

Study finds Local Control's debut greeted with enthusiasm but marred by major challenges

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A new study of the first year of implementing California's Local Control Funding Formula revealed that the idea of a need-based local funding model received an enthusiastic reception from district leaders—but implementing the new law was hampered by lack of time, information, skills, and resources.

The report, [Toward a Grand Vision: Early Implementation of California's Local Control Funding Formula](#), is by Daniel C. Humphrey and Julia E. Koppich and released by SRI International. The authors looked at the first year of implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) in 10 districts across California.

Among the challenges cited by districts were the tight timeline for developing Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs) and the need to develop new ways of working. As one district official put it, “The LCAP process really pushed the emphasis on collaboration. We recognized that people were working in silos. And we had to change.” Small districts especially felt overburdened by lack of support and capacity for developing the plans.

Inadequate time and resources also posed a challenge to achieving the meaningful level of parent and community engagement required by the LCAP. One official, whose district received input from only about 4 percent of families in the district, said, “LCFF is a historic effort, but we really haven't prepared our frontline people, really principals, on how to do engagement.” Other districts cited serious obstacles to engaging with parents at the poorest schools, including language, transportation and childcare barriers.

Despite a steep learning curve and the need to develop new skills and community ties, the study found strong support among district leaders for local control and “cautious optimism” about the future of the LCFF law. A common refrain cited in the study was “Give us time to get this right and, please, don't return to prescriptive categorical funding.”

