

Principals' Perceptions: Implementing The Local Control Funding Formula

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 **LCFFRC**

Local Control Funding Formula Research Collaborative

Executive Summary

In fall 2018, the Local Control Funding Formula Research Collaborative (LCFFRC) conducted surveys of stratified random samples of California superintendents and principals. Superintendent results were published in June 2018 in *Superintendents Speak: Implementing the Local Control Funding Formula*. This report, *Principals' Perceptions: Implementing the Local Control Funding Formula*, is the companion account of principal survey results. Highlights of this survey include:

- A strong majority of principals (86%) agree the LCFF is leading to greater alignment among school goals, strategies, and resource allocation decisions.
- A substantial majority of principals (72%) report the LCFF has increased their school budget flexibility.
- A strong majority of principals (82%) agree the LCFF has enabled their school to improve services for low-income students, English learners, and foster youth.
- Principals report their school has received guidance from their district on strategies to support student success, including ensuring students have access to fully credentialed teachers (82%), implementing state standards (75%), and improving school climate and safety (72%).
- A substantial majority of principals (77%) report they have received guidance from their district to support two of the three LCFF target groups—low-income students and English learners—but guidance on supporting foster youth has lagged.
- Three-quarters of principals (75%) agree the LCFF is leading to improvement in student academic outcomes at their school.

A review of the complete superintendent and principal survey results reveals remarkable consistency of views on the LCFF: support for the law's equity foundation, agreement that 1) fiscal flexibility is leading to greater alignment between resource allocation and local needs at the district and school levels, 2) parent and community engagement ensures district goals and strategies address local needs, 3) additional funds (supplemental and concentration grants) are enabling districts to provide expanded supports and services for LCFF target groups, and, 4) LCFF is leading to improved student academic outcomes.

These surveys were conducted prior to full implementation of the state's new accountability system and accompanying System of Support. How these new LCFF elements will impact views of the LCFF remains an open question, the answer to which may help to shape the future of the LCFF.

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Introduction

When the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) was enacted in 2013, it marked a watershed change in California’s system of school finance. The LCFF provides school districts with base funding for all students plus supplemental and concentration grants, based on a formula, for low-income students, English learners, and foster youth. The law eliminated most categorical programs, giving local school systems resource allocation authority and requiring Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) be developed with input from parents, community members, students, and educators. The policy’s aim is to bring about more equitable and coherent resource allocation decisions that will lead to improved and more equitable student outcomes.

This report marks the eighth in a series by the Local Control Funding Formula Research Collaborative (LCFFRC).¹ Previous reports have examined various aspects of implementation of the LCFF across four years.² This report, a companion to the June 27, 2018 *Superintendents Speak: Implementing the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)* which offered survey results from a statewide representative sample of California superintendents, presents results of an analogous survey of a sample of California principals. As such, it offers a window into principals’ views of and experiences with the law. Consistent with previous LCFF research, this survey report is designed to help policymakers and others better understand ways in which the LCFF is affecting goal setting, resource allocation, and governance in California’s K–12 education system.

This report is based on data from 267 school principals who responded to the survey, which was administered between September 20, 2017 and May 4, 2018. The survey sample included principals and assistant/associate principals who have served in their position at their school for at least two years or were in their first year and had served in their position at another school in the same district during the 2016–2017 school year. A total of 753 schools were selected for inclusion in the study using stratified random sampling. Schools were stratified by school grade level (elementary, middle/

¹ The LCFFRC is a group of senior researchers from various universities and organizations that came together four years ago to study implementation of the LCFF. Principal researchers are Julia Koppich (J. Koppich & Associates), Daniel Humphrey (Independent Consultant), Julie Marsh (University of Southern California), Jennifer O’Day (American Institutes for Research), Magaly Lavadenz (Loyola Marymount University), Laura Stokes (Inverness Research), and David Plank (Policy Analysis for California Education).

² *Toward a Grand Vision: Early Implementation of California’s Local Control Funding Formula (2015)*, *The Local Control Funding Formula: Staking Out the Ground for Early Learning (2015)*, *Foster Youth and Early Implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula: Not Yet Making the Grade (2015)*, *Two Years of California’s Local Control Funding Formula: Time to Reaffirm the Grand Vision (2016)*, *Paving the Way to Equity and Coherence? The Local Control Funding Formula in Year 3 (2017)*, *How Stakeholder Engagement Fuels Improvement Efforts in Three California School Districts (2018)*, *Superintendents Speak: Implementing the Local Control Funding Formula (2019)*.

junior high, high, and K–12), school district size (less than 2,000 students for small, 2,000–9,999 students for medium, and 10,000 or more students for large), and proportion of unduplicated high-need (low-income students, English learners, and foster youth) pupils (55% or less and more than 55%) in the district.

Responses were received from 267 of the 753 sampled principals, for a response rate of 35%. Results were weighted on grade level, district size and unduplicated pupil count to ensure results were representative of public schools in California. Even though the sample was weighted on only three variables, the weighting yielded a sample that is almost identical to the overall population in terms of region, school level, free and reduced-price lunch, English learner, migrant students, and foster youth.³ (See Table 1 in Appendix A for more detail.)

The report presents aggregate results along with a comparison of responses based on differences in the characteristics of principals' districts and schools: district enrollment size, district urbanicity (rural/town vs. urban/suburban), percentage of the school's population that is English learner (11% or more vs. less than 11%), and percentage of the school's population qualifying for free and reduced-price meals (above or below 51%).⁴ We used statistical tests to determine whether differences in reports between principals from different types of districts or schools were significant. Note that in all figures and tables, differences between responses of principals from different types of districts or schools with differing types of populations are marked by a * if statistically significant at the $p < 0.10$ level and ** if statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. In other words, the difference in response is large enough that we are confident (> 90% or > 95%) that the observed difference between these two groups reflects a difference in the underlying population.

In addition to providing survey results, where appropriate, the report refers to LCFFRC case studies. Between 2013 and 2017, the LCFFRC completed 30 case studies of districts around the state that were selected for their variation in location, size, student population, and other factors that render them collectively illustrative of the diversity of California districts and students. In the course of these case studies, LCFFRC researchers

³ Unduplicated students are low-income, English learners, and foster youth. They are counted only once for LCFF funding purposes even if they fit in more than one category. We stratified based on this variable because supplemental and concentration funds are allocated based on unduplicated counts and because LCFF spending rules differ for districts with more than 55% unduplicated students and as a result, could affect experiences implementing the policy.

⁴ Because the percentage of foster youth in most districts is small compared with the percentage of students in the two other high-need categories used to determine supplemental and concentration funding, examining variation in principals' responses based on school English learner and Free and Reduced-Price Meal (FRPM) percentages captures much of the variation based on unduplicated student percentages.

conducted more than 500 interviews with principals, district staff, school board members, union and association representatives, parents and community members, and county office of education officials, as well as reviews of more than 80 LCAPs and interviews with 36 COE superintendents and key staff. We draw on a small subset of principal interviews to illustrate some of the findings of this report.

For the superintendent's survey report *Superintendents Speak: Implementing the Local Control Funding Formula* and the complete data file for the principal survey, see links in Appendix B.

Consistency of Principal and Superintendent Survey Results

The LCFFRC principal and superintendent surveys included a number of identical questions about the LCFF's impact on districts. Responses to these questions make it possible to compare superintendents' and principals' views on several key LCFF dimensions including equity, resource flexibility and alignment, stakeholder engagement, support for target students, and academic outcomes. These results reveal a remarkable uniformity in the views of these two groups of educators. If anything, principals are even more enthusiastic than superintendents about the LCFF. Below is a selection of illustrative survey results on questions that were identical on both surveys.

Equity

One of the hallmarks of the LCFF is its focus on equity, the notion that the finance law should aim to level the playing field for all students, especially those who are historically underserved. An underlying premise of the law is that educating students with greater needs entails more resources, or put another way, achieving equity requires inequitable distribution of funds. This is a new proposition for California districts, schools and educators. Surveys sought to test the level of its acceptance.

Principals and superintendents were asked if they believe students with greater needs should receive more resources. Both groups answered strongly in the affirmative. Nearly all principals (97%) and a nearly equal percentage of superintendents (94%) agree or strongly agree with that statement. Yet about a third of both principals and superintendents (31% and 38%, respectively) say that the LCFF removes essential protections that categorical programs once provided for high-needs students.

Resource Flexibility and Alignment with Local Needs

One of the hoped-for outcomes of providing local districts with the authority to determine how to spend their dollars is to improve alignment between resource allocation

and local needs. A question on both the principal and superintendent surveys asked if the fiscal flexibility granted by the LCFF has enabled the district to spend in ways that match local needs. A significant majority of principals (89%) and nearly three-quarters of superintendents (74%) agree or strongly agree that it has. (In the section of this report on how principals view the LCFF's impact on their schools, we examine this issue in terms of school discretion, the analogue to district resource flexibility.)

