

# SOS for Student Achievement



Close the state accountability gap

## Overview

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### What is SOS for Student Achievement?

**SOS for Student Achievement** is a movement to transform California’s governance, systems, budgeting, operations and practices to end decades of stagnant outcomes and help school districts and county offices of education (COEs) boost overall student performance and close persistent achievement gaps. *The SOS for student achievement campaign urges California leaders to help close achievement gaps by:*

- 1) Adopting a coherent state-level operations and support plan that supports — not dictates to — local educational agencies (LEAs) in closing persistent achievement gaps.
- 2) Aligning state budgets, policies and practices to reinforce the state-level plan and optimize investments for student success.
- 3) Moving from a fragmented and disconnected series of programs toward a unified strategy of support for helping LEAs improve student performance.
- 4) Replacing an accountability system focused strictly on local school districts and COEs to a system with shared responsibility across state, county and local levels.
- 5) Evaluating every state program for effectiveness in helping LEAs close gaps. Then, modify or eliminate programs to focus on strategies proven to boost student achievement.
- 6) Transitioning from a compliance-oriented model to a customer-service approach based on individualized support for LEAs.
- 7) Reducing state-level barriers that inhibit the ability of LEAs to unlock innovation, meet local student needs and address achievement gaps.

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### What problems does SOS for Student Achievement address?

#### Stubbornly low achievement

While recent test scores show meager improvement, millions of California students from all backgrounds perform below grade-level and lack basic skills in English language arts and math. In some cases, achievement gaps between lower- and higher-performing groups have expanded since the 1990s. Yet, the State of California has no coherent plan to address this.

### **Piecemeal programs ≠ a plan**

California has launched countless programs aimed at improving student outcomes, yet no unified, state-level strategy ties them together. The result is a scattershot approach littered with one-off grants, temporary initiatives, disconnected reforms and overlapping policies that confound local efforts to close achievement gaps.

### **Lack of state-level accountability**

LEAs are held solely responsible for closing achievement gaps even though the state controls major policy and funding decisions, and state systems remain fragmented, overlapping and inconsistent. This creates a massive accountability gap: local leaders are expected to deliver positive student outcomes, but the state is not held accountable for whether its policies, budgets and agencies are aligned to support success.

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## **Why does California need an SOS for Student Achievement?**

- ▶ California's achievement gaps are stubborn and the status quo is unacceptable
- ▶ More than 1 million California students fail to reach proficiency every year
- ▶ Fewer than four in 10 students are proficient in math and only about half meet standards in English language arts
- ▶ Large gaps exist across social, economic, geographic and ethnic lines, as well as within groups that are considered high achieving
- ▶ Positive intentions and high-profile programs have not produced acceptable student outcomes
- ▶ The state has many piecemeal programs, but no coherent and unifying state-level plan to help school districts and COEs close achievement gaps
- ▶ The state inflates the promise of small gains to disguise systemic failures
- ▶ Glacial progress consigns generations of students to underperformance
- ▶ Large groups of struggling students impact learning, even for strong students
- ▶ Lost potential degrades the economic, social and civic future for all Californians

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## **Why CSBA launched SOS for Student Achievement**

SOS for Student Achievement exists because California's current approach is too scattered to succeed. The state has many initiatives, but without a unified strategy and accountability framework focused on closing achievement gaps:

- ▶ State policies and effort become fragmented
- ▶ State resources are diluted
- ▶ Successful local practices become harder to scale statewide
- ▶ New state programs often disrupt local planning instead of supporting it

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## Close the Achievement Gap Legislative Package

### Assembly Bill 2225: State Plan to Close the Achievement Gap (CTAG)

*by Assemblymember Darshana Patel (D-San Diego)*

Convenes a broad stakeholder workgroup to create a plan for greater state-level support to help LEAs close achievement gaps. Emphasizing students and LEAs, the proposal will require clear goals and benchmarks, annual performance targets and evaluations of key state education bodies and programs.

### AB 2149: Annual Report on State Plan Progress and Alignment

*by Assemblymember Robert Garcia (D-San Bernardino)*

Requires the Legislative Analyst's Office to annually evaluate and report on the alignment between the state plan and the state's proposed and adopted budgets, including a review of the funded status of mandates. The intent is for the report and associated recommendations to help guide the work of the state and to help implement and align work to the state plan established pursuant to AB 2225.

### AB 2514: State of the Achievement Gap Dashboard

*by Assemblymember Rhodesia Ransom (D-Tracy)*

Establishes a dashboard to provide a clear and concise method of informing the public of the state's progress in implementing the state plan for closing achievement gaps.

### AB 2202: Embedding the State Plan into the Work of the State Board of Education

*by Assemblymember Al Muratsuchi (D-Torrance)*

Establishes a Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG) Commission under the State Board of Education (SBE). The commission will help develop and recommend to the SBE and other policymakers a publicly available system of monitoring the performance of new and existing state programs to support LEAs in closing achievement gaps, consistent with the state plan.

Working with the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, the commission will also help identify more efficient methods of supporting LEAs through the Statewide System of Support.

## Vision of success

CSBA envisions a California education system where every student thrives because the state is finally organized for results. Closing achievement gaps requires more than new programs — it requires a coherent statewide plan that aligns policy, budgeting and support to strengthen local success. By committing to shared accountability, measurable goals, transparent reporting and sustained follow-through for state entities, California can replace fragmentation with progress and deliver the education every student deserves.