

Evaluating Local Control in Districts 1-3

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Introduction

Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis in 1932 wrote that “**a single courageous state may, if its citizens choose, serve as a laboratory [of democracy]; and try novel social and economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country.**”¹

Today, one such state is undeniably California. As the country’s wealthiest and most populated state, California has notably had a pronounced influence on national legislation². This “California effect” has generally referred to California’s regulatory practices, though recently ballot measures like Proposition 50³ have garnered national attention. Let’s focus on two such ballot measures. These played a significant role in shaping California’s education system and the **Local Control Funding Formula**.

The first ballot measure to consider is Proposition 13. Officially named the People’s Initiative to Limit Property Taxation, Prop 13 is an amendment to the Constitution of California enacted in 1978 that capped property taxes and limited property reassessments with changes of ownership⁴. Though California today has the highest marginal income and capital gains tax rate in the country⁵, Prop 13 led to a significant reduction in property tax revenue to local governments a year after passage. Among other effects, Proposition 13’s initial reduction in state and local tax collection⁶ is argued by some analysts to have facilitated a decline in the quality of California’s K-12 public schools⁷.

The precise role Prop 13 plays in shaping California’s current student outcomes notwithstanding, Proposition 13 **centralized** funding for education through the state government.

The second ballot measure to consider is Prop 98. Officially named the Classroom Instructional Improvement and Accountability Act, Prop 98 is an initiative passed in 1988 that requires a minimum percentage of the state budget to be spent on K-12 education, rather than raising taxes, adding to the overall budget, or pursuing **decentralized** sources of revenue⁸. Till date, Prop 98’s intention of depoliticizing state funding has led to a “plethora of tests and rules” to interpret and debate the instated minimum funding guarantee every year in the annual budget process⁹.

20 years after Proposition 98 in 2008, the Great Recession led to a shortfall in tax revenues that would ordinarily flow to the state government for allotment to school districts, which in turn led to local budget shortfalls. In response to this crisis, Governor Jerry Brown pushed for the adoption of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) in 2013¹⁰.

The LCFF replaced the previous system with a **decentralized** system that distributes base, supplemental, and concentration grants to delegate funding to districts¹¹. Further, the LCFF directs more funding to schools with higher populations of “unduplicated students” - English learners, low-income students, and foster youth across California - including those in Districts 1-3 of Alameda County.

With this context in mind, this research paper aims to provide an overview of student outcomes in public schools here in Districts 1-3, as well as key takeaways for future representatives and community members interested in learning more about the Local Control Funding Formula.

Summary

Methodology

In order to collate data on student outcomes in public schools for this paper, the author tabulated 2023–2025 California School Dashboard data for selected school districts associated with Alameda County Supervisorial Districts 1–3. The comparison spans 12 school districts: Dublin, Fremont, Sunol, Livermore, Pleasanton, Hayward, Newark, New Haven (Union City), Alameda, Oakland, San Leandro, and San Lorenzo Unified. This time frame was selected to reflect post-pandemic conditions following the end of California’s COVID-19 State of Emergency in 2023.

The key indicators analyzed include total enrollment, the share of socioeconomically disadvantaged students and English Learners, English Language Arts (ELA) and Math performance measured as points above or below the state standard, English Learner Progress, graduation, college/career readiness, chronic absenteeism, and suspension.

The data was organized specifically for this research and analyzed using Google Sheets/downloadable California Department of Education files. One should also note that the supervisorial and school-district boundaries do not align perfectly: District 3 contains only part of Oakland while including the unincorporated communities of San Lorenzo and Hayward Acres. Because the California School Dashboard reports district-wide outcomes, the Oakland Unified and San Lorenzo Unified figures in this paper represent their entire school districts rather than only students living inside the boundaries of the supervisorial district.

The California School Dashboard is an online tool created by the California Department of Education displaying the "performance of local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and student groups on a set of state and local measures to assist in identifying strengths, challenges, and areas in need of improvement.” Indicators include standardized test scores and preparation for future college/career readiness, which are rated via colors to reflect current year's test scores/rate and point change from a preceding year. Though not all indicators on the California School Dashboard per school district such as the color-rating of the suspension rate indicator were tabulated for this paper (as can be seen [here](#)), the author has linked the California School Dashboard’s glossary of all indicators on the reference sheet.

Results

Figure 1. Socioeconomic Disadvantage Across Selected Alameda County School Districts, 2025.

