP
- Metrics to assess progress toward each of the above goals
- Actions and expenditures need to achieve the above goals

Section 52068 describes the process for adopting COE LCAPs, which mirrors the process for school districts' LCAP adoption.

Section 52070 describes the approval process for a district's LCAP:

- No later than 5 days after LCAP adoption, the district submits the LCAP to the COE.
- No later than August 15, the COE can request clarification about the LCAP's contents.

The district's board must respond within 15 days.

- Within 15 days of receiving a response, the COE may submit recommendations for amending the LCAP. The district's board must consider the recommendations in a public meeting within 15 days of receipt.
- By October 8, the COE approves the LCAP as long as the LCAP adheres to the template, follows all instructions, and meets all requirements.
  - This includes all requirements around increased and improved services for unduplicated students, as well as the fiscal requirement that budgeted expenditures are sufficient to cover projected costs.

Section 52070.5 describes the **approval process for a COE's LCAP**. The process and timeline is identical to that of districts (above), except that COEs submit their LCAPs to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SSPI).[23]

Section 52073.3 focuses on the **importance of community engagement in the LCAP**.

[23] In practice, CDE staff review LCAPs on the SSPI's behalf.

- It begins with a statement from the Legislature declaring that meaningful stakeholder engagement, especially as it relates to the LCAP, is essential for students, families, and communities to be able to hold districts accountable for decisions that affect student outcomes.
- It then describes the System of Support's **Community Engagement Initiative**, established by the Budget Act of 2018, which aimed to build LEAs' capacity statewide for authentic stakeholder engagement.
- It then describes the upcoming **Community Engagement Initiative Expansion**. By May 1, 2023, CDE and CCEE, with approval from the Executive Director of the SBE, will select an expert community engagement lead agency to co-lead this Expansion with CCEE.
    - The statute provides considerable detail about what the Expansion's activities will involve, including developing **training and resources**, providing **technical assistance**, and convening 30 professional learning networks.

Education Code Sections Pertaining to the Dashboard

Section 52064.5 establishes:

- SBE's charge to adopt "evaluation rubrics," focusing on state priorities, which became the **state and local indicators on the Dashboard**.
- CDE's charge to create the Dashboard.
- SBE's charge to adopt performance criteria[24] that prompt eligibility for technical assistance (DA).
    - The criteria must be based on the performance of student groups either **across two or more of the state and local indicators** or across **two or more of the state priorities**.

Education Code Sections Pertaining to Differentiated Assistance

Section 52071 describes **COEs' responsibility to provide differentiated assistance to school districts**.

- A school district may also request this technical assistance, even if it is not eligible based on Dashboard data. However, if the district requests assistance and the request "creates an unreasonable or untenable cost burden" for the COE, then the COE may charge the school district a fee, which is not to exceed the cost of providing the service.

[24] The research team found it noteworthy that despite the granular level of detail related to many of these topics, EC offers little detail on what the performance criteria should involve.

- COEs are also responsible for providing technical assistance to help districts revise their LCAP or annual update if the plan did not meet the requirements for COE approval.

Differentiated assistance is "technical assistance focused on building the school district's capacity to develop and implement actions and services responsive to pupil and community needs." DA includes, but is not limited to, any of the following:

- **Assisting the school district to identify its strengths and weaknesses** in regard to the state priorities, using both Dashboard data and local data, and **identifying effective, evidence-based programs or practices** that address any areas of weakness;
- Working with the district to secure assistance from additional outside experts to identify and/or implement effective programs;
- Obtaining documentation from the school district that it has completed the above activities, "or substantially similar activities," or that it has selected another support provider specified below to help them complete these activities. **There must also be ongoing communication with the district to assess the district's progress**; and
- Requesting that the CCEE provide advice or assistance to the district.

Upon request from either the district or the COE, a Geographic Lead agency (Geo Lead) may provide this assistance instead. The Geo Lead may then request that another Geo Lead, an expert lead agency, a special education resource lead, or the CCEE provide this assistance.

A school district must accept the technical assistance.

Section 52071.5 describes the SSPI's[25]responsibility to provide differentiated assistance to COEs. This section mirrors the language above for school districts.

Section 47607.3 describes **COEs' responsibility to provide differentiated assistance to charter schools, starting in the 2020/21** school year. This section mirrors the above language for school districts.

Additionally:

- If a COE is the charter school's authorizer, then the Geo Lead provides differentiated assistance instead.
- If a charter school is identified for Level 3 intervention and the CCEE submits either of the following findings to the charter authorizer, then the authorizer may consider revoking the charter school:
  - The district has failed, or is unable, to implement CCEE's recommendations.
  - The inadequate performance is so persistent or acute that it requires the SSPI's intervention.

[25] CDE staff carry out these responsibilities on the SSPI's behalf.

- **The statute regarding charters was amended in 2020 to make the following changes**:
  - Previously, **the charter authorizer (rather than the COE) was responsible** for providing differentiated assistance.
  - Previously, charter school eligibility was based on underperformance for three out of four consecutive years; now, it is based on underperformance for two years.
  - For charter schools operating before July 1, 2020, **the previous language applied until June 30, 2022**.

Education Code Sections to Pertaining Level 3 Intervention[26]

Section 52072 describes the circumstances in which the SSPI,[27] with approval from the SBE, would identify districts for **Level 3 intervention**.[28] The district must meet both of the following criteria:

1. At least three student groups (or all student groups, if the district has fewer than three) have underperformance on the Dashboard for three out of four consecutive years.
2. CCEE has already provided differentiated assistance and submits either of the following findings:
   - The district has failed, or is unable, to implement CCEE's recommendations.
   - The inadequate performance is so persistent or acute that it requires the SSPI's intervention.

As Level 3 intervention, the SSPI, with approval from the SBE, may do one or more of the following:

- Make changes to the district's LCAP.
- Develop and impose a budget revision, in conjunction with revisions to the LCAP, in order to improve the identified student outcomes.
- Stay or rescind an action (as long as the action is not required by a local collective bargaining agreement) that would prevent the district from improving the identified student outcomes.
- Appoint a representative to do any of the above on the SSPI's behalf.

Section 52072.5 describes Level 3 intervention for COEs; the language mirrors all of the above.

[26] Level 3 intervention was outside the scope of this evaluation, but the research team felt it would still be relevant to review statute related to this next level of support.

[27] Or CDE, on the SSPI's behalf

[28] Education code doesn't actually use the term "Level 3" in this section.

Process Map: Alignment and Misalignment between the Dashboard, DA, and the LCAP

Table A-1 displays a summary of three key elements of the Dashboard, DA, and the LCAP, based on California Education Code. Specifically, those elements are:

1. which data are used to identify priority areas for improvement,
2. which student groups and indicators are the focus, and
3. how frequently is it updated.

The fourth column offers some notable areas of alignment and misalignment between the Dashboard, DA, and the LCAP, based on the summary of these elements.

