

Addendum to the Evaluation of California's Differentiated Assistance

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Introduction

In December 2022, WestEd submitted an independent [Evaluation of California's Differentiated Assistance](#). The evaluation report found that differentiated assistance (DA) positively impacts student outcomes including for student groups experiencing the lowest outcomes. (However, the evaluation report's causal impact analysis was limited to pre-pandemic data, and, due to statistical limitations, it could not examine causal impacts for each individual student group, local educational agency [LEA], and County Office of Education [COE].) A triangulation of data across different sources also suggested that DA builds local system capacity for improvement and that system leaders broadly support DA. However, approximately 1 in 10 LEA survey respondents rated the DA they received as low quality, indicating that DA still has room for improvement. Lastly, the evaluation report offered a set of recommendations for how the state and other system leaders can continue to strengthen DA.

After completing the evaluation report, the WestEd evaluation team conducted a series of 12 input sessions for educational partners from January through March 2023. During each of these sessions, the evaluation team presented a brief overview of key findings and recommendations and provided time for questions, feedback, and requests for additional information on the findings and recommendations. Approximately 250 participants attended the input sessions. Participants included system leaders and educational partners from multiple levels of California's education system including the state, regional, and local levels.

In conducting the original evaluation research, the WestEd team surveyed and interviewed a wide variety of system leaders and other educational partners across different levels of the system and across the state. These later input sessions provided an opportunity for system leaders and other educational partners to engage with the report's key findings and recommendations. The purpose of the input sessions was to provide the WestEd team and the state with insight on (a) how to adjust recommendations to account for needs and concerns expressed by system leaders and other educational partners and (b) how to communicate the report's findings and recommendations effectively, including clearing up potential misconceptions or elements of the report that needed further clarification.

The purpose of this addendum is to share system leaders' and other educational partners' perspectives on the evaluation report's recommendations and highlight some key insights that surfaced.

In addition to collecting feedback and questions during the virtual input sessions, the evaluation team invited written input via email. The team compiled all the session input and written input and organized each piece of feedback based on the report recommendation to which it pertained. The following sections summarize the input for each recommendation.

Each of the following sections focuses on an evaluation report recommendation—stated in the header of each section—and provides commentary on how the input that the evaluation team gathered after the report's release might be used to inform the state's consideration of the given recommendation. In addition, the text below some of the recommendations notes circumstances in which the 2023–24 Governor's Budget Education Omnibus Trailer Bill (the "Trailer Bill," released in February and updated in May 2023)¹ proposes language that addresses some of the recommendations.

Input on the Report's Recommendations

Continue to Support and Strengthen the Technical Assistance Provided Through Differentiated Assistance

- The California County Superintendents strongly supported this recommendation. They also requested more funding for COEs to provide preventative support.
- To support LEAs' timely and formative use of data, districts requested that the California Department of Education (CDE) build infrastructure that would allow districts to access reports of the data that they submit to the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) prior to the annual release of California School Dashboard (Dashboard) data.
- Districts and charters agreed that there is still the public perception that DA is punitive, suggesting that further communication from the state to help change this perception would be helpful. State agency leaders agreed and suggested that collaboration and communication between state agencies and COEs will be necessary for changing this perception.

From the evaluation team: Input session participants supported this recommendation and offered specific suggestions on how the state could strengthen DA. The Trailer Bill contains language that advances some of these suggestions.

COEs already receive funding to provide general support (including preventative support) in addition to the funding they receive to provide DA. The Trailer Bill (p. 11) proposes increasing the level of funding that COEs receive to provide DA.

School districts can already access reports of the data that they submit to CALPADS prior to the annual release of the Dashboard's accountability results. However, the Trailer Bill also proposes enabling districts to access their accountability results earlier in the school year.

¹ California Governor's Office. (2023). *Education omnibus trailer bill with Trailer Bill amendments*. California Department of Finance. <https://esd.dof.ca.gov/trailer-bill/public/trailerBill/pdf/909>

Specifically, the Trailer Bill (p. 51) proposes gradually moving the timeline for the annual public reporting of Dashboard data earlier so that by 2026, and each year thereafter, Dashboard data would be updated on October 15 rather than in December. The earlier Dashboard update would also enable DA providers to begin any new cycles of support in the fall.