Parent and Community Engagement

The LCFF requires that parents and community members (along with other education stakeholders) be engaged in the process of determining how district resources should be allocated. Principal and superintendent surveys queried the efficacy of this approach by asking specifically if "requiring parent and community involvement in the LCFF ensures district goals and strategies align with local needs." Here again, a strong majority of principals (86%) agree that it does. Slightly more than three-quarters of superintendents (76%) concur that parent and community engagement serves this intended purpose.

Supports

The LCFF is designed to provide additional funds to districts with concentrations of low-income students, English learners, and foster youth. These additional funds are meant to enable districts that receive them to increase the supports and services available to these often underserved populations of students. When principals and superintendents were asked if the LCFF has, indeed, "enabled the district to improve services for low-income students, English learners, and foster youth," 82 percent of principals agreed or strongly agreed that it has, as did 78 percent of superintendents.

Outcomes

The ultimate goal of the LCFF is to increase students' academic outcomes. Superintendents and principals were asked whether "the LCFF is leading to improved academic outcomes for all students in the district." Nearly three-quarters of principals (74%) agree or strongly agree that it is, as do 70 percent of superintendents.

In sum, the considerable parallelism of survey results strongly suggests that superintendents and principals are on the same page when it comes to bedrock principles on which the LCFF is based and the law's impact on their districts. We turn now to the results from the principal survey that focus specifically on principals' views of their experiences with the LCFF at their schools.

Principal Survey Results

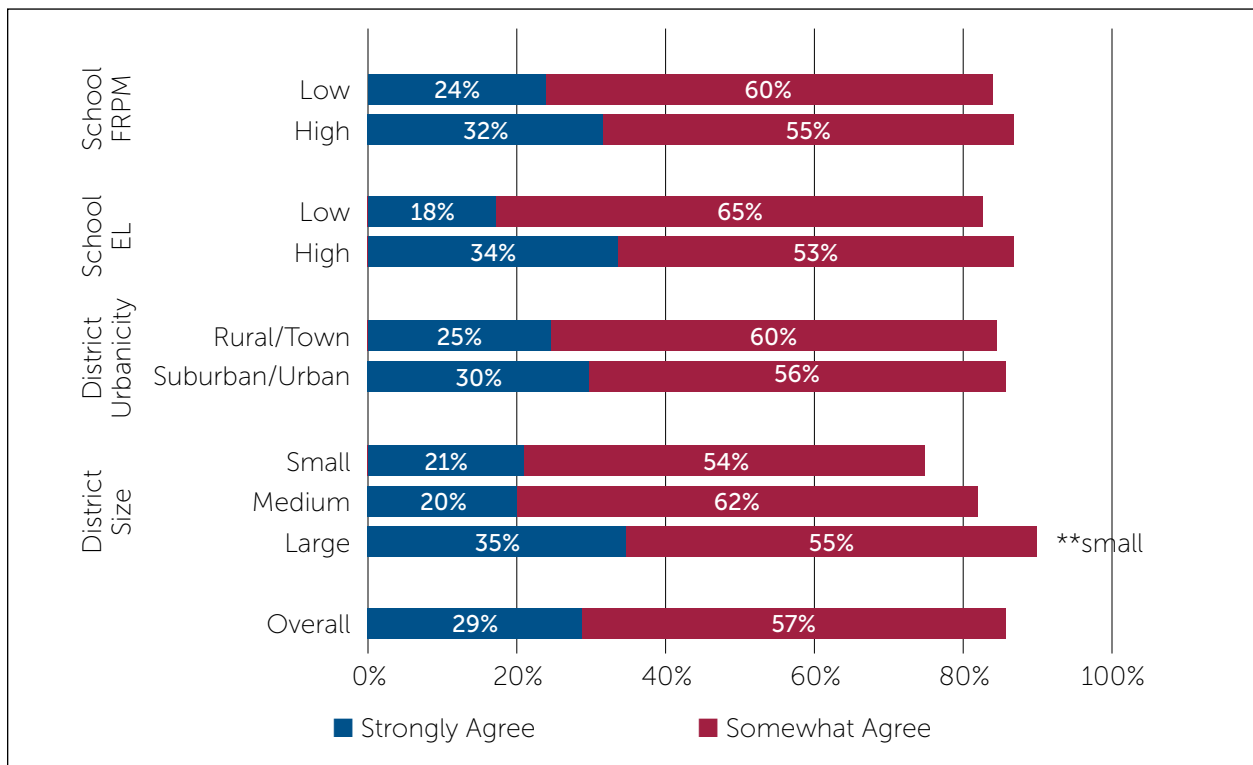
This section presents illustrative results from the principal survey. It is organized into 4 subsections: (1) Perceptions and Beliefs About the LCFF, (2) Fiscal Flexibility and Resource Allocation, (3) Stakeholder Engagement, and, (4) Student Supports and Outcomes.

Perceptions and Beliefs About The LCFF

A strong majority of principals agree that the LCFF is leading to greater alignment among school goals, strategies, and resource allocation decisions.

Most principals (86%) agree that the changes enabled by the LCFF are helping them better align school goals and strategies and the allocation of resources to meet these goals (Figure 1). However, just 29 percent of principals strongly agree with this statement; more than half (57%) only somewhat agree. Principals in large districts are more likely to agree that the LCFF is contributing to better alignment of their school goals, strategies, and resource allocation decisions than principals in small districts. (90% vs 75%).

Figure 1. Percentage of principals who agree that the LCFF is leading to greater alignment among school goals, strategies, and resource allocation decisions



Note: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the $p < 0.10$ level and ** at the $p < 0.05$ level. When comparing responses based on district size, we indicate with which comparison group significant differences exist.

Survey results are consistent with the comments of principals interviewed for LCFFRC case studies. Principals understandably link their school’s ability to align goals, resources, and strategies to their district’s Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), the state-developed tool that districts use to set goals, detail strategies to meet these goals, and determine resource allocation priorities. As one principal told LCFFRC researchers in explaining the LCFF’s impact on alignment efforts:

The good part is that the LCAP process ... forces us to articulate why we’re here at this school, and also to articulate how we’re going to reach that goal. It makes us go beyond the ... the obligatory “Things will be fine” kind of response, and really define what it is we’re doing and what strategy we are [using] to address this achievement gap.

Fiscal Flexibility and Resource Allocation

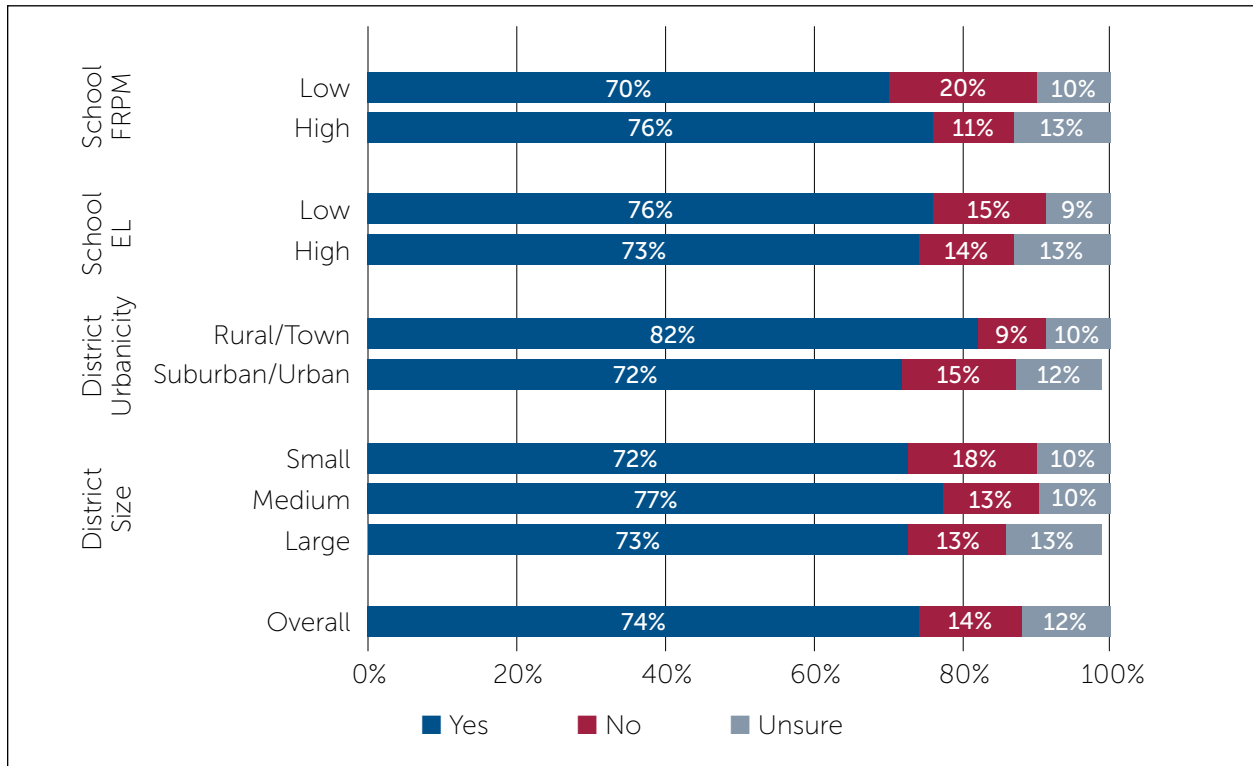
As described in the Introduction to this report, the LCFF provides a new way of allocating resources from the state to districts through base grants and supplemental and concentration grants targeted to low-income students, English learners, and foster youth. Districts have wide discretion to determine how to spend their funds and whether to centralize or decentralize resource allocation decisions.