Table A-1: Key Elements of the Dashboard, DA, and the LCAP and Notable Areas of Alignment or Misalignment

	Dashboard	Differentiated Assistance	LCAP	Alignment or Misalignment
Key Data ***Which data are used to identify priority areas for improvement?***	• State indicators, developed by SBE and CDE, based on EC § 52060(d). • Local indicators, developed by developed by SBE and CDE, based on EC § 52060(d). • LEAs measure their own progress and report it using SBE's self-reflection tools. • For each, Dashboard reports that performance standards were "Met" or "Not Met."	• Identify strengths and weaknesses in regard to state priorities, using both Dashboard data and local data (EC § 52071, 52071.5, and 47603).	• Described in detail in EC § 52060(d), LCAP data go beyond the Dashboard data and include detailed information on goals, actions, expenditures, increased and improved services, and more.	Alignment: • Dashboard and LCAP draw directly from same EC statute. • Dashboard results prompt technical assistance. Misalignment: • Dashboard data are limited in scope, so DA and LCAP require additional local data.
Identification ***Which student groups and indicators are the focus?***	• Student groups identified by EC § 52052. • Performance criteria (thresholds) set by SBE.	• Prompted by Dashboard performance and focuses on the student groups and indicators connected to Dashboard underperformance (EC § 52071, 52071.5, and 47603).	• Student groups identified by EC § 52052. • LEAs should "consider their performance" on the Dashboard when prioritizing their goals, actions, and expenditures (EC § 52064(e)(3). • An intensive, highly collaborative process is used to determine LCAP priorities (EC § 52060, 52062, 52066, 52068, and 47606.5.)	Alignment: • DA is based directly on Dashboard performance. Misalignment: • LCAP priorities are based on far more than Dashboard data; in particular, they include extensive stakeholder input.

Cycle ***How frequently is it updated?***	• Data are updated annually	• Eligibility is updated annually (based on Dashboard data) • Eligibility is based on 1 year of data for districts and COEs; 2 years for charters	• LCAP is 3-year plan • Annual update	Alignment: • DA is based on annual Dashboard results Misalignment: • One-year cycle for DA and Dashboard versus 3-year cycle for LCAP. (Makes it hard for DA to meaningfully inform LCAP.)

Appendix B: Overview of Regression Discontinuity Design

The central goal of DA is to improve the academic achievement of struggling students. Therefore, it is important to evaluate how students fare after their district becomes eligible for DA. However, there are several challenges. First, a difficulty with any quantitative analysis of the impact of DA has to do with an appropriate control group. But in this case, the control group is less than ideal. That is, districts who are eligible for DA are different from districts who are ineligible for DA by definition. Districts who receive DA have at least one student group whose performance is below satisfactory levels in two domains (indicators). So, comparing DA-eligible and non-DA-eligible districts for impact comes with caveats.

Second, given that student achievement has a strong serial correlation (that is, a district's performance in one year is highly predictive of its performance the next year), one would expect the average outcomes of DA-eligible districts to be at least somewhat below that of districts who were not eligible for DA, even if the DA had a positive impact. So, focusing on improvement from one year to the next will not solve this challenge of causal inference.

Additionally, there are any number of local contextual issues that can affect student outcomes. That is, any comparisons between DA- and non-DA districts over time will risk conflating the impact of DA with other factors that change over time. Moreover, because of a statistical phenomenon called "mean reversion," outlier districts with extremely low or high performance in one year are less likely to be outliers in another year, due solely to the laws of probability rather than any action undertaken by the districts. Consequently, districts eligible for DA in one year will almost certainly have somewhat higher performance in a following year, even if DA has no effect on student achievement. To mitigate these challenges of analyzing the impact of DA, the research team employed a regression discontinuity design (RDD) to statistically estimate the causal impact of eligibility for DA on districts' subsequent student outcomes.

The criteria for identifying districts for DA in California are far more complex than the accountability assignment rules in other states whose systems have been evaluated by RDD. In California's accountability system, each student group receives a performance color for each indicator, which is determined by a combination of that group's current performance and change in performance from the prior year. If any student group in the district has two low colors (sometimes, but not always, red) across two priority areas (sometimes, but not always, a

single indicator), then the district is eligible for DA. From this complex system, the research team identified precisely which measure of student achievement for which student group determined DA eligibility for each district. In general, it is the second-lowest indicator score for the student group with the most negative, second-lowest indicator scores in the district. This is the score that will render a district eligible for DA if it is below (in most cases) the red-orange performance threshold and, conversely, will keep a district ineligible for DA if it is above the red-orange threshold. Conceptually, the RDD model compares districts just on the red side of the red-orange threshold to districts just on the orange side of the red-orange threshold. The difference between two such hypothetical districts is only that one receives DA and the other does not.

Appendix C: Differentiated Assistance Evaluation Methods and Data Coding

Data Sources

For the quantitative analysis, we used publicly available data from the CDE website. These included data from the California School Dashboard files for 2017, 2018, and 2019, and corresponding ESSA and CSI/TSI status files. Table C-1 reflects the files used based on years of availability.

Table C-1: Data Files Used for Differentiated Assistance Evaluation

Priority Area	Data	2017[29]	2018	2019
Pupil Achievement (PA 4)	Academic Indicator ELA	X	X	X
Pupil Achievement (PA 4)	Academic Indicator Math	X	X	X
Pupil Achievement (PA 4)	English Language Proficiency Indicator	O	O	X
Pupil Engagement (PA 5)	Graduation Rate	X	X	X
Pupil Engagement (PA 5)	Chronic Absenteeism	—	X	X
School Climate (PA 6)	Suspension Rate	X	X	X
Outcomes in a Broad Course of Study (PA 8)	Career & College Readiness Indicator	O	X	X
Accountability	**Data**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**
Assistance Status File	Differentiated Assistance Identification	X	X	X
CSI/TSI Status File		—	X	X

[29] 2017 data files are available for grades 3–8 and grade 11 standardized assessments, but the state only used assessment data for grades 3–8 to determine performance for the Pupil Achievement priority area, as grade 11 assessment data were already included as a component of the Career/College Readiness indicator. Consequently, for 2017 data, we only used assessment data for grades 3–8.

We obtained district-type information from the suspensions data file. We used the largest sample size (i.e., largest denominator) for the "ALL" student category as a proxy for the population of each district. This number typically came from the suspensions file because suspensions can apply to students in most or all grade levels; so this measure typically applies to the largest range of students.

Analytic Sample

Data was matched across various files via the County-District-School (CDS) code. To form the analytic sample for the regression discontinuity, we kept only the records for districts, so we excluded school-level and county office of education records.

We excluded observations within each indicator that did not meet the standard for reporting or which had a special rule applied that was not determined by the performance change and level. We also flagged and excluded groups in each district without sufficient sample sizes to receive a color in the accountability model; specifically, those were foster youth and homeless student groups with fewer than 15 students, along with all other groups with fewer than 30 students. We also excluded observations that received:

- the "no test flag" (i.e., districts that failed to test at least 10 percent of their population);
- the "certify flag" (i.e., districts that failed to certify their discipline or suspensions data); or
- the "data error flag" (i.e., districts and schools that certified zero chronically absent students but had more full days of out-of-school suspension than the number of days reported as absences in the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System [CALPADS] for the Dashboard current year that qualifies for a color at their overall level or student group levels are automatically are assigned an orange performance level [box 180] if their earned color was originally blue, green, or yellow).

For each student group in each district, we identified and counted the number of indicators that received a "red" performance level for the priority area. This is different from being eligible for DA, as a student group must have low performance in two priority areas to be eligible for DA.

Identifying the Focal Indicator and Constructing the Running Variable

Because the indicator that prompts eligibility for DA varies across districts, we identified a focal indicator—i.e., the indicator that has either prompted DA eligibility or would be an indicator to prompt DA if it fell below a certain performance threshold. The student group possessing the focal indicator is called the focal group.

The process for identifying the focal indicator and constructing the running variable was as follows:

Step 1: Center and standardize running variables.

To find the focal group and indicator, we had to be able to compare performance across indicators with different measures and scales. To achieve this, we standardized the measures by centering them and dividing them by their population standard deviations.

First, we calculated the standard deviation of the current year's status values for each indicator *i* across all districts and student groups. The standard deviation is defined as:

$$sd_i = \sqrt{[\sum_{j=1}^{n} (x_{jd} - \bar{x})^2 \ ]/n}$$

where X_{jd} is the current year's math status value for the j^{th} student group in district d, and $\bar{X}$ is the mean of all the current year's math status values. We refer to this value as **sd_i** for the i^{th} indicator.