Extend the Period of Eligibility for DA From 1 to 2 Years

- COEs, districts, and CDE staff who attended the input sessions supported this recommendation. They noted that improvement work requires more time and that a 2-year cycle would facilitate greater alignment with the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).
- COEs asked that the state ensure any extension of eligibility will not affect the funding that DA-eligible districts generate. That is, since districts will receive support for 2 years, they should generate 2 years' worth of funding.
- The California County Superintendents recommended that state agencies create a communication plan that would communicate to districts "why the DA period will be extended, what districts should expect from the 2-year process, and what districts are responsible for doing over the 2-year process per California *Education Code* Section 52071."
- Districts similarly requested that it be clarified that 2 years of eligibility would not require two root cause analyses; rather, that the originally envisioned DA improvement process would be spread out over 2 years.

From the evaluation team: The Trailer Bill (p. 56) proposes that DA eligibility extend to "a minimum of two years," which would address this recommendation. However, participants brought up additional important points for the state and DA providers to clarify, namely around funding and expectations for a 2-year process.

This evaluation has shown that there is a great deal of variation in DA across the state. Therefore, before the state communicates any details about what a 2-year process might be expected to entail, there would need to be a discussion between state and regional leaders about any efforts to create more uniformity in DA across the state. Having such a discussion and the resulting communications would align with the WestEd team's recommendation to develop and distribute guidance on best practices for providing DA.

Develop and Distribute Guidance on Best Practices for Providing DA

- COEs, including the California County Superintendents, supported this recommendation.
- The California County Superintendents also noted that they have already begun to develop and internally distribute guidance on best practices for providing DA (e.g., during dedicated time at various statewide COE meetings) and that this has also

begun occurring through the workgroup established by the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) and co-facilitated by the CDE and the State Board of Education.

- COEs, districts, and legislative staff were eager to hear about which COEs were identified as providing high-quality support so that others can learn from them.
- Legislative staff were interested in learning more about the qualitative details of best practices for DA, including practices that help district-level work translate to site-level changes.

From the evaluation team: The California County Superintendents and the Geographic Lead Agencies (Geo Leads) will be key partners in implementing this recommendation, and they are deeply invested in this work. Leadership and support from the state will be essential as well. To ensure that the identification of best practices is data-driven and includes identification of best practices for a wide variety of contexts, the evaluation team recommends the use of a formal, mixed-methods process of identification. The Geo Leads have already begun discussing next steps for identifying DA best practices. Once best practices and learning models across the state have been identified, the evaluation team recommends that the state collaborate with the California County Superintendents and other regional leaders to document, share, and scale such practices statewide.

Evaluate Local Capacity to Provide DA and Target State and Regional Supports Where Capacity Needs Are Greatest

- Representatives from multiple groups supported this recommendation and expressed interest in learning which COEs' DA support was rated as low quality by districts that responded to the DA evaluation's survey, as these COEs could then be provided with capacity-building support.
- The California County Superintendents suggested that implementing this recommendation will not require a statutory change and that Geo Leads are well positioned to evaluate COEs' local capacity.

From the evaluation team: In summary, participants supported this recommendation. It should be noted that the evaluation did not report on the perceived quality of support provided by individual COEs or other support providers due to the evaluation's focus on DA *statewide* and due to confidentiality assurances during data collection. As a result, implementing this recommendation will require new data collection.

The evaluation team agrees that Geo Leads can serve as important partners in evaluating local COE capacity and as key leaders in deploying regional support. However, the evaluation report recommended that state and regional leaders collaborate to develop the process for evaluating local capacity, and the evaluation team believes that such collaboration will be

critical. Geo Leads' close relationships with COEs in their region can be an asset for the evaluation process, but the state's perspective and its stance as an independent third party will play a vital role in ensuring that evaluations of local capacity are well calibrated and align with statewide expectations for effective DA. For example, Geo Leads might lead the COE evaluation process, but state agency leaders could support the development of evaluation criteria and rubrics as well as the analysis of evaluation data.

