

Top-Down Support For Bottom-Up Change

POMONA'S PATH TO IMPROVING
OUTCOMES FOR ALL STUDENTS



Executive Summary

This case study summarizes how the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), California's state school funding law since 2013, is being implemented in Pomona Unified School District (PUSD). It focuses on the perspectives of various education stakeholders including students, teachers, parents, principals, school board members, and district staff to better understand how LCFF is being implemented to achieve the goal of advancing equity in the district. The goal of this report is to inform educators and education system leaders about how district practices have changed as a result of LCFF and to better understand strategies for improving educational outcomes for historically underserved students.

PUSD has undertaken a series of actions under LCFF to improve academic outcomes for historically underserved students (e.g. low-income students, foster youth, English Learners). Early signs of progress resulting from PUSD's efforts include improved levels of student achievement in schools implementing Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a significant decrease in referral and suspension rates overall, and stronger English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics outcomes for students in the classrooms piloting a co-teaching model. While a number of ongoing fiscal and implementation challenges remain for Pomona as the district works towards executing its Pomona 2020 plan, it is clear that progress is being made.

Findings

- 1. LCFF is being implemented as part of a comprehensive strategy to bring about equity and change.** Both Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and teacher-led professional learning, the main areas of focus of this study, are efforts and initiatives that are being leveraged towards equitable and responsive schooling for students.
- 2. Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports are a key lever for change.** The district's senior leadership identified PBIS as a potential strategy to address school climate patterns that have historically marginalized low-income students of color (e.g., suspensions and identifying youth of color for special education services). Pomona started with a select number of PBIS schools, which today has grown to 27 school sites.



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- 3. Success is enabled by transition towards thinking about the whole child and a focus on social and emotional learning.** While PBIS had historically focused on behavior and the social-emotional attributes of learning, there has been a progressive shift towards a whole-child practices approach that incorporates academic, behavioral, social, and emotional strategies utilized by all educators from bell to bell (e.g., student meditation, common behavior expectations across schools, physical environment, and positive classroom expectations).
- 4. Strong school leadership teams have been essential for building sustainability, ownership, and improving student academic outcomes.** All PBIS leadership teams include PBIS teacher coaches working alongside administrators. They work together to pursue common practices around improving student motivation and engagement and implementing alternatives to suspensions.
- 5. There are early signs of progress for the district under LCFF.**
 - The number of Office Discipline Referrals across PBIS schools has decreased by 48 percent, and suspensions have decreased by 61 percent.
 - In 2014–2015, students missed 460,000 minutes of learning time (1,278 days). In 2017–2018, referrals were reduced to 5,369, equalling 240,000 minutes (671 instructional days), resulting in an overall increase of 607 days of instructional time.
 - Across the district, most of the schools that experienced gains in both their English Language Arts (82 percent) and Mathematics (87 percent) scores in PUSD were PBIS schools.
 - Students in co-teaching classrooms are seeing greater gains in academic outcomes than their peers.