Districts 2 and 3 generally served substantially higher proportions of socioeconomically disadvantaged students than the incorporated areas of District 1. In 2025, Oakland Unified reported the highest share among the districts examined at 81.5%, followed by Hayward Unified at 78.3%, San Leandro Unified at 76.1%, and San Lorenzo Unified at 75.5%. Pleasanton Unified reported the lowest share at 10.2%, while Alameda Unified at 35.8% stood apart from the other incorporated areas of District 3.

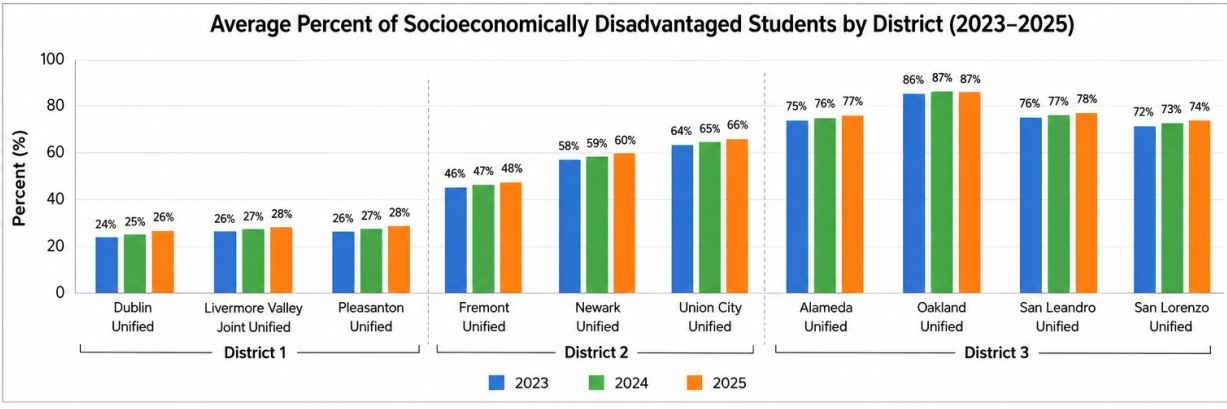
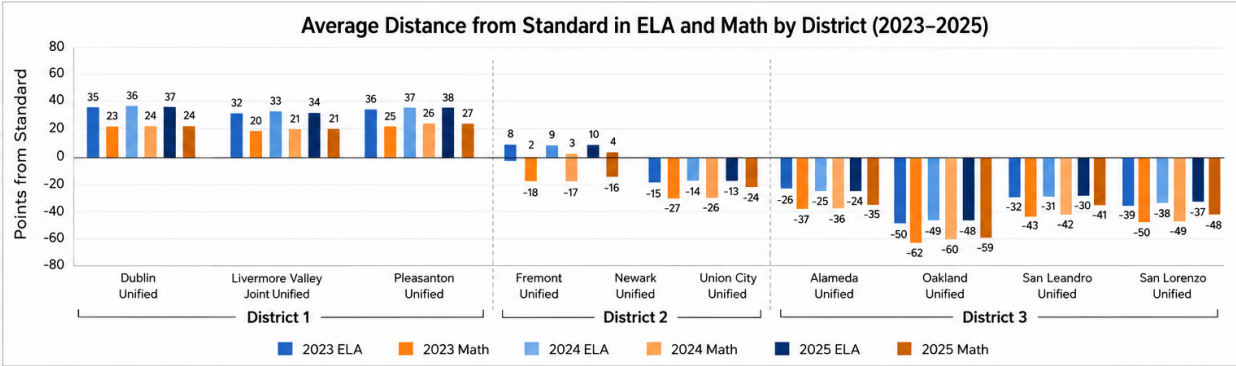


Figure 2. Math Performance Relative to the State Standard, 2025.

All selected District 2 districts and three of the four District 3 districts performed below the statewide Math standard. Hayward recorded the largest gap at 88.8 points below standard, followed by San Lorenzo at 84.5 points below, Oakland at 78.7 points below, and San Leandro at 70.7 points below. Alameda was the District 3 exception at 18.8 points above standard. Most District 1 districts performed substantially above standard, although Livermore remained 5.6 points below it.