Second, we centered the change scores at the lowest color boundary (on the change axis) for each status row by subtracting that boundary value from the score, and then we divided the centered change variable by its population (status) standard deviation. For small LEAs (with $n \leq 150$) that utilize the 3 x 5 methodology, we centered the change scores at the lowest color boundary after excluding any in the first and last columns, and then proceeded with the same steps, dividing by the population standard deviation. Dividing each centered change value by the appropriate indicator's sd_i created variables that are all on the same scale and allowed us to compare scores across indicators. We refer to these row-specific, standardized, recentered change values as **row_ score_i** for each row, and i^{th} indicator.

Step 2: Rank standardized variables to identify the lowest and second-lowest indicators for each group.

For each student group within each district, we determined the lowest and second-lowest change scores. First, we grouped status rows by the lowest color in the row, so that rows with red as the lowest color are in a group (the "red group"), rows with orange as the lowest color are in a second group (the "orange group"), and so forth. Then, we ranked scores by status row groups, so that those in the red group were the lowest, those in the orange group were the second-lowest, and so on. Next, we used the group's row_score_i values to determine change score ranks within row groups. For example, if students with disabilities were in the red group for the college/career indicator (CCI), the orange group for suspensions and chronic absenteeism, and the yellow group for all other indicators, their lowest indicator would be CCI

and the second-lowest would be the orange indicator (either suspensions or chronic absenteeism) with the lowest row_score_i value.

The focal group is the student group whose second-lowest indicator (within the student group)—i.e., the focal indicator—is the lowest across student groups. We identified the focal group and focal indicator for each district, and the focal indicator would become the running variable.

Adjusting for Special Cases

As a part of the ranking process, we adjusted for priority areas with multiple indicators as special cases with additional rules. Namely, those cases were:

- Pupil Engagement: This priority area utilizes either graduation or chronic absenteeism measures. A group meets the priority area by receiving a red performance level on either graduation or chronic absenteeism. Receiving a red performance level on both measures still counts as only one priority area. Consequently, if the lowest indicator is chronic absenteeism (or graduation rate), we excluded graduation rates (or vice versa) from consideration as the second-lowest indicator.
- Pupil Achievement: This priority area utilizes both ELA and math scores. A group must receive a red performance level on one subject score and orange (or red) on the other to meet DA eligibility for the pupil-achievement priority area. If either the lowest indicator or second-lowest indicator for the focal group was ELA scores (or math scores), we included the third-lowest indicator in the ranking as well, since ELA and math count toward the same priority area. In this case, we treated ELA (or math) values as part of the red row group (so that they were counted as a "lower score") and reranked the values. We then used the third-lowest indicator score in place of the student group's second-lowest score to compare across student groups within each district, while the other groups retained their original second-lowest scores.

Step 3: Construct the running variable for regression discontinuity.

To determine whether the district in the potentially treated set (those eligible for DA or close to eligible) or the comparison set of districts, we considered the lowest color in the status row of the focal indicator. If the status row for their focal indicator included red boxes (or orange in the case of math and ELA indicators), the district was in the potentially treated set. All other LEAs were in the comparison set. We then utilized the row_score_i of the focal indicator as the **running variable**.

Descriptive Statistics

Districts

Tables C-2 and C-3 show the counts of districts in the data files by district type. Most are unified districts, followed by elementary districts. Unified districts are the largest, and 70 percent of students attend school in a unified district, followed by 20 percent of students who attend school in an elementary district and 10 percent in a high school district. The remaining types of districts are attended by less than 2 percent of students.

Table C-2: Count of Districts by Type

	2019	2018	2017
Total District Count	**995**	**991**	**936**
Elementary District	297	293	488
Elementary School	220	221	0
High School District	72	72	74
High School	2	2	0
Middle School	3	3	0
Unified District (Not COEs)	345	344	373
COEs (Labeled UD)	56	56	0
Missing district type	0	0	1

Note: "Elementary School" and "High School" rows are single-school districts. They began receiving these new category labels in 2018.

Table C-3: Share of Students in Each District Type

	2019	2018	2017
Total Student Count	**5,858,050**	**5,923,489**	**5,840,575**
Elementary District	19%	19%	20%
Elementary School	1%	1%	0
High School District	10%	9%	9%
High School	0%	0%	0
Middle School	0%	0%	0
Unified District (Not COEs)	70%	70%	71%

	2019	2018	2017
COEs (Labeled UD)	1%	1%	0
Missing district type	0	0	0%

Student Population

We calculated the student populations for each student group by choosing the largest denominator across that group's measures. We aggregated this at the district and state level. The measures are reasonably close to the statewide student demographic population data pulled from CDE's DataQuest database for the same year.

Table C-4 below shows the share of all districts that had adequate sample sizes to receive a performance color for each indicator in 2018 by student group. For example, in 2018, only 2 percent of districts had a population of American Indian or Native Alaskan students large enough to receive a performance color for graduation rate or CCI.

Table C-4: Share of Districts With Sufficient Student Group Sample Sizes to Receive a Dashboard Performance Color for Each Indicator in 2018, by Student Group

	School Climate	Pupil Engagement		Pupil Achievement		Broad Course of Study
	Suspensions	Chronic Absences	Graduation Rate	ELA	Math	CCI
By Race/Ethnicity						
Hispanic / Latino	86%	78%	80%	79%	79%	80%
White	87%	79%	74%	79%	79%	74%
Asian	47%	40%	38%	40%	40%	38%
Black / African American	41%	35%	29%	33%	33%	29%
Filipino	36%	30%	24%	28%	28%	24%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	19%	15%	3%	11%	11%	3%
American Indian or Native Alaskan	27%	19%	2%	10%	11%	2%
Two+ Races	56%	48%	23%	41%	41%	23%
By Special Populations						
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	91%	83%	87%	86%	86%	87%
Students with Disabilities	75%	67%	58%	68%	68%	58%
English Learners	74%	67%	56%	70%	70%	56%

	School Climate	Pupil Engagement		Pupil Achievement		Broad Course of Study
	Suspensions	Chronic Absences	Graduation Rate	ELA	Math	CCI
By Special Populations						
Homeless students	56%	48%	48%	41%	41%	48%
Foster Youth	47%	36%	16%	21%	21%	16%
District Count	935	935	418	935	935	418
Types of Districts that have this Indicator	All	All	HS & Unified	All	All	HS & Unified

Table C-5 displays the average (mean), minimum, and maximum student counts for districts in each size percentile across the state. The student counts may seem small, but this is biased by the size of districts. That is, there are many very small districts, but most students attend a small number of large districts such as Los Angeles Unified (over 500,000 students), San Diego Unified (more than 100,000 students), Fresno Unified (more than 70,000 students), and Long Beach Unified (more than 60,000 students). The largest 25 districts in California serve more than 1.7 million students, while the smallest 25 districts serve a total of 293 students.

Table C-5: Percentiles of District Populations

Percentile	# of Districts	Mean # Students	Min # Students	Max # Students
10	101	43	1	90
20	99	142	93	203
30	99	306	204	419
40	100	591	420	834
50	99	1,168	841	1,631
60	100	2,208	1,638	2,755
70	100	3,678	2,764	4,646
80	99	6,180	4,660	8,578
90	100	11,561	8,664	16,096
100	99	33,850	16,211	488,944

Only the top 10 percent of districts have more than 16,000 students. The average district size is 5,995 students, but the median is 1,631 students (i.e., half of districts are smaller than 1,631),

because the largest districts skew the mean. Figures C-1 and C-2 provide visualizations of the skewed distribution of district sizes. Table C-6 provides a better sense of the proportions of California's student population that attend districts that receive a Dashboard performance color.

