

Date of Hearing: April 8, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Darshana R. Patel, Chair
AB 2149 (Garcia) – As Amended March 16, 2026

SUBJECT: Pupil achievement: closing the achievement gap: accountability report

SUMMARY: Requires the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO) to assess and publicly report to the Legislature and the Governor the state’s progress in closing pupil academic achievement gaps and to include recommendations on actions that the state can take to meet its performance targets established pursuant to AB 2225 (Patel) of the 2025–26 Regular Session. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the LAO to assess and publicly report to the Legislature and the Governor the state’s progress in closing pupil academic achievement gaps and to include recommendations on actions that the state can take to meet its performance targets established pursuant to AB 2225 (Patel) of the 2025–26 Regular Session.
- 2) Requires the LAO’s annual report to be completed on or before December 1 of each year as a component of the assessment of the state budget.
- 3) Requires the LAO’s annual report to include, but not be limited to, all of the following:
 - A review and assessment of whether the prior year’s adopted budget aligns with the Closing the Achievement Gap State Operations and Support Plan (Plan) developed pursuant to AB 2225 (Patel) of the 2025–26 Regular Session;
 - An assessment of new and existing unfunded or partially funded mandates or state requirements on local educational agencies (LEAs) and whether those mandates and requirements contribute to, or interfere with, LEAs’ ability to close the achievement gap, including whether those mandates and requirements align with the Plan;
 - An evaluation of state support efforts and the efficacy of state-run and state-directed programs aimed at improving pupil outcomes and closing the achievement gap; and
 - Any barriers that LEAs face in closing the achievement gap.
- 4) Requires the LAO annual report to be submitted in compliance with Section 9795 of the Government Code.
- 5) Requires the LAO to consult with education stakeholders to develop the annual report.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Establishes the single multiple measures public school accountability system, which must measure the overall performance of numerically significant pupil subgroups in schools, including charter schools, school districts, and county offices of education (COEs). Numerically significant pupil subgroups include: ethnic subgroups, socioeconomic

disadvantaged pupils, English learners, long-term English learners, pupils with disabilities, foster youth and homeless youth. (Education Code (EC) 52052)

- 2) Requires Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) to address how the district will address and improve in eight state priority areas, including pupil achievement as measured by, among other things, the percentage of pupils who have successfully completed courses that satisfy the requirements for entrance to the University of California (UC) and the California State University (CSU), or the completion of career pathways. (EC 52060)
- 3) Requires LEAs to adopt and annually revise LCAPs. (EC 47604.33, 52060, and 52066)
- 4) Establishes a single system for providing support (System of Support) to LEAs and schools and for programs established by the federal Every Student Succeeds Act to do all of the following:
 - a) Support the continuous improvement of pupil performance within the state priorities;
 - b) Address the gaps in achievement between pupil subgroups;
 - c) Improve outreach and collaboration with stakeholders to ensure that the goals, actions and services described in school district and COE LCAPs reflect the needs of pupils and the community, especially for historically underrepresented or low-achieving populations (EC 52059.5)
- 5) Establishes the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), whose purpose is to advise and assist school districts, county superintendents of schools, and charter schools in achieving the goals set forth in their LCAPs. The CCEE is required to achieve this purpose by facilitating continuous improvement for LEAs within California's system of public school support. (EC 52074)
- 6) Requires, for any school district for which one or more pupil subgroups meets specified criteria, the county superintendent of schools to provide technical assistance for a minimum of two years following the identification that shall be focused on building the school district's capacity to develop and implement actions and services responsive to pupil and community needs. (EC 52071(c))

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. According to the author, "As an educator, I believe that we must address the pupil accountability gap in our schools. We can no longer afford to treat the achievement gap as a localized problem for LEAs to solve in isolation. AB 2149 ensures that every state dollar and every new mandate is scrutinized for its efficacy in advancing equity, ultimately ensuring that the state's massive investment in public education translates into measurable progress for every child."

