SUPERINTENDENTS SPEAK: IMPLEMENTING THE LOCAL CONTROL FUNDING FORMULA (LCFF)

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Additional members
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June 27, 2018

LCFFRC
Local Control Funding Formula Research Collaborative

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SUPERINTENDENTS SPEAK:
IMPLEMENTING THE LOCAL CONTROL FUNDING FORMULA (LCFF)

A Report of the LCFF Research Collaborative's
Survey of California Superintendents

KEY FINDINGS

- **There is widespread support for the LCFF.** The vast majority of superintendents endorses the LCFF's equity goals and reports that the law is leading to important benefits. Superintendents believe the LCFF has enabled greater alignment among district goals and strategies, spending that matches local needs, new ways of thinking about budget priorities, and improvements in services for low-income students, English learners, and foster youth.

- **Several concerns remain.** A strong majority of superintendents report the LCFF has created new administrative burdens. Further, more than three-quarters of superintendents report inadequate base funding is a barrier to making the kinds of improvements they believe their districts need. Ninety percent of superintendents also would like greater flexibility to use supplemental and concentration funds for other non-LCFF-targeted disadvantaged students.

- **Stakeholder engagement continues to be a challenge.** About three-quarters of superintendents endorse the LCFF's requirement for parent and community involvement, particularly engagement of under-represented families, but report challenges engaging these groups. While they are using a variety of engagement strategies, participation remains limited.

- **The Dashboard gets mixed reviews**. Most superintendents believe the new California Dashboard measures progress toward the LCFF's goals, is easy to understand, and captures the most important measures of performance. However, less than a third (29%) think the Dashboard provides timely information on student outcomes.

- **District context matters.** Superintendents' experiences with the LCFF often differ depending on district context. Leaders in relatively larger districts and districts with higher numbers of low-income students, English learners, and foster youth (unduplicated students) were more likely to report that the LCFF is enabling greater alignment, more innovative changes, a rethinking of budget priorities, and improved services for the LCFF target group students. Conversely, leaders in smaller districts were more likely to report new administrative burdens resulting from the LCFF and concerns that eliminating categorical programs removed protections for high-needs students. Rural district leaders were more likely than leaders from other districts to report challenges attracting participation among the parents/guardians of LCFF's target group students.

INTRODUCTION

Adopted in 2013, the LCFF provides all districts with base funding plus supplemental and concentration grants for low-income students, English learners, and foster youth. The law eliminated most categorical programs, giving local school systems resource allocation authority and requiring Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs) be developed with input from parents, community members, students, and educators. The policy intends to promote more equitable and coherent resource allocation decisions and to lead to improved and more equitable student outcomes.

This report, the next in a series by the Local Control Funding Formula Research Collaborative (LCFFRC)[1], presents survey responses from a statewide representative sample of California superintendents. The survey complements the LCFFRC's four years of in-depth case study work examining the implementation of the LCFF[2] and provides a broad picture of superintendents' views of and experiences with the law. As with previous LCFF research, this survey is designed to help policymakers and others better understand ways in which the LCFF is affecting resource allocation and governance in California's K-12 education system. Results also indicate areas in which changes may be needed.

This report is based on data from 350 superintendents who responded to the survey, which was administered between September 2017 and March 2018.[3] The survey sample included elementary, high, and unified school districts and was stratified by district size and percent of unduplicated students.[4] The stratification plan defined three levels of district size—small (less than 2,000 students), medium (2,000 – 9,999 students), and large (10,000 or more students)—and two proportions of unduplicated pupils—low (55% or less) and high (more than 55%).

A total of 735 California superintendents was contacted to participate in the survey. Responses were received from 350, for a response rate of 48 percent. Results were

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[1] The LCFFRC is a group of senior researchers from various universities and organizations that came together four years ago to study implementation of the LCFF. Principal researchers are Julia Koppich (J. Koppich & Associates), Daniel Humphrey (Independent Consultant), Julie Marsh (University of Southern California), Jennifer O'Day (American Institutes for Research), Magaly Lavadenz (Loyola Marymount University), Laura Stokes (Inverness Research), and David Plank (Stanford University).

