

SOS for Student Achievement



Close the state accountability gap

CSBA is calling for a coherent, statewide operations and support plan with measurable goals, transparent benchmarks and aligned budgets that better support — not dictate to — local educational agencies striving to close achievement gaps.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is the purpose of the campaign?

- ▶ To strengthen California's public school system so that:
 - » Overall student performance rises and achievement gaps close at a rapid pace.
 - » State agencies work in partnership with LEAs to improve student outcomes by better supporting — not dictating to — local schools.
 - » Every state education initiative is aligned around a unified strategy of support to help LEAs improve overall student performance and close achievement gaps.
 - » Every state program is evaluated for its effectiveness in helping local schools close gaps.
 - » The state demonstrates accountability for its own role in closing achievement gaps.

What problems does the campaign address?

- ▶ Persistent statewide achievement gaps:
 - » Fewer than four in 10 students are proficient in math.
 - » Only about half meet standards in English language arts.
 - » Some student groups remain stuck in the 20–30 percent proficiency range.
 - » Demography is a strong predictor of outcomes.
- ▶ Lost potential and prosperity:
 - » Huge achievement gaps mean more than 1 million California students fail to reach proficiency every year.
 - » Large groups of struggling students have an impact on all student learning.
 - » Lost academic potential translates into a poorer economic and civic future for all Californians.

What must the state do differently?

- ▶ Develop a coherent state-level operations and support plan to help school districts and county offices of education accelerate student performance and close achievement gaps.
- ▶ Stop starting and ending initiatives haphazardly.
- ▶ Replace siloed, piecemeal programs with a unified, long-term strategy to support — not dictate to — LEAs in closing achievement gaps.
- ▶ Establish goals, benchmarks and reports to guide implementation, coordination and evaluation.
- ▶ Support LEAs in innovation and help scale promising practices statewide.
- ▶ Local school boards face constant scrutiny while the state escapes accountability for its own performance.

Why can't the existing system solve this problem?

- ▶ State actions are well-intentioned, but scattered, and lack the cohesion needed to drive real change.
- ▶ The state lacks a plan with transparent goals and a process for evaluating the efficacy of its initiatives.
- ▶ LEAs are held solely responsible for closing gaps even though the state (the administration, State Board of Education [SBE], California Department of Education [CDE] and California Collaborative for Educational Excellence [CCEE]) determines the policy, legislation, funding and supports that are critical to local success.
- ▶ Local districts innovate, but state fragmentation prevents statewide scaling.
- ▶ California repeatedly introduces piecemeal initiatives rather than a unified, long-term strategy.
- ▶ The state mistakes activity for achievement, leaving millions of students behind.

How would the statewide plan improve outcomes?

- ▶ Aligns CDE, CCEE, SBE and legislative directives around a unified goal of closing achievement gaps.
- ▶ Requires the state to set and evaluate progress toward measurable goals for its own effort to help local schools close achievement gaps.
- ▶ Establishes annual benchmarks and transparent reporting.
- ▶ Ensures state budget decisions follow a long-term strategy, not political cycles.
- ▶ Creates a State of the Gap Dashboard so the public can see whether the state is improving its own performance in providing the necessary supports for local school districts and county offices of education.
- ▶ Helps replicate and scale successful local innovations statewide.

Doesn't the plan threaten local control?

- ▶ No. It strengthens local control by ensuring state actions support rather than disrupt local priorities.
- ▶ LEAs retain full decision-making authority over local strategies.
- ▶ The goal is not more bureaucracy, but smarter, more consistent state support so LEAs can accelerate learning, scale success and close persistent gaps.
- ▶ CSBA is calling for a coherent, statewide operations and support plan with measurable goals, transparent benchmarks and aligned budgets.
 - » Without state-level alignment, even the strongest local strategies remain isolated.
 - » The plan is about state accountability, not state authority, over LEAs.

Why should legislators and state leaders support this?

- ▶ It provides the state with a structured, transparent framework for improving student outcomes and closing achievement gaps.
- ▶ Enhances governance by aligning budgeting, oversight and program design.
- ▶ Delivers higher return on investment (ROI) for taxpayer dollars.
- ▶ Improves public confidence in the state's education leadership.
- ▶ Offers a clear narrative: the state is taking responsibility for its own performance.
- ▶ Creates a bright economic, social and civic future for California.

Who benefits from a statewide plan?

- ▶ **Students:** Faster improvement, better academic and life outcomes.
- ▶ **Educators:** Fewer contradictory directives, more stability and more coherent systems.
- ▶ **School boards and LEAs:** Improved alignment and predictable support.
- ▶ **Families:** Clearer transparency about state performance.
- ▶ **Legislators:** More effective use of taxpayer dollars; responsiveness to voter priorities.
- ▶ **The state:** More efficient use of resources and better long-term results.
- ▶ **All Californians:** More well-educated students, better schools, a more capable workforce, a more robust economy and stronger communities.