Key provisions of the bill. This bill would require the LAO to assess and publicly report to the Legislature and the Governor the state's progress in closing pupil academic achievement gaps

and to include recommendations on actions that the state can take to meet its performance targets established pursuant to AB 2225 (Patel) of the 2025–26 Session. The LAO’s annual report would be required to include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

- A review and assessment of whether the prior year’s adopted budget aligns with the Plan developed pursuant to AB 2225 (Patel) of the 2025–26 Regular Session;
- An assessment of new and existing unfunded or partially funded mandates or state requirements on LEAs and whether those mandates and requirements contribute to, or interfere with, LEAs’ ability to close the achievement gap, including whether those mandates and requirements align with the Plan;
- An evaluation of state support efforts and the efficacy of state-run and state-directed programs aimed at improving pupil outcomes and closing the achievement gap; and
- Any barriers that LEAs face in closing the achievement gap.

The required LAO annual report would be completed on or before December 1 of each year as a component of the assessment of the state budget and require input from education stakeholders.

The Committee may wish to consider that this bill is one of four bills sponsored by the California School Boards Association (CSBA) in the 2025-26 Session to establish “a comprehensive state-level operations and support plan that clearly defines how the state will help LEAs close achievement gaps” (CSBA Closing the Achievement Gap Legislative Package Overview). Other bills include:

- AB 2220 (Muratsuchi) would establish the Closing the Achievement Gap Commission, an advisory body to the State Board of Education (SBE);
- AB 2225 (Patel) would establish a working group to develop a Plan; and
- AB 2514 (Ransom) would require the working group and Plan to be established by AB 2225 (Patel) of the 2025-26 Session to include recommendations for the development of a State of the Achievement Gap Dashboard.

Achievement gaps. Achievement gaps are significant and persistent disparities in student performance and educational attainment between student groups. Achievement gaps exist between different student ethnic and racial groups, as well as between students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. In California, achievement levels between student groups on nearly every indicator of student performance has been making progress in closing the achievement gap, but several student groups still fall behind state averages.

According to a 2015 report from the Economic Policy Institute, “Early Education Gaps by Social Class and Race Start U.S. Children Out on Unequal Footing: A Summary of the Major Findings in Inequalities at the Starting Gate,” achievement gaps begin as early as birth, particularly among students with different socioeconomic backgrounds. The key foundations for learning begin as soon as a child is born, and starting school behind their peers typically persists as children progress through school.

Studies show that the black-white achievement gap has persisted but changed over time. It narrowed in both reading and math from the early 1970s to the late 1980s, then widened in the early 1990s, but has been narrowing consistently since 1999 (Reardon, 2014). In addition, even though the Black/African American subgroup includes pupils at all income levels, its scores are below the scores of economically disadvantaged pupils, which suggests that poverty alone does not explain this outcome. According to Reardon et al., a relatively common question addressed in studies of racial/ethnic achievement gaps (particularly the black-white gap) is the extent to which the observed gaps can be explained by socioeconomic differences between the groups.

A 2004 Review of Economics and Statistics report, described that socioeconomic factors explain almost all (85%) of the black-white math gap, and all of the reading gap at the start of kindergarten. By the third grade, however, the same socioeconomic factors account for only about 60% of both the math and reading black-white gaps. This finding suggests that socioeconomic factors explain, in large part, the black-white differences in cognitive skills at the start of formal schooling, but do not account for the growth of the black-white gap as children progress through elementary school.

The Getting Down to Facts II Current Conditions and Paths Forward for California Schools Summary Report 2018, states: “Difference between black and white students, and Latino and white students, are...greater in California than in most other states. However...family income is more predictive of achievement differences than race/ethnicity. The size of the [achievement] gap shrinks noticeably when student socioeconomic status is considered—and California’s white-Latino gap become smaller than in other states. But the black-white gap persists and exceeds the gap in other states.”

According to a 2022 Policy Analysis for California Education report, *California Test Scores Show the Devastating Effect of the Pandemic on Student Learning*, the first California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) scores released since before the COVID-19 pandemic showed a substantial decline in student learning in both English language arts/literacy (ELA) and mathematics between the 2018–19 and 2021–22 academic years across all student groups. Low-income students, Black students and other students of color, and English learners were severely affected, as shown by student scores. The performance of Black students is particularly concerning; in 2021–22, only 15.9% of students met or exceeded state standards in math (a decline of 4.62 points), and 30.3% met or exceeded them in ELA (a 2.86 point decline). Similarly concerning is the performance of English learners; in 2021–22, only 9.7% of these students met or exceeded state standards in math (a decline of 2.86 points), and 12.5% did in ELA (a 0.35 point decline). Results for other student subgroups are included in Table 1.

