

IS FUNDING FOR HIGH-NEED STUDENTS ACTUALLY REACHING THOSE STUDENTS?

A REVIEW OF FRESNO UNIFIED'S LOCAL CONTROL ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN

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ABOUT US

ACLU

The ACLU Foundations of California work to protect equal educational opportunities for all students in the state. The organizations do this by ensuring that schools provide a safe learning environment for students—places that foster diversity based on race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion or disability, and that maintain fair and equitable discipline policies and funding allocations. For more information, visit www.aclunc.org.

Fresno Building Healthy Communities

Fresno Building Healthy Communities is a coalition of residents, young people, and community-and faith-based organizations working together to create One Healthy Fresno, where all children and families can live healthy, safe, and productive lives.

Fresno Building Healthy Communities focuses on key areas inspired by the community's stated priorities. Partners work in teams to influence policy and to change systems through action and advocacy. The Schools Action Team advocates for changes in the education system to increase investment in neighborhood schools and create an environment that supports youth and their families so students can succeed and graduate. For more information, visit www.fresnobhc.org.

Advancement Project

Advancement Project is a next generation, multiracial civil rights organization. In California, the organization champions the struggle for greater equity and opportunity for all, fostering upward mobility in communities most impacted by economic and racial injustice. Advancement Project California builds alliances and trust, uses data-driven policy solutions, creates innovative tools, and works alongside communities to ignite social transformation. For more information, visit www.advancementprojectca.org.

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Find appendices online at www.aclunc.org/FresnoLCAP

Appendix A: ACLU Administrative Appeal to the California Department of Education

Appendix B: Excerpts of the CDE Appeal Decision to the ACLU Administrative Appeal-Request for Appeal—Fresno Unified School District, American Civil Liberties Union, Appellant

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May 2017, the California Department of Education (CDE) issued a decision directing the Fresno Unified School District (FUSD) to take corrective action on its 2016-2017 Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) in response to a Uniform Complaint filed by the ACLU Foundations of California, in partnership with the Fresno Building Healthy Communities coalition. Specifically, CDE compelled FUSD to improve transparency regarding their spending plan for millions of dollars in supplemental and concentration funds earmarked for high-need students, and redirect some of these funds away from expenses such as janitorial staffing, increased policing, and surveillance.

As a result of the state's decision, FUSD had to justify and/or reallocate millions of dollars earmarked for high-need students to be in compliance with state education law and the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). In addition to its impact on FUSD, the CDE decision sent a clear message to school districts across California that funding for high-need students must be used specifically to improve their academic achievement, rather than to fill miscellaneous budget gaps.

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This report provides a summary of what parents, students, and advocates should expect when reviewing their school district's yearly LCAP, as well as recent changes to the LCAP template. Additionally, the document provides a brief review of the CDE decision and analyzes how Fresno Unified funds support its high-need students. The report concludes with testimonials from parents as well as community-informed recommendations for FUSD to strengthen engagement with parents, students, and community members in the design and implementation of its yearly LCAP.

BRIEF SUMMMARY OF CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION DECISION



In the summer of 2016, the ACLU and several community partners wrote to Fresno Unified, expressing concern that FUSD's 2015-2016 LCAP did not comply with state law. Concerns centered on how FUSD planned to spend supplemental and concentration (S&C) funds (funds designated to help high-need students), funds for programs intended for all students, and funds allocated for building upgrades and increased school policing. After the summer 2016 letter to FUSD, the ACLU filed a Uniform Complaint Procedures (UCP) complaint to the CDE, and FUSD denied these issues in a formal response. The ACLU appealed FUSD's decision to the CDE. The CDE agreed that Fresno Unified's LCAP did not comply with its legal obligations and made several important findings, clarifying how districts are supposed to allocate their funding.

