

November State Board Update: SBE Adopts LCAP instruction Changes, Delays Update to Assessment Descriptors

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At its November Board meeting, the State Board of Education (SBE) adopted updated LCAP instructions on including unexpended Learning Recovery Emergency (LRE) Block Grant funds while delaying the adoption of updated achievement level descriptors for students until its January meeting.

Board approves revised LCAP Template instructions for 2025-26

At the Board's September Meeting, the Board provided feedback on proposed changes to the instructions for the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) Template that were required as part of the most recent budget. Under [SB 153](#), CDE is required to update the LCAP Template instructions to account for the inclusion of unexpended LRE funding in the 2025-26, 2026-27, and 2027-28 LCAPs. As a reminder, the required changes to the LCAP instructions included requiring an LEA, in their annual LCAP, to:

- Identify all planned expenditures using LRE funds in the LCAP within the description of the actions and analysis of the implementation of those actions in the annual update;
- Identify at least one metric to monitor the impact of each action supported with LRE funds;
- Articulate the rationale for selecting actions that implement one or more of the learning recovery initiatives that support academic learning recovery and staff and pupil social and emotional well-being based on the required needs assessment, including identification of how the selected actions are expected to address the identified areas of need for students or schools identified by the need assessment; and
- Explain in the action description how research supports each selected action based on the identified area or areas of need set forth in the needs assessment.

At the September meeting, the Board was presented with two options for how local educational agencies (LEAs) could incorporate this information into their LCAPs, either by consolidating all LRE-supported actions into a single goal (Option 1) or integrating LRE-supported actions into their existing LCAP (Option 2). As both public commenters and the Board were in support of Option 2, since it would provide LEAs with more flexibility in how to include the information to best meet their needs, the instructions approved at this month's meeting reflect the additional flexibility provided by Option 2.

Along with these required changes, the approved instructions also included revisions in response to the board member and interest holder feedback received at the September meeting and during CDE's October statewide input webinar. These include:

- Adding language to the General Education prompt in the Plan Summary section that allows LEAs to provide information in the summary about their strategic plan or vision;
- Requiring all LEAs, even if an LEA had already spent all their LRE dollars, to indicate whether they have any unexpended LRE funding in 2025-26, 2026-27, and 2027-28; and
- For LEAs with unexpended LRE funding, requiring them to identify the goal and action number for each action that will be funded, either in whole or in part, with LRE funds in the “Reflections: Annual Performance” section.

For what the new language looks like in the LCAP template and instructions, see Attachment 3, which begins on page 60 of the [Item 4 document](#).

As the Board had already had a robust discussion about the proposed changes, there was not much debate this time around; though board members expressed appreciation for the work done on the instructions and how the revised instructions were responsive to earlier comments and concerns.

During its presentation on the item, CDE also shared that, in response to requests for additional support for LEAs in implementing the changes, it will be holding a training as part of a **January 14th Tuesdays @ 2 webinar**, specifically on the new required LRE actions and descriptions. According to CDE, this training will include “a review of the new instructions in the LCAP template, examples for how an LEA might include the required elements in the LCAP and recommendations for using current processes and timelines to reduce duplication of effort for LEAs.” You can register for the January webinar [here](#).

Action on Updated Achievement Level Descriptors and Student Score Reports pushed to January meeting

Building on the recent release by Smarter Balanced of its [“Smarter Balanced Assessments: What Do the Scores Mean?”](#) one-page brief, the Board was set to adopt revised Achievement Level Descriptors (ALDs) and Student Score Reports (SSRs) for the Smarter Balanced Summative Assessments for English language arts (ELA) and Mathematics as well as the California Science Test (CAST). The action was meant to align the ALDs and SSRs with the information in the one-pager and support clearer interpretation of student achievement.

The proposed revisions would not have made changes to rigor or standards for the assessments, but the item was still met with overwhelming opposition from equity groups during public comment. While there appeared to be general support for the concept of providing more clarity, concerns were raised about the lack of parent engagement in developing the revisions and the belief that the changes, despite CDE’s intent, would actually make it more difficult for parents to understand their student’s data, particularly for lower performing students. Specifically at issue was the shift from “standard not met” to “inconsistent” to describe Level 1 scores and the shift from “standard nearly met” to “foundational” to describe Level 2 scores. Many commenters feared that this language shift would provide an “inflated” understanding of a student’s performance and give parents a false sense of how their student is doing. As Children Now noted

in their [letter](#) to the Board, “Inconsistent” suggests that sometimes the student is doing work that meets standards and sometimes they aren’t. However, scoring level 1 equates to clearly not meeting standards.”

In the Board’s discussion on the item, members were clearly swayed by the comments made by the equity groups and there was consensus among the Board that clarity regarding the interpretation of ALDs and SSRs is needed but that the proposed revisions needed more precision and vetting. Multiple members also lifted up the importance of parent engagement in this process, with Member Kim Pattillo Brownson emphasizing the need to hear from the people that the changes are intended to help. In the end, instead of taking action, the Board decided to push out action on any revisions until the Board’s January meeting. This move was not particularly surprising, given the volume of opposition during public comment and the assurances from CDE and the Educational Testing Service (ETS), the state’s testing contractor, that they would be able to spend the next few months doing additional interest holder outreach and bring an updated proposal to the next SBE meeting.

While the item was delayed until January, the Board also left open what its next steps would be. Depending on what is presented at the next meeting, the proposed changes could be implemented for the 2024-25 SSRs or be delayed until the 2025-26 SSRs. President Linda Darling Hammond also noted that, regardless of what revisions are ultimately implemented, there will be a need for additional professional development and engagement with parents and students afterwards to help with understanding in the field.