[2] *Toward a Grand Vision: Early Implementation of California's Local Control Funding Formula* (2015), *The Local Control Funding Formula: Staking Out the Ground for Early Learning* (2015), *Foster Youth and Early Implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula: Not Yet Making the Grade* (2015), *Two Years of California's Local Control Funding Formula: Time to Reaffirm the Grand Vision* (2016), *Paving the Way to Equity and Coherence? The Local Control Funding Formula in Year 3* (2017), *How Stakeholder Engagement Fuels Improvement Efforts in Three California School Districts* (2018).

[3] Ninety percent of respondents were superintendents: 10% were other cabinet level leaders with LCFF decision-making authority (e.g., associate/deputy superintendent, chief financial officer). For ease of reporting we refer to all respondents as superintendents throughout this report.

[4] Unduplicated students are low-income, English learners, and foster youth. They are counted only once for LCFF funding purposes if they fit in more than one category. We stratified based on this variable because supplemental and concentration funds are allocated based on unduplicated counts and because LCFF spending rules differ for districts with more than 55% unduplicated students and as a result, could affect experiences implementing the policy.

weighted by district size and unduplicated pupil count to bring these variables into alignment with their actual proportions in the population of California districts. The weighting yielded a sample that is almost identical to the overall population in terms of region, district type, free- and reduced price, English learners, homeless students, and foster youth. Of note is that in the 350 districts that responded to the survey, 61 percent of the superintendents had served in this position one to five years, including 32 percent who served one to two years.

Throughout this report we present the aggregate results along with a comparison of responses based on differences in the characteristics of superintendents' districts: size, unduplicated student count, size of English learner population (districts with 11% or more vs. less than 11%[5]), and, in some cases, urbanicity (rural/town vs. urban/suburban).[6] We used statistical tests to determine whether differences between types of districts were significant. Note that in all figures and tables, differences between responses of superintendents from different types of districts are marked by a * if statistically significant at the p<0.10 level and ** if statistically significant at the p<0.05 level. In other words, the difference in response is large enough that we are confident (>90% or >95%) that there is a true difference between these two groups not due to chance. When comparing superintendents from the three categories of district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts. Throughout the report we use "relatively larger" to refer to differences between districts that are large compared to medium, medium compared to small, and/or large compared to small. In a few cases, rural results are different from small district results and are so noted. Sixty-two percent of small districts in the sample are rural.

In addition, where appropriate, we refer to LCFFRC case study findings. Between 2013 and 2017, the LCFFRC completed 30 case studies of districts around the state that were selected for their variation in location, size, student population, and other factors that render them collectively illustrative of the diversity of California districts and students. In the course of these case studies, LCFFRC researchers conducted more than 500 interviews with district staff, school board members, union and association representatives, parents and community members, and county office of education officials, as well as reviews of more than 80 LCAPs and interviews with 36 COE superintendents and key staff.

THE RESULTS

We turn now to the survey results. They are divided into six categories: 1) Perceptions and Beliefs about the LCFF, 2) Resource Allocation and Fiscal Flexibility, 3) Stakeholder Engagement, 4) Student Supports and Outcomes, 5) Guidance and Support for Districts, and, 6) Communication and Accountability.

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[5] 11% was selected in order to divide the sample into two segments of sufficient size to detect differences. 61% of superintendents were from districts with 11% or more EL students; 39% were from districts with less than 11% EL students.

[6] We have not included in the figures comparisons based on percentage of students eligible for free-and-reduced-price meals, as these comparisons are nearly identical to the patterns observed when comparing by percentage of unduplicated students.

PERCEPTIONS AND BELIEFS ABOUT THE LCFF

Buy-in and Understanding: Most superintendents support the key underlying goals of the LCFF and believe they are knowledgeable about its rules and regulations.

