



October 24, 2019

INFORMATION ITEM

SUBJECT: COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW

Strategic Plan Priority Area: Child Health, Child Development, and Family Functioning

Goals: 1) All children thrive by achieving optimal health prenatal through age 5; 2) All children birth through age 5 have high-quality, nurturing environments that ensure their learning readiness; and 3) All families have the knowledge, skills, and resources to support their children's optimal development.

SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE

County Offices of Education (COE) play a key role locally, regionally, and statewide in various areas related to the well-being of children birth through adulthood, and are positioned in all 58 counties throughout the state to optimize local, state, and federal dollars to effectively support cradle to career education in their local communities. Due to local control, no COE plays an identical role in early childhood education (ECE) locally, regionally, or statewide, but they are a key partner. In various counties and regions, COEs play the role of child care program administrator for direct services (e.g., Head Start and Early Head Start, Alternative Payment Program, and California State Preschool Program [CSPP]) and ECE systems support (e.g., Quality Counts California [QCC] Local Child Care and Development Planning Council [LPC], Quality Rating and Improvement System [QRIS] Block Grants, Resource & Referral [R&R], etc.) in order to best support the educational needs of their constituencies.

Many COEs work with First 5 county commissions to effectively manage local ECE systems (i.e., QCC) to help support infants, toddlers, and school-age children and their families in areas such as mental health, early learning and care, family engagement, and developmental screening. In some instances, the local First 5 county commission resides inside a COE.

While ECE is not a legislatively mandated field for COEs, they are a key part of the early childhood system in many local communities (see Attachment A). Currently, all 58 COEs participate in either CSPP or QCC QRIS Block Grants (or both), 31 have representatives participating on local First 5 county commissions, 52 operate LPCs, and 27 house a local First 5 county commission. Additionally, COEs are the lead agency in 9

county consortia for First 5 IMPACT and have been a strong partner in advancing quality improvement efforts in early childhood education through incentives to early learning and care programs, site-level coaching and technical assistance, and professional development.

Several COEs, First 5 county commissions (including Santa Clara, San Diego, and Fresno), and other key early childhood county agencies work in tight partnership to provide service and system goals, including data infrastructure, leveraging resources, and bringing local/regional partners and stakeholders together, which demonstrates the “Gold Standard” for local county partnership producing child outcomes. COEs are a key infrastructure and systems partner, and are closely aligned with IMPACT 2020 and QCC success that aims to improve the quality of early learning and care settings, improve child health, and provide family engagement resources and support to communities throughout the state.

BACKGROUND OF KEY ISSUES

Historically, one core responsibility of the 58 COEs and county superintendents of schools has been administrative and oversight for local kindergarten through grade 12 (K–12) school funding, which has undergone a recent transformation via the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), the hallmark legislation that fundamentally changed how all local educational agencies (LEAs) in the state are funded, how they are measured for results, and the services and supports they receive. The LCFF was enacted in 2013–14, and it replaced the previous K–12 finance system, which had been in existence for approximately 40 years. For COEs, the LCFF establishes separate funding streams for oversight activities and instructional programs¹, and prioritizes funding for dual language learners, children in poverty (e.g., receiving Free or Reduced Price Meals), and homeless and foster youth. These child-central priorities closely align with local First 5 county commissions and the First 5 California State Commission in supporting the needs of the most vulnerable and at-risk children and families.

Due to LCFF legislation, COEs are responsible for reviewing the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) for LEAs in their county. The LCAP is a three-year plan that describes the goals, actions, services, and expenditures to support positive student outcomes that address state and local priorities. The LCAP also provides an opportunity for LEAs to share their stories of how, what, and why programs and services are selected to meet their local needs.² Additionally, COEs provide technical assistance to their local school districts to support the development of the LCAP.

Along with providing accountability and assistance for local school funding, COEs administer student programs and regional services across the state, such as:

- Special education programs for medically fragile students and students with moderate to severe cognitive disabilities.

¹ “Local Control Funding Formula Overview.” Located on the California Department of Education Website at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/>.

² “Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).” Located on the California Department of Education Website at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/>.

- Court and community schools for incarcerated, adjudicated, and expelled youth.
- Federal and state early education and care programs and services.
- Teacher and administrator training, coaching, and mentoring programs.
- Career technical education programs for high school students.
- Professional development services and supports.
- Curriculum development and assistance.
- Broadband access and information technology supports.
- ECE administrator for direct services and systems support

COES ROLE IN ECE REGIONAL COORDINATION

COEs play a critical role in providing local, regional, and state leadership with other agency partners to effectively coordinate and administer ECE efforts, and continue to align with state initiatives to increase the quality of early learning providers. For example, in Santa Clara County, the COE, in partnership with their local First 5 county commission and other governmental and stakeholder groups, have demonstrated the Gold Standard by collaborating on numerous, high-profile efforts to improve the lives of their youngest learners:

- Since 2010, the Santa Clara COE has been engaged in the development of California’s first Educare Center, Educare of California at Silicon Valley, serving high-need students and families to ensure they are prepared to enter the K–12 system. This project, funded in partnership with First 5 California and First 5 Santa Clara, has helped to lead this robust public-private partnership that is dedicated to improving the quality of early education, child development and family engagement for all children.
- Santa Clara COE and First 5 Santa Clara have been working to implement a unified and integrated early childhood data system (ECIDS) that links ECE data with the K–12 Health and Human Services systems to better inform policy and practice to support children as they transition to kindergarten. The ECIDS collaboration drives a collective agenda around integrating, improving, and expanding early childhood programs and services by linking individual child-level data through a well-defined process of assigning a unique identifier to all children birth to age 5 in Santa Clara County.
- Santa Clara COE administers the Strong Start Initiative, which is a coalition of community leaders (including First 5 Santa Clara), early education providers, nonprofit organizations, elected officials, members of the business community, and other key stakeholders who are committed to expanding access to high-quality early learning opportunities for all children ages 0 to 8 in Santa Clara County. The coalition looks for local, state, and national solutions to help increase access to high-quality early education and conducts advocacy efforts at the state level to encourage increased investments in early learning.³

³ “About Strong Start.” Located on the Strong Start Santa Clara Website at <http://strongstartsacla.org/about/>

Not all COEs have a leadership role or capacity as Santa Clara does in ECE, but all are key QCC partners in their local QRIS systems to leverage funding and resources, coordinate local consortia efforts, develop early learning provider improvement strategies, align standards, and communicate the value of high-quality ECE in their local communities. Some COEs and county superintendents, however, play a statewide or state-level role, including:

- Kern County Superintendent of Schools is the administrative agent for the state-wide Fiscal Crisis Management Team, which assists and provides guidance to local educational agencies in the areas of business and financial management practices.
- Marin COE is the administrative agent for the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence to support counties by serving as strategic thought partners working alongside educators.
- Superintendent Dave Gordon of the Sacramento COE is a commissioner on the Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission, which seeks to oversee the implementation of the Mental Health Services Act.
- Sacramento COE administers the statewide California Preschool Instructional Network contract to provide regional instructors in all 11 California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA) regions to deliver research-based teaching and learning strategies that are age and developmentally appropriate, and based on the California Preschool Learning Foundations.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND ACTION

The Commission has previously approved First 5 IMPACT and IMPACT 2020 funding to improve the quality of early learning and care programs and support California's quality improvement system (QCC). COEs have played a role in the success of IMPACT and the QCC system as key partners in their local communities.

ATTACHMENTS

A. County Offices of Education Regional Coordination Role in Early Childhood Education. Attachment is located on the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association (CCSESA) website at https://ccsesa.org/?wpfb_dl=6981.