



# Equity Alert



## Equity Alert: Black Students Need More from California's Equity Multiplier

California's education system, like many government institutions, was not developed to serve Black students. The tough truth is that it still doesn't: only 30.3 percent of Black students met or exceeded standards in English and only 15.9 percent met or exceeded standards in math in the 2021-22 school year.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Black students are less likely to report feeling connected to school than any other student group.<sup>2</sup> Year after year, students, parents, community members, and advocates have demanded that California address Black students' needs. Now is the time to finally take bold and effective action.

The governor recently proposed what he is calling an equity multiplier to be added to California's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). The proposal was a response to Assembly Bill 2774 (AB 2774), in which advocates called for resources to close the opportunity gap for Black students by adding a new statewide "lowest performing subgroup"<sup>3</sup> to LCFF. He is also proposing changes to LCFF accountability and the Local Control and Accountability Plan requirements (LCAP) to prompt local education agencies (LEAs) to prioritize the students and schools most in need of additional support, evaluate whether their actions work, and change course when they don't.

We're encouraged that the governor's proposal sends more money to schools with high concentrations of poverty and uplifts accountability changes that focus on closing equity gaps for marginalized students. However, much more can be done to center Black students in these solutions. We provide four recommendations below to support focusing the funding, LCAP, and System of Support components of this governor's proposal directly on Black student success.

### WHAT IS THE EQUITY MULTIPLIER? WHAT IS THE ADDITIONAL LCFF ACCOUNTABILITY?

#### Equity Multiplier

The governor's proposed budget includes \$300 million to increase funding for schools with highly concentrated poverty. Schools are eligible for this additional funding if:

- 90 percent or more of students are eligible for free lunch for elementary and middle schools
- 85 percent or more of students are eligible for free lunch for high schools

According to Ed Trust–West estimates, about six percent of all California students attend the schools that would receive equity multiplier funds, and roughly seven percent of Black students in the state attend schools that would receive this funding. This would increase funding for students in eligible schools by an estimated \$887 per student.<sup>4</sup>

Equity multiplier dollars would need to be spent directly on the school sites that generate the additional funding, unlike LCFF supplemental and concentration dollars, which can be spent on cross-district initiatives rather than being targeted to support the students who generated the additional funds.

## LCAP and System of Support Changes

The governor also proposed several changes to the LCAP and the state System of Support that helps LEAs in need of improvement. These changes aim to increase the level of accountability for LEA improvement and make information more transparent to schools and communities. Below is a summary of the most notable proposed changes:

### LCAP Changes

- LEAs must include in their LCAPs specific goals, actions, and investments for student groups and schools that are not getting the support they need to succeed. The criteria would be any group or school performing in the “very low” category in chronic absenteeism, suspension rates, English Learner progress, graduation rates, college/ career readiness, or state test scores on the California School Dashboard. For many LEAs, Black students would be one of those groups. LEAs must also do this for schools that qualify for the equity multiplier, specifically addressing teacher credentialing or training issues, if applicable.
- LEAs must evaluate the effectiveness of actions included in their LCAP, based in part on parent and community input.
- LEAs must provide a mid-year report on outcomes data, as well as data on expenditures and implementation of all actions identified in the current year’s LCAP.
- LEAs must change actions included in their LCAP if data show a lack of progress toward goals after a period of three years.
- LEAs must identify one or more metrics to measure the success of LEA-wide expenditures using targeted LCFF funds.
- If LEAs have been identified for technical assistance, they must include the work underway and the actions they plan to implement as a result of the technical assistance they’ve received for student groups with “very low” outcomes on the Dashboard.
- LEAs must engage stakeholders at equity multiplier schools and reflect the engagement in their LCAPs.
- It adds in a statute that the purpose of the LCAP is to reduce disparities between student groups.



### System of Support Changes

- County offices of education (COEs) must provide technical assistance for identified LEAs for two years after they have been identified.
- After an LEA has been identified for technical assistance for three consecutive years, geographic leads provide technical assistance rather than the COE.
- LEAs will automatically be referred to the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence after qualifying for technical assistance for three or more student groups (or all the LEA’s student groups if it has fewer than three) in three out of four years. The technical assistance must focus on responsiveness to student and community needs.
- Equity leads would be established to coordinate support for LEA improvement, working with experts and education leaders to disseminate information and provide resources for effective planning and improvement that eliminates disparities between student groups, including specifically eliminating racial disparities in opportunities and outcomes.