Overall superintendents report strong support for the underlying equity goal of the LCFF. Nearly all superintendents (94%) agree students with greater needs should receive additional resources, a fundamental premise of the LCFF (Figure 1).
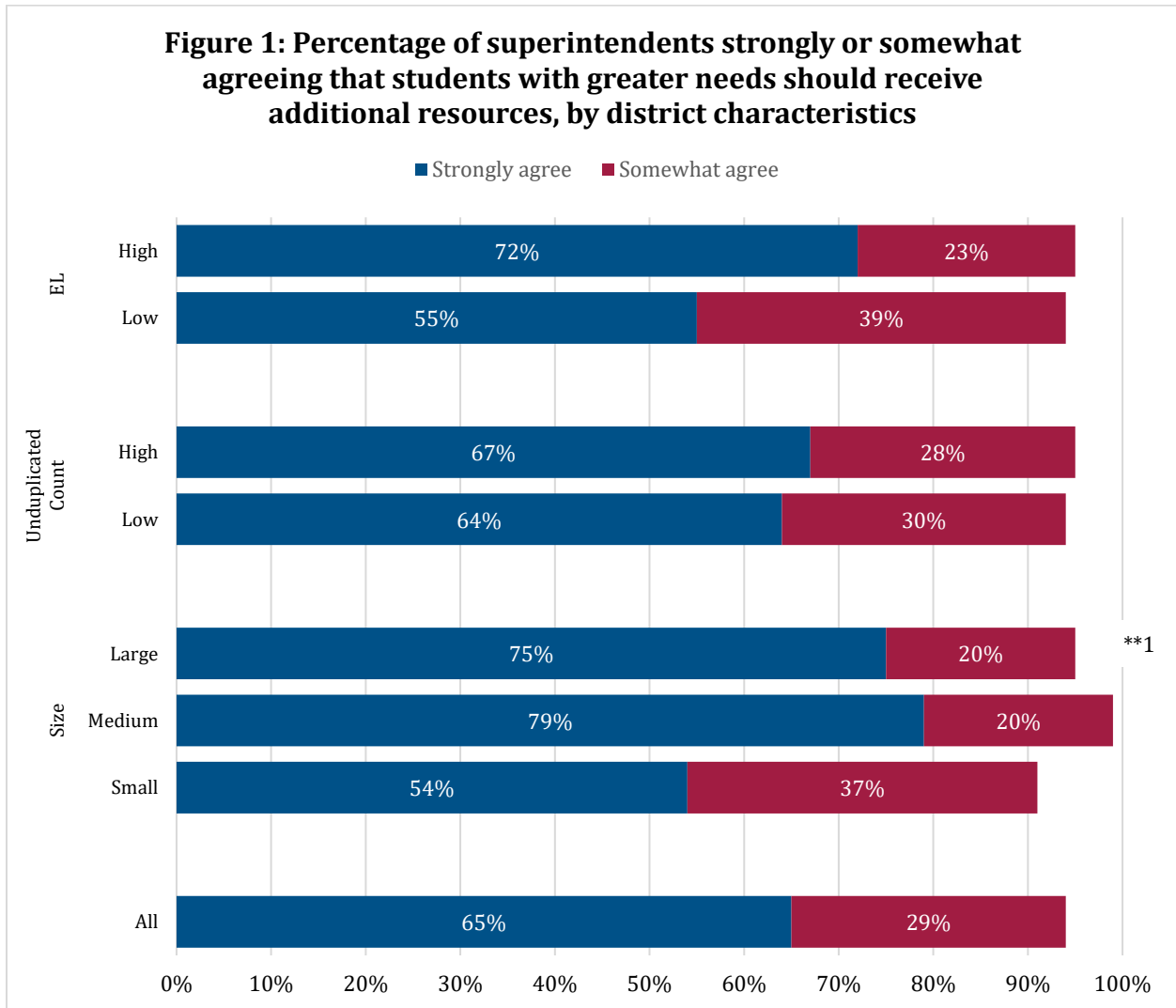
Figure 1: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that students with greater needs should receive additional resources, by district characteristics