The outcome of this appeal meant that FUSD could not adopt its 2017-2018 LCAP without correcting the problems outlined in the CDE's decision. Fresno Unified also must share its new findings with parent committees and the public. With CDE monitoring, FUSD had to fix the problems before adopting a new LCAP.³

- First, the CDE made clear that Fresno Unified's attempt to use S&C funds for police did not meet the requirements of demonstrating how those funds were used to help high-need students. The CDE made the same finding for many other expenditures that FUSD wanted to use S&C funds for, including: \$5.6 million to redesign the middle schools, \$3.8 million for employee supports, and allocations for facilities maintenance, such as 40 additional custodians, ground maintenance, and high school bathroom renovations.
- Second, the CDE clarified that simply referencing that 88 percent of FUSD's students are high-need did not provide an adequate or sufficient justification for why services are "principally directed or effective in meeting" the needs of these students.
- 1 See Appendix A: ACLU Administrative Appeal to the California Department of Education.
- 2 See Appendix B: Excerpts of the CDE appeal decision to the ACLU Administrative Appeal-Request for Appeal – Fresno Unified School District, American Civil Liberties Union, Appellant.
- 3 See Appendix A: ACLU Administrative Appeal to the California Department of Education.

SUMMARY OF LCAP REQUIREMENTS

In 2014, California passed the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), a law that fundamentally changed the way the state funds its public schools. The Legislature intended LCFF to promote equity by directing more resources to high-need students, including those who are low-income, foster youth, and English-language learners.

Under the LCFF, school districts are required to create a LCAP, which is a plan that school districts must write every year to describe how they plan to spend funds to meet annual goals for all of their students. Here are the central sections and requirements of an LCAP:

- ▶ It must be comprehensive. The LCAP is a comprehensive document meant to increase transparency and accountability to anyone who may be interested in school districts' funding choices.⁴
- ▶ School districts need to hear from their communities. School districts must consult with students, parents, teachers, community members, and basically anyone who may be interested in the LCAP process.⁵
- School districts must establish formal groups to review the LCAP. They must establish Parent Advisory Committees (PACs) and must present PACs with drafts of the plan as well as respond in writing to any comments. School districts where more than 15 percent of the students are English learners must also establish a District English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC), which gives input to school districts as the LCAP is being written.
- School districts must hear from the public. School districts hold public meetings and solicit comments and recommendations on ways to make the LCAP better. School districts have an obligation to accept written comments from community members.
- School districts must adopt the LCAP in a public meeting. This gives community members the opportunity to see whether school boards were responsive to their feedback and gives the public another opportunity to offer input before the vote.
- School districts must explain how they performed under state evaluation criteria for parental involvement, student achievement, school climate, and other areas.
- School districts must reflect on two to three of the most significant ways that they plan to create change for high-need students.

⁴ Read more about how the LCFF works at https://www.aclunc.org/sites/default/files/LCFF.pdf.

⁵ Educ. Code §§ 52060(g), 52066(g).

⁶ Educ. Code §§ 52063, 52069.

⁷ Educ. Code §§ 52063, 52069.

THE LCAP, SECTION-BY-SECTION

SUMMARY SECTION. In this section, school districts must describe:

- Two to three of its most significant plans to help high-need students in their district.
- School districts must explain significant progress and greatest needs for improvement.

ANNUAL UPDATE SECTION. School districts must describe:

- The previous year's goals and outcomes;
- Where the school districts spend S&C funding and how these programs helped highneed students;
- Data showing how school districts made progress towards goals from the previous year;
- Instances where the district did not spend money budgeted for the year.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SECTION. School districts must describe:

How parents, students, and community members participated in the LCAP process and how community feedback was included.

GOALS, ACTIONS, AND SERVICES SECTION. School districts must describe:

- The actions that the district will take to meet each goal, including goals specifically directed to high-need students.8
- How much money the district plans to spend on each action and where that money will come from.
- ▶ How any S&C money spent on school-wide services are "principally directed towards and effective in" helping low-income, English learner, and foster youth students, if the district population of these students is greater than 55 percent.
- How the spending is "the most effective use of funds to meet the school district's goals for unduplicated (foster youth, English learner, and low-income) pupils in the state and any local priorities" when attempting to use S&C funds for school-wide purposes.

DEMONSTRATION OF INCREASED OR IMPROVED SERVICES FOR UNDUPLICATED PUPILS SECTION. School districts must identify and justify:

- The total amount of S&C funds it will receive for that school year;
- Any S&C funds that it plans to use in a district-wide or school-wide manner;
- (As noted in the section above), how S&C funds that are being spent on all students are "the most effective use of funds to meet the school district's goals for unduplicated pupils in the state and any local priorities" or "principally directed and effective in" meeting the needs of high-need students; and
- The "minimum proportionality percentage," which is the percentage that the school district must increase or improve services for high-need students.