Incorporate Opportunities for Peer Learning Into the DA Structure

- COEs, districts, and CDE staff supported this recommendation.
- Some COE DA providers noted that they are already incorporating opportunities for peer learning into their DA structure.
- DA-eligible COEs added that they value the peer learning that they experience when receiving DA through COE consortia.

From the evaluation team: Participants expressed full support for this recommendation. This recommendation is directly related to the development and dissemination of best practices for DA. During the investigation into effective DA practices, information should be gathered on models of effective DA that are incorporating opportunities for peer learning.

Allow DA Recipients to Access Funding for the DA Provider That Best Meets Their Needs

- COEs, including the California County Superintendents, opposed this recommendation. They noted that
 - COEs need to hire staff in advance.
 - COEs are statutorily required to offer to provide DA regardless of whether LEAs accept it from them.
 - Providing DA requires skill and experience, so building COEs' capacity to provide high-quality DA requires allowing them to invest long-term in their staff. If COEs have to lay off staff from year to year, this will undermine their ability to retain skilled staff and provide high-quality DA.
- The California County Superintendents noted that there are already instances in which COEs pass along some portion of DA funding so that districts can work with other providers. Currently, however, they are not required to do so; the choice is up to each COE.
- One COE representative suggested a potential compromise: an assurance that COEs would retain a certain amount of the funding they receive to provide DA. Doing so would create more stability for COEs when budgeting and planning.

- In the evaluation report, this recommendation also suggested that the CDE should receive funding based on the number of COEs that opt to work with them. When considering the possibility of the CDE receiving funding to provide DA, CDE leaders expressed similar concerns about needing a stable level of funding to employ a dedicated team of staff for this effort. They also noted that they provide some level of DA support to all COEs, including those that opt to receive DA from other COEs.
- Not all district participants commented on this recommendation, but those who did were in support of it. These district participants were from small districts and agreed that the quality of DA varies by COE.
- Representatives from multiple groups were interested in knowing whether there would be limitations on whom districts could seek DA from. For example, they wondered whether DA recipients would be limited to current System of Support leaders such as the CCEE and Geo Leads or whether they could work with other technical assistance providers or with consortia of similar districts.

From the evaluation team: As noted by the California County Superintendents, some COEs already pass funding through to districts so that the districts can work with other providers. COE and CDE DA providers brought up important and valid points about the need for year-to-year funding stability so that they can hire and retain the skilled and experienced staff necessary to provide high-quality DA. The evaluation team supports the consideration of guardrails for this recommendation, such as the COE suggestion to allow COEs to retain a certain proportion of DA funding even if the districts in their county opt to work with a different DA provider. If the state implements the evaluation's recommendation to provide the CDE with funding as a DA provider, then similar guardrails should be put in place to ensure the stability of the CDE's funding as well while taking into account any constraints related to funding for state agencies.

Regarding the question about whether there would be limitations on whom districts could seek DA from: The evaluation team recommends referring to the existing statutory guidance on this topic. Per *Education Code* Section 52071, districts should continue to have a wide choice of potential DA providers but should work in collaboration with their COEs to select one. The evaluation team simply recommends that the district should be able to use DA funds to pay for its DA support rather than having to pay on its own if the district opts to use a provider other than its COE. For an accountability measure, *Education Code* Section 52071(e) states that when working with another DA provider, a district must submit documentation to and have ongoing communication with its COE to demonstrate that DA activities have been completed. For an additional accountability measure, the evaluation report noted that the state may also want to consider requiring any LEA to demonstrate after 2 years that it has made measurable progress toward improvement, through working with the DA provider, in order to continue working with the provider if the LEA remains eligible for DA.

Develop a Structure for DA-Eligible Districts Needing Multiyear Support

- The California County Superintendents supported this recommendation but not how the Trailer Bill proposes implementing it. The Trailer Bill (p. 58) proposes requiring that Geo Leads provide DA in collaboration with COEs for districts that are eligible for DA for 3 or more consecutive years. Instead, the California County Superintendents recommended allowing “the Geo Leads to provide individualized coaching and technical assistance to the COE DA team supporting and working with the district.” The California County Superintendents explained that its proposed model “would allow for coherence from the district’s perspective by not changing their DA provider or disrupting the trust that has already been established.”
- The California County Superintendents recommended that a new lead in the System of Support should provide DA for COEs that are eligible for 3 or more consecutive years rather than having those COEs receive support from the CCEE.