Figure C-1: Percentage of Districts, by Enrollment Size

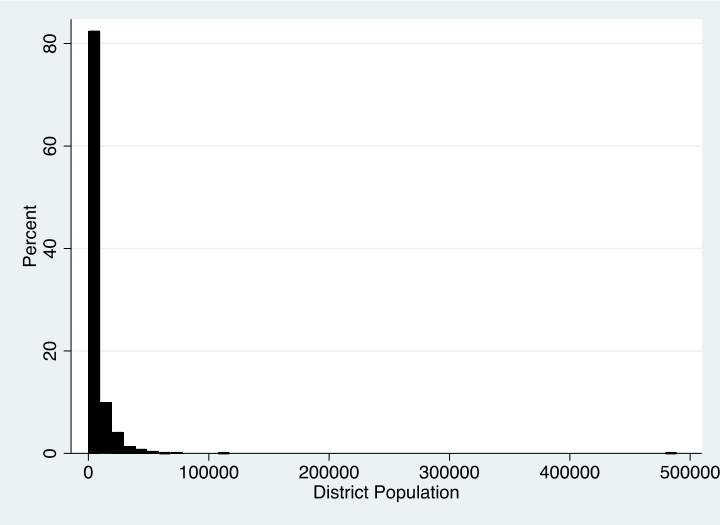


Figure C-2: Percentage of Districts With Fewer Than 20,000 Students, by Enrollment Size

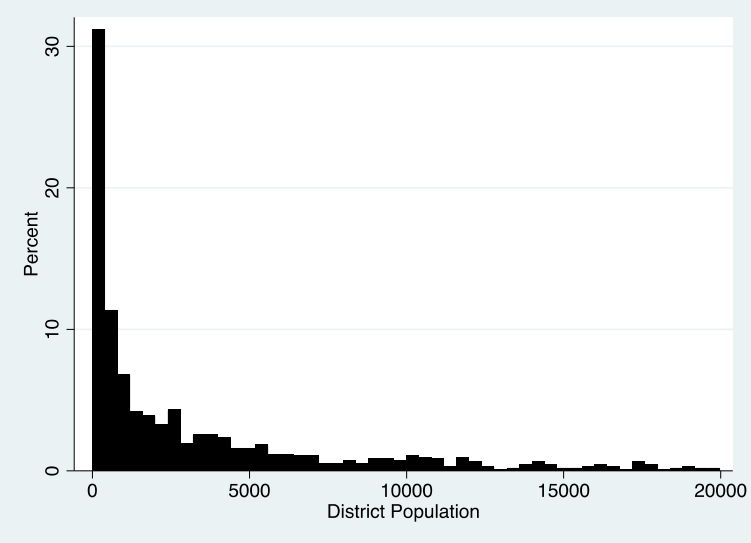


Table C-6 displays similar data as Table C-4, except that these data are weighted by students. That is, the table displays the share of the state's student group population that is in a district with sufficient sample size to be assigned a performance color for each indicator for that group. For example, 99 percent of the state's Hispanic/Latino students attend districts with sufficient numbers of Hispanic/Latino students to receive a performance color for suspensions, graduation rate, ELA, math, and CCI.

Table C-6: Share of Students in Districts With Sufficient Student Group Sample Sizes to Receive a Dashboard Performance Color for Each Indicator in 2018, by Student Group

	School Climate	Pupil Engagement		Pupil Achievement		Broad Course of Study
	Suspensions	**Chronic Absences**	**Graduation Rate**	**ELA**	**Math**	**CCI**
By Race / Ethnicity						
Hispanic / Latino	99%	93%	99%	99%	99%	99%
White	99%	92%	93%	97%	97%	93%
Asian	92%	84%	77%	88%	88%	77%
Black / African American	91%	82%	69%	84%	84%	69%
Filipino	88%	78%	59%	79%	79%	59%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	67%	57%	18%	49%	48%	18%
American Indian or Native Alaskan	71%	54%	13%	40%	41%	13%
Two+ Races	93%	86%	54%	86%	86%	54%
By Special Populations						
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	99.8%	93%	99%	99%	99%	99%
Students with Disabilities	99%	92%	94%	99%	99%	94%
English Learners	99%	92%	91%	98%	98%	91%
Homeless students	94%	86%	84%	84%	84%	84%
Foster Youth	91%	82%	50%	69%	69%	50%
Student Count	5,865,783	5,865,783	4,694,315	5,865,783	5,865,783	4,694,315

Almost the entire student population (91–99 percent of students) are in districts that receive a color for socioeconomically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, English learners, White students, and Hispanic/Latino students for every measure. Only 13 percent of the student population attends districts where American Indian or Native Alaskan students receive a color for high school measures (graduation rate and CCI), but 67 percent attend districts where this group receives a color for suspensions.

These data are likely due to the fact that these students are either concentrated in a few small districts or have very small populations in larger districts. The data support this explanation; in more than 80 percent of districts, the share of American Indian or Native Alaskan students is very small, but there are a handful of districts where these students comprise up to 80 percent of the district population. Figure C-3 shows the distribution of their population share across districts. The same is true for Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander students: About 80 percent attend districts where they represent a small share of the population, and there are a very small number districts where these students comprise 10 percent to 25 percent of the district population. By contrast, the Hispanic/Latino population (Figure C-4) covers the whole range of district population shares, with a relatively even percentage of districts with any share of Hispanic/Latino students; that is, these students are equally likely to make up 10 percent, 30 percent, 50 percent, 70 percent, or 90 percent of a district's population.

Figure C-3: Districts' Proportions of American Indian or Native Alaskan Students

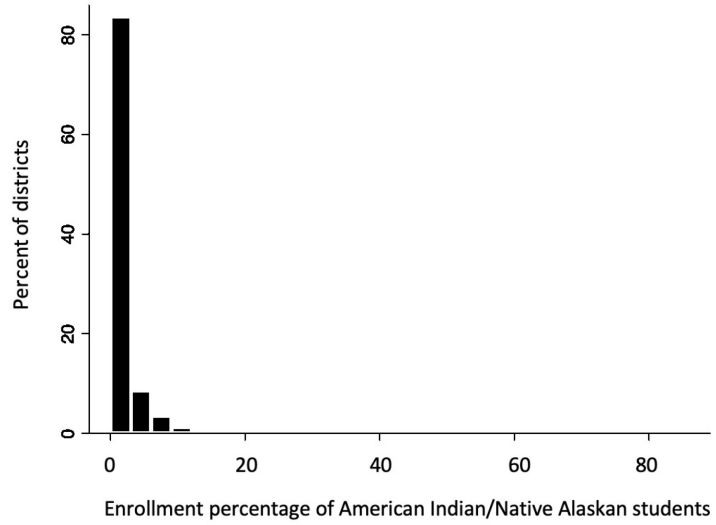


Figure C-4: Districts' Proportions of Hispanic/Latino Students

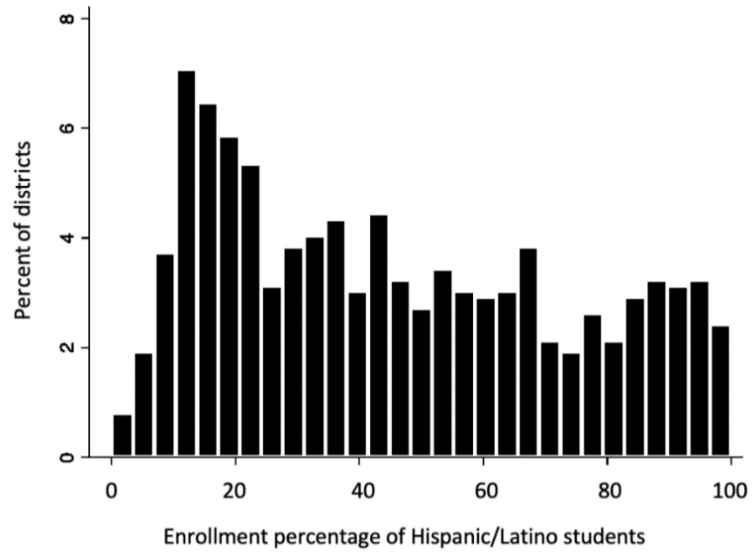


Table C-7: Share of Each Student Group That Attends Districts With Sufficient Sample Sizes to Provide a Performance Color for That Student Group in 2018

