

April 16, 2021



The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor
State of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Toni Atkins
President pro Tempore
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Senate Budget Committee Chair
State Capitol, Room 5019
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Philip Ting
Assembly Budget Committee Chair
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Linda Darling-Hammond
State Board of Education President
1430 N Street, Room 5111
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Tony Thurmond
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
1430 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Sent Via Email

Re: California Partnership for the Future of Learning Education Budget Priorities

Dear Governor Newsom, Senate and Assembly Leadership and Budget Committee Chairs Atkins, Rendon, Skinner, and Ting, State Board of Education President Darling-Hammond, and Superintendent of Public Instruction Thurmond:

We write as the California Partnership for the Future of Learning to share our priorities for the 2021 K-12 education budget and to provide recommendations for allocating the latest rounds of federal education stimulus funds. The influx of federal funds and the better-than-expected state economic recovery combine to offer the state an historic opportunity to address the tragic, systemic inequities in education only further highlighted by the pandemic. We propose here nothing less than a transformational, integrated set of investments to enable California to build back its public education system with a restorative restart, especially for the most impacted low-income communities and students of color. Specifically, we are asking for increased and multi-year funding for:

- Community schools and to build state and local capacity for restorative educational practices to support students and families (\$2.5 billion one-time, available for 7 years);
- School climate surveys (\$100 million one-time, available for 5 years);
- Educator and staff professional development (\$900 million one-time, available for 3 years);
- Social-emotional learning and trauma-informed educator professional development (\$225 million one-time, available for 3 years); and
- Educator recruitment and workforce investment grants (\$1.5 billion, available for 5 years).

The [California Partnership for the Future of Learning](#) is a statewide alliance of community organizing and advocacy groups advancing a shared vision of a transformational, racially just education system built for us all. It is led by [Advancement Project California](#), [Californians for Justice](#), [PICO California](#), and [Public Advocates](#), with the support of [Community Coalition](#), [InnerCity Struggle](#), and over a dozen grassroots, research and philanthropic partners.

We appreciate the tremendous amount of work and thoughtfulness that has gone into supporting California's most high-need students in recovering from the pandemic and we thank you in advance for your consideration of our proposals to accelerate learning recovery and promote school transformation to support whole-child wellness and academic success.

1. Build School and Statewide Capacity for Restorative Learning and Recovery by Expanding Investment in the California Community Schools Partnership Program to \$2.5 Billion Available Over 7 Years

We strongly support the Administration and Legislature's commitment to expanding the community schools model. We are also confident that, with sufficient investment and support, the state's Community Schools Partnership Program can be used to ensure an effective use of funds that drives a restorative approach to recovering from the pandemic that embeds transformational approaches to learning at all levels of our educational system. To that end, we request that \$2.5 billion be invested over 7 years to expand the California Community Schools Partnership Program ("CCSPP") to reimagine and rebuild our schools post-pandemic by focusing on sustainable systemic transformation.

We recommend using the following combination of federal stimulus (approximately \$2.4 billion) and Prop 98 (approximately \$100 million) funds for this purpose, including appropriating:

- \$154 million from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act ("CRRSA") GEER II fund for public schools;
- \$671 million from the CRRSA ESSER II state set aside;
- The entire \$1.5 billion American Rescue Plan Act ("ARPA") ESSER III state set aside for learning recovery grants, summer enrichment, after school programs, and discretionary funds; and
- \$99 million from the ARPA fund for homeless students.

Schools, particularly those serving high numbers of vulnerable students, must address exacerbated inequities and trauma from the pandemic. We need schools to develop and scale new capacities, such as rebuild trust and collaboration with parents, educators and students through relationship-centered practices, address lost learning opportunities in an engaging and student-centered way, and quickly hire and effectively train personnel to address whole-child needs.