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

Similarly, nearly all superintendents (96%) also report having a good understanding of the LCFF's rules and regulations (Figure 2).
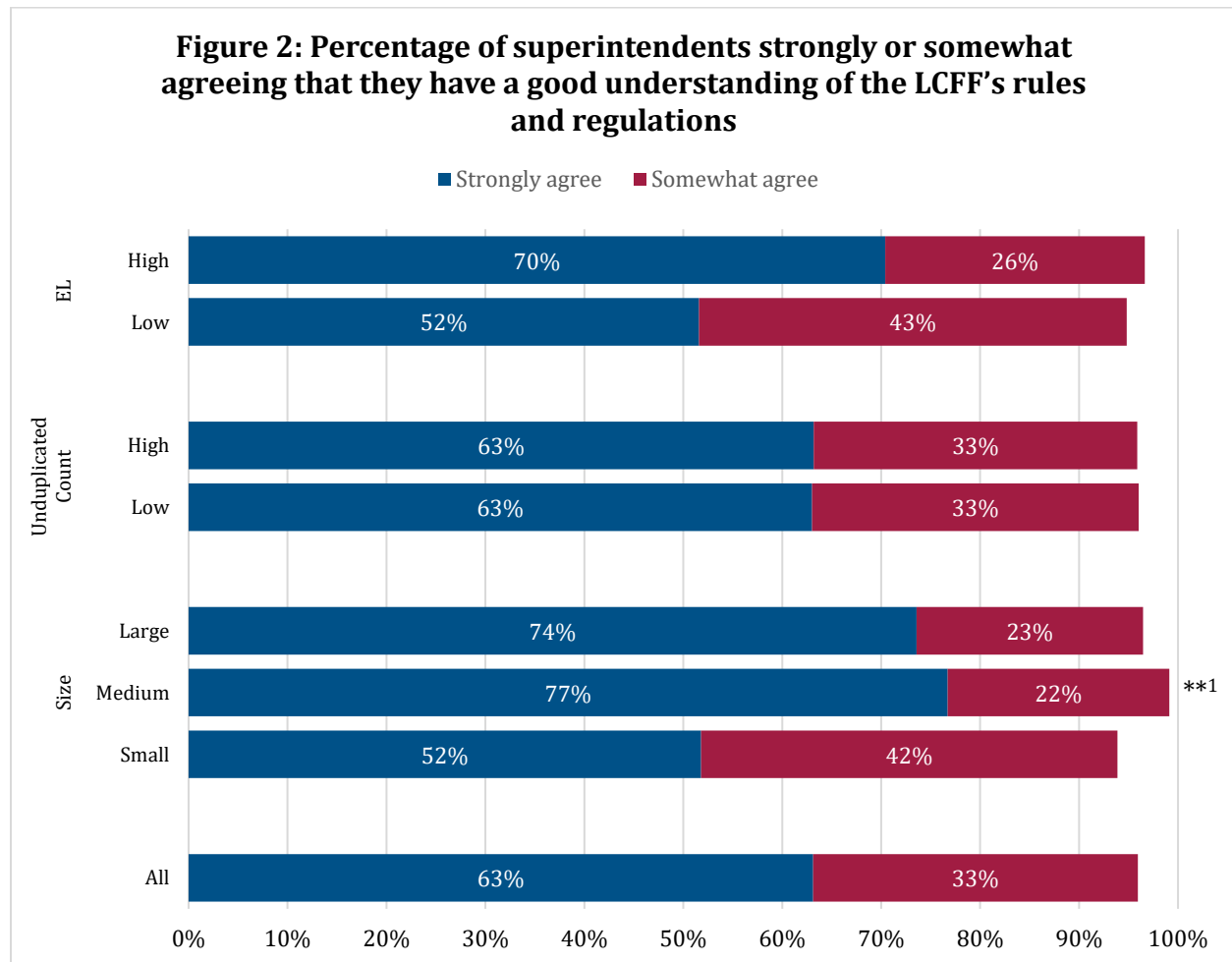
Figure 2: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that they have a good understanding of the LCFF's rules and regulations

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree

		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree
EL	High	70%	26%
	Low	52%	43%
Unduplicated Count	High	63%	33%
	Low	63%	33%
Size	Large	74%	23%
	Medium	77%	22% **1
	Small	52%	42%
	All	63%	33%

