

DIFFERENTIATED ASSISTANCE ELIGIBILITY

December 7, 2017

RE: Eligibility for Assistance under California's New Accountability System

Dear Superintendent Kyla Johnson-Trammell and Governing Board Members,
The California Department of Education has completed its update of the California School Dashboard, which is now available for public review. The Dashboard plays a key role in school and district accountability: As a data transparency tool, it is the first step in ensuring support for schools and districts in our new system of continuous improvement.

Based on a review of student group performance on Dashboard indicators, your school district meets the criteria to receive differentiated assistance. We are contacting you to:

- Provide background on California's new approach to assistance, which differs considerably from the "sanction and punish" framework of No Child Left Behind and California's Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA); and
- Explain what you can expect from us in the coming weeks and months.

Under California's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), County Offices of Education, the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, and the California Department of Education have specific responsibilities for providing assistance and support to local educational agencies. Along with staff from the State Board of Education, we have been working to ensure that we have a consistent approach and that our efforts are responsive to locally identified needs.

The starting point will be talking with your leadership team and stakeholders about the Dashboard data and other local data, identified strengths and challenges and what may be the cause of these challenges. County offices are prepared to facilitate these conversations.

The focus will be on helping districts build internal capacity so that they can work within their own communities to develop and implement improvement strategies with guidance and support. Rather than "doing to," as in the past, the current approach is premised on "doing with" because it is more likely to lead to sustained improvement. For change to be sustainable, it must be developed and directed by the people within the districts who will be doing the hard work of continuous improvement.

What does this mean in practice? Although the approach will evolve and improve over time based on feedback from local educators and stakeholders, this is what you can expect:

- The state will not dictate a specific set of interventions or establish top-down directives for improvement strategies.
- Your county office of education will work with you to identify underlying causes, possible solutions, resources or expertise that can help. If you are currently working with a partner agency, such as the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, your county will ask to be updated as that work continues within the differentiated assistance process.

- There is no requirement to create a new improvement plan. Instead, you will be expected to leverage the Local Control and Accountability Plan process to strengthen/change your LCAP through the annual update cycle.
- The assistance will not be limited only to the student group(s) and indicators that led to identification. Rather, assistance will focus on the actual needs identified working collaboratively with you and your local community.
- The assistance will focus on helping you identify your needs and to access expertise or resources to help you address them. While there is urgency to begin this work, there are no quick fixes for developing capacity; such efforts require long-term commitment so that improvement can be sustained over time.

We appreciate that you may have many more detailed questions about what to expect. The enclosed Frequently Asked Questions document includes more detailed information about questions that you may have. In addition, please feel free to contact Ingrid Roberson at Alameda County Office of Education if you have any questions in the meantime.

Sincerely,

L. Karen Monroe
Alameda County Superintendent of Schools

Tom Torlakson
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

Carl Cohn
Executive Director, California Collaborative for Educational Excellence

Michael W. Kirst
President, California State Board of Education