We believe that the work schools must do in the short-term to address the immediate needs of the most vulnerable students can and should lay the groundwork for long-term systemic transformation to strengthen our educational system to be [restorative places](#) that eradicate racial inequities. To do this effectively, school sites and LEAs must get clear direction and support (both resources and technical assistance) from the state. We suggest a two-pronged approach to expanding the CCSPP that will 1) provide highest poverty schools with a dedicated funding stream to establish and expand community schools and 2) build capacity statewide to support school sites and districts now and for the long term.

a. Provide 90% of Funds (\$2.25 Billion) Directly to Highest Poverty Schools

Under our proposal, 90% of the CCSPP funds (approximately \$2.25 billion) would be allocated directly to school sites. Rather than using a grant application process which can further inequity, all highest poverty schools (91% poverty, approximately 1,700) would pre-qualify to receive an average of \$275,000 per year for 5 years (totaling approximately \$1.25 million each). Amounts should be adjusted for school size with larger schools receiving a higher amount and smaller schools receiving less. Funding would follow a 5-year cohort model with Cohort 1 receiving funding starting in 2021 and Cohort 2 receiving funding beginning in 2023.

To be eligible for the CCSPP funds, schools should be required to 1) address the four pillars of community schools, as well as center relationships and name and address racial equity, and 2) work with a coach or technical assistance provider.

i. Address the Four Pillars of Community Schools, Center Relationships, and Name and Address Racial Equity

To qualify for the CCSPP funds, we recommend that schools be required to address the [four pillars of community schools](#) (integrated student supports, expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, active family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership practices), and follow the values and principles that we outlined in our [February 12, 2021](#) letter to the Legislature such as: 1) centering relationships, including collaborating with students, families, educators, community partners, and administrators to develop the “community schools plan” which should be presented in a public meeting with the school and/or district stakeholders, and 2) naming and addressing racial equity, including incorporating culturally and linguistically inclusive and relevant conditions, instructional and other materials, and teaching and learning practices.

In addition to engaging in a community visioning process at the school site with students, families, educators, administrators and community partners to develop an initial community school plans, schools would also have to provide annual public updates to support a process of continuous improvement in which schools reflect on learnings from the previous year and present plans for the coming year.

ii. Require Schools to Work With A Coach or Technical Assistance Provider

In addition to following the principles and pillars outlined above, schools would be required to use a portion of their grant to work with one or more coaches or technical assistance (“TA”) providers of their choice to ensure support is tailored to the school’s needs. For example, the TA partner could be based in the district or county, or be an independent service provider. This TA-provider would serve to coach school teams and help build the capacity of the community school staff lead, or educator and community partners teams implementing the plan. Technical assistance provided at this level is vital to school success and capacity-building because it can be tailored to address specific school needs at a more granular level than technical support provided by the county or state and is flexible enough to address changes in a school’s TA needs year to year. For instance, a school may require support in addressing trauma-informed social-emotional learning one year and the following year seek support to revamp racial/ethnic studies curriculum.

b. Use 10% of Funds (\$250 Million Over 5 Years) to Build Statewide Capacity

Prong two of our proposal requires ongoing investment (we recommend approximately \$250 million over seven years) to build statewide capacity to support school sites and local educational agencies (“LEAs”), including: \$10.5 million for a statewide community schools Lead agency and advisory council; \$90 million for identifying and investing in technical assistance providers (“TA providers”) to build capacity throughout the state; \$70 million to create a tutoring and engagement corps, and \$72.5 million to build capacity of the 58 county offices of education. The first of the four-part approach was described in a.ii. above (schools pick their coach(es)/TA provider(s) using funds provided through the direct school grant). The remaining components to build statewide capacity for transformative community schools are outlined below:

i. Create a Statewide Community Schools Lead Agency & Advisory Council

We propose establishing a statewide community schools Lead agency(ies) that have expertise in community schools, racial equity and school transformation, to provide ongoing oversight of this program. We propose \$1.5 million a year for 7 years totaling \$10.5 million. (Existing state example: [School Climate / MTSS Initiative](#) - Orange County, UCLA Center for Transformation of Schools, Butte County.) The Lead agency would also facilitate a statewide council (“Council”) composed of groups/individuals that represent students and families of color, community and after-school providers, educators, administrators, and researchers. Stipends should be included for all Council participants. The Council’s responsibilities would include:

- Designing a California framework for community schools that focuses on relationships, racial equity, and systemic whole-school transformation;
- Providing ongoing governance -- monitoring, evaluation, continuous improvement; and
- Identifying and selecting TA providers to build additional state capacity aligned to the framework (allocating \$90 million for this purpose). This is key to build new capacities at the

state-level need to support LEAs and schools in creating racially just, relationship-centered school transformation.