## WHAT IS NEEDED TO SUPPORT BLACK STUDENTS?

While these efforts to provide more resources and accountability to LCFF could help ensure equity in K-12 schools and districts, the state must take much bolder action to directly address the stark disparities Black students experience. We believe that the governor and legislature should include the following changes to the equity multiplier and proposed accountability provisions to center Black students in their efforts to improve LCFF meaningfully.<sup>5</sup>

### 1 Include student groups by race in the LCFF formula, or alternatively include AB 2774 in the equity multiplier proposal.

While we appreciate the governor recognizing that LEAs need additional resources to support marginalized students, the equity multiplier proposal does not directly address the need to target Black students as a group for additional funding. The most effective way to address racial disparities is to take a race-conscious approach to modify LCFF. That means using racial/ethnic student groups to allocate additional funding. Without the ability to include student groups by race in the LCFF formula, the proposal in AB 2774 would get the state closer to sending resources to LEAs specifically for Black students. According to the [Black in School Coalition](#), adding a statewide “lowest performing student group” to the LCFF supplemental distribution as proposed in AB 2774 would provide additional funding to approximately 80,000 Black students who do not currently generate additional funding.

Moreover, by incorporating AB 2774 into the equity multiplier proposal, LEAs would not only receive additional funding, but they would also be required to use it to increase or improve services for Black students. Without adding this classification of student group into the LCFF formula, there is no requirement for districts to target Black students with the use of additional resources.

### 2 Require LEAs to adopt research-based actions and services specific to supporting Black students in LCAPs.

We support the governor’s call to require LEAs to create specific goals and actions for student groups receiving a “very low” rating on the Dashboard. However, to increase the likelihood of success, the goals and actions identified for those student groups must be grounded in research. The governor and legislature should direct the California Department of Education and/or the California Collaborative for Education Excellence (CCEE) to curate a clearinghouse of evidence-based services and interventions proven to support Black students like those identified by the [Los Angeles County Office of Education](#). If an LEA falls into the “very low” category for Black students, leaders in that LEA should be required to implement services from this clearinghouse to address the needs of their Black students.

### 3 Provide guidance and support for improvement specific to Black student success as part of the state’s System of Support for LEAs.

The LCFF has identified county offices of education and the CCEE as the entities responsible for technical assistance and support for LEA improvement. In the past 10 years of LCFF, we saw marginal improvement for Black students in math and English language arts before the pandemic, and sharp declines since. This is proof that LEAs need support and guidance specific to the needs of Black students to intentionally and effectively meet their needs. The state should harness the wealth of expertise in Black student support that exists in California to directly inform LEA improvement efforts. The CCEE should partner with COEs and other technical assistance providers with a track record of success for Black students to provide this support.





#### 4 **Require the inclusion of Black parents, students, and communities in LCAP stakeholder engagement.**

We appreciate that the governor’s proposal seeks to intentionally include stakeholder engagement in the LCAP planning and evaluation process. No one knows better what Black students need from their schools than Black students, families, and community members. LEAs that are struggling to support Black students must be required to include Black student, parent, and community input in both their plans to better support Black students and their evaluation of whether those plans are working. LEAs should also be required to document this engagement and how it informed planning and evaluation efforts.

### HOW CAN YOU GET ENGAGED?

**Contact your state representatives** – From now until the end of June, the state legislature will be deciding on new policies necessary to implement the state’s budget. Share your perspectives on the equity multiplier and LCFF and LCAP changes with your Senate and Assembly representatives so they vote with your opinions in mind.

**Weigh in at a legislative hearing** – Legislators who sit on the education and budget committees have significant influence over what policies are moved forward to enact the budget. Write a letter or provide public comment at a hearing so committees make decisions based on the perspectives of stakeholders and advocates for marginalized students.

**Urge your local leaders to support Black students** – School boards and other local education leaders can always take action to do more to support Black students, regardless of the decisions made in Sacramento. Reach out to your local leaders and urge them to act in support of Black students, like at the Los Angeles Unified School District and other districts in California.

**Join us** – Sign up for The Education Trust–West’s contact list to stay informed on this issue as it develops.

### ENDNOTES

- 1 Source: California Department of Education, “California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) Test Results,” 2022, <https://caaspp-elpac.ets.org/caaspp/>.
- 2 Source: California Department of Education, “California School Climate, Health, and Learning Survey Results,” 2019, <https://calschls.org/>.
- 3 AB 2774 sought to have the “lowest performing student group” added to the LCFF Formula. The “lowest performing student group” is defined by the bill at the student group with the lowest results statewide in math and English Language arts on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress, excluding student groups that already generate state and or federal funding.
- 4 Source: The Education Trust–West analysis of California Department of Education data, 2021-22, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/downloadabledata.asp>.
- 5 We recognize the legal limitations that Proposition 209 and other laws might present to advance these recommendations. We also acknowledge that legality in the United States has often masked what is right or just.