# The Changing Role of County Offices of Education in Supporting District and School Improvement

December 13, 2019
Sacramento, California

PACE
*Policy Analysis for California Education*

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1. bringing evidence to bear on the most critical issues facing our state;
2. making research evidence accessible; and
3. leveraging partnership and collaboration to drive system improvement.

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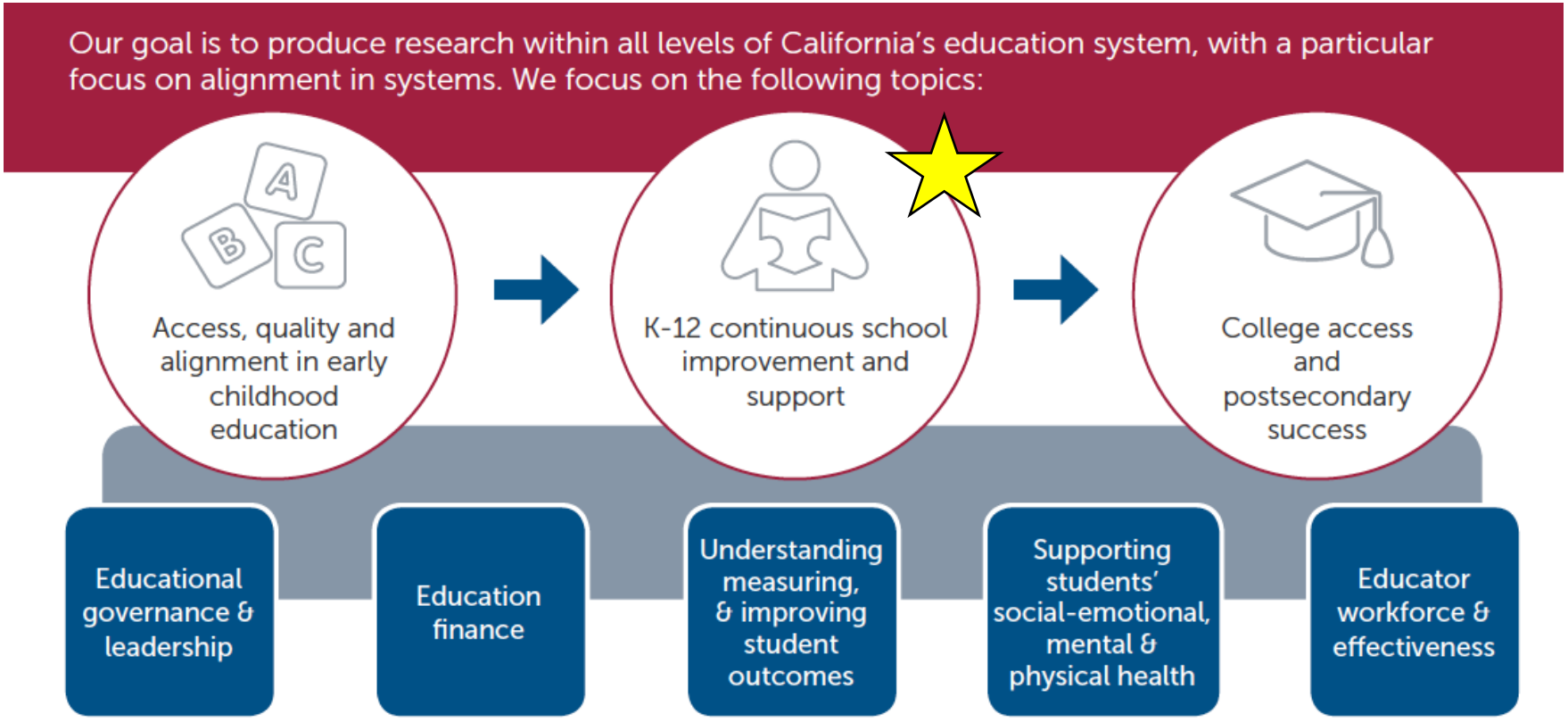