- Through a request for proposal process, funds would be granted to scale the services of the selected providers which could be counties, districts, nonprofits, CCEE, etc.
- Existing state example: [Educator Workforce Investment Grants](#).

ii. Create a California Tutoring and Engagement Corp

Part three of our proposal to build capacity in the system statewide is to create a California tutoring and engagement corps that can train, hire, and deploy staff to schools and LEAs to meet increased staffing needs to provide learning acceleration and social-emotional supports, and engage students and families who feel disconnected from school. Young people and families who have been financially impacted by the pandemic should be prioritized in hiring which would be a win-win for students and the community: high school and college-age youth, family members, and community members could earn wages or stipends while sharing their experience and knowledge and building new skills, and students could benefit from the deeper support, mentorship, and connections to their communities. These new hires and partners should reflect the racial, ethnic, and linguistic makeup of students in the community.

We suggest allocating \$70 million for this purpose. Existing models for this include Americorps and the City Year model which are used to quickly hire and train personnel.

iii. Build County Office of Education Capacity

The final part of this proposal includes providing funding for the 58 County Offices of Education to build their capacity around the framework for Community Schools Transformation so they can provide TA and oversight for districts and schools in the long-term. We propose that county offices would receive an average of \$1.25 million over 5 years (\$72.5M in total).

2. Provide \$100 Million in One-Time Prop 98 Funds for School Climate Surveys and Make School Climate a State Indicator on the California School Dashboard

We wholeheartedly support the Administration's goal of investing in school climate surveys to 1) gather information on valid and reliable school climate, 2) support LEAs in implementing and conducting annual surveys, and 3) provide training on interpreting data to support continuous improvement. We recommend increasing the proposed investment of \$10 million in one-time Prop 98 funds to \$100 million available over five years and making school climate a state indicator. We also suggest the following modifications to strengthen the Governor's proposal:

a. Purpose of School Climate Surveys and Relevance to Student Success

School climate encompasses a school's overall culture which deeply informs the day-to-day experiences of students. Data demonstrates that student social and emotional growth and academic

achievement increase when schools cultivate a sense of safety and belonging and provide students with healthy adult-student and peer-to-peer support. Now more than ever schools are struggling to accelerate learning recovery and meet the multi-faceted needs of students and families as they heal from trauma induced by the pandemic and ongoing racial tensions and white supremacist cultural and educational norms. Using a school climate survey to collect school climate perception data is the first step in creating a positive school climate.

b. Students, Families, and School Staff Should be Surveyed

We recommend using school climate surveys to gauge the experiences of students, families and all school staff, rather than limiting it to students, parents and educators. Survey results should also be disaggregated by race and student groups. Survey results provide schools with insightful information about how each group perceives conditions for learning which can be used to help schools address the academic, social-emotional, and mental health impacts of the pandemic and other factors affecting student learning and well-being. In addition to teachers, students are in daily contact with a variety of school staff ranging from bus drivers to paraprofessionals and administrators. To fully understand a school's culture, surveys should be conducted as comprehensively as possible and not limit the school staff surveyed to educators.

School climate survey results need to be disaggregated by racial and other student groups. Students experience schools differently, and their perceptions of schools differ. Disaggregating school climate data by the groups that exist within school districts helps to uncover these differences, allowing educators and administrators to more effectively allocate resources and target supports in ways that create positive school experiences and close achievement gaps for each student. Data disaggregation by school site and student groups would further support LEAs and schools as they work to address the diverse needs of their students.

c. Include School Site Staff in Training on Conducting School Climate Surveys and Interpreting Data

Adequate multi-year funding is needed to build capacity at the LEA and school site level to assess and improve school climate. Moreover, training on survey implementation and interpreting data should be expanded to include both LEAs and school site staff. Surveys should also be complemented by a community focus group and/or interviews.