⁸ Educ. Code §§ 52060(c)(2), 52066(c)(2).

HOW SHOULD COMMUNITY ADVOCATES USE THIS INFORMATION?

ISSUES TO REVIEW IN THE LCAP SUMMARY:

- Did the school district address significant changes for high-need students?
- Did the school district explain any progress and ways to improve their LCFF allocations/ programs?

IN THE ANNUAL UPDATE SECTION:

- What were the actual versus estimated expenditures for the budgeted year?
- What were the actions and services that were actually provided last year?
- What were the actions and services listed in the Annual Update but not provided last year?
- What metrics were used and which metrics were available?
- Did the school district explain any unused funds?

IN THE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SECTION:

- Are community needs reflected in the LCAP?
- What was the timeline for community feedback?

GOALS, ACTIONS, AND SERVICES AS WELL AS THE INCREASED OR IMPROVED SERVICES FOR UNDUPLICATED PUPILS SECTIONS:

- How specific are the actions the school district plans to take in the goals, actions, and services section? It is not enough for a school district to just state its goals but it must also address how it plans to meet them.
- ▶ Do the total S&C funds listed in the Increased and Improved Services section add up to the S&C funds listed in Section 2? If not, why not?
- Is the reasoning clear in the Increased and Improved Services section regarding how programs for all students are going to benefit high-need students especially?
- How much S&C money is the school district spending on services specifically for high-need students? This is important for evaluating whether the school district is meeting its minimum proportionality percentage in the Increased and Improved Services section.

WHEN LOOKING AT THE LCAP AND LCAP PROCESS AS A WHOLE, MAKE SURE TO CONSIDER:

- Did the school district hold community input sessions?
- When did the school district engage members of the community? Was the timeline for discussing LCAP issues adequate?
- Did the school district meaningfully involve PACs and DELACs in the development of the LCAP?
- Did you see your points addressed?
- Did the school district provide information and data so community members could make informed conclusions?
- Did the PACs and/or District Advisory Committees review the final draft LCAP?

HOW HAS THE LCAP CHANGED RECENTLY?



With the passage of AB 99 on June 27, 2017, the Legislature reinforced the authority and obligation of county superintendents to ensure their school districts are complying with LCAP requirements, and added the following new guidelines:⁹

Revised LCAP Template & California School Dashboard

The CDE issued a new template for school districts to use when writing their LCAPs and a new online tool called the California School Dashboard. The new template is designed to clarify the instructions for a school district to complete its LCAPs in accordance with the legal requirements and allows the public to see test scores, graduation rates, and other measures of student success. School districts now must provide a "plan summary" that provides highlights of the school district's LCAP as well as descriptions of any significant changes it is planning for high-need students. The Annual Update also was moved up in the LCAP and now includes evaluation information regarding how the school district performed for each goal. This information helps to provide more accountability in the LCAP.

Technical Assistance Requirement for County Superintendents

▶ The Education Code has also been updated to reflect that if the state superintendent finds merit in an appeal of an LCFF UCP complaint, the state superintendent must provide technical assistance to the county superintendent to improve the county's review and approval of LCAPs.¹⁰

Clarification of school-wide and district-wide uses of S&C funding

In response to the Fresno Unified School District appeal filed by the ACLU to the CDE, described more fully below, the CDE has clarified its guidance on how a school district can comply with the requirements in allocating its S&C funding. When allocating these funds, school districts must explain how they will be "principally directed towards, and effective in, meeting the school district's goals for its unduplicated pupils in the state priority areas." 5 CCR § 15496(b)(1)(B).

⁹ SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS—SCHOOL FUNDS, 2017 Cal. Legis. Serv. Ch. 15 (A.B. 99).

¹⁰ Education Code Section 52075(e) as amended in June 2017.