Table 1. Percentages of students meeting or exceeding math and ELA standards and differences between 2018–19 and 2021–22, by student group

Subgroup	ELA			Math		
	% Met or exceeded 2019	% Met or exceeded 2022	Difference (percentage points)	% Met or exceeded 2019	% Met or exceeded 2022	Difference (percentage points)
White	65.6	61.4	-4.29	54.2	48.2	-6.06
Two or more races	65.7	59.9	-5.86	55.3	47.1	-8.21
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	43.6	39.7	-3.97	32.6	24.6	-8.01
Hispanic or Latino	40.8	36.4	-4.39	28.1	21.2	-6.81
Filipino	71.6	70.0	-1.55	59.5	54.2	-5.38
Economically disadvantaged	39.2	35.2	-3.97	27.5	21.2	-6.25
English learner	12.8	12.5	-0.35	12.6	9.7	-2.86
Black or African American	33.2	30.3	-2.86	20.5	15.9	-4.62
Asian	77.1	75.3	-1.77	74.4	69.5	-4.90
American Indian or Alaska Native	38.4	33.3	-5.16	26.6	20.7	-5.90
All students	51.1	47.1	-4.04	39.7	33.4	-6.35

Source: PACE

Student achievement on standardized test results in California demonstrates achievement gaps between different race and ethnic groups, students with disabilities and students without disabilities, and students of different socioeconomic statuses. For example, the 2025 CAASPP ELA results for all grades assessed included 32.8% of Black or African American students and 38.84% of Latino students that met or exceeded targeted benchmarks for mathematics, compared to 61.8% of White students, and 74.4% of Asian students. The statewide average was 48.8%. 2025 CAASPP Math results for all grades assessed included 20.1% of Black or African American students and 25.74% of Latino students that met or exceeded targeted benchmarks for mathematics, compared to 51% of White students, and 70.3% of Asian students. The statewide average was 37.3%.

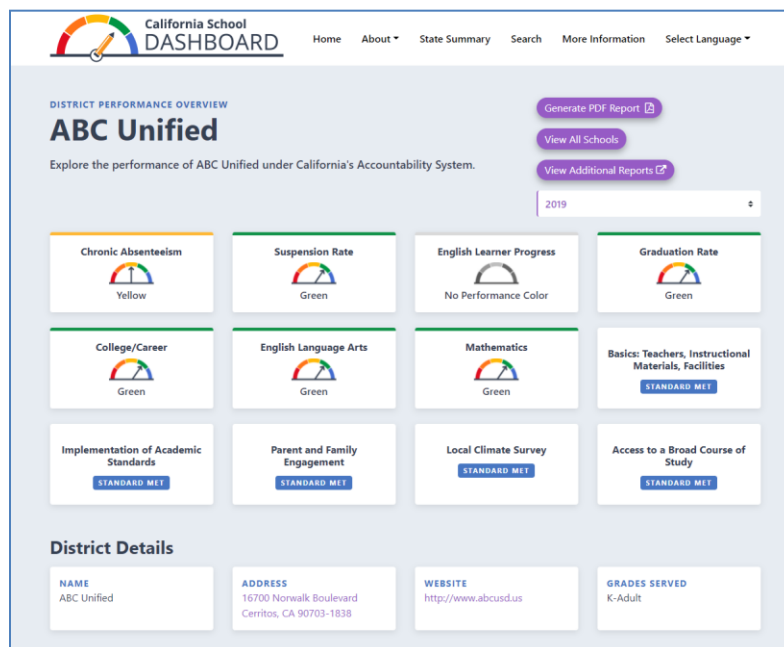
Academic achievement gaps have consequences beyond school. A 2018 Equality of Opportunity Project at Stanford University report, *Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States: An Intergenerational Perspective* states, "Black children born to parents in the bottom household income quintile have a 2.5% chance of rising to the top quintile of household income, compared with 10.6% for whites," and "American Indian and black children have a much higher rate of *downward* mobility than other groups [emphasis in original]."