Survey findings need to be discussed with students, families, educators, school staff, and other community members in order to complement and deepen understanding of their school conditions and climate survey results to make meaning of the data and to translate that meaning into new or revised actions for improvement. We need to leverage the data to change things that are not working well, and that process needs to be done in partnership with students and families to develop plans and solutions.

We support the [School Conditions and Climate Work Group recommendation](#) that “[s]chool districts and schools should utilize a variety of modalities to gather input on the ‘meaning’ of the data. For example, focus groups can be facilitated, campus walk-throughs undertaken to see if the data collected is visually and physically apparent, listening circles formed to include the stakeholders most impacted by the data (e.g. student listening circles, teacher listening circles, etc.), and interviews conducted to explore the impact of the data with individuals and groups of stakeholders.”

Increasing investments in school climate surveys and making those investments ongoing will enable LEAs to receive multi-year technical assistance to build their capacity, and better enable LEAs to build the capacity of individual school site educators and staff, to effectively interpret and use school climate survey data to create transformational change at the school level.

d. Make School Climate a State Indicator on the California School Dashboard

School climate should be made a state indicator and reported on the California School Dashboard (“Dashboard”). Without comparable statewide data, school climate is only included in the Dashboard as a local indicator showing whether surveys were conducted. The Dashboard does not reflect the findings of the surveys or any reflection of the disparate experiences between student groups. As a result, the state does not have data necessary to ensure that schools and LEAs who are struggling to provide students with a positive, safe, and culturally-affirming school climate will receive the support needed to improve school conditions.

The Governor’s January budget proposal includes funds to gather information on valid, reliable and appropriate school climate surveys. We recommended that such work build off the 2017 findings and recommendations of the School Conditions and Climate Work Group and be expanded to include 1) refining and standardizing school climate survey tools and implementation practices across LEAs and school sites and 2) making school climate a state priority for all schools by establishing and requiring districts to conduct a consistent annual baseline school climate survey. Doing so will produce comparable data that can be used to inform policies and improve technical assistance and capacity-building offered to districts and school sites. It also allows for local flexibility by permitting LEAs to add questions of local interest to the standardized questions to be determined by the State Board of Education.

e. Provide LEAs With a Menu of School Climate Survey Tools

The School Conditions and Climate Work Group also recommended that “the CDE should provide a menu of state-vetted and state-supported survey tools and instruments to LEAs. The menu should contain survey tools that cover four research-based school conditions and climate domains and related constructs: (1) Safety, (2) Relationships, (3) Conditions for Teaching and Learning, and (4) Empowerment. LEAs could also add additional constructs to understand specific local needs.”

LEAs should also have the option to use a survey instrument that does not appear on the menu as long as their alternative survey covers the suggested domains and constructs that are consistent with

the state indicator. While California Healthy Kids Survey is a good option for LEAs as it is the most widely used survey in the state, we also must not limit any new, creative, and innovative survey collection tools and instruments, especially in a post-pandemic world.

3. Increase Funding for Educator and Staff Professional Development, Including Anti-Racist Training and Training on Student and Family Engagement to \$900 Million Available Over 3 Years

We support the Governor’s decision to invest in expedited educator and school staff professional development (“PD”) in high-need areas, including accelerated learning, re-engaging students, restorative practices, implicit bias training, and creating and expanding courses on ethnic studies.

We recommend increasing the investment in PD for teachers, administrators, and other in-person staff to \$900 million available for 3 years using Prop 98 funds. Educator PD should be expansive and include expanded learning staff, such as paraprofessionals and staff from community based organizations with whom schools and LEAs partner. PD provided to administrators should specifically include principal and school leader training (especially on collaborative leadership practices and systems change work).

