California School Dashboard
A Gauge for Change

Access, equity, and local control. These values set the tone and the direction of California's bold and innovative education law, the Local Control Funding Formula. Among other things, this law called for the creation of an accountability tool that supports these values. The result is the California School Dashboard.

Easy to access, transparent, and Web-based, the Dashboard provides information "on multiple measures that impact student performance . . . a more complete picture of what contributes to a positive educational experience for students."[1] These measures show overall school performance and also provide detailed information about various student subgroups—students who have disabilities, who are English language learners, and who live in poverty or in foster care, as well as many ethnic groups. Additional measures report on the quality of the schools themselves.

The indicators reflect the state's priorities for education[2] and are part of an ongoing effort to align and strengthen accountability for all schools and all groups of students. The new Statewide System of Support will work from the information in the Dashboard to provide differentiated assistance to those school districts that show a need for improvement, collaborating with them as they develop their own ability to maintain continuous quality improvement.

Since its information is available to the general public, the Dashboard also gives parents, teachers, community members, and others who have a stake in the success of their schools the information they need to participate in developing and revising local plans.

Finally, the Dashboard highlights places of educational excellence. As a result, it can contribute to the state's knowledge of successful practices. All schools can learn and benefit from what works.

Indicators

The Dashboard reports information on ten indicators of success for schools, school districts, and county offices of education (COEs). In the Dashboard, the term "school district" also refers to single-school districts and charter schools.

1. California State Board of Education. August 2016. Memorandum. *https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/pn/im/documents/memo-sbe-aug16item02.doc*
2. Read more about California's educational priorities at *https://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/lc/statepriorityresources.asp*

Note: When reading the Dashboard, remember that, for purposes of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), all charter schools are listed separately as their own LEAs and cannot be credited to a district.

COEs are responsible for reporting on the alternative schools and programs they administer. The applicable indicators, however, are not yet featured in the Dashboard. The unique needs and position of the students served in these schools require carefully crafted indicators that are appropriate to their circumstances. A full complement of these indicators is in development and will appear in the Dashboard in the fall of 2018.

Local Indicators

Four local indicators reflect how districts and COEs are performing internally:

1. Basic conditions (i.e., teacher qualifications, safe and clean buildings, and textbooks for all students)
2. Implementation of academic standards
3. School climate
4. Parent involvement and engagement

The Dashboard uses three performance levels for these indicators: "Met," "Not met," and "Not met for two years." Reports on the local indicators summarize a district or COE's narrative response to self-reflection tools and surveys that the state provides. A district or COE meets the standard by collecting its performance data and completing the surveys. These performance levels do not result in differentiated assistance. The reports—and especially the complete responses made available to local communities—are designed to provide educators and stakeholders with the information they need to have conversations and ask questions about how their schools are performing, with this involvement contributing to the plans and strategies for improving outcomes for all students.

The local indicators are based on district-level information, so they are not reported for schools or for student groups.

State Indicators

Six state indicators record student progress in the following:

1. High school graduation rates
2. Academic performance (grades 3–8 in English language arts and mathematics)

3. Suspension rates (grades K–12)
4. English learner progress (grades 1–12)
5. College and career readiness
6. Chronic absenteeism[3]

Data on these six indicators are collected statewide, ranked by statewide comparisons, and uploaded into the Dashboard by the California Department of Education (CDE). Details on how each of these indicators is calculated and measured can be found through the following link: *https://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/cm/*

Performance

The Dashboard uses five circles of different colors—along with specific amounts of color in each circle (see below)—to show performance levels. The amounts of color make it possible for people with black-and-white computer screens and printers, or those with visual disabilities, to clearly see the different levels:

Lowest Performance ← → Highest Performance
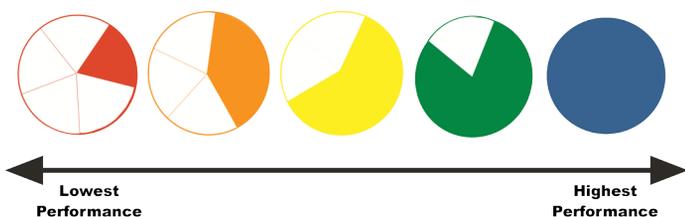
California's goal is for all state indicators to be at the Green performance level or higher. Any performance level below Green (i.e., Yellow, Orange, or Red) shows a need for improvement.