Most principals say that they have received at least some discretionary supplemental and/or concentration grant funds to be used at the school level.

Nearly three-quarters of principals (74%) agree that they had at least some flexible supplementary and/or concentration grant funds to spend during the 2016–17 school year (Figure 2). This proportion was consistent across all types of schools and did not vary according to district demographics.

It should be noted, however, that LCFFRC case studies found that the majority of resource allocation decisions remain the province of school districts (not schools) and that where schools have discretionary resources, the amount of these resources typically is quite small.

Figure 2. Percentage of principals who say they had at least some flexible supplementary and concentrations dollars to spend at their school in 2016-17



A substantial majority of principals say that the LCFF has increased their school budget flexibility, though principals in large districts and schools that serve high numbers of English learners are more likely to agree with this assertion.

Nearly three-quarters of principals (72%) agree the LCFF has increased budget flexibility at their school (Figure 3). However, rates of agreement were higher for principals working in schools with high numbers of English learners than those in schools with low numbers of English learners (76% vs. 64%). Principals working in large districts also had higher rates of agreement, compared with those working in small districts (79% vs. 56%).

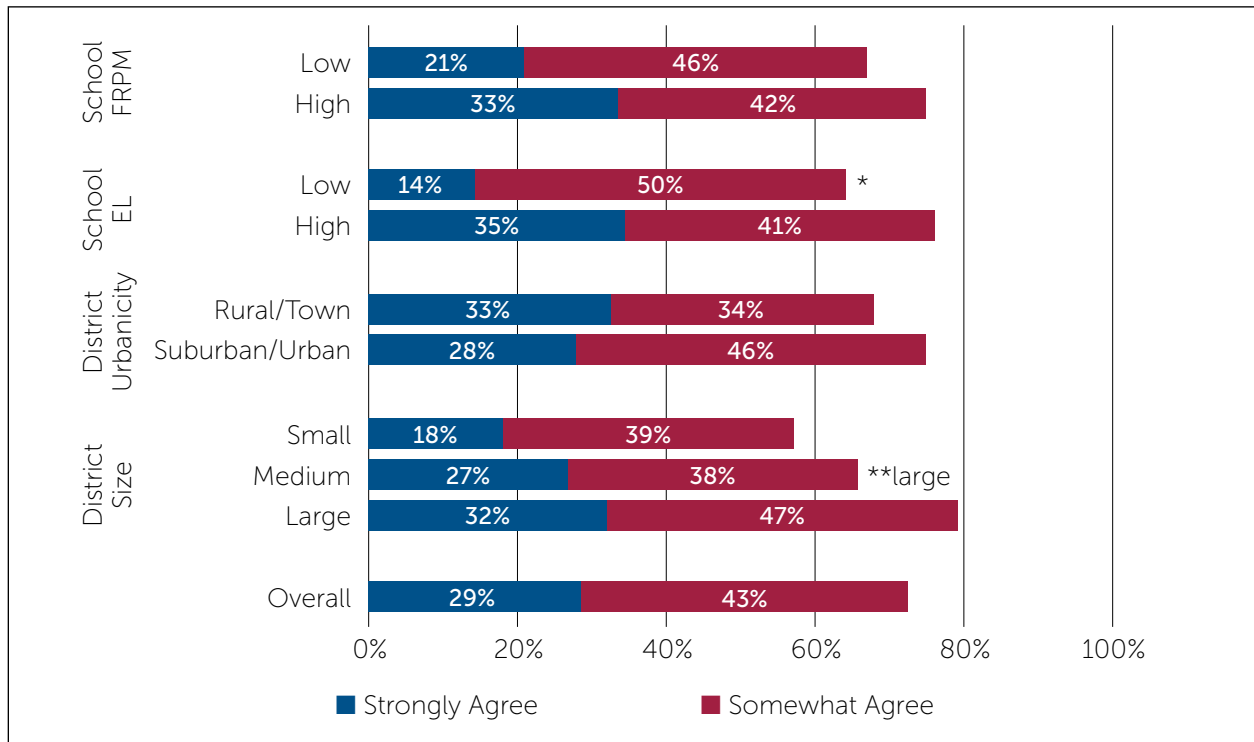
During LCFFRC case study interviews, a number of principals spoke about their school’s increased flexibility under the LCFF. As one middle school principal noted:

Prior to LCFF, [t]he expectation was that [categorical dollars] would go to support English learners. Now there seems to be a little bit more freedom to be able to use the funding in more than just the English language development area because of the unduplicated ... with the socioeconomically disadvantaged, and I have a high population on my campus... I’m able to spread the love a little bit more.

Similarly, a high school principal told LCFFRC researchers:

So prior to LCFF, I would have had... probably half that amount of [supplemental] money. It was then in two categorical accounts, one for low SES and one for English Language Learners. The restrictions were much more significant and it was very difficult to spend. Very frequently, I could not spend all of it.

Figure 3. Percentage of principals who agree that the LCFF has increased budget flexibility for their school



Note: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the $p < 0.10$ level and ** at the $p < 0.05$ level. When comparing responses based on district size, we indicate with which comparison group significant differences exist.

Principals report that the most commonly used strategy to support low-income students, English learners, or foster youth is professional development for teachers and staff focused on these students’ needs.

Nearly all principals (90%) indicate that their district or school provided professional development focused on the needs of target students (Figure 4). As one elementary school principal told LCFFRC researchers:

Having the LCFF [supplemental and concentration] dollars that we’ve had, we’ve been able to provide our teaching staff, to provide some to our

paraprofessionals as well, some very good professional development on the shifts of the Common Core and what does that look like in the classroom. And we've been able to do that every year since we received the LCFF dollars.

Although providing professional development was the most prevalent strategy cited by principals, there were some differences in how schools and districts focused their resources. For example, those principals working in schools with higher English learner populations tended to cite professional development as a strategy more than those serving smaller proportions of these target students (94% vs. 81%).

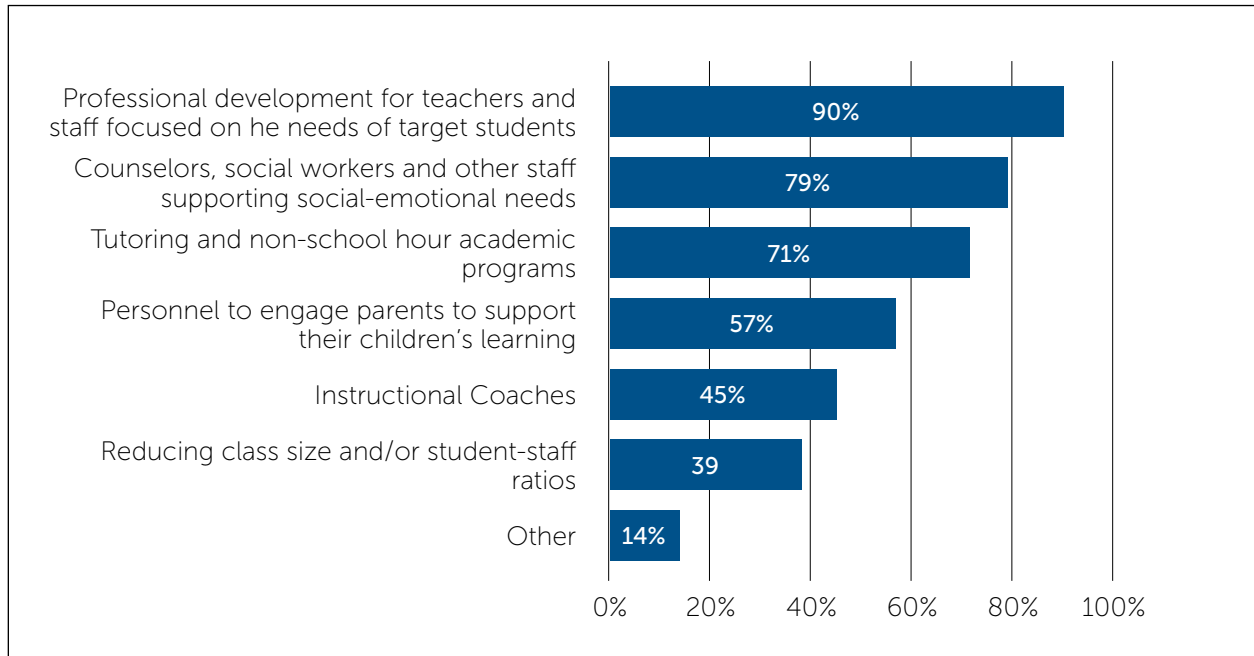
In addition to professional development, principals also indicated target students in their school benefited from counselors, social workers, and other staff supporting students' social-emotional needs (79%), as well as staff engaged in tutoring and other after school and non-school hour academic programs (71%).