Note: Positive values indicate performance above the state standard; negative values indicate performance below the state standard.
Source: California School Dashboard (2023–2025)

Discussion

While this paper compares outcomes across supervisorial districts, differences cannot be attributed to policy alone. Instead, student outcomes reflect a combination of funding levels, student demographics, local implementation strategies, and broader socioeconomic conditions. Under the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), districts receive differing levels of supplemental and concentration grant funding based on their populations of "unduplicated students" - English Learners, low-income students, and foster youth. Consequently, districts serving larger concentrations of high-need students generally receive greater state funding, though educational outcomes ultimately depend on how those resources are deployed.

Supervisorial District 1

Overall, Supervisorial District 1 demonstrated the strongest academic performance of the three supervisorial districts. Dublin, Pleasanton, Fremont, Livermore, and Sunol Glen all performed at or above the state standard in English Language Arts in 2025, while every district except Livermore also exceeded the Math standard. District 1 also served comparatively smaller shares of socioeconomically disadvantaged students, ranging from 10.2% in Pleasanton to 22.0% in Livermore.

Within District 1, Livermore emerged as the principal outlier. It remained the only district performing below the Math standard (-5.6) while also recording the lowest ELA performance (+25.4) among District 1 districts. However, Livermore simultaneously demonstrated considerable improvement between 2023 and 2025, including gains in Math performance, college and career readiness, and lower suspension rates. This suggests that although the district faces comparatively greater socioeconomic challenges than its neighboring District 1 districts, targeted investments under the LCFF may be contributing to gradual improvement.

Fremont provides a contrasting example. Despite serving the largest enrollment in the study and a substantially larger population of English Learners than neighboring districts, it continued to perform well above state standards in both ELA and Math. Fremont's relatively large unduplicated student population results in greater LCFF supplemental and concentration grant funding than neighboring districts, suggesting that additional resources, when combined with effective implementation, may help offset many of the academic challenges associated with serving a larger high-need student population.

Supervisorial District 2

Supervisorial District 2 presented a markedly different profile from District 1 and 3. Hayward, Newark, and New Haven remained below state standards in English Language Arts and Math while serving larger populations of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Greater exposure to housing instability, economic pressure, language barriers, and limited access to private academic support likely contributes to these outcomes and explains why these districts receive larger LCFF supplemental and concentration grants.

Hayward represented the highest-need district in Supervisorial District 2. Its combination of concentrated socioeconomic disadvantage, substantial English Learner needs, and persistent attendance barriers likely makes academic recovery more difficult. Although graduation rates, absenteeism, and Math outcomes improved modestly between 2023 and 2025, the district remained well below state standards, suggesting that educational funding must be paired with broader family, health, housing, and community support.

Newark's stronger gains in ELA, graduation, and college and career readiness may reflect more effective local interventions, stronger implementation capacity, or better alignment between LCFF spending and identified student needs. New Haven's improvements in graduation and Math similarly suggest that targeted academic support and consistent district priorities can produce progress even in higher-need communities.

Supervisorial District 3

Supervisorial District 3 exhibited the greatest internal variation because it includes both comparatively affluent Alameda and the substantially higher-need communities served by Oakland, San Leandro, and San Lorenzo. Differences in household income, housing stability, student mobility, language needs, and access to educational resources help explain the wide variation in outcomes.

Alameda Unified performed above state standards in ELA and Math and reported District 3's lowest proportion of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Its stronger performance likely reflects greater economic stability, lower concentrations of student need, and greater access to academic and community resources outside school.

Oakland serves a much larger and more economically diverse student population while confronting concentrated poverty, housing instability, chronic absenteeism, staffing challenges, and longstanding achievement gaps. These conditions help explain why Oakland remained below statewide averages despite meaningful improvements in attendance, ELA, and Math.

San Leandro's consistent academic gains and stronger college and career readiness may indicate effective intervention strategies and more successful coordination of academic supports. However, its high level of socioeconomic disadvantage means that continued improvement will depend on sustaining these programs and ensuring that they reach the highest-need students.

San Lorenzo continues to face particularly significant challenges in Math and English Learner Progress, likely reflecting the combined effects of concentrated economic disadvantage, substantial language-development needs, and limited district capacity. Its improvements in attendance, suspensions, and college and career readiness nevertheless suggest that school-climate and student-support investments are beginning to produce results.

