

Why School Psychologists Need to Fully Engage in Local Control Funding Formula Planning

What Is the LCFF

The Local Control Funding Formula was a significant change to the way the state funds school districts beginning July 1, 2013. The new funding formula gives every school district a base apportionment and then funds every district based on a specific target that is predicated on the number of students that are English language learners, participants in the Free and Reduced Lunch program or are foster youth. Each district will be funded based on the unduplicated count of these students. The grant for these unduplicated students will be known as a supplemental grant. For districts where the total student population of unduplicated students is above 50%, there will also be additional funding known as the concentration grant the size of which will be based on the “concentration” of these unduplicated students. The formula will fund each district differently based on its unduplicated count over an 8 year period at which point each district should have reached its target level. The primary goal of the LCFF is to ensure that the district is providing “increased or improved services” to the unduplicated students in the district.

What is the LCAP

On or before July 1, 2014, each school district and county office of education is required to adopt a local control and accountability plan (LCAP) using a template adopted by the State Board of Education. The plan will be effective for 3 years, with an update prepared before July 1 of each year. The plan will require districts to adopt a plan of action for meeting the specific needs of its unduplicated student population by ensuring that there will be specific increases and/or improvements in services. The LCAP shall include the annual goals, for all pupils and each subgroup of pupils (as defined in the academic performance index) to be achieved for each of the 8 state and local priorities and the specific actions the school district or COE will take during each year of the plan.

The LCAP Presents an Opportunity to Expand Mental Health

The expansion of mental health services and the hiring of additional school psychologists is a justifiable expenditure of supplemental and concentration grant funds because those funds would be attributed to expansion of services for unduplicated students and is a legitimate expenditure of supplemental grant funds. School psychologists must work closely with teachers, administrators, parents and community leaders to advocate for the expansion of mental health services on school sites as a part of the community outreach effort that each district is required to have as a part of the development of its LCAP.

Reach Out to the Community

In order to effectively impact the district’s LCAP, school psychologists must combine forces with the teachers and administrators in the school and the district in support of expanding mental health services beyond those provided for special education. Additionally, school psychologists must reach out to parents the importance of developing strategies like Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) that

create a more positive and safe school environment. You must brief them on the importance of advocating for these types of enhances mental health strategies as a priority for LCAP funding and you must ask each of them to also contact 10 friends to deliver the same message. The LCAP requires a number of public input sessions for the community to outline their own policy priorities. Having the parent community ready with key talking points on the value of a positive school climate, school safety and PBIS related approaches will be critical.

Talking Points to Use with the Teaching Staff & Community

* One of the mission of school psychologists is to create positive cultures in schools. An effective approach to creating a positive school culture is called Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). This approach is in use and growing in a number of California schools, and we want more school leaders to know about these strategies as well as understand how suspensions and expulsions affect students both socially and academically.

* Within the body of the PBIS system is the concept of restorative justice. It is an approach to resolving conflicts and behavioral problems that is grounded in mutual respect, positive relationships, and productive accountability. Restorative practices help students understand the impact of their actions. Practices such as Peacemaking Circles and Restorative Conferences are designed to help students take responsibility for their actions and repair the harm they may have caused. Through this process, students learn how to interact and manage their relationships. A Restorative Justice approach enables school personnel to intervene more effectively, increasing support without compromising accountability. There is growing evidence that school-based restorative practices reduce violence and school suspensions.

* PBIS multi-tiered frameworks are aligned with the priorities established by the Local Control Funding Formula. These include: (a) flexibility to meet student needs, (b) equity through student focused funding, and (c) decision making power that will allow school districts and county offices to act based on the needs they see for students. PBIS provides an operational framework for achieving these outcomes. The PBIS multi-tiered support systems framework addresses at least five critical areas of LCAP. These include: 1) academic outcomes, 2) Common Core State Standards, 3) school culture and climate, 4) parent involvement, and 5) student engagement.

* Schools must be considered the gateway to mental health services. Children with behavioral and mental health needs are often under-identified and under served, resulting in increased disciplinary, safety and delinquency problems both on school campuses and in the community. In the view of CASP and those professionals that have implemented PBIS systems in districts here in California, PBIS should be viewed in the same context as Response to Intervention (RTI).