Performance rankings on the six state indicators are calculated by combining scores of both status and change:

- Status is based on the current year of data at one of five levels: "very high," "high," "medium," "low," and "very low."
- Change is calculated by comparing the current year's results with results from a previous year or years. There are five levels of change: "increased significantly," "increased," "maintained," "declined," and "declined significantly."

The resulting grid makes possible 24 different rankings:

Change → Level	Declined Significantly by more than 5%	Declined by 1% to 5%	Maintained Declined or increased by less than 1%	Increased by 1% to less than 5%	Increased Significantly by 5% or more
Very High 95% or greater	N/A	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
High 90% to less than 95%	Orange	Yellow	Green	Green	Blue
Medium 85% to less than 90%	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Green	\Green
Low 67% to less than 85%	Red	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Yellow
Very Low Less than 67%	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red

(Status ↓)

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3. There is currently no Status and Change Report for the state indicator of Chronic Absenteeism. The Dashboard does report the data for Chronic Absenteeism that are available through Dataquest (which is another rich resource of student data and found at *https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/dataquest.asp*). The California State Board of Education is currently developing policy for how best to incorporate this indicator into the Dashboard system.

How to Read the Dashboard

From the Dashboard's homepage (*https://www.caschooldashboard.org/#/Home*), you can search for any public school, district, or county office of education in the state and get information through four reports: the Equity Report, Status and Change Report, Detailed Report, and Student Group Report. Each report is available through a tab at the top of the "search results" Web page:

Equity Report	Status and Change Report	Detailed Report	Student Group Report

A search for any school, school district, charter school (which will not be included in district data), or COE on the Dashboard's homepage will take you to an Equity Report.

Equity Report

For Schools

The Equity Report contains:
- A list of all **state indicators**
- The **performance level for all students** on each indicator
- The **number of student groups** that received a performance ranking for each indicator
- The number of student groups that are ranked at the two **lowest performance levels** (red and orange)

Clicking on any one of the state indicators in the Equity Report will deliver a Status and Change Report (see below).

For School Districts

In addition to information on state indicators, similar to what is provided for schools, the Equity Report for districts lists the local indicators and the district's ratings on each. Clicking on one of the local indicators gives you a narrative summary of the district's self-assessment report, as well as the district's performance level.

For County Offices of Education

The Equity Report for a COE contains the following:
- The performance level for **Chronic Absenteeism**
- The performance level for all **local indicators**

Clicking on any of the local indicators will deliver the COE's **performance level** and **narrative summary** of the self-assessment report that the COE has submitted.

Status and Change Report

For Schools and School Districts

The Status and Change Report contains:
- A list of **state indicators**
- The **performance level** for all students
- The **status** ranking and the **change** ranking for each indicator

The state indicator "Chronic Absenteeism" links to a breakdown of how all student groups compare in their enrollments, absentee counts, and rates. This page also provides a **Report Options and Filters** link that allows you to search for detailed information about which groups of students are most absent from school.

The other state indicators link to a **comparison of all student groups** on that indicator:

- The number of students in each group
- The status for that student group on the indicator
- The percentage of change that has occurred for each student group on that indicator compared to previous year(s)

The "Graduation Rates" indicator also includes assessment performance results for English language arts and mathematics.

