

Lead with Equity: What California’s Leaders Must Do Next to Advance Student Learning During COVID-19

— RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VARIOUS STATE ACTORS AND AGENCIES —

The recent [PACE policy brief](#) by Heather Hough, Jennifer O’Day, Carrie Hahnel, Arun Ramanathan, Christopher Edley, Jr., and Maria Echaveste provides recommendations to policymakers on the appropriate state role in supporting teaching and learning as the pandemic continues, calling on the state to:

1. Establish a small number of clear requirements related to teaching and learning, monitor their implementation, and provide support to districts to help them address students’ academic, social, and emotional needs;
2. Extend districts’ key flexibilities, consistent with equity imperatives, so they can efficiently, effectively, and creatively serve students; and
3. Play a leadership role in securing more funding.

This chart breaks down what various state actors and agencies can do to support:



Legislature

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarify law to require that every student, including those enrolled in fully remote options, receives daily, real-time, one-on-one or small-group instruction or support designed to address their individual learning needs, with the amount of live instructional minutes increasing with student need.• Clarify that synchronous but noninteractive tasks such as listening to lectures, watching videos, or working independently, while useful instructional tools, should not be considered “live instruction.”• Authorize counties to reject or help revise districts’ instructional continuity plans where needed.• Establish oversight processes to document rates of participation in different instructional modalities by student group, and help districts correct any disparities in student participation—unless that disparity is clearly an effort to advance equity by matching instruction to student needs.• Consider a statewide evaluation or audit to document trends in instruction and student engagement so that policymakers and stakeholders have good information upon which to base future decisions.• Require that districts assess achievement and monitor learning during the pandemic.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Require districts to continue measuring the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) “local indicators” and discussing the results during local school board meetings.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow districts to carry over unspent funds from one year to the next, so long as they are used for similar purposes and the same student populations for whom they were intended.• Offer districts flexibility over the types of facilities in which they may operate.• Remove class size caps and penalties to allow for local creativity around how to staff and organize classrooms.• Offer districts reasonable flexibility to adjust staffing based on local needs.

California Department of Education (CDE) and State Board of Education (SBE)



- Require that districts describe in their learning continuity plans:
 - How they will prioritize synchronous instructional time for vulnerable students, whether in person or virtual, and
 - How they will ensure that low-income students, English learners, students with disabilities, students of color, and students who have fallen behind during school closures receive additional and targeted supports so that they can fully participate and engage in learning.
- Require districts to collect local data and regularly update their communities on the implementation of these plans, including how much synchronous instructional time each group of students is receiving and rates of participation.
- Point districts towards a narrow set of high-quality, Common Core-aligned assessment tools and screeners, and provide support on how to aggregate, analyze, and act on the data.
- Continue efforts to design a student growth measure and look at options for measuring student learning using multiple non-consecutive years of data in order to better understand and address learning loss.



- Require that districts engage families of historically marginalized students and demonstrate how they are ensuring that the opinions and preferences of privileged families do not drown out and disproportionately influence district plans.
- Ensure that districts provide families, especially parents of students receiving special education services, avenues for offering feedback, participating in decision-making, and raising concerns.
- Offer afterschool providers operational flexibilities, along with adequate funding, to allow them to adjust their programming.

System of Support—includes the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), county offices of education (COEs), and the California Department of Education (CDE)



- Provide technical assistance to help districts select and implement high-quality instructional materials, better leverage their existing materials for distance or blended instruction, and provide professional development to educators on relevant, rigorous, and equitable instruction.



- Support districts in measuring and addressing disparities in student engagement, school climate, family involvement, and student social and emotional well-being.
- Support districts in using restorative and trauma-informed teaching strategies, recognizing student mental health needs, and connecting families with appropriate services—while protecting student privacy.
- Support districts in working with local behavioral health departments to provide on-campus and school-linked mental health services as well as prevention and early intervention programs.

Governor and Governor's Office



- Use the bully pulpit to set the tone for what schooling must look like during this pandemic and to model the importance of leading with principles of equity and racial justice.



- Create a statewide plan to ensure all students have access to mental health screening and supports (will require cross-agency collaboration).
- Draw down additional federal funds to support mental and physical healthcare services.



- Secure funds to address connectivity challenges so that all families have adequate access to the internet.
- Seek additional and significant federal coronavirus relief and stimulus aid.
- Secure additional local and state funding for education.