From the evaluation team: There was general support from a range of system leaders for the need to develop a structure for DA-eligible districts that need multiyear support. The evaluation team did not collect extensive data to inform this specific topic (e.g., surveying districts on what they believe effective multiyear support would look like). However, the evaluation team agrees that there would be value in adopting more flexible statutory language to allow districts greater choice regarding who provides multiyear support. In circumstances in which the COE and district are making progress toward improving student outcomes, there may not be a need for Geo Leads to step in as a new direct support provider for the district, so more flexible language could allow Geo Leads to have more involvement or less involvement in directly supporting the district on a case-by-case basis.

Given the Lack of Federal and State Alignment, Study the Implications of Migrating to a Single Method of Identifying LEAs for Support

- Overall, participants were more interested in how to align state and federal improvement **support** processes and didn’t comment much on using a single method for **identification**.
- The California County Superintendents recommended that state agencies develop and distribute guidance on aligning the Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) and Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) processes with DA.
- The California County Superintendents also pointed out that California’s Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan has districts become eligible for DA if they have schools that do not exit CSI within 4 consecutive years, which could happen upon the release of 2023 Dashboard results.

- Districts recommended that, in order to reduce duplication, DA providers should routinely use districts' work and results from the CDE's Compliance and Improvement Monitoring (CIM) process for special education as part of DA work when relevant.
- Legislative staff were interested in learning more details about how federal improvement processes, including those for special education, could be better aligned with DA to reduce duplication.
- A charter school representative voiced concern that having multiple school-level improvement support processes for charter schools is duplicative and adds to their administrative burden and noted that DA eligibility could hypothetically influence charter renewal processes.

From the evaluation team: In summary, participants commented more on aligning the state and federal accountability processes than on aligning the identification methods. The CDE has already made efforts to align these processes, but the field still perceives that there is duplication. The evaluation report proposed studying the possibility of aligning identification methods as a step that may facilitate further alignment of accountability processes. Accordingly, the evaluation team still recommends studying the alignment of state and federal identification methods. Furthermore, the study should consider whether there are opportunities to further align DA with CSI, ATSI, and TSI support, with or without also aligning identification.

Revisit Eligibility Criteria for DA

- COEs, including the California County Superintendents, strongly supported the recommendation to revisit the eligibility criteria for COEs. The California County Superintendents mentioned that “the County Operated Student Programs Committee of the California County Superintendents is prepared to provide recommendations and programmatic insight to inform what new criteria could be.”
- Small school districts reported that DA eligibility criteria are problematic for them because their sample sizes (n-sizes) are very small, so a few students moving into the district can make them eligible.
 - A superintendent of a small district also noted that with such small student populations, school and district staff—including the superintendent—are already extremely familiar with each student, their data, and their needs, and so the data analysis involved in DA is not a valuable use of their very limited time.
- Charter schools noted a similar concern about their student data being volatile due to small sample sizes, although charter eligibility is based on 2 years of data, which may help reduce volatility. The state may want to model an adjustment to use 2 years of data, which is also used for TSI, as a potential approach to increasing stability in eligibility for small LEAs.

- CDE leaders noted the n-size that is used for assigning Dashboard performance colors (which are used to determine DA eligibility) is based on federal requirements to protect student privacy and the need to ensure statistical reliability. However, California's minimum n-size is larger than needed to meet federal requirements.
- District leaders expressed frustration that large numbers of districts are eligible for DA based on 2022 Dashboard data on chronic absenteeism because they were following the laws around quarantines.
- A COE echoed the concern surfaced in the report that when large proportions of school districts are eligible for DA—such as the 606 districts that are currently eligible based on 2022 Dashboard data—it can overwhelm the limited capacity of providers. The COE pointed out that if the state has limited resources for this work, eligibility criteria should be revisited to ensure that resources are deployed to support those who truly need it most.
- Leaders from the CDE's Analysis, Measurement and Accountability Reporting Division (AMARD), which manages the Dashboard, noted that many of these issues have already been considered within their development of eligibility calculations.