Grades Included:	All	K–8 and 11		High School		K–8
	Suspensions	ELA	Math	CCI	Grad	Chronic Absenteeism
Hispanic / Latino	99%	99%	99%	79%	79%	92%
White	99%	99%	99%	78%	78%	91%
Asian	100%	100%	100%	81%	81%	92%
African American / Black	98%	98%	98%	82%	82%	92%
Two+ Races	99%	99%	99%	78%	78%	93%
Filipino	100%	99%	99%	82%	82%	92%
American Indian / Native Alaskan	98%	97%	97%	75%	75%	87%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	99%	98%	98%	80%	80%	92%
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	99%	99%	99%	79%	79%	92%
English Learner	99%	99%	99%	74%	74%	96%

Grades Included:	All	K–8 and 11		High School		K–8
	Suspensions	ELA	Math	CCI	Grad	Chronic Absenteeism
Students with Disabilities	97%	97%	97%	78%	78%	91%
Homeless Students	99%	99%	99%	76%	76%	93%
Foster Youth	90%	89%	89%	70%	70%	84%

Table C-7 shows the share of each specific student group under consideration (rather than the share of the total student population) that attends districts where the group receives a performance color. We expect the smaller proportions to receive the high school–related measures because these measures do not apply to elementary districts. Overall, these data are promising; the vast majority of students in each student group attend districts where their student group receives a performance color in suspensions, ELA, math, and chronic absenteeism. We see lower percentages receiving colors for the high school–related measures (CCI and graduation); however, these percentages are still quite high.

The highest percentage of any student group receiving a performance color for high school-related measures is 82 percent; this percentage applies to African American students. This is an interesting finding and makes sense because African American students are largely concentrated into a smaller number of districts. The lowest percentage of any student group receiving a performance color for these measures is 70 percent, which applies to foster youth. This reflects the fact that foster youth comprise a small share of the student population. Nevertheless, most of the foster youth population attend districts where their student group receives a performance color for suspensions, ELA, math, and chronic absenteeism, which is promising.

Another notable observation is that in contrast to Table C-6—in which only 13 percent of the total student population attends districts where American Indian and Native Alaskan students receive a performance color for the graduation rate—75 percent of that student population attends districts where they receive a color for graduation rate. This finding aligns with previous findings about the distribution of the American Indian and Native Alaskan student population across districts.

Share of Districts Eligible for DA by Priority Area

Tables C-8 and C-9 report the share of districts (Table C-8) and the share of students (Table C-9) in districts eligible for DA by priority area. Overall, 24 percent, 38 percent, and 32 percent of districts, respectively, were eligible for DA in 2017, 2018, and 2019.

The share of districts eligible for DA for the Pupil Achievement priority area is fairly consistent across years, ranging from 22 percent to 27 percent. By contrast, there is a sharp increase in the

share of districts eligible for DA because of the Pupil Engagement priority area between 2017 and 2018; this is due to the addition of the chronic absenteeism measure in 2018. The share of districts eligible for DA because of School Climate is fairly consistent at about a quarter of the districts, and the share of districts eligible for DA due to the CCI measure is relatively low, which makes sense given that this measure only applies to districts with high schools.

Table C-8: Share of All Districts Eligible for DA, by Priority Area and Year

	2019	2018	2017
District Count	995	991	936
DA Overall	32%	38%	24%
DA Achievement	21%	27%	22%
DA Engagement (Absenteeism / Graduation)	26%	27%	7%
DA School Climate	24%	28%	22%
DA Broad Course of Study (CCI)	10%	16%	0%

Table C-9: Share of Students in Districts Eligible for DA, by Priority Area and Year

	2019	2018	2017
Student Count	5,858,050	5,923,489	5,840,575
DA Overall	57%	63%	49%
DA Achievement	30%	48%	43%
DA Engagement (Absenteeism / Graduation)	49%	50%	32%
DA School Climate	36%	47%	33%
DA Broad Course of Study (CCI)	31%	38%	0%

Districts eligible for DA tend to be larger; so when we look at the share of students in districts eligible for DA, this figure is quite a bit larger than the share of districts. Starting in 2017, about half of California's public school students attend districts that are eligible for DA, and that figure increases to about 60 percent for 2018 and 2019. In 2017, the largest share of students were in districts eligible for DA due to the Achievement priority area, but once the chronic absenteeism measure was added in 2018, that largest share shifted to Engagement. In 2018, roughly an equal share of students attended districts eligible for DA due to Achievement as those eligible due to School Climate (suspensions). That changed in 2019, when Achievement becomes the

most frequent category and both Achievement and School Climate declined. This change is also more extreme than it would be if we just looked at the district-level data. We can also see that the share of students attending a district on DA due to the career and college readiness indicator is quite a bit higher than we might guess based on the district share: about 1/3 in 2019 and close to 40 percent in 2018.

Table C-10 shows a count of districts within the intersection of the two priority areas that made them eligible for DA in 2018. The most common combination of areas was School Climate and Engagement; 200 districts were eligible for DA based on this combination of priority areas, slightly more than the second most common combination, School Climate and Achievement, with 187 districts.

Table C-10: Number of Districts Eligible for DA in 2018 Based on Underperformance in Each Combination of Priority Areas

Priority Area	Achievement	Engagement (Absenteeism / Graduation)	Suspensions	Broad Course of Study (CCI)
Achievement	257			
Engagement (Absenteeism / Graduation)	173	254		
Suspensions	187	200	261	
Broad Course of Study (CCI)	121	92	91	145
Total	257	254	261	145

Share of Districts Eligible for DA by Student Group

Table C-11 shows the student groups that made districts eligible for DA, by the share of districts made eligible by those groups, by the count of districts, and by the share of students attending districts that that were eligible for DA based on that student group in 2018. The most common group to prompt DA eligibility was students with disabilities; 23 percent of districts were eligible for DA for this group and 44 percent of the overall student population attended districts that were eligible for DA based on outcomes for this group. The next most common student group to prompt DA eligibility was homeless students; 15 percent of districts were eligible for DA based on outcomes for this group and 27 percent of the overall student population attends these districts. The groups least likely to prompt DA eligibility were Asian, Filipino, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and students with two or more races.

