CENTER FOR CITIES+SCHOOLS
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA BERKELEY

PLUS Fellows Policy Brief 2016

Youth Engagement and Authentic Student Voice in LCAP/LCFF Planning Processes

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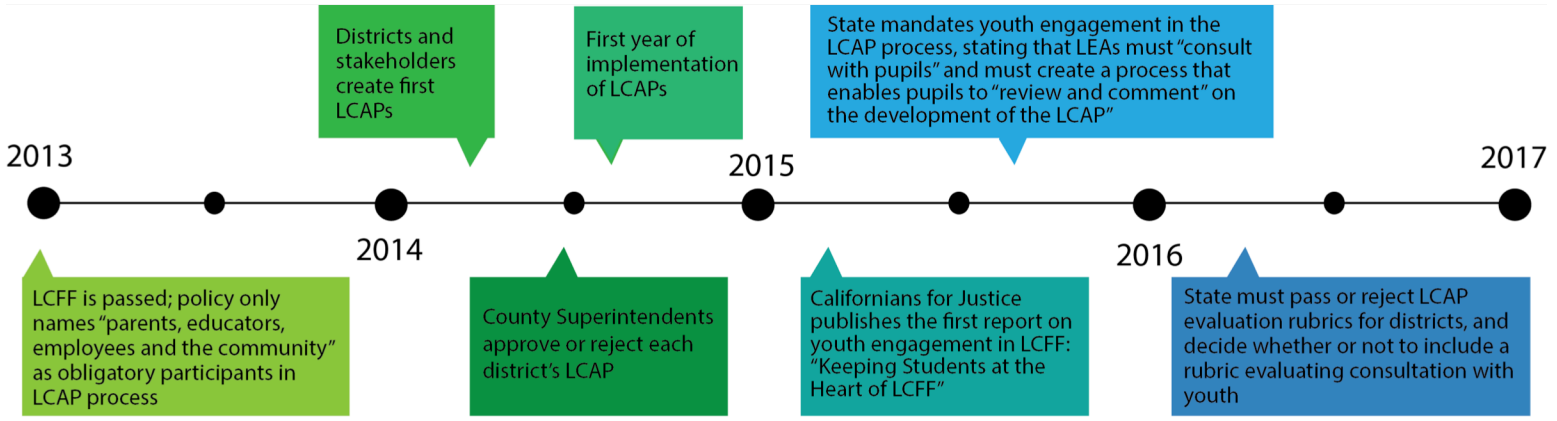
Clients: The California Endowment, Healthy Richmond HUB, West Contra Costa USD

ISSUE

Authentic youth engagement is critical to the implementation of a democratic Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) process in California. The passage of the LCFF laid the foundation for the development of a more equitable funding system that prioritizes the needs of the highest-need students. That said, there has been a significant lack of youth voice represented statewide in Districts' Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs). While LCFF explicitly requires districts to engage parents, teachers and administrators in the LCAP process, it did not have any requirements for youth to be involved until September 2015 when the state passed a measure that required LEAs (Local Educational Agencies) to "consult with pupils." This measure also clarified that "consulting with pupils," means that LEAs must create a process through which youth can review and comment on *the development of* the LCAP. Given this exciting new development, **our charge for this project was to address how innovations at the state and local level are working to authentically engage youth in the LCAP process.** Including youth in the development of LCAPs stands to reverse the historic trend of youth, and especially low-income youth of color, ELLs and foster care youth being excluded from decision-making processes concerning their own education.



METHODS

1. Interviews with key stakeholders (youth, WCCUSD staff, staff from community advocacy organizations, and a member of the State Board of Education).
2. Attended local meetings regarding LCAP (Parent Advisory Meetings and WCCUSD Youth Commission meetings).
3. Reviewed 9 sources on stakeholder engagement in LCFF/LCAP, and reviewed 10 sources on best practices for youth engagement outside of the LCFF/LCAP contexts.
4. Policy review of LCFF/LCAP.
5. Conducted 10 site visits at WCCUSD schools and community advocacy organizations.

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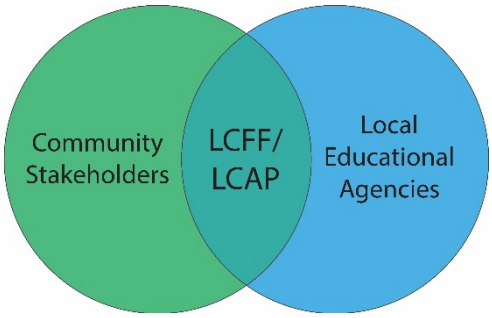
FINDINGS

- **Emerging, effective best practices for youth engagement in LCAP/LCFF processes in districts across the state include**: surveys, focus groups, general townhalls, student-specific townhalls and workshops, student leadership committees and trainings for leadership students, student meetings with existing adult leadership bodies, leveraging resources of community-based and grassroots organizations, using meaningful and relatable materials to explain LCCF/LCAP and to recruit youth participants, providing the infrastructure and resources needed for continued youth engagement, and making clear and transparent how student feedback will be integrated, such as through the use of interactive feedback forums for LCAP drafts online.
- Despite LCFF being a policy founded in local, grassroots principles, LEAs are requesting more state-mandated language, as seen through the request for evaluation rubrics.
- Across the state, there has been a lack of partnership between districts and community-based and grassroots organizations, who have a history of effective engagement with traditionally marginalized populations.
- Student-initiated engagement activities yielded the best results statewide because they were designed by students and not dominated by adults.
- Looking locally, WCCUSD has: 1) Utilized their existing Youth Commission framework (created in 2009) to integrate youth voice and participation into the LCAP process; 2) Provided trainings for the Youth Commission on how to increase the quality and rigor of their work; 3) Distributed infographics to illustrate how LCAP dollars had been used at each school site, which are available to students, parents and community members in English and Spanish.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our findings we are situating our recommendations as a 3-tier approach in an effort to comprehensively and effectively center youth voice in LCAP/LCFF process.

1. **Process of engagement**
   Innovations at the state and local level.
   a. Provide an academic context for LCAP through the creation of a curriculum that provides a platform for youth participation in the LCAP process during the school day (ex: WCCUSD's partnership with YPLAN).
   b. Capitalize on opportunities for synergy between community-based and grassroots organizations and LEAs.
2. **Translation of engagement into action**
   Transparency
   a. Center youth voice, ideas, and concerns to strategically integrate them into the LCAP spending formula for districts.
   b. Use non-adultist language to make visible how youth voice has been implemented (ex: "Your LCFF Funds at Work" signs in schools to indicate what services have been improved or instated due to LCFF funding").



3. **Measured outcomes of LCAP investments and increased documentation of emerging best practices**
   Impact
   a. Share knowledge of best practices across LEAs and advocacy groups to deepen the quality and breadth of student engagement.
   b. Develop metric to measure how LCAP investments impact student achievement.

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