From the evaluation team: Participants from the field strongly supported this recommendation and identified it as a high priority. Developing Dashboard performance calculations and determining DA, CSI, ATSI, and TSI eligibility criteria are complex challenges, particularly given how vastly LEAs across California vary in terms of size, demographics, and other factors. The evaluation team wants to acknowledge the time, energy, and expertise that AMARD has already applied to this challenge. However, given the consistent feedback from the field on this topic, it appears that eligibility criteria for certain types of educational contexts (such as DA-eligible COEs and small school districts) and for particular student groups are still worth revisiting.

It is also worth noting the 2022 Dashboard results pertaining to DA eligibility, which were released after the development of the evaluation report (See Table 1). From 2019 to 2022, the number of eligible districts doubled (growing from 301 to 606), and the number of eligible COEs dramatically declined (from 32 to 11).

Table 1. DA-eligible districts and COEs overall and based on the performance of students with IEPs, for 2018, 2019, and 2022 Dashboard data

Year	Total eligible districts and COEs (out of approximately 993 total)	Eligible districts (out of approximately 935 total)	Eligible COEs (out of 58 total)	% of eligible total (districts + COEs) that were eligible based on students w/IEPs	% of eligible districts that were eligible based on students w/IEPs	% of eligible COEs that were eligible based on students w/IEPs
2018	386	353	33	63%	62%	73%
2019	333	301	32	56%	56%	56%
2022	617	606	11	84%	85%	36%

Leaders at the CDE shared that the reduction in eligible COEs may be due to multiple factors. One factor seems to be the implementation of a statutory shift regarding which entity is held accountable for outcomes of students with IEPs served by COE-run programs. Prior to the 2022 Dashboard, a student's LEA of attendance alone (which in many cases was a COE) was held accountable; now the district of residence is held accountable regardless of whether the student attends and receives most of their education within a different LEA (such as a COE). Although this change may have contributed to the reduction in the number of eligible COEs, the policy shift does not address other concerns around DA eligibility for COEs (e.g., that metrics of long-term performance, such as the College/Career Indicator metrics, may not be appropriate for measuring the success of the more transitory student populations served by COE court and community schools). Consequently, despite the reduction in DA-eligible COEs in 2022, the evaluation team continues to recommend revisiting the DA eligibility criteria for COEs.

In addition, when the state considers adding any new eligibility criteria, it should take steps to ensure that such criteria will not identify any particular LEA type as eligible for DA in perpetuity. For example, COEs have already expressed concern with how data on teacher assignment will be assessed as COE-run schools often need to employ teachers with subject-specific credential waivers so that the schools can offer a full range of courses despite serving small student populations. The state has engaged COEs in a workgroup that will inform the details for using teacher assignment data in the accountability system. The evaluation team recommends that the state continue to take such measures to involve those affected by any new eligibility criteria proposed in the future.

Furthermore, the dramatic increase in the number of DA-eligible districts in 2022 underscores the need to revisit district eligibility criteria. One likely contributing factor to this steep increase in eligibility is the high level of statewide chronic absenteeism prompted by the pandemic (potentially linked in some cases to mandatory quarantines). In addition, the shift in accountability for students with IEPs who are served outside the district of residence may have slightly increased the number of eligible districts. Based on the 2022 Dashboard results, nearly two-thirds of districts in total are now eligible for DA. As pointed out during the input sessions, having such a large proportion of California's school districts eligible for DA can overwhelm the limited capacity of providers. The state's DA resources should be targeted to the districts that most need support.

Prepare for Support for Charter Schools

- Charter schools agreed that more communication about DA from the state, their COEs, or both prior to DA work commencing would be helpful.
- The California County Superintendents recommended that state agencies develop a communication plan for charter schools to explain charter schools' roles and responsibilities in the DA process and to explain how DA aligns with the schools' current CSI/ATSI work.
- The California County Superintendents requested additional funding for COEs to provide Level 1 support to charter schools.
- The California County Superintendents also requested clarification as to whether DA-eligible COE-operated charter schools would generate funding (since COE-operated court and community schools do not).