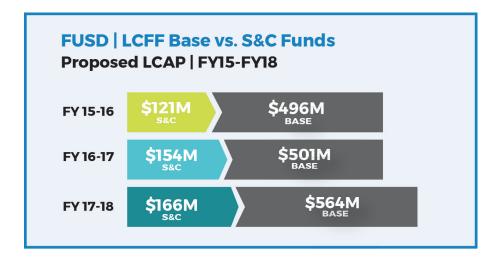
ANALYSIS OF FRESNO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT'S LCAP

THREE-YEAR ANALYSIS OF FRESNO UNIFIED'S LCAP & CHANGES

During the last three years, FUSD has continuously increased the amount of base as well as S&C funds included in the LCAP. The increase coincides with state increases in LCFF funding. In FY17-18, Fresno Unified included \$564.2 million in base funds in their LCAP, a major increase compared to previous years. FUSD plans to use a majority of these funds for operations, including but not limited to, food services, facilities maintenance, utilities, and transportation.

FUSD has also seen a steady increase in S&C funds, which are meant to benefit high-need students (low-income, foster youth, and English learners), with the largest increase—\$33 million—occurring between FY15-16 and FY16-17. While FUSD is reporting more S&C funds, it is unclear whether this reporting is actually improving or directing services towards high-need students in particular.

The chart below lists the three latest fiscal years' LCFF base and S&C funds disclosed in FUSD's LCAP.¹¹



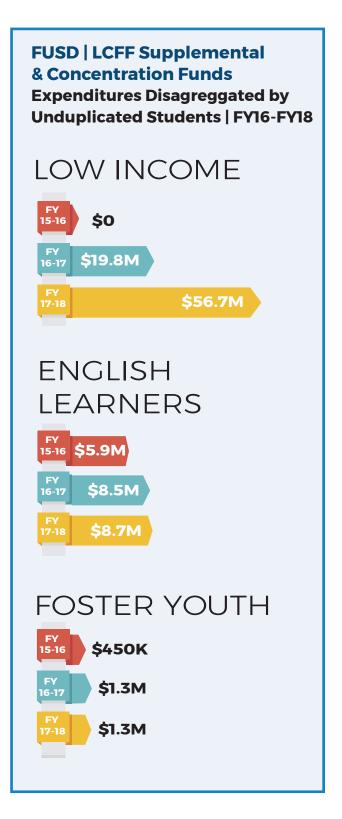
¹¹ FY14-15 was not included in this section because FUSD did not differentiate between S&C funds and base funds. Instead, FUSD reported funds only as "LCFF." In addition, the chart does not represent all the LCFF funds FUSD received.

SUPPLEMENTAL AND CONCENTRATION (S&C) FUNDS

HIGH-NEED STUDENTS

Each year, FUSD lists in its LCAP the actions that each piece of funding will pay for, the students benefitting from said actions, and the source of the funds used to pay for those actions. ¹² In this section, our analysis centers on the S&C funds spent on "standalone" high-need students as compared to "all students" which is not a priority student group under LCFF. The best way to explain this is that FUSD often funds services for students in one of three ways:

- Targeted funding for a standalone LCFF highneed student group, e.g. English learners, foster youth, or low-income students: This could mean funds for a dual immersion program that is directly targeting English learners. Alternatively, it could mean funds for social workers assigned to each foster youth in FUSD.
- Funding for all three unduplicated student groups or a pairing of each: This often looks like an action such as extended library hours said to benefit English learners and low-income students. Alternatively, it could be an extended credit recovery program for all three groups. The important distinction of this form of categorizing benefits is that it is more unclear how the three priority groups will be targeted in the outreach or services provided.
- Funding for "all students": Actions directed to all students often covers expenses for core operational expenses including instruction or school allocations for sports. These funds could be spread out equally across FUSD.



¹² While supplemental and concentration funds were not disagreggated in FY14-15 we included the funds allocated to this student group because it is highly likely the district is using equity-based funds.



HIGH-NEED STUDENTS (CONT.)

As noted in the LCFF S&C funds graphic, the variation in S&C funds used to provide supports for standalone LCFF unduplicated students varies year to year.

Low-Income Students:

This student group has seen a lot of variation from year to year; however, low-income students appear to have received the largest share of funds in FY17-18 largely because 86 percent¹³ of FUSD's student population falls under the low-income category and therefore it is easy to characterize broad, less-targeted spending as benefiting low-income students. The high degree of variation in spending on this category in recent years suggests that what is changing is labeling, not District operations. Two years ago in FY15-16, Fresno Unified did not allocate any money towards low-income students. In contrast, in FY17-18, this group saw the highest amount in equity-based funds.¹⁴

Given this continuous fluctuation, it is hard to see a clear pattern. In analyzing the reasons why low-income student funds now see an increase in allocation, as discussed further below, it appears that Fresno Unified may have begun treating this allocation of funds as another form of "all student" spending and not directly targeting the funds towards low-income students.