More than half of all principals (57%) reported they employed additional personnel to engage parents in their children's learning. One middle school principal provided LCFFRC researchers with an example of the types of services provided by these additional personnel:

We have a home-school liaison that we pay for out of our LCFF [supplemental and concentration] funds. She's really, really excellent. She organizes weekly parent meetings on campus, but also performs a lot of these duties like she does home visits often. She's constantly in communication with parents around things like attendance, grades, that kind of stuff.

Some principals also reported using instructional coaches and reducing class sizes as strategies to support target students. Principals in mid-sized districts tended to employ instructional coaches more than those in small districts (54% vs. 34%). Principals working in rural districts were more likely than those in urban/suburban districts to indicate they reduced class sizes and/or student-staff ratios in order to support English learners, foster youth, and low-income students (55% vs. 35%).

Figure 4. Percentage of principals using various strategies to support low-income students, English learners, or foster youth in the 2016-17 school year

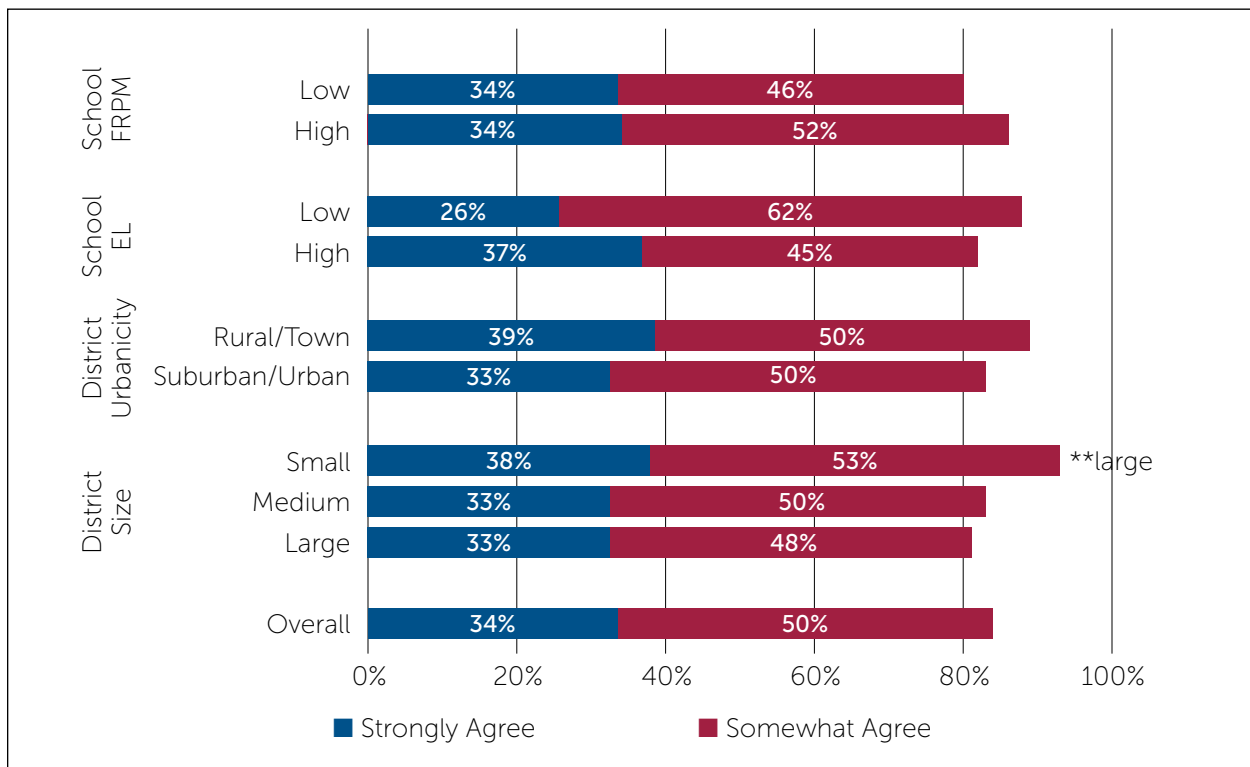


Stakeholder Engagement

A strong majority of principals agree their school community had input into developing the district's goals and priorities.

Most principals (84%) agree that their school and community participated in developing the district's goals and priorities (Figure 5), with consistently high agreement across principals in schools or districts with varying characteristics. Principals in small school districts are more likely than principals in large districts to report having this type of engagement (93% v. 82%).

Figure 5. Percentage of principals who say their school community had input in developing the district’s goals and priorities



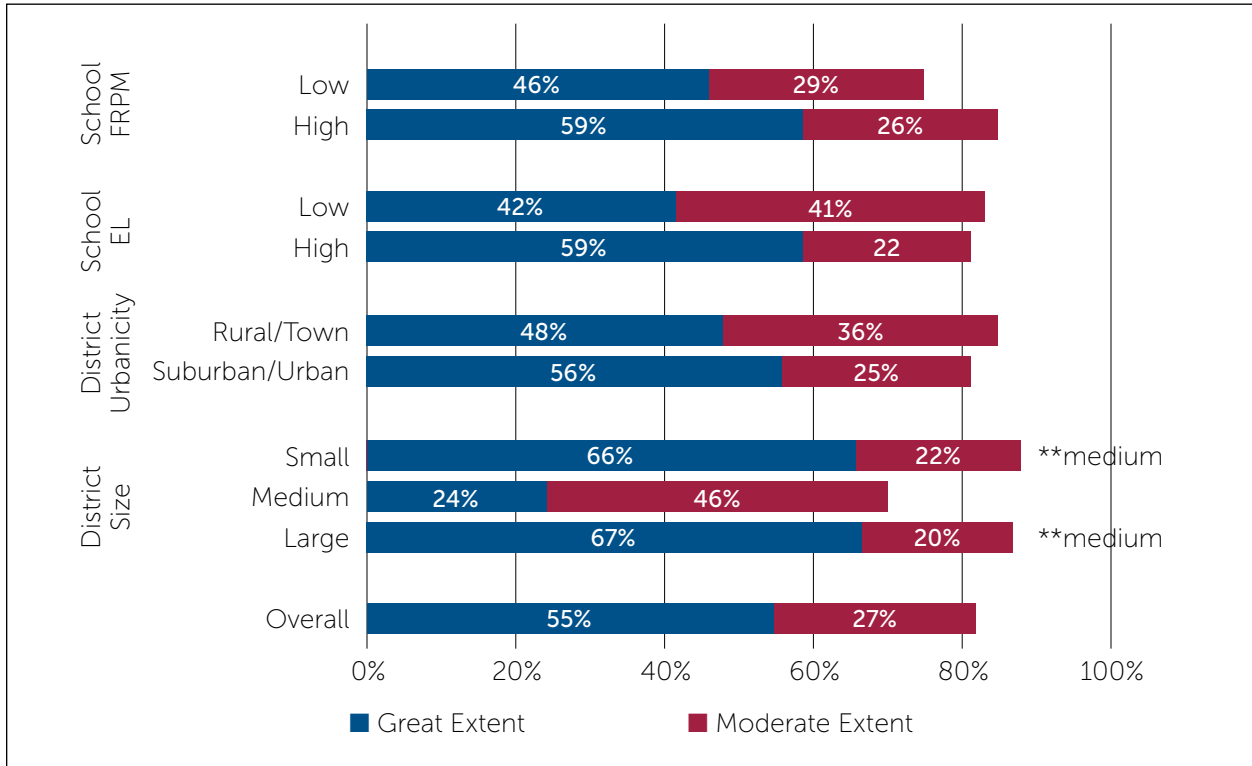
Note: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the $p < 0.10$ level and ** at the $p < 0.05$ level. When comparing responses based on district size, we indicate with which comparison group significant differences exist.

A significant majority of principals report participating in the development of LCFF goals and resource allocation priorities for their school, but the extent of principal participation varied across schools.