Table C-11: Share of Districts and Counts of Districts Eligible for DA Based on Outcomes for Each Student Group in 2018, and Share of All Students Attending Those Districts, by Student Group

	Share of Districts	Count of Districts (freq.)	Share of Students Attending Districts Eligible for DA for this Student Group
By Race / Ethnicity			
Asian	0.0%	0	0.0%
Black	6%	59	14%
Indigenous	2%	22	4%
Filipino	0%	0	0
Hispanic / Latinx	3%	25	1%
Pacific Islander	1%	5	3%
White	3%	25	0%
Two+ Races	1%	15	2%
By Special Populations			
Low SES	4%	43	2%
Disabilities	23%	232	44%
English Learners	5%	48	7%
Homeless	15%	144	27%
Foster	10%	103	33%
Overall DA Districts	38%	375	63%
Not DA Districts	62%	616	37%
Total		935	5,865,783

Share of Districts Meeting DA Eligibility Criteria for Each Priority Area

Tables C-12 and C-13 show the share of districts eligible for DA based on each priority area and student group (the third column) and the share that meet eligibility criteria for a given, individual priority area and student group (the fourth column). This allows us to see the gap between districts that meet eligibility for one priority area and two priority areas, which can serve as a proxy for the difference between low performance on one measure versus multiple measures.

Table C-12: Share of Districts Eligible for DA in 2018 Based on Each Priority Area and the Share that Met Eligibility Criteria for a Given Priority Area, by Student Group (Race / Ethnicity)

Student Group	Priority Area	Share of Districts Eligible for DA by Student Group and Priority Area	Share of Districts Meeting Eligibility Criteria for a Given Student Group and Priority Area
Hispanic / Latino	Climate	2.1%	5.6%
	Engagement	1.4%	6.5%
	Achievement	1.1%	4.3%
	CCI	0.7%	1.5%
White	Climate	2.1%	7.9%
	Engagement	2.2%	7.8%
	Achievement	0.4%	0.9%
	CCI	0.3%	0.5%
Asian	Climate	0.0%	0.2%
	Engagement	0.0%	0.2%
	Achievement	0.0%	0.0%
	CCI	0.0%	0.0%
Black / African American	Climate	4.2%	11.3%
	Engagement	5.0%	8.1%
	Achievement	4.3%	6.3%
	CCI	0.5%	1.2%
Filipino	Climate	0.0%	0.3%
	Engagement	0.0%	0.1%
	Achievement	0.0%	0.0%
	CCI	0.0%	0.0%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Climate	0.3%	1.8%
	Engagement	0.3%	3.3%
	Achievement	0.4%	0.5%
	CCI	0.0%	0.1%

Student Group	Priority Area	Share of Districts Eligible for DA by Student Group and Priority Area	Share of Districts Meeting Eligibility Criteria for a Given Student Group and Priority Area
American Indian or Native Alaskan	Climate	2.0%	6.6%
	Engagement	2.0%	4.6%
	Achievement	0.9%	1.3%
	CCI	0.1%	0.1%
Two+ Races	Climate	1.5%	6.4%
	Engagement	1.4%	5.0%
	Achievement	0.2%	0.3%
	CCI	0.1%	0.5%
Total Districts		935	940

Student groups were most likely to be eligible for DA based on School Climate or Engagement. In a very small number of districts, Asian and Filipino students met the eligibility criteria for Engagement or School Climate, but they never prompted the district to be eligible for DA. Among race-and-ethnicity student groups, districts were most likely to be eligible for DA based on the outcomes for African American students, and this was most often based on the School Climate, Engagement, and Achievement priority areas. More than 11 percent of districts met the eligibility criteria for the School Climate priority area for African American students, and just more than 4 percent of districts were eligible for DA based on this student group and priority area. The student group whose outcomes most frequently met eligibility criteria for the CCI priority area was Hispanic / Latino students; for the other three priority areas, the group whose outcomes most frequently met eligibility criteria were African American students.

However, as shown in Table C-13, special student populations were far more likely to meet eligibility criteria for individual priority areas and more likely to prompt DA eligibility than racial or ethnic groups. The priority area-and-student group combination that most frequently met eligibility criteria was Achievement for students with disabilities: 35 percent of districts met eligibility criteria for this priority area for students with disabilities and 21 percent of districts were eligible for DA based on this priority area and student group. Nearly 20 percent of districts met eligibility criteria for the priority area of School Climate for foster youth or students with disabilities, although students with disabilities were much more likely than foster youth to prompt DA eligibility due to School Climate. Foster youth were the most likely group to meet eligibility criteria for the School Climate priority area; homeless students are the most likely group to meet eligibility criteria for the Engagement priority area; and students with disabilities were the most likely group to meet eligibility criteria for the Achievement priority area and for CCI. Overall, students with disabilities were the most likely student group to prompt eligibility for DA across all priority areas, indicating that students with disabilities were more likely to

meet eligibility criteria for multiple priority areas. Homeless students and foster youth were generally less likely to prompt DA eligibility, despite frequently meeting eligibility criteria for individual priority areas.

Table C-13: Share of Districts Eligible for DA in 2018 Based on Each Priority Area and the Share That Met Eligibility Criteria for a Given Priority Area, by Student Group (Special Populations)

Student Group		Share of Districts Eligible for DA by Student Group and Priority Area	Share of Districts Meeting Eligibility Criteria for a Given Student Group and Priority Area
Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	Climate	3%	11%
	Engagement	3%	8%
	Achievement	2%	6%
	CCI	1%	2%
Students with Disabilities	Climate	12%	18%
	Engagement	13%	15%
	Achievement	21%	35%
	CCI	11%	13%
English Learners	Climate	2.1%	3.9%
	Engagement	2.0%	4.6%
	Achievement	4.2%	11.3%
	CCI	2.8%	7.1%
Homeless Students	Climate	9.4%	14.8%
	Engagement	12.1%	22.4%
	Achievement	7.8%	10.3%
	CCI	4.1%	4.8%
Foster Youth	Climate	8.1%	18.7%
	Engagement	7.2%	11.6%
	Achievement	6.3%	8.7%
	CCI	2.2%	2.6%
Total Districts		935	940

Appendix D: Full Data Tables for Impact Analysis

The following tables include the impact analysis results discussed in Tables 9 through 18 of the report but with additional statistical details.

Table D-1: Percent Change in Likelihood of Being Eligible for DA in Subsequent Years as a Result of DA, by Years of Data Analyzed, for All Districts and for Non-Large Districts

Outcome	DA Year	Outcome Year	District Type	Impact	p-value	R2	*N*
DA Eligibility	2017	2018	all	-0.13	0.33	0.15	240
DA Eligibility	2017	2018	non-large	-0.13	0.37	0.13	208
DA Eligibility	2017	2019	all	-0.28**	0.04	0.12	264
DA Eligibility	2017	2019	non-large	-0.26*	0.06	0.12	217
DA Eligibility	2018	2019	all	-0.22**	0.04	0.1	329
DA Eligibility	2018	2019	non-large	-0.2*	0.08	0.1	274

** statistically significant
* nearing statistical significance

Table D-2: Percent Change in Likelihood of Being Eligible for DA for the Focal Group in Subsequent Years as a Result of DA, by Years of Data Analyzed, for All Districts and for Non-Large Districts

Outcome	DA Year	Outcome Year	District Type	Impact	p-value	R2	*N*
DA for Focal Group	2017	2018	all	-0.11	0.29	0.07	336
DA for Focal Group	2017	2018	non-large	0.08	0.52	0.07	218
DA for Focal Group	2017	2019	all	-0.17	0.16	0.09	287
DA for Focal Group	2017	2019	non-large	-0.11	0.4	0.08	236

Outcome	DA Year	Outcome Year	District Type	Impact	p-value	R2	*N*
DA for Focal Group	2018	2019	all	-0.13	0.18	0.09	320
DA for Focal Group	2018	2019	non-large	-0.1	0.32	0.12	268

Table D-3: Percent Change in Likelihood of Being Eligible for DA for the Focal Group and Focal Indicator in Subsequent Years as a Result of DA, by Years of Data Analyzed, for All Districts and for Non-Large Districts