# Agenda

- Jennifer O'Day and Daniel C. Humphrey present:
  - Early Implementation of California's System of Support (Daniel C. Humphrey & Jennifer O'Day)
  - The Changing Roles of County Offices of Education: Survey Results (David N. Plank, Daniel Humphrey, and Jennifer O'Day)
- Ben Cottingham presents:
  - Leadership for Continuous Improvement: The Vision for County Offices of Education (Ed Manansala and Benjamin W. Cottingham)
- Reflection: Ed Manansala
- Audience Q&A

# Today's speakers

Ben Cottingham
PACE

Daniel C. Humphrey
Independent
Consultant

Ed Manansala
El Dorado COE, CCSESA

Jennifer O'Day
American Institutes
for Research

# The Early Implementation of California's System of Support: Counties, Differentiated Assistance, and the New School Dashboard

**Daniel Humphrey and Jennifer O'Day**

**December 13, 2019**

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LCFFRC
*Local Control Funding Formula Research Collaborative*

# Methods / Data Sources

Multi-method study:

- Document reviews (LCAPS, policies)
- State-level interviews (20)
- COE Supt. and Asst. Supt. Surveys
- Case studies
  - 5 counties (50 interviews)
  - 14 Districts (111 interviews)

# COE SUPPORT FUNCTION

# 1. New Support Narrative

**COEs and Districts are embracing new accountability and support narrative:**

- Capacity building over compliance and sanctions
- Emphasis on relationship-building and trust
- Responsiveness to local conditions and decisions

*"We're fortunate that the county doesn't come in and try to tell us what to do…We're trying to address our specific issues, but I feel the county works with us ."*

*(District Administrator)*

# 2. Varied District Perceptions of Effectiveness of COE Support

**District perceptions of support usefulness varied**

- Overwhelming praise in 2 counties
- Mixed reviews in 3 counties
- Concerns: light touch, limited depth, incomplete process