More than three-quarters of principals (82%) report they participated to either a great extent or a moderate extent in developing LCFF goals and allocation priorities for their school during the 2016–2017 school year (Figure 6). However, survey results show significant differences in the extent of principal participation, depending on district characteristics. Principals in large and small school districts are more likely to report participating to a moderate or great extent than those in medium-sized school districts (88% and 87% vs. 69%).⁵

⁵ Sum of numbers in graph may differ slightly from total due to rounding.

Figure 6. Percentage of principals participating in the development of LCFF goals and resource allocation priorities for their school to a great or moderate extent



Note: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the $p < 0.10$ level and ** at the $p < 0.05$ level. When comparing responses based on district size, we indicate with which comparison group significant differences exist.

A majority of principals report they shared the district’s 2016–17 Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) with school faculty and staff as well as with parents.

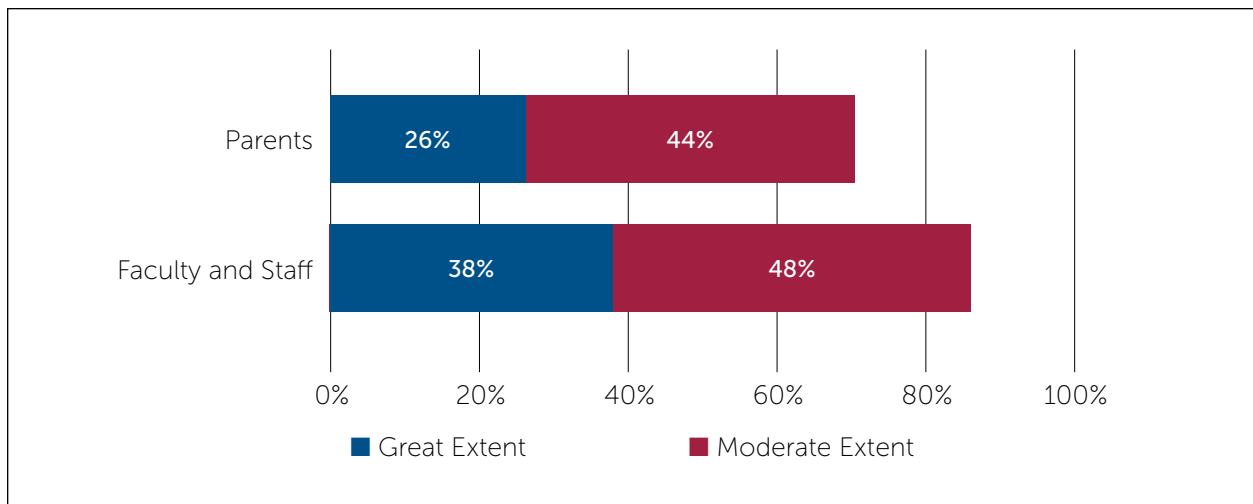
Most principals report they shared the district’s 2016–17 LCAP with school faculty and staff (86%) and with students’ parents (70%) either to a moderate or great extent (Figure 7). Principals employed a variety of strategies for sharing the district LCAP with parents. One principal who spoke with LCFFRC researchers described the school’s process this way:

We [were] presented with a draft [LCAP], and we were asked to bring it to our school site councils and ELAC [English Language Advisory Committee]. [The district] gave us a presentation that highlighted the main topics of the LCAP that was in parent-friendly language, not using all the educational acronyms and verbiage so that they could understand really how it does affect the school, and we showed the power point [presentation] which was narrated by [the LCAP Director] so that the message was very uniform and clear. And then there was a survey online where the parents gave input

regarding how do I want that to look at my site? How do I see that being implemented at my site?

LCFFRC case studies also revealed that some secondary principals shared the LCAP with students.

Figure 7. Percentage of principals who shared the district’s 2016-17 LCAP with school faculty and staff and parents

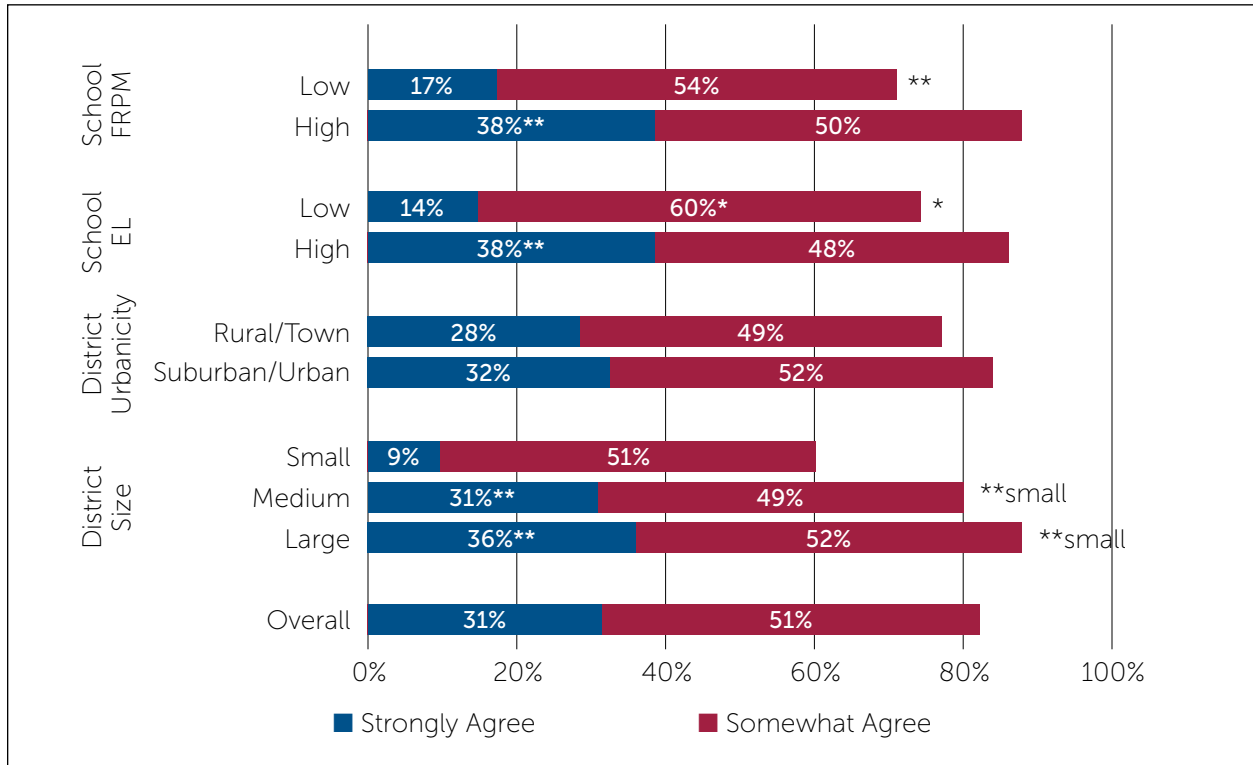


Student Supports and Outcomes

Most principals agree that the LCFF has enabled their school to improve services or programs for low-income students, English learners, and foster youth.

A strong majority of principals (82%) either agree or strongly agree that the LCFF has enabled their school to improve programs and services for low-income students, English learners, and foster youth (Figure 8). The likelihood of agreement, however, varies by district and school characteristics. Principals in medium or large districts are more likely to agree compared with those in smaller school districts (80% and 88% vs. 60%, respectively). At the school level, principals of schools with a greater proportion of students receiving free and reduced-priced meals are also more likely to agree compared to principals of schools with lower proportions of these students (88% vs. 71%).