English Learners/ Reclassified English Proficient:

This group has consistently received roughly the same amount every year, with \$7.9 million in FY14-15, \$5.9 million in FY15-16, \$8.5 million in FY16-17, and \$8.7 million in FY17-18 as compared to the \$56.7 million allocated to low-income students for FY17-18. FUSD allocated 86 percent of the funds, from 2014 through 2018, for the implementation of various components of FUSD's English Learner Master Plan. English learners represent 22 percent¹⁵ of high-need students in FUSD.

Foster Youth:

Foster youth have seen the smallest share of equity-based dollars of any other LCFF high-need student population with \$400,000 in FY14-15, \$450,000 in FY15-16, \$1.3 million in FY16-17 and \$1.3 million in FY17-18. The entirety of these funds provide nine social workers for foster youth in grades 6-12 in addition to a foster youth roundtable. There are 681 foster youth enrolled in FUSD. Although foster youth make up only one percent¹⁶ of the student population, FUSD should provide greater supports for this group because it has higher needs than most other populations.

¹³ Ed-Data. Fresno Unified retrieved at http://www.ed-data.org/district/Fresno/Fresno-Unified.

¹⁴ Equity-based funds are base, supplemental, and/or concentration funds.

¹⁵ Ed-Data. Fresno Unified retrieved at http://www.ed-data.org/district/Fresno/Fresno-Unified.

¹⁶ See Appendix A: ACLU Administrative Appeal to the California Department of Education.

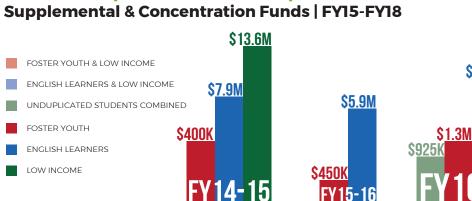
FUNDS LIMITED TO HIGH-NEED STUDENTS

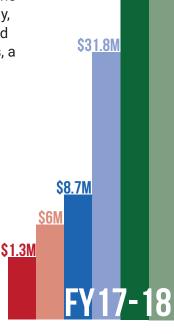
Despite the mandate to spend S&C funds on high-need students, FUSD rarely directs funding exclusively to such students. In FY14-15, the District allocated \$21.9 million and divided it amongst foster youth, English learners, and low-income students. By FY15-16, FUSD significantly decreased this amount, only allocating \$6.3 million for foster youth and English learners and nothing for low-income students. In FY16-17, FUSD ramped up funds for high-need students to \$30.6 million, with low-income students receiving the largest increase as well as the new grouping of all high-need students although, again, it is unclear whether the funds were appropriately or effectively spent on these student groups. Given that there have been few large-scale changes in District operations and educational approaches in the past two years, the dramatic changes in these categories of spending appear to have been largely the result of relabeling exercises rather than significant shifts in services for high-need students.

In FY17-18, Fresno Unified continued its classification changes, in particular by reclassifying line items previously benefitting "all students" so that they now are purportedly supporting low-income students or all three LCFF target groups. By FY17-18, total funding allocated to high-need students saw a significant increase to \$166.4 million, with most of the increase coming from funding labeled as benefiting low-income students and a combination of all three high-need student groups.

For FY17-18, the significant increase appears to be largely attributable to the state's updated LCAP form that required school districts to select which of the three high-need student groups would benefit from the listed action. In essence, what we have seen is FUSD not changing many of its previous actions and instead engaging in a practice of relabeling allocations in order to attempt to satisfy its legal obligations. For example, in FY16-17, FUSD had listed the "Maintain 24:1 TK-Third Grade Average Class Size" action item as benefiting all students; however, in FY17-18 the same action was now listed as benefiting unduplicated students. Another example is the action item "Linked Learning, Regional Occupational Program (ROP), and Career Technical Education (CTE) Pathway Development," which was listed as benefiting all students in FY16-17 and benefiting low-income students in FY17-18, with only cosmetic modifications to the action description. Lastly, in the years between FY14-15 and FY16-17, FUSD would create its own loosely defined student groups, such as, "at-risk" and "subgroups" that absorbed equity-based dollars, a practice that has ended in FY17-18.