The comparison pages for these indicators (except for "Chronic Absenteeism") have a link to the *Five-by-Five Placement Report*. Clicking on that link delivers the table of colored blocks (see the grid on the left) that represents the "status and change" ranking for each student group in that school or district. Each student group is listed in the coordinate box that reflects its "status and change" ranking on the state indicator.

For County Offices of Education

The Status and Change Report for COEs shows the performance level for all students on the state indicator of **Chronic Absenteeism** and the "status and change" rankings.

Detailed Report

For Schools and School Districts

A pull-down menu on this report lists three options:

1. Academic Performance delivers graphs that show student rankings on:
- English learner progress
- College and career readiness
- English language arts and mathematics measures

2. School Conditions and Climate delivers graphs that show rates of suspensions over time.

3. Academic Engagement delivers graphs that show graduation rates over time.

For County Offices of Education

A pull-down menu on this report lists two options:

1. Academic Performance provides
- a graph of the percent of English learners who made progress toward English proficiency over time, and
- ratings for two local indicators: "Basics" and "Implementation of Academic Standards."

Clicking on any one of these indicators will produce the COE's narrative summary of its performance on that indicator.

2. School Conditions and Climate provides
- data on the percentage of student suspensions over time, and
- a list of local indicators and their performance ratings. Clicking on any one of the indicators will deliver the information the COE submitted detailing its performance.

Student Group Report

For Schools and School Districts

The Student Group Report includes:
- A list of the **state indicators**
- Performance levels for **all students** on each indicator
- Performance levels for **all student groups** on each indicator

Clicking on any one of the indicators will take you back to the Status and Change Report.

For County Offices of Education

The Student Group Report for COEs shows the ranking of all student groups on the state indicator of "Chronic Absenteeism." Clicking on that indicator will give you a breakdown of how those student groups compare in their enrollments, absentee counts, and rates of absenteeism. A **Report Options and Filters** link allows you to search for very detailed information about which groups of students are most absent from school.

How to Talk About the Dashboard

The Dashboard was not designed to be a source of pride for some and discouragement for others. Its purpose is to make it possible for schools that are not as successful as they might be—especially those with historically underperforming student groups—to receive customized assistance that works in collaboration with local strengths, goals, and resources. As a result, the information in the Dashboard should shape conversations about Local Control and Accountability Plans, and it should help to direct any differentiated assistance that a district receives. According to State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, "The Dashboard helps all schools and districts improve by identifying strengths and weaknesses in many different areas, allowing parents, teachers, students, and communities to target their resources toward areas where improvement is needed."

Using the Dashboard for Participation

The Local Control Funding Formula requires school districts to invite and use "stakeholder engagement" as they develop and revise their plans. This requirement creates challenges. Many districts lack existing models and structures to engage parents and community members in authentically shaping local plans. Many parents and community members don't have experience in educational planning. And many parents of children who receive special education services often do not see themselves as part of general education.

This divide can be bridged in a number of ways. Knowing that your voice matters—and is required—is an important first step. The next step is learning what's in the Dashboard. For example, by carefully reading a district's report of the local indicators in the Dashboard (under the Equity Report) and comparing that report with student results, parents can frame their own questions about and suggestions for making their schools more successful.

Two narrative reports provide examples to help parents, teachers, and others begin to learn the language of school improvement and develop confidence in their ideas: "Parent Engagement" and "School Climate." If the Parent Engagement Survey (in the Dashboard under each district's Equity Report) shows that fewer than 20 percent of parents agree that "the school seeks parent input on decisions regarding services or programs for students at their school," parents and teachers will know that their district can improve its efforts to authentically engage parents. No single person has to come up with a solution. But school districts are required to do better. Or you could compare the School Climate Survey report against a district's graduation

rates. If dropout rates are rising, perhaps schools in your district can work to improve climate to help those students who are most vulnerable find good reasons to stay in school.