Figure 8. Percentage of principals who agree that the LCFF has enabled their school to improve services/programs for low-income students, English learners, and foster youth in their school



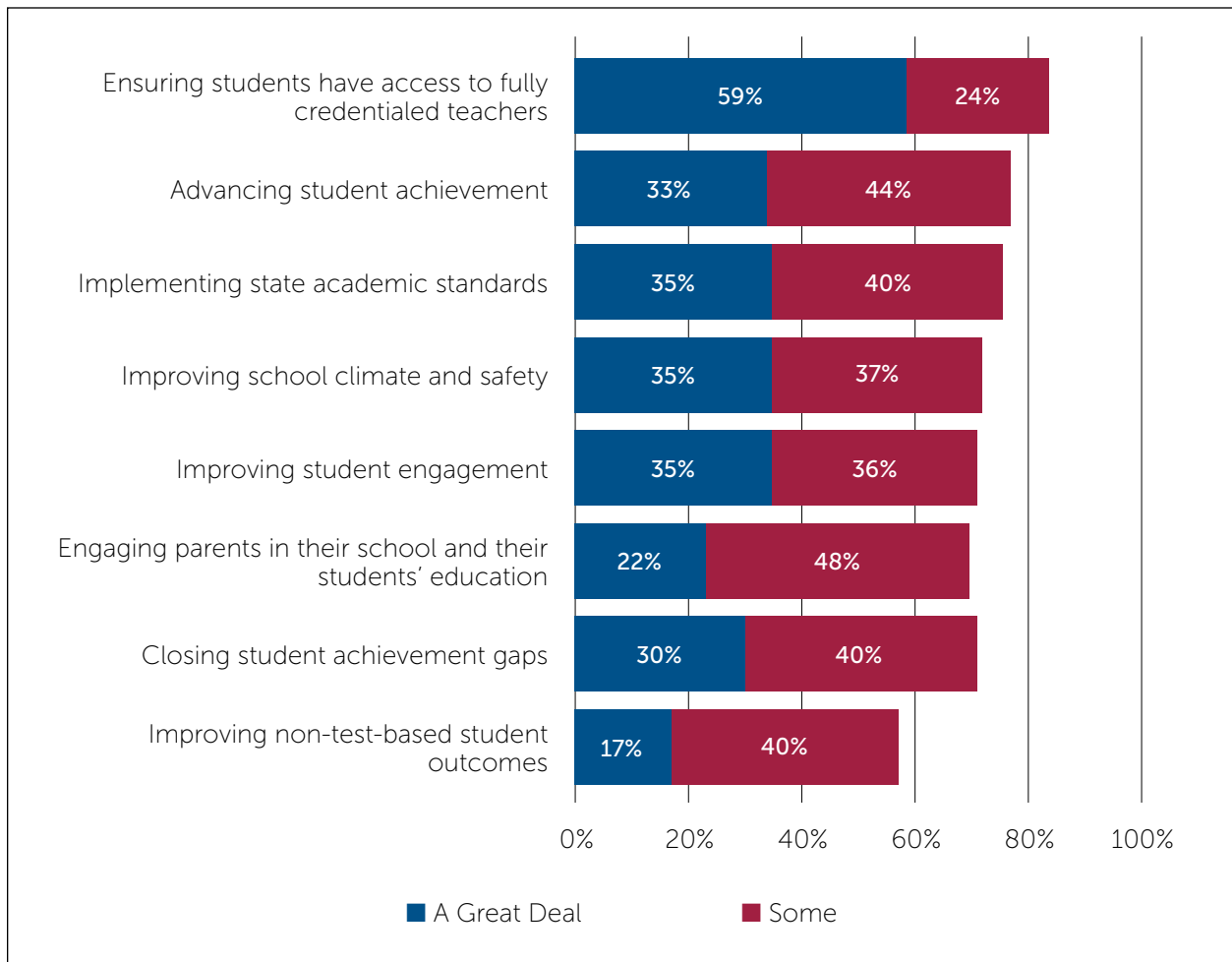
Note: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the $p < 0.10$ level and ** at the $p < 0.05$ level. When comparing responses based on district size, we indicate with which comparison group significant differences exist.

Most principals report their school has received guidance and support from their district on a variety of strategies to support student success.

Principals say that their district has provided guidance and support to them and their school to further student success. They most often report they have received some or a great deal of support to ensure students have access to fully credentialed teachers (82%). About three-quarters of principals report receiving support and guidance around advancing student achievement (77%), implementing state academic standards (75%), improving school climate and safety (72%), and improving student engagement (72%). Guidance related to improving non-test-based student outcomes is less frequently reported, but still a common area of support and guidance (58%)⁶ (Figure 9).

⁶ Sum of numbers in graph may differ slightly from total due to rounding.

Figure 9. Percentage of principals who report their school has received support or guidance from their district on each of the following:



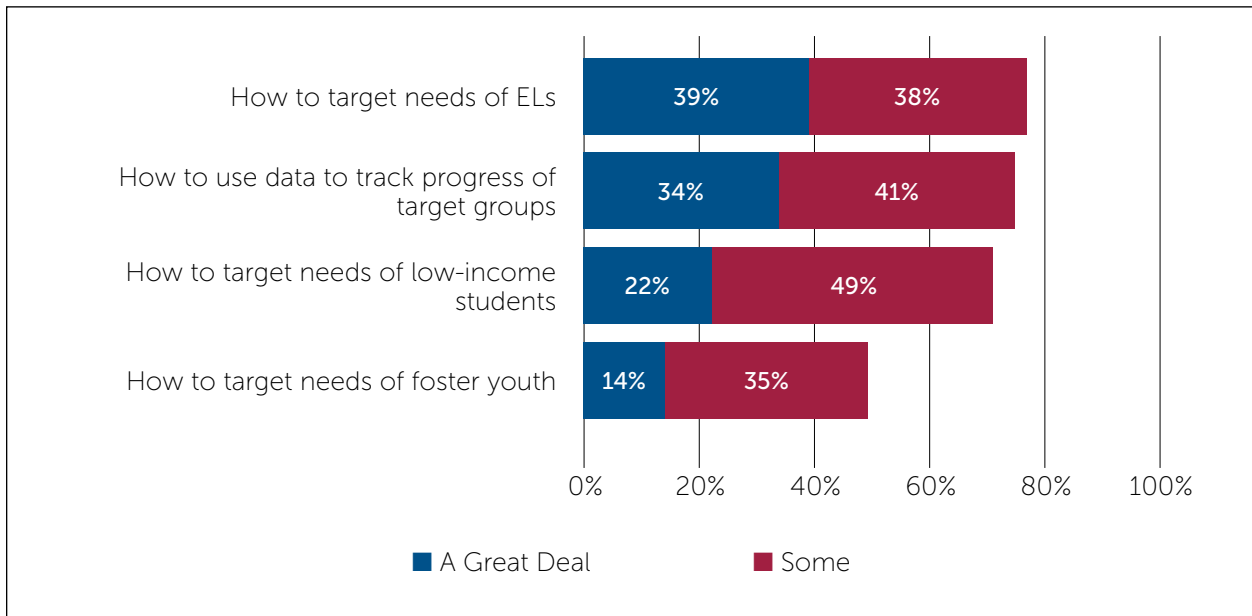
Although not included in Figure 10, it is interesting to note that compared with suburban and urban school principals, principals of rural schools are significantly more likely to report that they have received support and guidance from their district to ensure students have access to fully credentialed teachers (91% vs 81%), to close the student achievement gap (82% vs. 66%), and to improve non-test-based student outcomes (70% vs. 55%).

A substantial majority of principals have received guidance from their district to assist two of the three LCFF target groups—low-income students and English learners. Guidance for supporting the third group, foster youth, principals say, has lagged.

Roughly three-quarters of principals report receiving either some or a great deal of guidance from their district to help them target the needs of English learners (77%),

use data to track the progress of target groups (75%) and target the needs of low-income students (71%). However, just under half of principals (49%) report receiving guidance from their district on how to target the needs of foster youth (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Percentage of principals who report their school has received support and guidance from their district on each of the following:



Compared with principals in suburban and urban districts, principals of rural district schools are more likely to report receiving guidance about how to target the needs of low-income students (83% vs. 68%). A higher percentage of principals in rural schools compared with those in urban or suburban districts also reported receiving district guidance about how to target the needs of foster youth (67% vs. 44%).

Regardless of support and guidance received previously, more than half of principals say they would like additional assistance around supporting the LCFF target student groups.

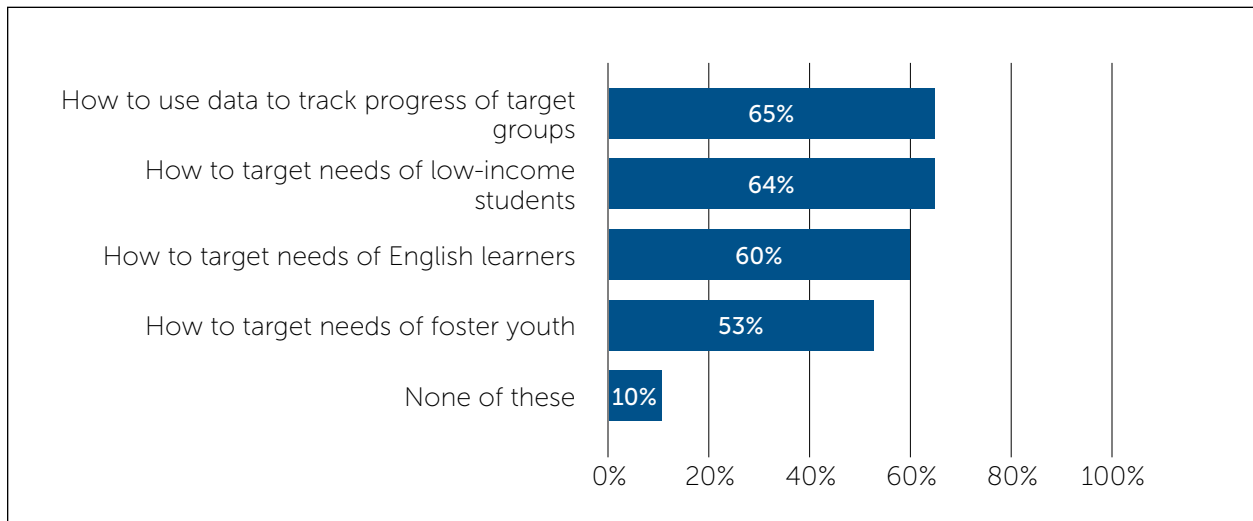
The majority of principals report that they would like more support in the areas of using data to track progress of student groups and targeting the needs of low-income students, English learners, and foster youth (Figure 11).