\$19.8M

\$8.5M

\$61.9M

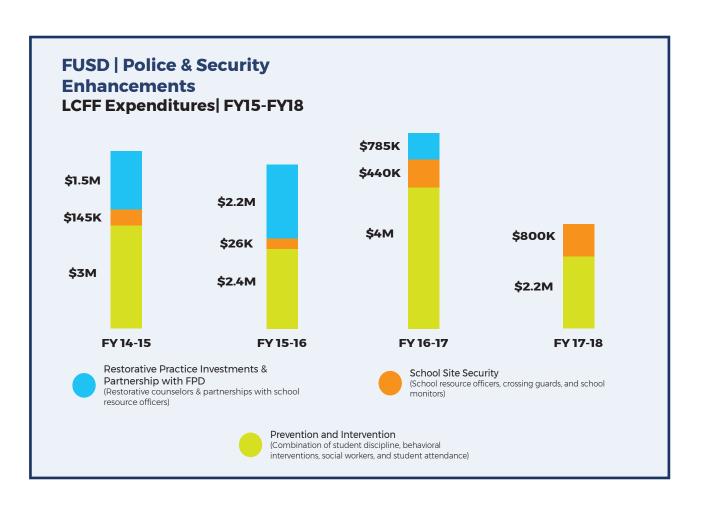
\$56.7M

FUNDING FOR POLICE AND SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS

In FY15-16, Fresno Unified began including its partnership with Fresno Police Department for what is considered to be "restorative practices" along with any additional funding that FUSD considers a restorative approach to discipline and security. Prior to FY15-16, FUSD did not list its partnership with Fresno Police Department and school resource officers as part of its restorative practices. It is questionable that FUSD lists this partnership as a "restorative practice" given that methods such as restorative justice circles and non-punitive measures often expressly do not involve police. Because FUSD has not given a financial breakdown of how much of this funding is being used for its partnership with police, there is little transparency regarding whether any of this funding truly supports restorative practices. FUSD's lack of transparency is one of the main reasons the ACLU filed a UCP complaint with FUSD in 2016, and this is an example of where FUSD must improve.

Restorative Practice funding breakdown:

In FY14-15, \$1.5 million was allocated for this action, followed by \$2.2 million in FY15-16, \$785,000 in FY16-17, and \$800,000 in FY17-18 in part using S&C funds. This action item primarily funds restorative practice counselors and professional development on restorative practices, but in FY16-17 FUSD began a partnership with the Fresno Police Department for professional training of Student Resource Officers on these practices. This partnership has extended into FY17-18.









FUNDING FOR POLICE AND SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS (CONT.)

School Site Security:

In FY14-15, FUSD allocated \$145,000 for school site security, followed by \$260,000 in FY15-16, \$440,000 in FY16-17, and zero supplemental and concentration funding in FY17-18. This action item began in FY14-15 as a way to pay for campus safety assistants and school crossing guards but was expanded in FY17 to include school resource officers. However, due to the ACLU complaint to the CDE regarding FUSD's use of S&C funds for school resource officers, FUSD stopped funding these services with funds for high-need students and instead now funds them with base funds.

Prevention and Intervention Department:

The Prevention and Intervention Department oversees student attendance, discipline, social work case management, and behavioral interventions, among other programs. This action item received the largest share of LCFF (Supplemental, Concentration, and Base) funds, although the funds varied year to year. For example, in FY14-15 it was allocated \$3 million, followed by \$2.4 million in FY15-16, \$4 million in FY16-17, and \$2.2 million in FY17-18 primarily using base funds.

SCHOOL COUNSELORS

FUSD has consistently set aside modest funds for social emotional counselors from 2014 through the end of the 2018 school year; however, the amount set aside has diminished significantly compared to earlier years.