*"Districts in this county absolutely get the support they need."*

*"We felt like we started a process and then it just stalled."*

# 3. Varied COE Conceptions of Role

**COE's conceptualization and implementation of Differentiated Assistance varies**

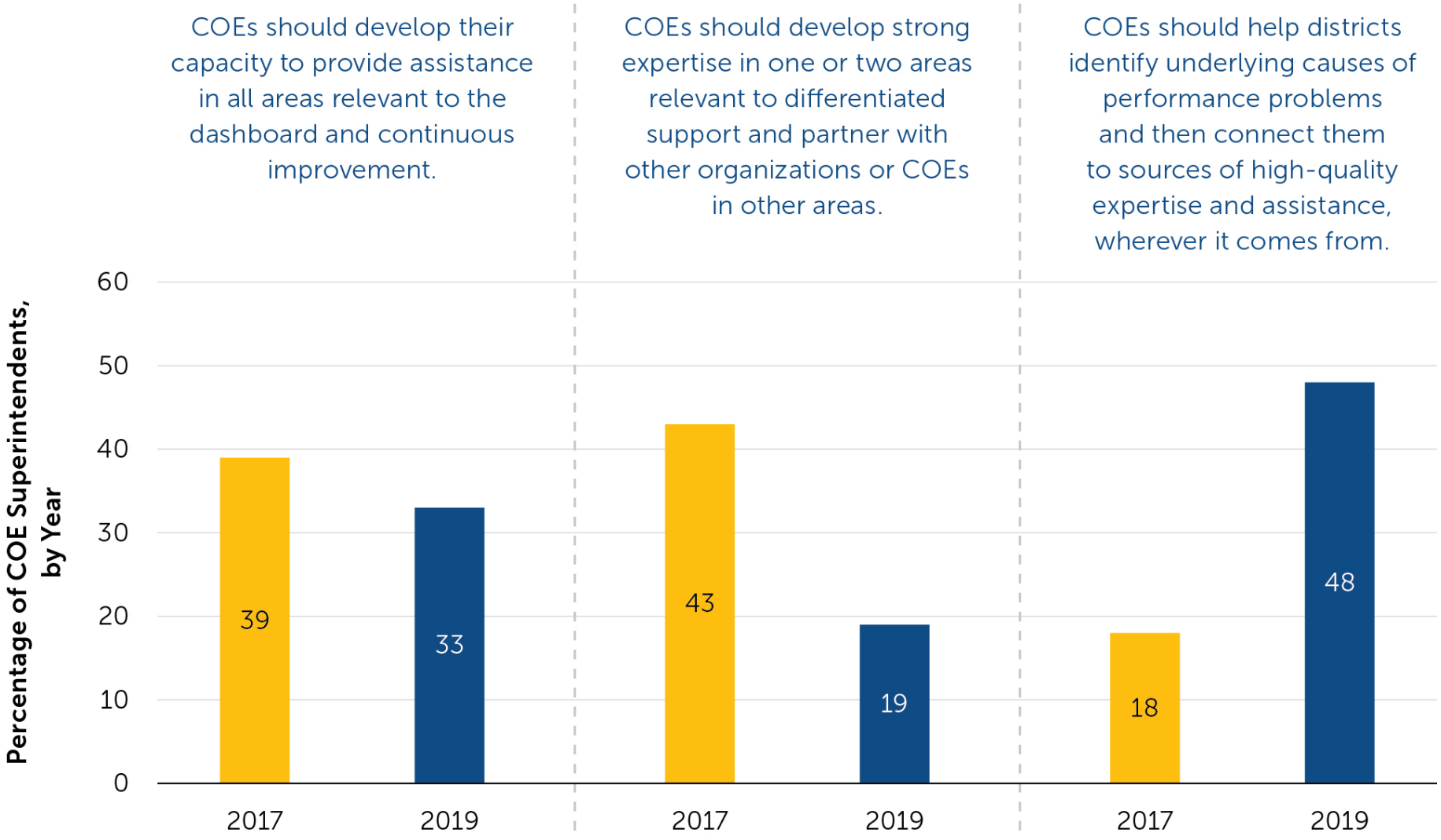
Three examples

- COE as one-stop shop for process and substantive support (COE A)
- COE as thought partner for continuous improvement process (COE B)
- COE as both provider and broker of services (COE C)

Conceptualizations influenced by:

