

# California Department of EducationEngaging Equity Stakeholders

Engaging diverse groups of stakeholders as partners in this work has many benefits. By collaboratively reviewing data and identifying the root causes behind equitable access issues, local educational agencies (LEAs) can forge and strengthen critical partnerships while developing a strong plan that benefits all students.

To lead the way on equitable access to effective teaching in your LEA, sparking discussions with all key stakeholders must be at the center of your planning. Stakeholder engagement will look different in each LEA. In addition, LEAs may already have very successful systems and processes in place for stakeholder engagement. The guidance provided in this document is a tool that LEAs may wish to utilize to build upon or modify their current stakeholder engagement processes. It can be adapted to meet your local context and needs.

## Step1: Build your Equity Team

Equity teams should bring together a diverse group of both internal (LEA employees) and external stakeholders. Internal stakeholders should work with a variety of different students in your LEA including but not limited to: special education, early education and English learner students. Internal stakeholders should also represent the broad spectrum of departments within the LEA, different types of schools served in the LEA, as well as different grade levels within the LEA. An effort should be made to encourage diversity in stakeholder representation, including age, race, and gender.

In building your internal LEA team, consider and select leaders from the following LEA departments:

* Human Resources
* Curriculum and Instruction
* Professional Development
* Cabinet Level Decision Makers
* Site-Level Representatives (Teachers, Counselors, Principals, etc.)
* Collective Bargaining Union Members
* State and Federal Programs

Please note: This document was adapted from: *Stakeholder Engagement Guide*, Center on Great Teachers & Leaders at the American Institutes for Research, <https://gtlcenter.org/learning-hub/equitable-access-toolkit/stakeholder-engagement-guide>, accessed January 31, 2019.



* California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS)/California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS)
* Assessment Special Education
* Beginning Teacher Support
* English Learner
* Early Education

External team members may include:

* Parents
* Students
* Community Leaders
* Local Advocacy Groups
* Representatives from Institutions of Higher Education

## Step 2: Connect with Stakeholders/ Provide Clear Communication

It is crucial that the first contact with equity team members is clear and concise about the goals of the equity team. Your stakeholders have various other time commitments and making stakeholder meetings purposeful and concise will be important.

In your first communication with potential stakeholder members, ensure that you:

* Clearly define the tasks and the time commitment
* Provide clear and consistent communication regarding meetings
* Explain why their participation is vital to the team and process
* Provide a contact person for questions or concerns

## Step 3: Create a Common Starting Point

In order to set the stage for the stakeholder meetings, all members should be provided with reading materials and data that will pertain to their meeting tasks. Sending these documents a week or two before the scheduled stakeholder meeting will allow all members time to review them and come to the meeting prepared to discuss any questions or concerns they may have.

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Consider providing stakeholders with pre-reading on the following topics:

* Journal articles about the importance of equitable access for students
* California’s Every Students Succeeds Act (ESSA) Plan language regarding disproportionate rates of access to educators.
* The importance and purpose of your LEA’s equitable access plan
* Past efforts that your LEA has taken to address equity issues and lessons learned
* Definitions and clarifications regarding any technical terminology

## Step 4: Ensure Successful Engagement

Equity teams will be large and filled with individuals that come to the table with different experiences and perspectives. It is essential to provide guidelines that will lead to constructive and respectful conversations.

Consider the following strategies for ensuring that stakeholder communication becomes stakeholder engagement:

* Set Expectations Up Front: Let stakeholders know how their input will be used—such as a presentation or a set of recommendations.
* Build Trust: Create an environment that allows stakeholders to provide meaningful, productive feedback and also keeps them engaged in the process moving forward.
* Encourage Participation: Encourage stakeholders to share their perspectives, suggestions and feedback. Ensure that all participants have an opportunity to speak.
* Assign a Note Taker: Communicate that the discussion is important and will be revisited at different stages in the planning process.

## Step 5: Review Equity Data

A key ingredient for effective stakeholder engagement about equitable access is discussion centered on data and evidence—data on the scope of the equitable access challenge, data on interventions and their impact, and data on progress toward achieving equitable access goals. Consider the following strategies for ensuring that stakeholder communication becomes stakeholder engagement:

* Provide all stakeholders with the ESSA definitions (out-of-field, ineffective, inexperienced, etc.) that were used to pull data
* Think about how best to share the data with your stakeholders. For example, consider dividing team members into small groups divided by grade levels (elementary, middle, high), or groups divided by ESSA definitions (inexperienced, out-of-field, ineffective, etc.)

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* Some stakeholders may be inexperienced with reviewing data. Be sure to pair them with internal personnel and provide time for activities and reflection.

## Step 6: Review Root Cause Analysis

LEAs may decide to develop a root cause analysis before they meet with their equity stakeholder team and others may do their analysis for the first time with a team. The benefit of performing the analysis before the stakeholder meeting is that LEAs may be able to anticipate and research various stakeholder team member questions before the meeting and provide meaningful feedback.

If an LEA develops a root cause analysis before meeting with the equity stakeholder team, they will need to walk the team through the process for developing the root cause analysis. The equity team should be able to add additional root causes to the initial list if the team agrees it is warranted.

In addition, the LEA should anticipate questions that external team members may have out the recruitment and retention practices already in place at the LEA.

Some questions that stakeholders may have are:

* What teacher recruitment practices are in place?
* What time of year does teacher recruitment start?
* What are the priorities for hiring new teachers?
* What is the teacher turnover rate?
* What supports are in place for new teachers?
* How are students assigned to teachers each year? Does this vary by school?

## Step 7: Developing a Plan to Address Inequities

The Local Control and Accountability Plan Federal Addendum requires LEAs to describe actions it will take to address any disparities discovered during the data analysis process. When developing a narrative describing the plan, LEAs should consider the following:

* Review research-based recruitment and retention strategies
* Determine which strategies align to your root causes
* Identify strategies that best fit your district’s context and needs
* Consider which steps you would take to implement the strategies
* Consider methods for monitoring the effectiveness of the implemented strategies

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