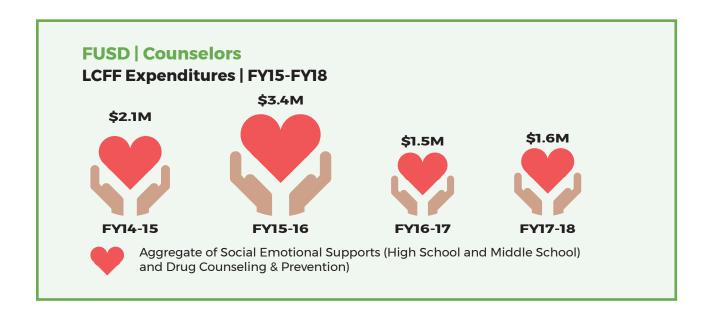
FUSD also sets aside funds for counselors under a separate action item (Supplemental Student Supports) but that action item groups counselors with other supports such as instructional coaches and health personnel. This makes it difficult to determine how much of those funds actually pay for counselors or even the type of counselors they are funding, e.g. academic or social emotional. Therefore, our analysis will focus on counselors providing social emotional supports:

Social Emotional Supports (middle school): This action item funds counselors who provide social emotional support at highneed middle schools to provide assistance in conflict resolution and social skills. In FY14-15, \$2.1 million was allocated for this action item, followed by \$2.4 million in FY15-16, \$1.3 million in FY16-17, and \$1.6 million in FY17-18, primarily using S&C funds. This action item makes up the bulk of funds used for social emotional supportive counseling not found in any other action items.



SCHOOL COUNSELORS (CONT.)

- Additional Resources for Drug Counseling and Prevention: FUSD funded site-based prevention and treatment services at the high school level for \$150,000 in FY15-16 and FY16-17. This action item was not included in the FY17-18 LCAP and was funded using S&C funds.
- Social Emotional Supports (high school): FUSD provided \$900,000 in FY15-16 for social emotional counselors at high schools; however, this action was discontinued in later years. This action item also relied on S&C funds.



STUDENT AND PARENT REACTIONS



These are parent and student stories from FUSD.

STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

Fresno Unified isn't conducting adequate LCAP outreach to parents and students.

- As a student, LCAP community feedback forums aren't youth friendly in the time and locations they are being held.
 - Fresno Unified student
- **LCAP youth feedback should go beyond just surveys. ***
 - -Fresno Unified student
- I was informed about the LCAP through Californians For Justice. The communications through the School Board and the Fresno youth should be improved in the future to include student voices.
 - Edison H.S. student



- **LCAP youth feedback should go beyond just surveys.
 - -Fresno Unified student



PARENT TESTIMONIALS

FUSD is not clarifying for parents and students how they should be involved in the LCAP process nor does FUSD follow up on any community input.

- Language used at LCAP meetings is not community friendly. A lot of jargon [is] used.
 - Fresno Unified parent
- **Documents and presentations are not translated sometimes. ***
 - Fresno Unified parent
- Oftentimes, parents/community are hearing about LCAP/LCFF for the first time and don't know what to look for and ask (unless they are assisted by a CBO [Community-based organization] and they are not probed to think deeper about how funds can help their child.
 - Fresno Unified parent
- There is no follow-up with the community from FUSD (outside of board meetings) explaining what feedback or recommendations they took, which ones they didn't and why.
 - Fresno Unified parent



There is no follow-up with the community from FUSD (outside of board meetings) explaining what feedback or recommendations they took, which ones they didn't and why.

Fresno Unified parent



PARENT TESTIMONIALS (CONT.)

Parents do not see the investment from FUSD.

- One time during a presentation from FUSD about the LCFF/LCAP, FUSD kept focusing on using funds for field trips. I thought this was okay but also wanted FUSD to use funds to help reduce class sizes.
 - Fresno Unified parent
- We don't think the afterschool program at certain Fresno schools (Vang Pao, Winchell, Sequoia) actually helps our children and others that need it, academically. To even enter the programs, it's based on lottery and not need.
 - Fresno Unified parent
- The level of outreach to community is very minimal. A lot of the times, if it wasn't for community-based organizations, parents and others wouldn't know about LCAP meetings. Thus, community turnout to FUSD led LCAP meetings is very low.
 - Fresno Unified parent
- If elt like FUSD was discouraging me and other parents from suggesting ideas other than what FUSD was pushing.
 - Fresno Unified parent



STUDENT TESTIMONIALS



Going to a school board meeting for the first time as a 10th grader gave me hope. I felt that it was important for the school board members and staff to treat us students as respected individuals. Without the student voice, the school board is missing valuable opinions of youth most impacted.