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.
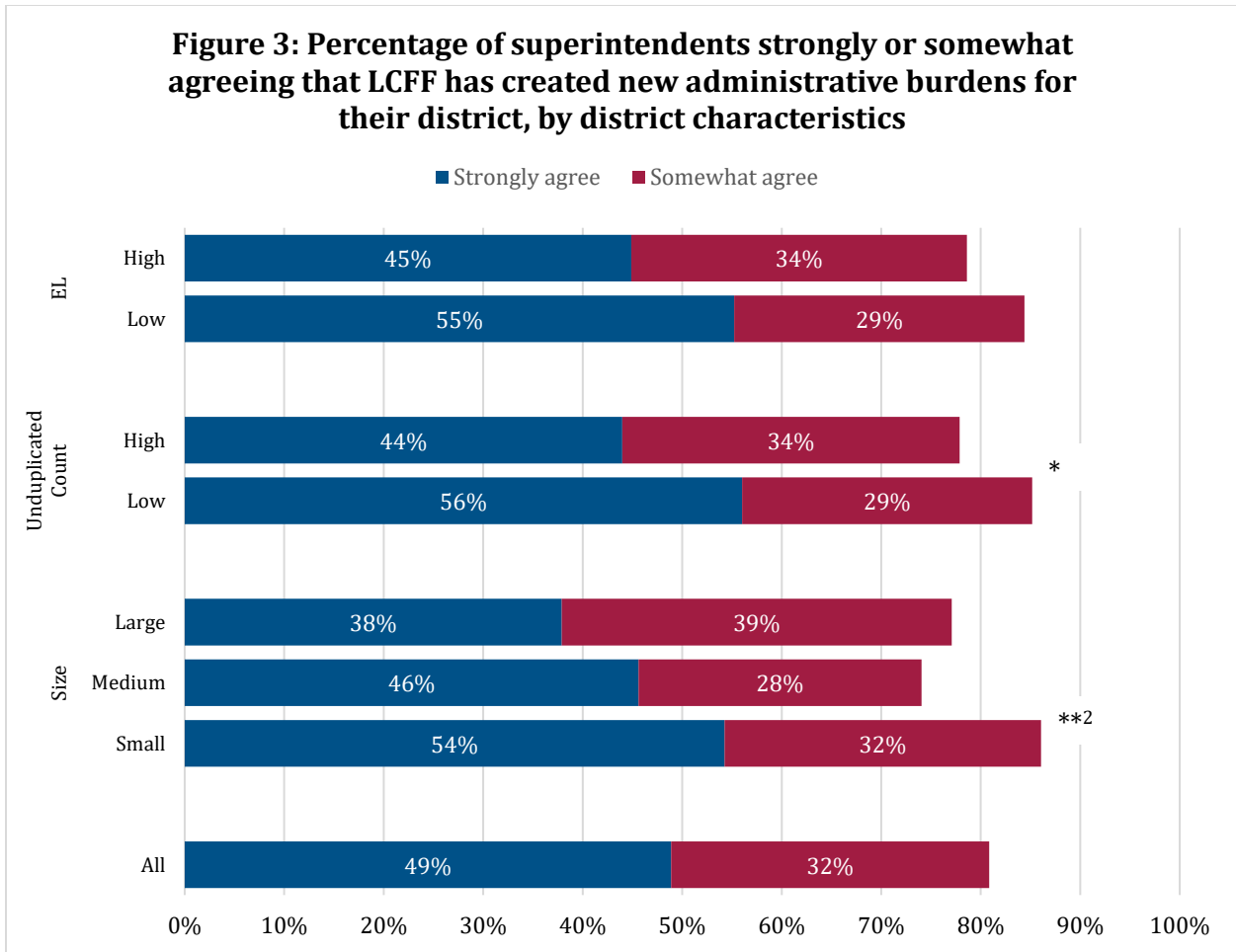
However, most superintendents report the LCFF has created new administrative burdens, and some express concerns about protecting the interests of high-needs students.

A strong majority of superintendents (81%) agrees the LCFF has created new administrative burdens for their district (Figure 3). These concerns were particularly acute among smaller districts. Though not depicted in Figure 3, superintendents in rural/small town districts also were significantly more likely to agree with this statement (84% vs 77% in suburban/urban districts; difference significant at p<.10). These results are consistent with LCFFRC case study findings in which small districts, in particular, found the LCFF's administrative burden, as embodied in the LCAP, often overwhelmed their capacity.