Statewide efforts to close achievement gaps in California. Since the creation of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and the related accountability measures in 2013, California has developed the "Statewide System of Support" for all LEAs, including school districts, COEs and charter schools. The goal for support at all levels is to assist LEAs and their schools in meeting the needs of each student served, with a focus on building capacity to sustain improvement and effectively address inequities in student opportunities and outcomes. The System of Support is comprised of four entities in current law: the California Department of Education (CDE), SBE, COEs, and CCEE.

The Committee may wish to consider that current law articulates a system of policymaking (the Governor, Legislature and SBE), data collection (CDE and LEAs), technical assistance (CDE, COEs, and CCEE), and practice (LEAs), but there is no entity formally tasked with collecting research related to achievement gaps, and supporting undergraduate and preservice preparation of educators programs. Although achievement gaps are widely studied both at the national and statewide levels, few supports exist to collect, distill and distribute the findings from that research to practitioners and technical assistance providers in order to change statewide policies and local practice.

Several initiatives described below, including Differentiated Assistance (DA), Direct Technical Assistance, and projects facilitated by the CCEE are all aimed at closing the achievement gap. Further, California's K-12 accountability system is based on identifying gaps in student achievement.

LCAPs. The LCFF was established in the 2013-14 fiscal year to address the achievement gap by providing more equitable funding among LEAs, that is, to provide a higher level of funding to LEAs that enroll larger numbers of English learners, foster youth, and students eligible for free- or reduced-price meals (unduplicated pupils) so they could provide those students with additional services and support. The reforms to the funding system were accompanied by changes to the state accountability system, including LCAPs. 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 provides an opportunity for LEAs (school districts, COEs, and charter schools) to share their stories of how, what, and why programs and services are selected to meet their local needs. Current law requires that, before the governing board of a school district considers the adoption of an LCAP, numerous and specific steps be taken to ensure public input in the development of the LCAP, including consulting with parents and soliciting input from the public.



California School Dashboard (Dashboard). The Dashboard is an online tool that reports school and LEA performance and progress on both state and local measures. State measures apply to LEAs, charter schools, and student groups, and are based on data that is collected consistently across the state. Local measures apply at the LEA and charter school level and are based on data collected at the local level. Charter schools are displayed as their own LEA on the Dashboard, independent of their authorizer.

The state and local measures are drawn from the eight priority areas of the LCFF (see section on DA). The Dashboard is updated annually. LEAs receive one of five color-coded performance levels on the state indicators. From

highest to lowest, the five performance levels are: Blue, Green, Yellow, Orange, and Red. The data displayed on the Dashboard is used to determine which LEAs and charter schools receive DA by COEs and the Statewide System of Support. Eligibility for DA is based on the LEA and school performance on the state (colors) and local indicators on the Dashboard. To a large degree, eligibility is based on gaps in achievement.

Equity Multiplier. The LCFF Equity Multiplier provides additional funding to LEAs for allocation to schoolsites with prior year nonstability rates greater than 25% and prior year socioeconomically disadvantaged pupil rates greater than 70%. Equity Multiplier funding is required to be used to provide evidence-based services and supports for students at these schoolsites, and LEAs are also required to document the efforts to improve outcomes for students at these schoolsites in their LCAP. LEA LCAPs are required to establish one or more goals for each school generating Equity Multiplier funding and to address all student groups that have the lowest performance level on one or more state indicators on the Dashboard. In addition, the LEA is required to address any underlying issues in the credentialing, subject matter preparation, and retention of the school's educators. The goals for each Equity Multiplier school site are required to identify specific metrics for each identified student group.

California's System of Support. California's System of Support is focused on improving the outcomes of California's students. Current law establishes that the purpose of the System of Support is to build the capacity of LEAs in each of the following areas:

- Based on the results of the Dashboard: support the continuous improvement of student performance in each of the eight state priority areas;
- Address the gaps in achievement between student groups; and
- Improve outreach and collaboration with stakeholders to ensure that goals, actions, and services described in school district and COE LCAPs reflect the needs of students and the community, especially for historically underrepresented or low-achieving groups.

The System of Support provides three levels of support to LEAs and schools. The first level, Universal or Support for All, is made up of resources and assistance that are available to all LEAs and schools. The second level of support, Targeted/Supplemental Support or DA, is individually designed support available to LEAs that meet the eligibility requirements set by the SBE. The third level of support, Intensive Direct Technical Assistance, may be provided to LEAs by the CCEE that are identified as having persistent performance issues and a lack of improvement over three out of four consecutive years.