– Ziaunna Temple, Edison H.S. student

This year, I went to my first LCAP meeting at the school board chambers. As a current student at Edison High School, I feel that there weren't many students there other than students I knew FUSD worked with directly.

- Verriah McGhee, Edison H.S. student





Without the student voice, the school board is missing valuable opinions of youth most impacted.

- Edison H.S. student

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMANDATIONS (SUMMANARY)

For the reasons described above, Fresno Unified can do a much better job allocating funds for and overall investment in all groups of high-need students. We have outlined recommendations based on parent, student, and community feedback regarding what stakeholders believe is currently missing from FUSD's LCAP and LCAP process.

FUSD must:



Make the full draft LCAP available to community members earlier to make sure they can fully engage in the process and offer input.



Ensure the LCAP is easy to understand and clearly explains each allocation of S&C funds, and how FUSD plans to use those funds.



Engage community members in a meaningful way.



Ensure more adequate funding for parent engagement.



Use the LCAP to ensure:

- A reduction in the achievement gap;
- More social emotional support for students; and
- Promotion and preservation of students' ethnic language and culture.



Provide the public with written and easily accessible reasons for why community feedback is included or why it will not be included.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (IN DETAIL)

FUSD must:

1. Make the full draft LCAP available to community members earlier to make sure they can fully engage in the process and offer input.

If FUSD expects parents, students, and community members to be part of the solution, those stakeholder groups need considerably more time than FUSD currently allows to engage with the LCAP.

The review period—with a full draft— should start at the end of February. This will give the community ample time to review the contents of the LCAP. This will allow for several months of review prior to being asked to give input on major funding and allocation decisions.

2. Ensure the LCAP is easy to understand and clearly explains each allocation of S&C funds, and how FUSD plans to use those funds.

According to student and parent interviews, FUSD makes it difficult for community members to understand which funds are for high-need students. Although the District started engaging some student groups, our understanding is that this level of engagement does not extend to all advocacy groups. Based on our analysis, FUSD has shifted its funds for "all students" to an increase of funds for "low-income" students without any indication of how those programs will help low-income students or other high-need students.

If FUSD intends for the community to truly engage in the process, FUSD should spend time ensuring the LCAP is comprehensible and easy to read and clearly explain FUSD's actions designed to help high-need students.

3. Engage community members in a meaningful way.

It is unfortunate that FUSD has discouraged parent and student participation at LCAP meetings. As demonstrated by several parent, student, and community advocate interviews, FUSD either talks to the audience in a manner that is one-sided or tries to diminish community input. According to LCFF regulations, this is not the purpose of the LCAP process.

FUSD often prides itself on having many meetings, but holding more meetings without implementing the ideas from parents, students, and community members will not lead to a better result. FUSD should get feedback from parents, students, and community members to ensure the format and times of meetings work for the individuals FUSD needs to hear from.

4. Ensure more adequate funding for parent engagement.

FUSD can show its investment in ensuring parents are involved in the LCAP process by investing funding in their participation. For example, FUSD could expand meeting opportunities, create parent centers, and hire staff to coordinate with parents. FUSD should work with a variety of local parent advocacy groups to best understand how to allocate this increased investment. This process should be deliberate and demonstrate FUSD is listening to their needs with the allocation of funds.

5. Use the LCAP to ensure:

The closing of the achievement gap. This can include, but is not limited to, increased academic supports for high-need students, increased training for teachers, and English-learner programs.

- Investment in more social emotional support for students including, but not limited to, better access to counselors, trauma-informed training for staff, and restorative justice programs.
- Promotion and preservation of students' ethnic language and culture.
- FUSD should create goals and subgoals to ensure that these recommendations materialize. FUSD should identify and describe how FUSD plans to implement these recommendations.

6. Provide the public with written and easily accessible reasons for why community feedback is included or why it will not be included.

FUSD should have regular communication with the community to justify why community feedback on the draft LCAP will or will not be included. FUSD currently does not provide detailed descriptions of each community meeting and why stakeholder recommendations fail to be included in FUSD's LCAP.

If FUSD plans to engage with community members in an effective way, FUSD should provide written justifications of accepted and rejected community demands between each draft of LCAP revisions. If FUSD knows prior to a completed draft that certain information is going to be rejected from the revised LCAP, FUSD should also disclose this information to community members to create an open and effective working relationship for improving the LCAP.