From the evaluation team: Participants expressed full support for this recommendation. In addition, the California County Superintendents' question about funding for COE-operated charter schools is an important point for the state to clarify.

Reduce Administrative Burden to Free Up System Leaders' Time to Focus on Improvement

- COEs, districts, charter schools, CDE staff, and others expressed very strong support for this recommendation.
- In particular, administrative burden was a top concern of small school districts and charters.
- Several noted that the Trailer Bill goes in the opposite direction by revising LCAP reporting requirements in ways that may increase administrative burdens for local leaders.

- The California County Superintendents pointed out that some of the proposed items appear duplicative of existing reporting requirements—for example, the proposal to include “focus goals” for certain schools in the LCAP—given that school-level goals and actions are already reported in the School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA).

From the evaluation team: Participants strongly supported this recommendation and identified it as a high priority. As participants pointed out, the Trailer Bill proposes revisions to current LCAP requirements which may add to the existing administrative burden. These include revisions related to LCAP midyear updates (pp. 40, 43, 52), metrics to monitor actions and budgeted expenditures that are provided on an LEA-wide basis (p. 47), and “focus goals” for schools that generate the newly proposed Equity Multiplier funding (p. 48). The evaluation team recognizes that such revisions are intended to improve transparency and accountability and ensure that LEAs are effectively aligning their resources and school improvement efforts with students’ needs. The evaluation team acknowledges that state leaders must grapple with the tension between the need for accountability and a desire to limit the LCAP’s length and administrative burden. The evaluation team recommends that when LCAP revisions create new requirements, these changes should be accompanied, wherever possible, by revisions to streamline the LCAP in other areas. As such, revisions can help focus local leaders and educational partners on those areas that are most critical to serving students while streamlining the LCAP and reducing any duplicative requirements.

Conduct a Post-Pandemic Impact Study

- Representatives from multiple groups agreed that a post-pandemic impact study will be important for assessing DA’s impact with greater confidence.
- Representatives from multiple groups recommended that a future study include student-level data.
- Legislative staff were interested in an evaluation of the whole Statewide System of Support rather than just individual components such as DA and the lead agencies.

From the evaluation team: Participants expressed full support for this recommendation.

Requests for Clarification and Additional Details

During the sessions, participants asked for clarification on the following details and/or requested that the report addendum include the following clarifications:

- COEs, CDE staff, and legislative staff were interested in the evaluation report’s finding that educational partners reported limited involvement in DA and district improvement efforts. They asked for clarification as to whether the reason might be that educational

partners are simply less familiar with the terminology of “DA.” The research team clarified that, as stated in the report, the team understood educational partners’ limited exposure to the DA terminology to have been the case prior to recruiting participants and, consequently, the team had asked about educational partners’ involvement in school and district improvement work more generally.

- A COE was concerned that local educational partners would view this evaluation as describing all COEs and may conclude that any areas for improvement described in the report necessarily apply to their own local COE. The COE requested that this addendum clarify that the report’s findings describe a variety of DA experiences across the state, which may or may not be a reflection of any individual COE.
- COEs asked that it be reiterated that this study is intended to be formative, not punitive.

The following sections provide responses to participants’ requests for additional information and further analyses of the data from the evaluation.

How many DA-eligible districts reported focusing specifically on students who are English Learners?

Surveyed districts were asked to identify the student group(s) they focused on in their most recent LCAP; the survey prompted them to check all options that applied. Of the 146 DA-eligible districts that responded to the survey, 125 DA-eligible districts (86%) indicated that they focused on students who are English Learners in their most recent LCAP. The other survey responses regarding DA from this group of 125 English Learner–focused districts did not differ significantly from the overall results and patterns that are noted in the evaluation report from respondents as a whole.

Were there any survey data trends regarding which COE activities or characteristics were associated with districts reporting low-quality DA?

The evaluation team performed additional analyses of the survey data from districts that rated the DA support they received as either “low quality” or “very low quality.” Out of the 124 districts that responded to this question, 14 districts (11%) rated their DA support overall as “low” or “very low” quality, and 17 districts (14%) gave this rating to their DA support for targeted student groups. Between the two rating categories (quality overall or quality for targeted student groups), 18 districts in total provided a low or very low rating for either category. Only 1 of these 18 districts reported that DA had helped the district improve student outcomes.

