



Progress Update

Engagement • Performance • Well-being

February 2015

Parents, students and staff began taking surveys in February, and students will begin taking new state tests in March. The surveys and tests – part of a new and improved accountability system for our school district – will assess how well students and schools are doing by measuring engagement, performance and well-being.

A number of efforts are under way to support students under this new system.

Parents are encouraged to monitor their children's progress as these new systems are implemented. But remember that the newer and tougher Common Core standards, new assessments and other new accountability measures represent a complete recalibration and may at first create the perception of a decline in performance. Do not be alarmed by an initial decline in certain accountability measures. While the bar is being raised in terms of expectations, it takes some time for both teaching and learning to adjust to these expectations.

Teacher and Principal Evaluation Systems- The Long Beach Way

In the summer of 2014, the school district began implementing two new systems aimed at supporting student and school progress. Newly developed evaluation systems for teachers and principals were deployed after years of research, collaboration and planning. While these systems address two different groups of employees (teachers and administrators), they are designed to complement one another, creating a common language among employees as they work to promote student progress.

The LBUSD teacher evaluation system is based on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. These research-based standards describe the classroom practices that are known to positively impact student achievement. The teacher evaluation system uses a set of standards to help all teachers focus on what matters most with students. This system provides opportunities for principals to observe teachers in action, collect evidence of teaching and learning while in classrooms, and then provide feedback and insights to teachers in a supportive way to help improve their teaching craft.

The LBUSD principal evaluation system is based on national research and standards on school-level factors and indicators that have been shown to have the greatest impact on student achievement. In LBUSD, every principal engages in a yearly evaluation cycle that includes school and leadership goal setting (based on the school's specific strengths and needs), visits to classrooms to determine the quality of teaching and learning, the sharing of evidence of progress that the leader, the students and staff are making in reaching goals, and a final evaluation that incorporates student progress data.

Both of the new evaluation systems include ratings of Distinguished, Effective, Developing and Unsatisfactory. Tremendous attention has been paid to the professional development, or training, needed to make certain that every teacher and every principal understands the new expectations within these systems and the support necessary for an individual to perform well. If you are visiting a school here, it shouldn't surprise you to see administrators in classrooms observing teaching and learning. It also shouldn't surprise you to see your school's principal walking the campus or classrooms with their principal supervisor. These systems have already received national attention for promoting the learning of teachers and administrators while focusing on student progress at the heart of their design.

Under this model allowed by a federal waiver, schools that fall short of their goals receive professional training opportunities for teachers and social-emotional support resources from district partners. Schools with the greatest need receive direct assistance from educators who have had success under similar circumstances. The idea is that when schools learn from one another, they can better prepare all students for college and careers. More information about this system is available at coredistricts.org.

Local Control and Accountability Plan

The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) gives schools greater flexibility to use state funds based upon students' needs. This funding formula requires school districts to develop a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) that spells out spending priorities and performance goals to make certain that resources are used effectively.

LBUSD's plan supports student progress in many ways. The plan includes programs that are resulting in real benefits for all of our students, particularly those who are in greatest need. For example, the plan expands K-12 counseling, library education, nursing and technology services, as well as the elementary music program and various forms of support to middle schools. At the high school level, the plan provides access to free SAT preparation courses and Advanced Placement exams, saving families hundreds of dollars.

LBUSD's plan addresses specific state priority areas while fulfilling school district goals. It incorporates the results of the Smarter Balanced assessments; the surveys for students, parents, and staff; and many other accountability measures. Extensive school-by-school data are available in real time at lbschools.net in the A-Z index under LCAP, then LCAP District & School Data. These reports help the public to see how taxpayer-funded resources are being used responsibly to give students brighter futures.

Continuous Improvement Expenditure (CIE) Planning

Since the beginning of LCAP implementation, principals have reexamined the systems at their schools that engage stakeholders (teachers, parents, community) in the budget planning process. To support students most effectively, budget planning requires a process of engagement, strategic planning and review.

In LBUSD, a tool that is used to make sure that schools' discretionary funds are used to support student progress, is the Continuous Improvement Expenditure tool (CIE). School leaders have received guidelines for determining what is permissible to fund, prioritization based on student and staff needs, and methods for gauging their plan's strength. Once a school team determines what they believe to be a set of activities, systems or approaches to supporting their school's students, this information is entered into an online planning template. Schools' plans are then reviewed by budget and compliance staff, including school district leadership. With several steps in the review process, the CIE ensures transparency and communication, and it requires schools to consider the most strategic methods of using their money, in line with the school district's expectations. CIE plans for each school are available at lbschools.net under Continuous Improvement Expenditure Plans in the A-Z index.

Federal Waiver

LBUSD's plan is reinforced by a waiver from federal No Child Left Behind rules. Similar to the state's LCFF, the federal waiver gives schools greater flexibility to use federal funds based upon students' needs. This flexibility stems from LBUSD's commitment to using the School Quality Improvement System, an accountability model that ties together all of the ideas described above.

This model includes our work on Common Core State Standards and employee evaluations. It also tracks the same accountability measures that we have in our plan. Most notably, it establishes a new way to improve schools that need the most help – an approach that does not punish them, but rather gives them extra support.