Principals in urban and suburban districts are more likely than their rural counterparts to report that they would like more district support and guidance related to targeting the needs of low-income students. Further, principals in medium and large districts are more likely than their small district counterparts to say they would like future supports around targeting needs of foster youth (53% and 59% of large and medium district principals, respectively, as compared to only 30% of small district principals).

During the LCFFRC case studies, several principals told researchers they had little experience tending to the needs of foster youth prior to the LCFF. As one principal noted:

Foster children, that was a curve ball from my 30 years in education. I said “Okay. They’re important.” There’s nothing wrong with that, but you’re asking me now to focus on this.

Figure 11. Percentage of principals who report they would like to receive support and guidance in the future from their district in these areas



A majority of principals agree that the LCFF is leading to improvements in student academic outcomes at their school.

Three quarters of principals (75%) agree that the LCFF is leading to improved academic outcomes at their school (Figure 12). The majority of principals (at least 60%) agree regardless of their school or district characteristics.

Principals in larger school districts nevertheless are more likely to agree that the LCFF is leading to improved student outcomes than principals in small and medium size school districts (81% vs. 60% and 69%, respectively).⁷ This finding may be at least partly attributable to large districts generally receiving more funds than smaller districts. At the school level, principals of schools with a higher proportion of English learners are more likely to agree that the LCFF is leading to improved student outcomes compared with those at schools with a lower proportion of English learners (79% vs. 65%). In addition,

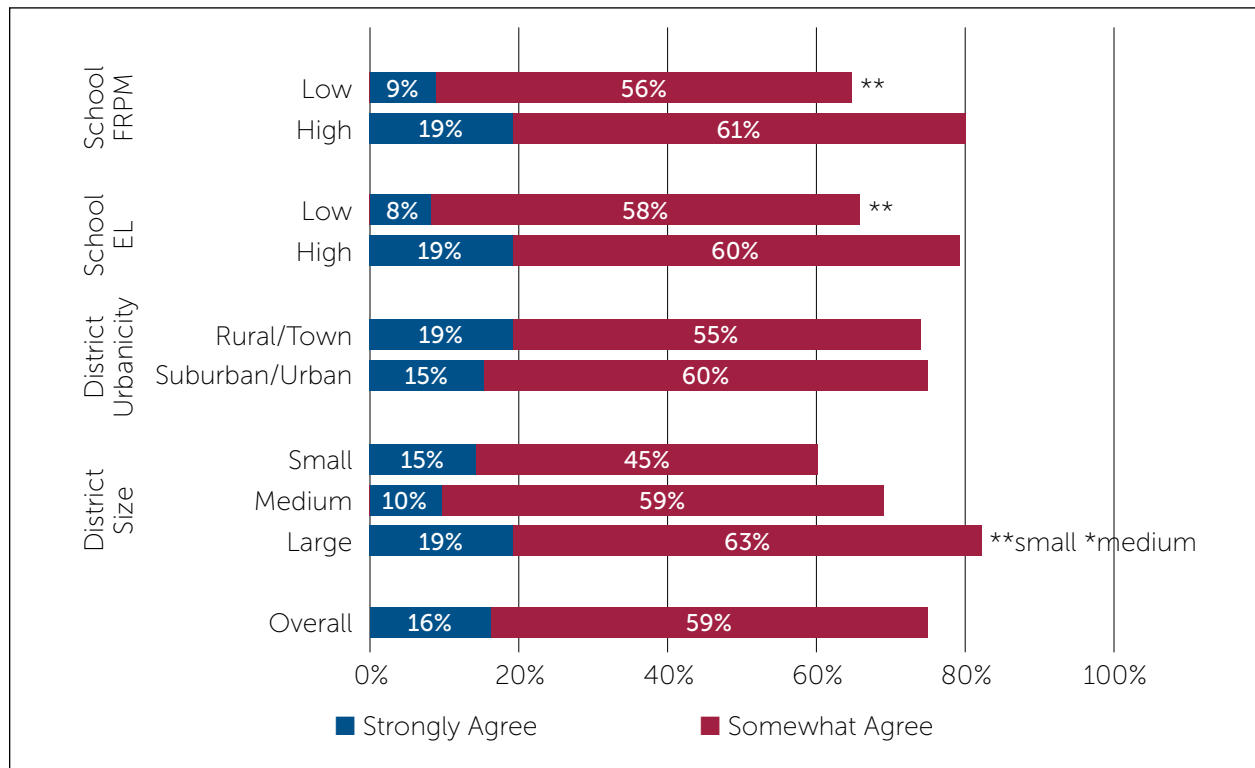
⁷ Sum of numbers in graph may differ slightly from total due to rounding.

principals of schools with a higher proportion of students receiving free and reduced-priced meals are more likely to agree compared to principals of schools with a lower proportion of these students (80% vs. 66%). Again, higher levels of funding at schools with higher proportions of English learners and students receiving free and reduced-price meals may partly explain this finding.

One principal emphasized improvement in an interview with LCFFRC researchers:

If you just look at our data, things have improved. Everything from suspensions and attendance and our survey data, our academic measures ... where we rank within our district, this school has improved, which is hopeful.

Figure 12. Percentage of principals who agree that LCFF is leading to improvements in student academic outcomes in their school



Note: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the $p < 0.10$ level and ** at the $p < 0.05$ level. When comparing responses based on district size, we indicate with which comparison group significant differences exist.

Conclusion

Survey responses display a remarkable symmetry between principals' and superintendents' views on fundamental aspects of the LCFF: achieving equity, fiscal flexibility's impact on greater alignment between resource allocation and local needs, the centrality of parent and community engagement, LCFF funding increasing supports and services for the target student populations—low-income students, English learners, and foster youth—and the law's contribution to improving student academic outcomes.

Moreover, similar to the superintendent survey results, results of the principal survey reveal that context matters. Principals of schools in small and rural districts report less alignment between district goals and strategies and resource allocation decisions, less school budget flexibility, and less agreement that the LCFF is bringing about improved services for low-income students, English learners, and foster youth than do their counterparts in larger districts.

Perhaps most importantly, the principal and superintendent surveys were conducted at a particular juncture in LCFF implementation. Survey results reflect the views ascendant at that time. California is now firmly in the law's next phase of implementation. Under the state's new accountability system, districts are charged with addressing the needs and performance of significant numbers of subgroups of students (e.g., special education students, homeless students) on a wide variety of measures. The accompanying statewide System of Support, still in its early stages of implementation, is meant to provide differentiated assistance to districts based on identified local needs. Ever more districts continue to find their way onto the need-for-support list.

How will implementation of the accountability system and System of Support impact superintendents' and principals' views of the LCFF? Will accountability and support help districts and schools refine their improvement strategies within the context of local control? Or might these new systems prompt a reappraisal of what California means by local control? Answers to these and other emerging questions likely will shape the future of the LCFF.

Appendix A

Methods

Overview. The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) Survey of Principals was conducted online and by telephone by Fluent Research on behalf of the LCFF Research Collaborative between September 20, 2017 – May 4, 2018 among 267 qualified principals in public school districts in California. Qualified respondents included principals and assistant/associate principals who have served in their position at their school at least two years or were in their first year and had served in their position in another school in the same district during the 2016–2017 school year. Results were weighted on grade level, district size and unduplicated pupil count (proportion of high-needs students) to ensure results were representative of public schools in California.

Interviewing procedures. Interviews were conducted between September 20, 2017 – May 4, 2018 and interviews averaged 15 minutes in length when completed online and 26 minutes when completed by phone. Several measures were taken to achieve a high response rate for the survey, including employing a multi-mode interviewing approach (online and telephone), an extended field period, multiple contacts (by email, postal mail and phone), controls on sample management, and offering participants a summary of the survey results and a \$25 Amazon gift card.⁸ Attempts were made to contact participants who had not yet completed the survey at least 10 times by email and 10 times by phone.

Sample selection and weighting of results. The sampling frame was built using the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) UPC Source File for grades K–12 for the 2015–2016 school year, the most recent file available when the study was being planned. (File “cupc15-16.xls”, downloaded from <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filescupc.asp>.)