Notably these 18 districts are located in 13 different COEs. This indicates that responses from “dissatisfied” districts are spread out—not concentrated within just a few COEs. However, there is variation in the number of districts served by each of these COEs (and accordingly, the

number of districts rating their support), so it is not possible to generalize whether dissatisfied districts represent a large or a small proportion of the districts served by each COE.

Table 2 displays the percentage and number of district respondents² for each of the 13 COEs with at least one district rating the quality of its support as “low” or “very low” quality overall or for targeted student groups. The table categorizes the ratings as (a) “very high” or “high” quality, (b) “neither high nor low” quality, or (c) “low” or “very low” quality.

Table 2. Percentage and number of district respondents that rated the quality of their COE’s DA support overall and DA support for targeted student groups, by rating level

COE	District respondents that rated COE quality (n-size)	High/very high quality overall	Neither high nor low quality overall	Low/very low quality overall	High/very high quality for targeted groups	Neither high nor low quality for targeted groups	Low/very low quality for targeted groups
COE 1	12	2 (17%)	8 (67%)	2 (17%)	2 (17%)	8 (67%)	2 (17%)
COE 2	9	3 (33%)	5 (56%)	1 (11%)	1 (11%)	8 (89%)	0 (0%)
COE 3	7	4 (57%)	2 (29%)	1 (14%)	4 (57%)	1 (14%)	2 (29%)
COE 4	5	1 (20%)	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	3 (60%)	1 (20%)
COE 5	5	4 (80%)	0 (0%)	1 (20%)	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)
COE 6	3	0 (0%)	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (100%)
COE 7	3	0 (0%)	2 (67%)	1 (33%)	0 (0%)	2 (67%)	1 (33%)
COE 8	3	2 (67%)	0 (0%)	1 (33%)	0 (0%)	2 (67%)	1 (33%)
COE 9	3	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)
COE 10	3	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)	1 (33%)
COE 11	2	0 (0%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)
COE 12	2	1 (50%)	0 (0%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0 (0%)	1 (50%)
COE 13	1	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)

² This reflects the number of district respondents who answered the survey question about the quality of DA support from their COE. Not all district respondents answered this specific question.

The following examples illustrate the variation in survey responses:

- The COEs that received ratings from three or fewer districts (i.e., COE 6 through COE 13 in the table) tended to have a larger or equal number of “low” or “very low” compared to “high” or “very high” ratings. Note: the number of ratings received by each COE is not necessarily correlated with how many districts each COE served.
- By contrast, in other COEs, the one dissatisfied district was in the minority. For example, COE 3 in the table had four out of seven districts (57%) rate its DA overall as “high” or “very high” quality, while just one district (14%) rated it as “low” or “very low.” Similarly, COE 5 had four out of five districts (80%) rate its DA overall as “high” or “very high” quality, while just one (20%) rated it as “low” or “very low.”

These examples demonstrate the variation in ratings of quality across district respondents within COEs that received at least one “low” or “very low” quality rating. However, it is notable that several of these 13 COEs also had substantial proportions of districts reporting that they received support that was “neither high nor low quality overall,” which suggests that these COEs do have room for improvement.

Reviewing the 18 dissatisfied districts’ survey responses for trends or notable findings, the evaluation team noted the following points:

- When these districts were asked how frequently they met with the DA provider in their most recent year of DA eligibility,
 - Four (22%) reported that they did not meet on a consistent basis.
 - Four (22%) reported meeting once.
 - Four (22%) reported meeting once per month.
 - Approximately equal numbers reported that they would have preferred less time (eight districts) or more time (seven districts) with their DA provider. The remaining three districts said the amount of time was just right.
- When these 18 districts were asked about seeking support elsewhere,
 - Eleven (61%) agreed that when content expertise does not exist within the district, they know where to go to get the additional support and resources they need.
 - Thirteen (72%) indicated that they would consider using a different service provider for DA if the costs were covered.
- When asked to rate their COE staff’s knowledge in certain areas, there were some areas these districts reported as key knowledge gaps. For example:
 - Only two (11%) reported that COE staff were either “very knowledgeable” or “extremely knowledgeable” with regard to **Math/ELA content knowledge**.