Additionally, the educator professional development package should include dedicated resources to support LEAs in prioritizing high-quality staff training on student and family engagement. The pandemic has intensified the barriers that already existed between schools and families, making it even more critical that the state invest in training teachers, staff and administrators on relationship-centered practices that are rooted in trust in order to build strong and equitable relationships with families. For example, student and family engagement should include using parent teacher home visits as a tool to help teachers and families build relationships, develop shared understanding and goals, and engage families in student learning.

Lastly, PD funding should also specifically address relationship-centered, racially just community schools practices including anti-racist practice training (not just implicit bias training.) Furthermore, funding should be permitted for coaches and master teachers to support school sites and LEAs in providing targeted PD and developing skills of teachers, administrators and school site staff.

4. Increase Funding for Social-Emotional Learning and Trauma-Informed Educator Professional Development to \$225 Million Available Over 3 Years

We support the Governor’s proposal to award funds to LEAs to support the implementation of high quality integrated academic, behavioral, and social-emotional learning (“SEL”) practices in an integrated multitiered system of support at the schoolwide level and to expand the state’s capacity to support LEAs in implementing SEL, trauma-informed practices, and culturally relevant, affirming, and sustaining practices by creating statewide resources.

We recommended increasing this investment from \$50 million in one-time Prop 98 funds to \$225 million available over 3 years. Students, parents, educators, and school staff alike have endured immense trauma over the past year and recovery will undoubtedly take many years. In order for schools to be places of inclusion and healing, educators need to build their capacity to support students socially and emotionally, as well as academically. LEAs will need sustained investments to develop and implement tiered educator and staff training. Additionally, SEL training should be explicitly anti-racist SEL training so as to avoid further embedding white supremacist norms in our educational practices. Furthermore, LEAs should be required to report planned and actual PD investments and measure the effectiveness of those investments in their LCAP.

5. Increase Teacher Workforce Investments to Improve the Teacher Pipeline and Recruit Diverse and Prepared Educators to \$1.5 Billion Available Over 5 Years

We support the following Prop 98 investments for educator recruitment and retention programs included in the Governor’s budget proposal:

- \$25M for the Classified School Employees Program
- \$100M for the Golden State Teacher Grant Program
- \$100M for the Teacher Residency Grant Program

We recommend increasing investments in these educator recruitment and retention programs to \$1.5 billion available for 5 years using Prop 98 funds and prioritize attracting, preparing and supporting a diverse pool of educators. Prior to the pandemic, 80% of school districts reported having a teacher shortage. According to a report released last month by the Learning Policy Institute (“LPI”), teacher shortages remain a critical problem, especially in such subjects as math and science. Moreover, as teacher shortages persist in high-need schools, low-income students and students of color are often most seriously impacted. This is especially true for high-poverty schools where shortages are acutely felt as these schools have a more difficult time attracting qualified teachers. The state must take proactive steps to build the supply of fully prepared teachers, as these programs aim to do. We urge you to give special attention to programs that expand the teacher pipeline by attracting and retaining qualified, progressive, and anti-racist educators of color. Research shows that residency programs such as the California Teacher Residency Grant Program have been effective in attracting a greater number of teacher candidates of color and prepares them to teach in high-need areas. Each of these programs help attract a diverse pool of educators by offering them financially feasible pathways. Increased investment in teacher preparation and support can stem the attrition that has been exacerbated by the myriad stressors on school communities since the beginning of the pandemic.

Anecdotally, we have heard that the initial investments in the Teacher Residency Grant Program did not yield enough candidates because the financial aid support was not enough to attract people. In order to recruit diverse candidates and more Black and Brown educators to reflect the students taught in California’s schools, it is imperative that the state commit multi-year funding to attract new teachers by providing larger, livable stipends and program grants. By assuring prospective teachers financial assistance, teacher residencies can promote new teacher recruitment and retention, particularly in high-need areas.

Conclusion

We have an unprecedented opportunity as we begin our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic to use significant state and federal educational dollars to invest in long-term, transformational solutions that reimagine and rebuild schools to help California's highest-need students thrive. Accordingly, we urge you to incorporate these recommendations into the State's 2021-22 budget. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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