- County Context
- COE capacity
- Leader beliefs

# Survey Results: COE Support for Brokering Role on the Rise

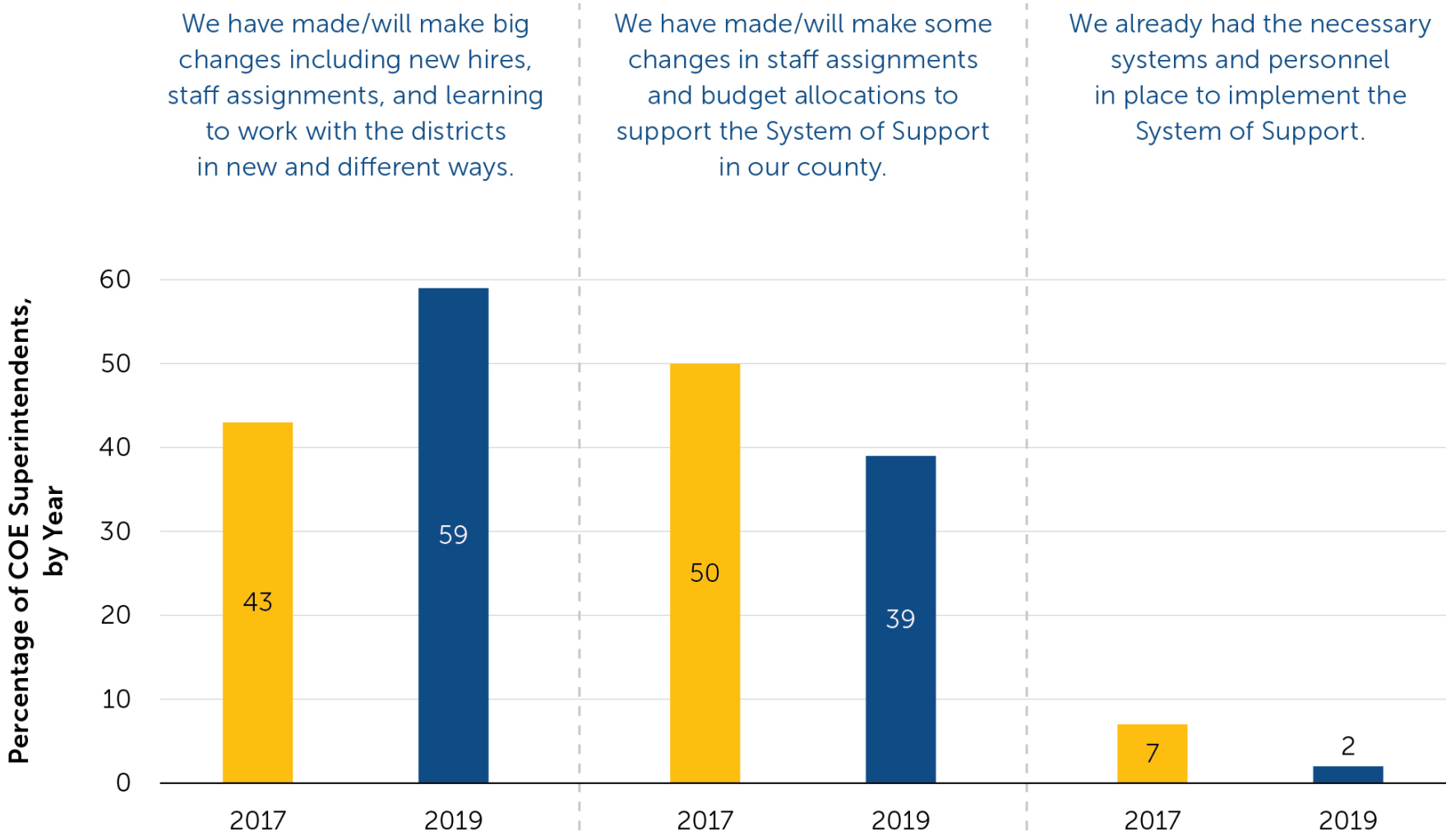


# 4. COE Capacity

**COE capacity to support districts remains a concern despite efforts to increase COE effectiveness**

- Steps to build internal COE capacity
    - Recruitment or reassignment of staff
    - PD for COE staff
    - Cross functional teams

# Survey Results: COE Changes to Implement New Support Role



# COE Capacity (self-assessments)

**Percentage of COEs rating their capacity at 7 or higher:**

- Root cause analysis: 80%
- Instructional alignment, chronic absenteeism and suspension, graduation rate, data systems: 57%-61%
- Evaluating efficacy of interventions (40%), building district structures to support school improvement (49%)

(2019 survey of COE superintendents)

# COE Capacity (District Perceptions)

**Districts' assessment of support usefulness was closely tied to their perceptions of COE capacity**

- Variation across counties
- Variation across districts *within* counties, depending on:
  - Level of district capacity
  - Prior district experience with continuous improvement processes

# 5. An Under-resourced System

**Both COEs and districts identify serious financial concerns**

- 77% of COE superintendents. report inadequate resources to support districts
- New allocations (Budget Act 2018) small relative to district needs
- Budgetary squeeze from pensions and other increased costs jeopardize support system

*"With the API, if you were in improvement, there was money. Here with the Dashboard, it is really about improvement and I am excited about that. The issue is there is no money."*

*(District Administrator)*

# The California School Dashboard and the System of Support

# The Dashboard's Strengths

- Multiple Indicators
- Subgroup Performance
- Improvement over API
- New format

*"For the first time in my career, finally the data feels like a true representation of our school."*

*(School Principal)*

# The Dashboard's Weaknesses

**Multiple priorities and volatility undermine the focus needed to sustain improvement.**

- Too many priorities for districts to address simultaneously
- Multiple areas with a single indicator oversimplifies problems and solutions
- Year-to-year changes in identified subgroups leads to "whack a mole"