Recommendations

Overall, these findings point to a nuanced outcome. The LCFF appears to be achieving its core objective of directing additional resources to higher-need districts. However, the variation in academic outcomes across districts with similar funding structures suggests that funding alone is not sufficient to close performance gaps. Rather, the effectiveness of the LCFF is closely tied to how districts implement programs, target the needs of specific student populations, and allocate resources in practice.

While the LCFF's weighted funding model has supported districts with underserved student populations, certain gaps in Math performance and English Learner progress (particularly in Livermore) suggest that funding allocated from the LCFF alone does not automatically translate into equitable outcomes. The mechanisms by which districts plan, allocate, and account for LCFF funds, including through advisory committees/community input on Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs), therefore warrant close attention from all members of Alameda County.

The author recommends the following to keep in mind when paying closer attention to one's own LCFF planning process:

1. Advocate for Stronger Programs Supporting English Language Learners

English Learner outcomes differ substantially across the three supervisorial districts. In District 1, Fremont's English Learner Progress rate declined from 51.9% in 2023 to 48.1% in 2025 despite the district's comparatively strong overall academic performance. District 2 districts such as Hayward face the combined challenge of serving many English Learners while also addressing broader academic gaps. In District 3, school districts serve especially large multilingual populations, with San Lorenzo declining from 39.0% to 36.5% and Oakland reaching only 40.3% in 2025. District 1 should focus on reversing recent declines, while Districts 2 and 3 may require more intensive staffing, language-development programs, and support for long-term English Learners. An ask of all districts to report disaggregated outcomes for this student group would also be useful.

2. Consider the Relationship Between Socioeconomic Issues and Academic Outcomes

Socioeconomic conditions vary both between and within the supervisorial districts. District 1 includes comparatively high-performing districts such as Fremont but also communities such as Livermore where larger shares of socioeconomically disadvantaged students correspond with greater difficulty meeting academic standards, particularly in Math. District 2 districts such as Hayward face more concentrated economic need, limiting some families' access to tutoring, stable housing, transportation, and other academic support. District 3 districts, particularly Oakland and San Lorenzo, must address similar barriers on a larger urban scale. These differences mean that District 1 may need more targeted subgroup interventions, while Districts 2 and 3 require broader academic and community-based support.

Community members should educate themselves on the LCFF's weighted funding model, while also recognizing that increased funding to districts alone may not be enough to tackle larger societal issues. Addressing these disparities will likely require coordinated efforts beyond school funding alone, including broader social and community-based support.

3. Prioritize Math Recovery in Higher-Need District 2 and District 3 Systems

Math performance is a countywide concern, but the scale of the challenge differs by district. District 1 systems generally perform better overall, although Livermore and disadvantaged student groups within Fremont still face meaningful gaps. District 2's Hayward system shows a greater need for intensive Math intervention because lower performance is combined with higher levels of socioeconomic disadvantage. District 3 has some of the county's largest gaps, as the 2025 Math results show especially large gaps in Hayward, San Lorenzo, Oakland, and San Leandro. Community members and LCAP advisory groups should examine whether LCFF-funded tutoring, intervention periods, instructional coaching, extended learning, and family-engagement strategies are reaching the student groups with the greatest need. Districts should report both participation and outcome data so that residents can assess which investments are producing measurable gains.

4. Strengthen English Learner Progress Monitoring in District 3 Specifically

District 3 contains large English Learner populations, particularly in Oakland, San Leandro, and San Lorenzo. English Learner Progress remained relatively low in Oakland at 40.3% and declined in San Lorenzo from 39.0% in 2023 to 36.5% in 2025. In general, all districts should publish clearer disaggregated outcomes and explain how supplemental and concentration funds are supporting language development, long-term English Learners, and access to rigorous coursework.

5. Use Attendance Improvement as a Foundation for Academic Recovery

All four District 3 districts reduced chronic absenteeism between 2023 and 2025, with Oakland making the largest reduction from 60.3% to 27.9%. These improvements should be studied and sustained through family outreach, transportation support, mental-health services, and community-school partnerships. At the same time, rates in Oakland, San Lorenzo, and San Leandro remain high enough to warrant continued attention. Improving attendance is essential to all districts because students cannot benefit fully from academic programs, tutoring, or additional LCFF investments when they are frequently absent.

6. Consider Perusing the Following Resources to Better Understand Education Policy in California

[California School Dashboard](#) - online tool created by the California Department of Education displaying student outcomes per school district.

[Edsource](#) - California's largest journalism organization focused solely on education.

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