Outcome	DA Year	Outcome Year	District Type	Impact	p-value	R2	*N*
DA for Focal Group / Focal Indicator	2017	2018	all	-0.03	0.77	0.04	328
DA for Focal Group / Focal Indicator	2017	2018	non-large	0.02	0.87	0.05	269
DA for Focal Group / Focal Indicator	2017	2019	all	-0.18*	0.09	0.08	279
DA for Focal Group / Focal Indicator	2017	2019	non-large	-0.16	0.16	0.07	236
DA for Focal Group / Focal Indicator	2018	2019	all	-0.11	0.23	0.06	296
DA for Focal Group / Focal Indicator	2018	2019	non-large	-0.11	0.3	0.1	231

*** nearing statistical significance**

Table D-4: Change in Performance of the Focal Group's Focal Indicator as a Result of DA, by Years of Data Analyzed, for All Districts and for Non-Large Districts

Outcome	DA Year	Outcome Year	District Type	Impact	p-value	R2	*N*
Focal Group / Focal Indicator	2017	2018	all	0.29*	0.08	0.7	238
Focal Group / Focal Indicator	2017	2018	non-large	0.39**	0.04	0.68	196
Focal Group / Focal Indicator	2017	2019	all	0.11	0.53	0.7	240
Focal Group / Focal Indicator	2017	2019	non-large	0.12	0.53	0.69	202
Focal Group / Focal Indicator	2018	2019	all	-0.04	0.82	0.68	234
Focal Group / Focal Indicator	2018	2019	non-large	-0.08	0.7	0.66	197

** statistically significant
* nearing statistical significance

Table D-5: Change in Performance of the Focal Group's Lowest-Performing Indicator as a Result of DA, by Years of Data Analyzed, for All Districts and for Non-Large Districts

Outcome	DA Year	Outcome Year	District Type	Impact	p-value	R2	*N*
Focal Group / Lowest Indicator	2017	2018	all	0.63***	0	0.19	238
Focal Group / Lowest Indicator	2017	2018	non-large	0.73***	0	0.27	188
Focal Group / Lowest Indicator	2017	2019	all	0.53***	0	0.16	250
Focal Group / Lowest Indicator	2017	2019	non-large	0.73***	0	0.3	187
Focal Group / Lowest Indicator	2018	2019	all	0.2	0.25	0.22	223
Focal Group / Lowest Indicator	2018	2019	non-large	0.1	0.62	0.26	184

*** strong statistical significance

Table D-6: Change in All Students' Performance on the Focal Group's Focal Indicator as a Result of DA, by Years of Data Analyzed, for All Districts and for Non-Large Districts

Outcome	DA Year	Outcome Year	District Type	Impact	p-value	R2	*N*
All Students / Focal Indicator	2017	2018	all	0.21	0.2	0.18	328
All Students / Focal Indicator	2017	2018	non-large	0.3*	0.07	0.23	267
All Students / Focal Indicator	2017	2019	all	0.25	0.11	0.24	284
All Students / Focal Indicator	2017	2019	non-large	0.28*	0.1	0.25	241
All Students / Focal Indicator	2018	2019	all	0.34*	0.08	0.22	206
All Students / Focal Indicator	2018	2019	non-large	0.26	0.21	0.24	182

*** nearing statistical significance**

Table D-7: Change in All Students' Performance on the Focal Group's Lowest-Performing Indicator as a Result of DA, by Years of Data Analyzed, for All Districts and for Non-Large Districts

Outcome	DA Year	Outcome Year	District Type	Impact	p-value	R2	N
All Students / Lowest Indicator	2017	2018	all	0.48***	0.01	0.2	326
All Students / Lowest Indicator	2017	2018	non-large	0.5***	0.01	0.2	273
All Students / Lowest Indicator	2017	2019	all	0.44**	0.02	0.22	250
All Students / Lowest Indicator	2017	2019	non-large	0.46**	0.02	0.23	213
All Students / Lowest Indicator	2018	2019	all	0.11	0.51	0.19	260
All Students / Lowest Indicator	2018	2019	non-large	0.13	0.53	0.2	216

***** strong statistical significance**
**** statistically significant**

Table D-8: Percent Change in Likelihood of 2019 DA Eligibility, Based on Impact of 2017 DA Eligibility Due to Outcomes for Students with Disabilities

Outcome	Impact	P-value	R2	*N*
DA Eligibility	-0.33**	0.05	0.06	167
DA for SWDs	-0.28	0.11	0.06	154
DA for SWD Based on Focal Indicator	-0.23*	0.10	0.04	172

** statistically significant
* nearing statistical significance

Table D-9: Change in Student Performance from 2017 to 2019, Based on Impact of 2017 DA Eligibility Due to Outcomes for Students with Disabilities

Outcome	Impact	P-value	R2	*N*
Focal Group / Focal Indicator	0.10	0.59	0.72	183
All Students / Focal Indicator	0.18	0.39	0.15	166
Focal Group / Lowest Indicator	0.46**	.02	0.24	155
All Students / Lowest Indicator	0.40**	.05	0.04	167

** statistically significant

Table D-10: Percent Change in Likelihood of 2019 DA Eligibility, Based on Impact of 2017 DA Eligibility for Small LEAs

Outcome	Impact	P-value	R2	*N*
DA Eligibility	-0.15	0.45	0.18	130
DA for Focal Group	-0.19	0.37	0.14	112
DA for Focal Group Based on Focal Indicator	-0.09	0.52	0.21	139

Table D-11: Change in Student Performance from 2017 to 2019, Based on Impact of 2017 DA Eligibility for Small LEAs

Outcome	Impact	P-value	R2	*N*
Focal Group / Focal Indicator	0.19	0.46	0.72	114
All Students / Focal Indicator	-0.02	0.91	0.25	138
Focal Group / Lowest Indicator	0.60**	.02	0.13	112
All Students / Lowest Indicator	0.63***	.001	0.29	95

** statistically significant
*** strong statistical significance

Appendix E: Comparing Differentiated Assistance and ESSA Assistance (CSI or TSI/ATSI)

This analysis discusses the idea of identifying districts as eligible for DA based on whether they have at least one school in ESSA assistance (CSI or TSI/ATSI), rather than using the current DA eligibility criteria.

Based on 2019 data, if districts were eligible for DA based on having at least one school in ESSA assistance, many more districts—44 percent versus the current 32 percent—would be eligible for DA. There would be net "migration" into DA eligibility of 12 percent (*n* = 108); specifically, 6 percent (*n* = 57) of districts would no longer be eligible and 18 percent (*n* = 165) new districts would be eligible.

Most (81 percent) of the current DA-eligible districts already have schools in ESSA assistance (CSI or TS/ATSI). A smaller number, but still a majority, of districts with at least one school identified under ESSA (60 percent) are also eligible for DA. The potential increase in eligibility discussed above is mainly driven by the fact that a large share of current ESSA districts are not eligible for DA (40 percent).

Of the new districts that gain DA eligibility, 19 are single-school districts. Only two of the districts that lose DA eligibility are single-school districts. The districts that gain DA eligibility tend to be larger (with an average of 13 schools). The number of schools ranges from 1 to 222.

In terms of student populations that made them eligible for assistance, 43 percent of districts receive ESSA assistance for students with disabilities; 12 percent for homeless youth; and 10 percent for African American students. The districts losing DA eligibility tend to be smaller (averaging 5.6 schools with a range from 1 to 19 schools). In terms of student group performance that made them eligible for assistance, 54 percent are eligible for students with disabilities; 23 percent for homeless youth; and 10 percent for foster youth.