# The Dashboard's Weaknesses

**Technical problems undermine validity and comprehensibility of measures to guide improvement.**

- Low Status Cut-Scores, Weak Measure of Growth
- Yellow Is Not Yellow

*"I'm fearful of the day when they adjust the cut points and what that's going to do to the system."*

*(District administrator)*

# The Dashboard's Weaknesses

**The state's definition of English Learners limits the Dashboard's ability to identify needs of current and long-term English Learners.**

*"So it looks like on average… that people are doing well. You miss the needs of kids who are long-term English Learners."*

*(District superintendent)*

# The Dashboard's Weaknesses

**The timing of the release of the Dashboard presents a key implementation problem.**

*"We get the data in December… probably letters go out in January, [we] do our data meetings in early February, but that really truncates the timetable for the three meetings, or four, or five depending on the district."*

*(COE administrator)*

# Not Yet A System

**System: A collection of organizations that share a common purpose, acts rationally and interdependently to achieve the purpose, and forms a coherent whole.**

*"When you look at this thing as a system, it felt like it came out in parts. …I have an LCAP and apparently now I have a Dashboard too…"*

*(COE administrator)*

# Not Yet A System

- CDE and CCEE roles are not clearly understood
- Dashboard release is out of sync with district planning and LCAP development
- Disjuncture in the sources of accountability (engagement missing from the system of support)
- Resources are modest
- The system of support does not utilize the full complement of expertise in the state

# Recommendations

- Incorporate the full complement of expertise in the state
- Provide year-round support for all districts
- Address Dashboard timing
- Build stakeholder and community engagement into the system
- Provide adequate resources

# Leadership for Continuous Improvement

## The Vision for County Offices of Education

Ed Manansala
Benjamin W. Cottingham

# CCSESA – PACE Collaboration

Phase 1 – Theory of Action

Phase 2 – Building Consensus Around COE Role and Responsibilities in the Statewide System of Support

Phase 3 – Guide Conversations About CCSESA Restructuring

# Phase 2 Data Collection

Conducted Interviews with COE Leaders and Staff and Continuous Improvement Professionals