How IEPs Influence the Dashboard

The Dashboard is a critical source of information for special educators and for parents of children with disabilities. If your school is inclusive and the Dashboard shows it to be strong in literacy, math, or behavioral management, students with disabilities are going to benefit from those strengths. If the Dashboard shows an area of weakness, the scores of students with disabilities are probably going to be the first to highlight the areas that need most improvement.

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is the backbone of special education. By studying the Dashboard with IEP goals in mind, parents, teachers, and students can ensure that, through their involvement in Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) conversations and revisions, schools are doing the kinds of things that IEPs list and that students with disabilities need in order to succeed in school.

Next Steps

You have an interest in improving your school. Information from the Dashboard has given you some ideas. Your next step is to learn about the processes your district or charter school uses for making its local plans. Consider using the talking points below and the questions that follow to begin conversations and gain the necessary confidence for getting involved:

Talking Points

- School districts are responsible for the school progress of all.
- Parents, teachers, and community members are required to contribute to the creation and revision of each district's LCAP.
- Students with disabilities belong to other student groups: those who are English learners and who live in poverty or foster care.
- The Dashboard provides feedback on where local resources should be directed and how a district's LCAP can be revised to redefine and strengthen a district's goals and priorities for improving student outcomes.
- The state launched the Dashboard as it rolled out its new Statewide System of Support. That system is designed to work with districts that face significant challenges to improving the performance of specific student groups, including those with disabilities.

Questions to Ask About Your District's Plans

- How is community engagement in our LCAP being encouraged and strengthened?
- How exactly are parents, teachers, and community members contributing to and improving local plans in our district?
- How does our LCAP ensure that all students, including students with disabilities, are prepared for college or career after they graduate from high school?
- Does our LCAP include plans for training all teachers on the principles of universal design for learning (UDL) so that all students can access challenging curriculum?
- How does our LCAP acknowledge the direct affect of social and emotional health on school safety, student engagement, and academic performance?

Local Meetings

The Dashboard has made public the fact that nearly one in four of the school districts in the state have been identified for differentiated assistance. And more than half of those districts were identified because of the low scores of students with disabilities. With research showing that all students perform better when students with disabilities do well,[4] improving special education services is in everyone's best interest.

The specifics of a district's local indicators must be discussed and adopted at regular public meetings, which any community member can attend—and at which members of the public may comment. Consider bringing the following kinds of questions to your next district meeting:

- Does our school have the resources it needs to provide the services and supports written into our IEP plans?
- Does our school plan the education of every child with a disability with the long-range goal of independent living and living-wage employment in mind?
- What does our school do to ensure reading, literacy, and communicative competence for every child?
- Are more of our children of color or certain ethnicities being disproportionately identified as having disabilities? If so, does our staff receive training on issues of cultural bias?
- Do general educators and special educators attend professional development events together? Is collaboration encouraged and supported through scheduling?
- How does our school address issues of climate? Of behavior?
- How do we ensure that our classrooms reflect our policies about including students with disabilities in general education?
- How do we ensure that the services and supports provided to children with disabilities are based on the specific, expressed needs of the student and not on a disability category?

Gathering and sharing answers to these questions will help your school grow and improve—for the benefit of all students.

Moving Forward

Focusing on student outcomes is not new. What is new is California's commitment to collaborating across sectors to improve those outcomes. The state's emphasis on supports and encouragement for schools—rather than sanctions and punishment—is new as well, as is a heightened understanding of how systems deliver the results they were designed to produce. If results need to change, the system needs to change—and the local community is being asked to inform what that change looks like. This call for involvement leads to another new feature in education in California: a sense of shared responsibility; we are all responsible for the school success of all of our children. As it clearly broadcasts what is going well and what needs to change within the context of this responsibility, the Dashboard proves itself to be part of a very bold vision, marking the beginning of a coordinated process of continuous improvement that includes and challenges everyone.

4. Inclusive Schools Network. (2015). *Together We Learn Better.* https://inclusive-schools.org/together-we-learn-better-inclusive-schools-benefit-all-children/