- Only five (28%) reported that COE staff were either “very knowledgeable” or “extremely knowledgeable” about **research-based strategies to improve school culture and climate**.
- When asked to rate their COE staff’s capacity to coach the district in various activities, fewer than half of the districts (eight districts, or 44%) described the COE staff’s capacity as either “average,” “above average,” or “excellent” in coaching the district in the following activities:
 - Selecting strategies to address identified root cause(s)
 - Setting goals for improvement
 - Implementing improvement routines (e.g., continuous improvement cycles)
 - Using data to measure and monitor improvement

Were there any survey data trends regarding the types of skills or expertise that districts indicated that their DA provider had or did not have?

Several survey questions asked districts to assess their DA provider’s capacity to provide their district with the necessary support to address identified gaps in performance for particular student groups.

Before asking specifically about DA, the survey asked districts to describe the level of knowledge their COE staff possessed in seven key areas. As shown in Table 3, districts tended to view their COEs as more knowledgeable about California’s standards and curriculum frameworks, the Dashboard, the LCAP, and the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) than about research-based instructional strategies to improve outcomes for specific student groups or strategies to improve school culture and climate.

Table 3. District respondents’ ratings of their COE staff’s level of knowledge in various areas

How would you describe the level of knowledge of your COE staff in the following areas?	Not at all knowledgeable	Not so knowledgeable	Somewhat knowledgeable	Very knowledgeable	Extremely knowledgeable
Research-based instructional strategies for improving outcomes for specific student groups (n=267)	2%	5%	25%	40%	29%
CA standards and curriculum frameworks (n=279)	1%	2%	16%	42%	39%
Improvement science or another improvement methodology (n=256)	1%	6%	21%	38%	34%
CA System of Support (n=265)	1%	6%	22%	39%	33%
Math/ELA content (n=271)	2%	3%	23%	39%	33%
CA Dashboard, LCAP, LCFF (n=281)	0%	1%	12%	40%	47%
Research-based strategies to improve school culture and climate (n=262)	2%	7%	27%	35%	30%

The survey later asked districts to assess their DA provider’s ability to coach the district in six key improvement activities associated with DA. Districts’ responses were generally uniformly positive, with a majority of districts (53–61%) rating their DA provider’s coaching ability as “above average” or “excellent” for each activity (see Table 4).

Table 4. District respondents’ ratings of their DA provider’s ability to coach the district in various improvement activities

How would you rate your DA provider’s ability to coach your district...?	Very poor	Below average	Average	Above average	Excellent
Through a root cause analysis (n=111)	4%	6%	30%	36%	24%
To select strategies to address identified root cause(s) (n=112)	5%	6%	32%	35%	21%
To set goals for improvement (n=113)	6%	4%	30%	39%	21%
To develop a theory for how to improve student outcomes (n=111)	5%	8%	34%	35%	18%
To implement improvement routines (e.g., continuous improvement cycles) (n=113)	5%	6%	33%	40%	16%
To use data to measure and monitor improvement (n=113)	4%	7%	32%	39%	19%

Districts' responses to a later survey question about improvement activities were a bit more varied (see Table 5). These responses suggested that although districts felt that DA helped them identify area(s) in need of improvement, DA did not always help them understand the root causes of local underperformance or identify specific strategies to address their area(s) in need of improvement. In fact, more than 30 percent of responding districts indicated that DA helped them understand the root cause of local underperformance "very little" or "not at all" (Table 5).

However, this question did not directly ask districts to assess their DA provider's knowledge or ability, so districts may have reported that DA fell short in these areas due to another reason (e.g., too short a timeline for DA to support these activities).

Table 5. District respondents' ratings of the extent to which DA helped their improvement work in several specific ways

Did DA help your district in the following areas?	Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	To a great extent
Understand the root cause of underperformance in your district (n=117)	12%	19%	41%	28%
Identify an area(s) of improvement (n=118)	7%	13%	43%	37%
Identify an improvement strategy for your area(s) of improvement (n=117)	11%	15%	48%	26%

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