Reviewed Mission and Vision Statements of 27 COEs

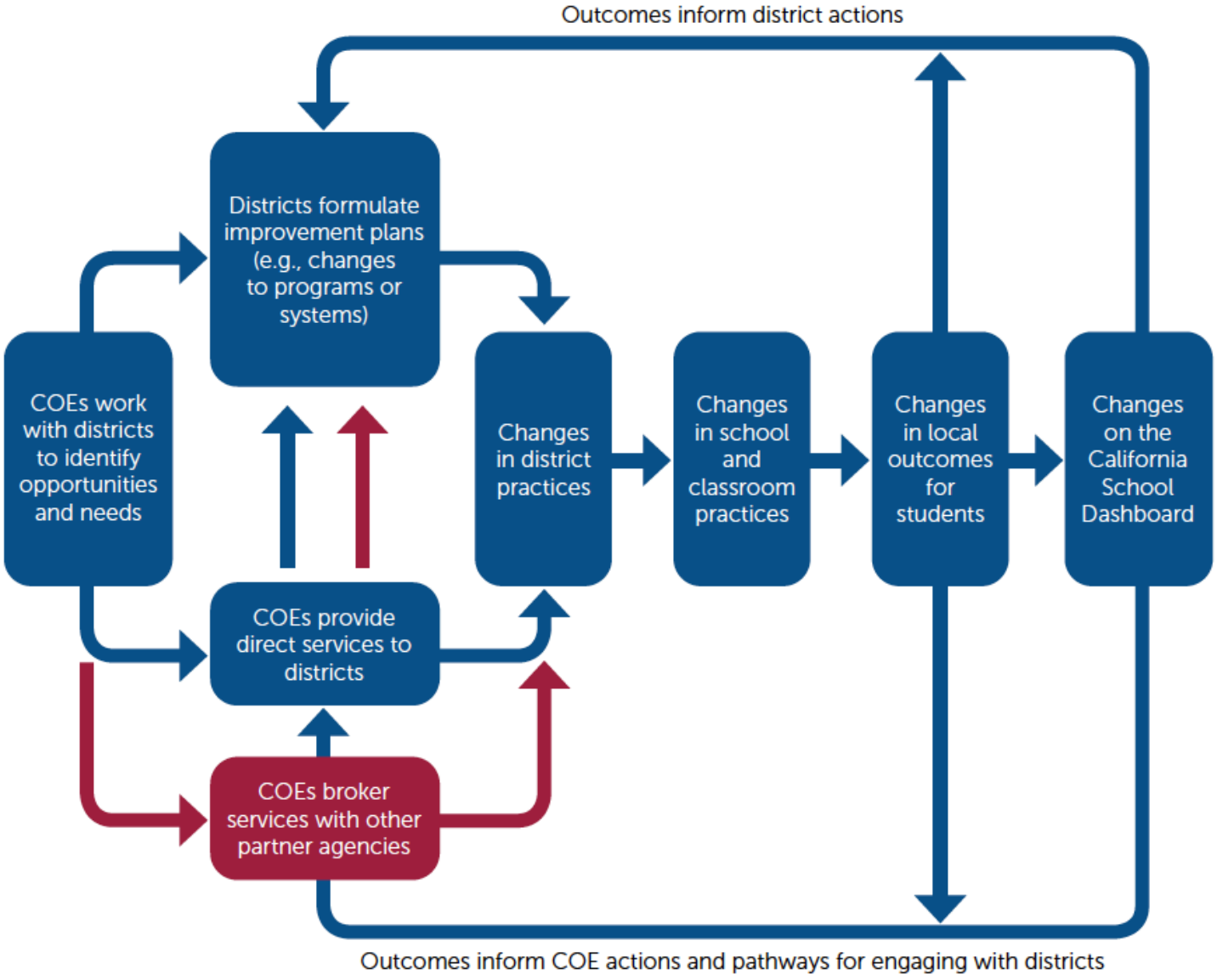
Facilitated Conversation with COE Superintendents at the June 25th CCSESA General Membership Meeting

# Leadership for Continuous Improvement: The Vision for County Offices of Education

To build consensus around the necessary shifts that county offices must make to fulfil their capacity-building responsibilities within the statewide system of support.

Shift 1: Every layer of the system must assume shared responsibility to improve student outcomes, requiring a mindset shift from the historical role of COEs.

*"The challenge in California is to change the culture of the [county office] organization so that it's focused on creating the conditions for everybody to learn across the system rather than being in a supervisory role… That requires a very different set of skills."*


Outcomes inform district actions
Districts formulate improvement plans (e.g., changes to programs or systems)
COEs work with districts to identify opportunities and needs
Changes in district practices
Changes in school and classroom practices
Changes in local outcomes for students
Changes on the California School Dashboard
COEs provide direct services to districts
COEs broker services with other partner agencies
Outcomes inform COE actions and pathways for engaging with districts

Shift 2: To support continuous improvement in districts, COEs must themselves experience and lead through continuous improvement and operate as improvement organizations.

- Development of a continuous improvement mindset.
- Learning together with districts.
- Operating COEs as improvement organizations.

Shift 3: To coordinate resources in service of districts, COEs must break down departmental silos and use data that provide reliable, timely feedback.

- Building coherence in service of districts.
- Using data for improvement

# Future Questions

How will COEs know if the investments and resources that they are providing to districts are impacting student outcomes?

What data systems track and provide the information that COEs need to make decisions around the support given to districts, or how could these be built?

How will California develop the necessary human capital to lead continuous improvement work at multiple levels in the Statewide System of Support?

Are there examples of COEs successfully leading continuous improvement in their own offices and in support of districts in California that can be learned from and shared with other COEs to guide their own improvement journeys?

# Panel Q&A

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