Districts in the sample included elementary, high and unified public school districts (per LEA classification). Districts classified as the following were excluded from the sample: County Boards of Education (CBE), County District Office, Juvenile Court, Home and Hospital, and all-charter school districts. This yielded a total population of 944 districts.

Schools were selected for inclusion in the study using stratified random sampling. Schools were stratified by school grade level (4 categories), school district size (3 categories), and proportion of unduplicated pupils (2 categories). The stratification plan

⁸ The \$25 Amazon gift card incentive was implemented during survey fielding.

defined 2015–2016 district size by the following three levels: small districts (less than 2,000 students), medium districts (2,000 – 9,999 students), and large districts (10,000 or more students). The two levels for proportion of unduplicated pupils in 2015–2016 were defined as follows: low proportion of unduplicated pupils (55% or less), and high proportion of unduplicated pupils (more than 55%). The four grade level categories were elementary, middle/junior high, high, and K–12.

Schools were divided into 19 strata for sampling. Because of the small number of K–12 schools, all K–12 schools were included in one sampling stratum. The other strata were defined in a 3 x 3 x 2 design by crossing grade levels (3 categories) with district size (3 categories) and unduplicated pupil count (2 categories), yielding another 18 sampling strata. All qualified public school districts in California were divided into our six sampling strata, and principals were then randomly sampled from each stratum. At least 25 surveys were sent to each stratum, purposely oversampling schools in the smallest strata.

Final results were weighted by stratum (grade level, district size and unduplicated pupil count) to bring these variables into alignment with their actual proportions in the population. Table 1 provides a comparison of the demographic profile of the weighted and unweighted total sample. Even though the sample was weighted on only three variables (grade level, district enrollment and unduplicated pupil count), the weighting yielded a sample that is almost identical to the overall population in terms of region, grade level, reduced price/free meals, English learner, homeless students, foster students, and migrant students.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Weighted and Unweighted Sample

	Population (N = 8572)	Unweighted Survey Respondents (N = 267)	Weighted Survey Respondents (N = 267)
Grade Level			
Elementary	63%	41%	64%
Middle/Junior High	14%	34%	14%
High	21%	23%	20%
K–12	2%	2%	2%
District Enrollment			
Small (< 2,000 students)	12%	25%	12%
Medium (2,000 to 9,999)	28%	31%	28%
Large (10,000 or more)	60%	44%	60%

	Population (N = 8572)	Unweighted Survey Respondents (N = 267)	Weighted Survey Respondents (N = 267)
Unduplicated Pupil Count (Proportion of Total Enrollment)			
55% or fewer	33%	40%	33%
56% or more	67%	60%	67%
Region			
Los Angeles	21%	16%	20%
Los Angeles Area	21%	19%	22%
Bay Area	17%	20%	17%
San Diego	8%	7%	9%
Sacramento/North	13%	18%	14%
Central Valley	19%	20%	18%
District Type			
Elementary School District	25%	27%	20%
Unified School District	70%	65%	73%
HighSchool/K-12 District	5%	8%	7%
Free and Reduced-Fee Meal			
51% or more	65%	59%	64%
Under 51%	35%	41%	36%
English Language Learners			
11% or more	69%	60%	72%
Under 11%	31%	40%	28%
Foster Children			
1% or more	26%	23%	26%
Less than 1%	74%	77%	74%
Homeless			
1% or more	52%	47%	46%
Less than 1%	48%	53%	54%
Migrants			
1% or more	19%	21%	21%
Less than 1%	81%	79%	79%
Setting			
Rural	8%	12%	7%
Town	9%	19%	12%
Suburb	41%	36%	38%
Urban	42%	33%	43%

Sample disposition and completion rate. The final sample disposition for this survey is shown in Table 2. Attempts were made to contact a total of 847 principals. Of these, 52 principals could not be contacted (their emails bounced back) and 42 principals did not meet our screening criteria because either: the survey respondent did not have a role in making decisions about the implementation of LCFF in their district, or they were in their first year and were not familiar with the implementation of LCFF policy in their current school district during the 2016–2017 school year. Of the remaining 753 principals who could be contacted, 267 completed surveys, for a response rate of 35%. The margin of error for proportions in the sample as a whole is +/- 7.5%.⁹

Table 2. Final Sample Disposition for Principals

	Count	Percentage of Attempted Contacts (N = 847)	Percentage of Eligible Participants (N = 753)
Number of Principals Attempted to Contact	847		
Participants	267	32%	35%
Eligible Non-Participants (Subtotal)	486	57%	65%
No Questionnaire Returned	454	53%	60%
Refused Interview (during phone interview)	32	4%	4%
Ineligible or No Longer In Position (Subtotal)	94	11%	--
Email Not Deliverable (bounced back)	52	6%	--
Did Not Meet Eligibility Criteria	42	5%	--

Responders vs. non-responders. Table 3 provides a comparison of principals who completed the survey (responders) to potentially eligible principals who received the survey but did not complete it (non-responders). Schools of responding and non-responding principals were very similar (no significant differences) in unduplicated pupil count, region, district type, and the proportion of students who got free or reduced fee meals, were English language learners, were foster children, were homeless, or were migrants. However, responding and non-responding schools differed in grade level and district enrollment. Responding schools included relatively more middle/junior high schools and fewer high schools, and relatively more schools from medium-sized districts and fewer from large districts. This did not impact our results, because our survey results are weighted by grade level and district enrollment to reflect the total population of schools.

⁹ The margin of error for proportions was calculated using a formula that accounts for clustered sampling. <https://cals.arizona.edu/classes/rnr321/Ch4.pdf>

Table 3. Demographic Profile of Responders and Non-Responders (Unweighted Data)

	Population (N = 8572)	Unweighted Survey Respondents (N = 267)	Non- Responders (N = 485)	Chi Square	df	p
Grade Level				10.58	3	.02
Elementary	63%	41%	39%			
Middle/Junior High	14%	34%	26%			
High	21%	23%	32%			
K-12	2%	2%	4%			
District Enrollment				27.45	2	.001
Small (< 2,000 students)	12%	25%	26%			
Medium (2,000 to 9,999)	28%	31%	47%			
Large (10,000 or more)	60%	44%	26%			
Unduplicated Pupil Count (Proportion of Total Enrollment)				0.07	1	0.80
55% or fewer	33%	40%	41%			
56% or more	67%	60%	59%			
Region				2.93	5	0.71
Los Angeles	21%	16%	17%			
Los Angeles Area	21%	19%	18%			
Bay Area	17%	20%	17%			
San Diego	8%	7%	6%			
Sacramento/North	13%	18%	18%			
Central Valley	19%	20%	24%			
District Type				1.67	2	0.43
Elementary School District	25%	27%	24%			
Unified School District	70%	65%	65%			
HighSchool/K-12 District	5%	8%	11%			
Free and Reduced-Fee Meal				0.00	1	0.95
51% or more	65%	59%	59%			
Under 51%	35%	41%	41%			
English Language Learners				3.32	1	0.07
11% or more	69%	60%	53%			
Under 11%	31%	40%	47%			
Foster Children				0.61	1	0.44
1% or more	26%	23%	20%			
Less than 1%	74%	77%	80%			
Homeless				0.00	1	1.00
1% or more	52%	47%	47%			
Less than 1%	48%	53%	53%			
Migrants				0.21	1	0.65
1% or more	19%	21%	20%			
Less than 1%	81%	79%	80%			

Appendix B

Superintendent's survey report, *Superintendents Speak: Implementing the Local Control Funding Formula*, can be found at <http://www.edpolicyinca.org/publications/superintendents-speak>.

The complete data file for the principal survey featured in this report can be found at <http://www.edpolicyinca.org/publications/principals-speak>.

Researcher Biography

Julia E. Koppich is a member of the core research team studying implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula, the LCFF Research Collaborative, and President of J. Koppich & Associates, a San Francisco-based education-consulting firm. She has served as a policy consultant for numerous state and federal organizations, including the U.S. Department of Education, National Center on Performance Incentives, Education Commission of the States, National Governors' Association, and National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Dr. Koppich has been a principal on studies of urban school change, teacher peer review, and the impact of federal policy on states and local school districts. Her areas of expertise include public sector labor relations and new forms of teacher evaluation and compensation.

About

The Local Control Funding Formula Research Collaborative (LCFFRC) brings together a diverse set of policy experts who, since 2014, have been documenting implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), California's pathbreaking finance and governance system. Operating under the auspices of Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), principal LCFFRC researchers are Julia Koppich (J. Koppich & Associates), Daniel Humphrey (Independent Consultant), Julie Marsh (University of Southern California), Jennifer O'Day (American Institutes of Research), Magaly Lavadenz (Loyola Marymount), and Laura Stokes (Inverness Research).

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