Table E-1: Current Overlap Between Districts That Receive Support Through DA and Districts With Schools Receiving ESSA Assistance

DA and ESSA Eligibility and Assistance	Percentage
Districts with neither DA nor ESSA assistance	50%
Districts with both DA and ESSA assistance	26%
Current share of districts eligible for DA	32%
Share of DA-eligible districts that are also in ESSA assistance	81%
Share of DA-eligible districts that are not in ESSA assistance	19%
Share of ESSA districts that are also eligible for DA	60%
Share of ESSA districts that are not eligible for DA	40%

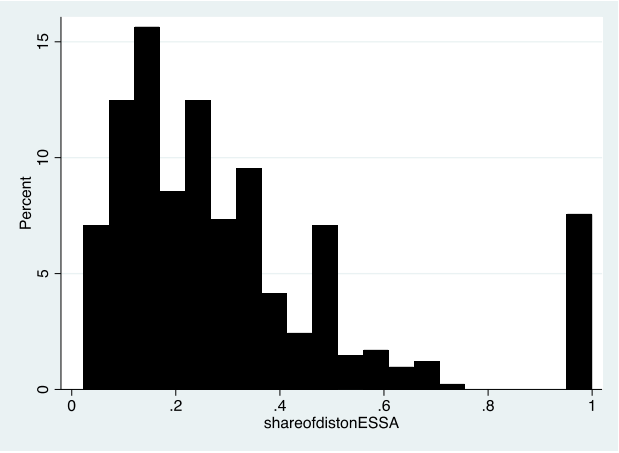
Table E-2: Changes in District DA Eligibility if DA Eligibility Were Based on ESSA Assistance Criteria

DA Eligibility	Percentage
Districts that would gain DA eligibility based on ESSA assistance	18%
Districts that would lose DA eligibility	6%
Total share of districts that would be eligible for DA	44%
Total share of districts that would not be eligible for DA	56%
Share of ESSA districts that are also eligible for DA	60%
Share of ESSA districts that are not eligible for DA	40%

As an alternative to making districts eligible for DA based on receiving ESSA assistance for at least one school, the state could consider the total number of schools receiving ESSA assistance and the share of schools that they represent in a district. From this consideration, the state could investigate a rule whereby districts with some percentage of schools receiving ESSA assistance are eligible for DA.

For districts with at least one school in ESSA assistance, Figure E-1 shows the distribution of the share of schools in the district in ESSA assistance. The districts with 100 percent of their schools in ESSA assistance (n = 31) have one to three schools, and only two of these districts have more than one school.

Figure E-1: Distribution of the Share of Schools in ESSA Assistance



As noted earlier, with the first assignment rule (requiring only one school to be in ESSA assistance), 165 districts would be newly eligible for DA.

If that rule were restricted so that at least 5 percent of the district's schools would need to be in ESSA assistance in order for the district to be eligible for DA, the number of newly eligible districts could come down to 156 districts. Table E-3 displays the number of districts that would be newly eligible based on different rules.

Table E-3: Number of Districts That Would be Newly Eligible for DA Based on Potential Proportions of Schools That Would Need to Be in ESSA Assistance

Proportion of schools that a district would need to have in ESSA assistance	Districts that would be newly eligible for DA
5%	156
10%	132
15%	98
20%	89
25%	61

The state could also consider a rule based on the number of schools in each district and make some special set of rules for small districts; for example, if the number of schools is more than five and one school receives ESSA, then the district would be eligible for DA. (Taking this

approach, 106 would gain DA eligibility and 25 would lose DA eligibility for a net gain of 81 districts, instead of 108).

At the county level, there are currently 53 counties with DA-eligible districts. If the state were to apply the rule of having DA eligibility for any districts with at least one school in ESSA assistance, then 51 counties would have districts eligible for DA, for a net loss of two counties (three would lose DA eligibility and one would gain eligibility).

Appendix F: District and COE Eligibility Criteria for DA

Table F-1 lists the priority areas that the state uses to determine eligibility for DA. As noted in the table, the Dashboard indicators that are based on standardized student performance data (e.g., Math, ELA, Graduation, Suspension, College/Career Indicator) receive a color score, with "red" representing the lowest performance level and "orange" representing the second lowest.

The other indicators, known as local indicators, are based off the data that districts, COEs, and charter schools report using the SBE-approved self-reflection tools (CDE, 2022a). If a district, COE, or charter school does not meet a local indicator, all of its student groups are deemed as not meeting that local indicator.

Districts, COE, and Charter School Eligibility for DA

DA eligibility is based on the following:

- Districts and COEs: The same student group must meet the criteria in two different priority areas in a single year (CDE, 2022b).
- Charter schools: The same student group must meet the criteria in in two different priority areas for two years (EC Section 47607.3).[30]

[30] Prior to the 2020/21 school year, charter schools were eligible if they met the performance criteria for three or more student groups (or all student groups if the charter school had less than three student groups) in one priority area for three out of four consecutive school years.

Table F-1: Criteria Used to Determine Eligibility for DA

LCFF State Priority Areas 1–5	LCFF State Priority Areas 6–10
Basic (Priority 1) • Not Met for 2 or More Years on Local Performance Indicator	**School Climate (Priority 6)** • Red on Suspension Rate Indicator, or • Not Met for 2 or More Years on Local Performance Indicator
Implementation of State Academic Standards (Priority 2) • Not Met for 2 or More Years on Local Performance Indicator	**Access to a Broad Course of Study (Priority 7)** • Not Met for 2 or More Years on Local Performance Indicator
Parent Engagement (Priority 3) • Not Met for 2 Or More Years on Local Performance Indicator	**Outcomes in a Broad Course of Study (Priority 8)** • Red on College/Career Indicator
Pupil Achievement (Priority 4) • Red on Both English Language Arts and Math Tests, or • Red on English Language Arts or Math Test and Orange on the Other Test, or • Status of "Very Low" on the English Learner Progress Indicator (EL student group only)	**Coordination of Services for Expelled Pupils – COEs Only (Priority 9)** • Not Met for 2 or More Years on Local Performance Indicator
Pupil Engagement (Priority 5) • Red on Graduation Rate Indicator, or • Red on Chronic Absence Indicator	**Coordination Of Services For Foster Youth—COEs Only (Priority 10)** • Not Met for 2 or More Years on Local Performance Indicator

Source: CDE, 2022c

School Eligibility Criteria for CSI (CDE, 2019)

CDE uses school-level Dashboard performance data to determine eligibility for CSI. Schools may be eligible in one of two categories:

- Low graduation rate: schools with a two-year average combined four- and five-year high school graduation rate below 68 percent.
- Lowest-performing schools: Schools within at least[31] the lowest 5 percent of Title I–funded schools, based on any of the following Dashboard performance:

[31] Schools can only be eligible in one category for any given school year, and the eligibility categories are hierarchical. The first eligibility group is "CSI–Low Graduation Rate Schools"; so schools eligible for CSI based on graduation rate that happened to be Title I–funded are removed from the pool prior to the determination of Title I–funded schools in the "CSI–Lowest Performing Schools" category. Consequently, some schools will be eligible in the latter category despite having performance above the lowest 5 percent.

- Schools with all red indicators
- Schools with all red but one indicator of any other color
- Schools with all red and orange indicators
- Schools with five or more indicators where the majority are red

School Eligibility for TSI/ATSI (CDE, 2019)

The criteria used to determine school eligibility for TSI and ATSI are identical to one another. TSI-eligibility determinations occur annually, while ATSI determinations occur every three years. Schools—including those that do and don't receive Title I funds—are eligible if they meet both of the following:

- Not eligible for CSI
- Have one or more student groups that for two consecutive years meet any of the following criteria:
  - All red indicators
  - All red but one indicator of any other color
  - All red and orange indicators
  - Five or more indicators where the majority are red