Outside of the three levels of support, a referral to the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) Office may occur with approval from the SBE if there is a lack of implementation or significant improvement after working through eligible levels of support. A description of the supports available to LEAs at each level are described below:

- Level 1 – Universal Support for All: Supports available to LEAs include various state and local agencies provide an array of support resources, tools, and technical assistance that all LEAs may use to improve student performance at the LEA and school level and to narrow disparities among student groups across the LCFF priorities, including recognition for success and the ability to share promising practices.

- Level 2 – Targeted/Supplemental DA: Supports available to LEAs include COEs, the CDE, and the Geographic Lead Agencies provide DA for eligible LEAs, in the form of individually designed assistance, to address identified performance issues, including significant disparities or gaps in performance among student groups.
- Level 3 – Intensive (Direct Technical Assistance): The CCEE provides more intensive and customized support for eligible LEAs. Determination for acceptance of the referral is made by CCEE after consultation with the eligible LEA and any provider of technical assistance/DA.
- State Level Intervention: The SPI may, with the approval of the SBE, intervene where the CCEE determines that the LEA meets either of the following criteria: 1) the LEA has failed or is unable to implement the recommendations of the CCEE; or 2) inadequate performance of the LEA is either so persistent or acute as to require intervention by the SSPI.

Differentiated Assistance. For districts and COEs to be eligible for DA, the same student group must meet the criteria in two different State Priority Areas. For 2024 DA determinations, districts and COEs became eligible based on:

- Student group performance in two or more LCFF state priority areas;
- Performance on local indicators in two or more priority areas;
- A combination of student group performance in one state priority area and local indicator performance in one different priority area; or
- Failing to submit California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) data on time (only applicable to districts and COEs).

The eligibility criteria for charter schools are the same as for districts and COEs, except that charter schools must meet them for two years. Results from the 2023 and 2024 Dashboards are used in DA determinations for charter schools.

In 2024, 436 districts and COEs are eligible for DA. This is a decrease from 2023, in which approximately 466 or 47% of all COEs and school districts were eligible for DA. In 2024, 153 or 15.4% of the COEs and school districts eligible for DA in 2023 made significant improvements and are no longer eligible for DA. An additional 123 new districts and COEs are eligible for assistance in 2024. The top three student groups meeting the eight state priority area criteria in the highest frequency are: long-term English learners, students with disabilities, and homeless youth.

In 2024, 173 or 13.6% of charter schools are eligible to receive DA. This is a decrease from 2023, in which approximately 203 or 16% of all charter schools were eligible for DA. In 2024, 94 or 7.4% of the charter schools eligible for DA in 2023 made significant improvements and are no longer eligible for DA. An additional 67 new charter schools are eligible for assistance in 2024. Across the 2023 and 2024 Dashboards, the top three student groups meeting the eight state priority area criteria in the highest frequency for charter schools are students with disabilities, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and Hispanic.

Evaluation of Differentiated Assistance provided several recommendations and found district and county leaders were generally positive about DA and its potential to improve student outcomes in the state. A 2022 WestEd report, *Evaluation of California's Differentiated Assistance*, demonstrated findings from a triangulation of data across different sources indicate that DA has room for improvement, particularly in some districts and counties, but that it is broadly supported by system leaders. Findings showed early signs of improving student outcomes. Report recommendations included developing and distributing guidance on best practices for providing DA, evaluating local capacity to provide DA, and targeting state and regional supports where capacity needs are greatest, and reducing administrative burden to free up system leaders' time to focus on improvement. Authors of the report also noted a need for a specific post-pandemic study to evaluate impacts on student achievement.

California Collaborative on Educational Excellence. Current law establishes the CCEE with a purpose to advise and assist school districts, county superintendents of schools, and charter schools in achieving the goals set forth in their LCAPs. According to the CCEE's website, "The CCEE is a statewide agency that works to strengthen California's public school system so that districts can build their capacity to improve student outcomes. Our agency does this by working collaboratively with other statewide agencies, COEs, and stakeholders so we — as a collective group — can tackle challenges as a team. In some cases, the CCEE can also offer one-on-one support to districts through direct technical assistance." The CCEE is governed by a board that includes: the SPI, the President of the SBE, a county superintendent of schools appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules, a teacher appointed by the Speaker of the Assembly, and a superintendent of a school district appointed by the Governor.

Arguments in support. The CSBA writes, "This legislative package proposes that the state, similar to local school district and county office of education boards, must adopt clear goals, measurable benchmarks and transparent and understandable reporting to the public on the state's progress towards a more aligned state system that improves outcomes for California students. This north star would guide the state's public education entities and serve as a common throughline to a shared goal of closing achievement gaps. Together, they represent a landmark effort by the Legislature to help further focus and align the state's policy, fiscal and operational efforts to support schools and establish a new level of shared accountability between state entities and local educational agencies for closing achievement gaps."

Recommended Committee Amendments. *Staff recommends that the bill be amended as follows:*

- AB 2225 (Patel) would require the Plan to include, "specific goals and benchmarks for the state to support local educational agencies in closing the achievement gap." This bill requires the LAO report to include "recommendations on actions that the state can take to meet its *performance targets*." The term *performance targets* is not included in AB 2225 (Patel). In order to align the requirements of the LAO report with the Plan, Committee amendments will remove "performance targets" and replace it with "specific goals and benchmarks for the state to support local educational agencies in closing the achievement gap" as described in AB 2225 (Patel)
- Require the LAO report to first be provided on December 1, 2028, and then on December 1st for each year thereafter.

Related legislation. AB 2220 (Muratsuchi) of the 2025-26 Session would establish the Closing the Achievement Gap Commission, an advisory body to the SBE.

AB 2225 (Patel) of the 2025-26 Session would establish a working group to develop a Closing the Achievement Gap State Operations and Support Plan.

AB 2514 (Ransom) of the 2025-26 Session would require the working group and Closing the Achievement Gap State Operations and Support Plan to be established by AB 2225 (Patel) of the 2025-26 Session to include recommendations for the development of a State of the Achievement Gap Dashboard.

SB 153 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 38, Statutes of 2024, established the LCFF Equity Multiplier to provide additional funding to LEAs for allocation to schoolsites with prior year nonstability rates greater than 25% and prior year socioeconomically disadvantaged pupil rates greater than 70%.

SB 77 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review), Chapter 53, Statutes of 2019, established the Center to Close Achievement Gaps. This bill required the center to seek to fulfill its mission and improve the capacity of teachers, education specialists, and school administrators to close gaps in academic achievement through both of the following: strengthening professional preparation on effective instructional practices, effective school leadership practices, effective LEA leadership practices, and the use of data and continuous improvement strategies; and serving LEAs as a clearinghouse for evidence-based strategies and promising practices for closing academic achievement gaps.

AB 1173 (O'Donnell) of the 2019-20 Session would have required, within one year of appropriation, the establishment of the Center to Close Achievement Gaps at a California State University (CSU) campus to be chosen by the CSU chancellor. Stated that the mission of the Center would be to provide resources and assistance to LEAs to eliminate academic achievement gaps as identified by the state's accountability system, the Dashboard. This bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Anaheim Unified School District
Cajon Valley Union School District
California Charter Schools Association
California School Boards Association
California State PTA
Campbell Union School District
Capistrano Unified School District
CFT – A Union of Educators & Classified Professionals, AFT, AFL-CIO
Chowchilla Elementary School District
Cupertino Union School District
El Monte Union High School District
El Rancho Unified School District
Encinitas Union School District
Escondido Union School District

Gilroy Unified School District
Hanford Elementary School District
Imperial County Office of Education
Irvine Unified School District
Lammersville Unified School District
Legislative Action Committee - Santa Clara County School Boards Association
Los Angeles County School Trustee Association
Los Angeles Unified School District
Madera County Superintendent of Schools
Milpitas Unified School District
Monterey Peninsula Unified School District
Mountain View Whisman School District
Napa Valley Unified School District
San Mateo County School Boards Association
San Mateo Union High School District
Santa Clara County Office of Education
Sierra Sands Unified School District
Spreckels Union School District
Ventura Unified School District Superintendent
Warner Unified School District
Westmorland Union Elementary School District
28 individuals

Opposition

None on file

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