Figure 3: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that LCFF has created new administrative burdens for their district, by district characteristics

Legend: ■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree

Category	Group	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Significance
EL	High	45%	34%	
EL	Low	55%	29%	
Unduplicated Count	High	44%	34%	*
Unduplicated Count	Low	56%	29%	
Size	Large	38%	39%	
Size	Medium	46%	28%	**2
Size	Small	54%	32%	
	All	49%	32%	

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

Further, more than a third of superintendents (38%) say the LCFF removes essential protections that categorical programs once provided for high-needs students (Figure 4). Again, this concern was more common among small districts.
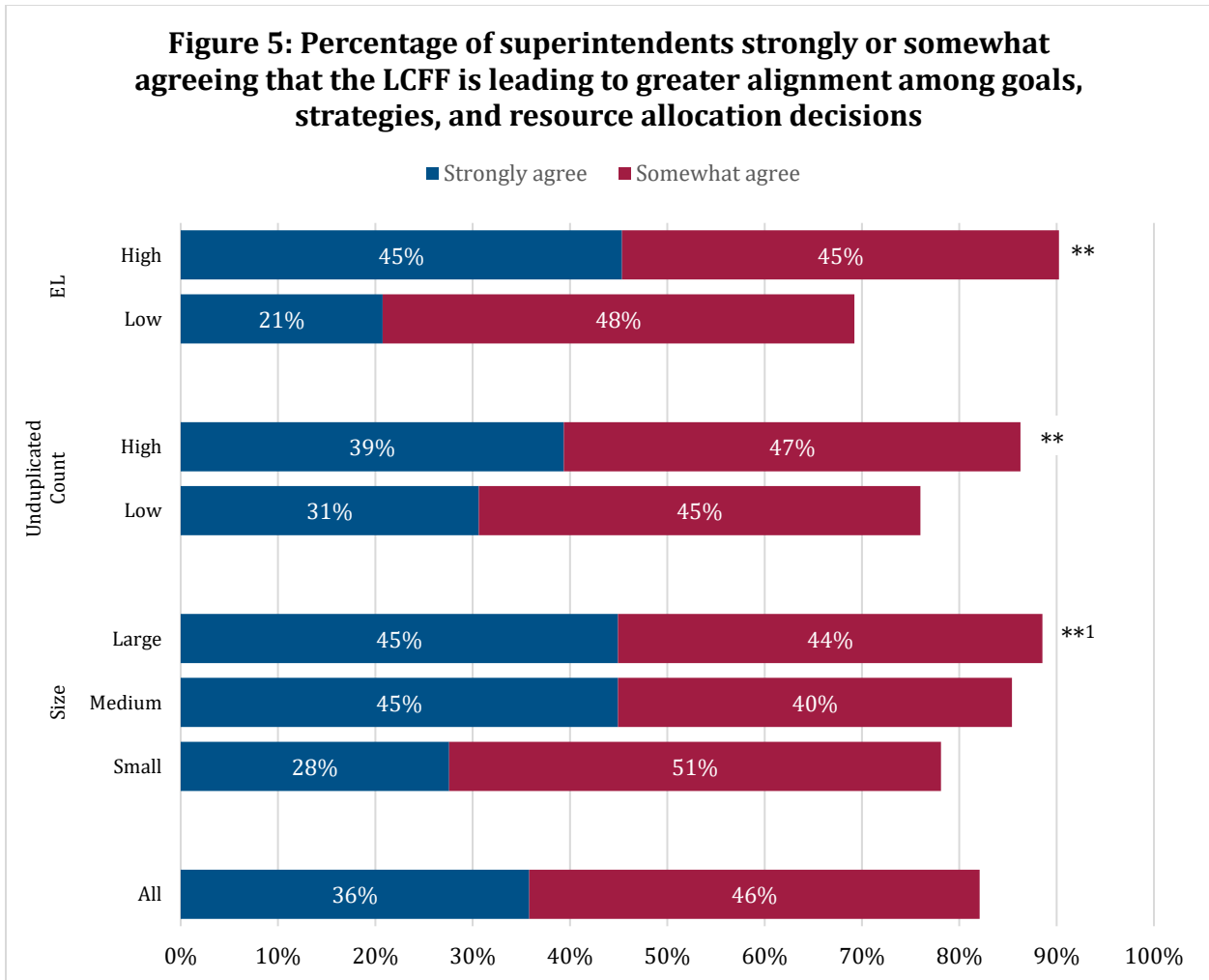
Figure 4: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that LCFF removes essential protections that categorical programs once provided for high-needs students

■ Strongly agree   ■ Somewhat agree

		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Total
EL	High	13%	27%	
	Low	5%	30%	
Unduplicated Count	High	11%	27%	
	Low	9%	30%	
Size	Large	10%	19%	
	Medium	10%	26%	
	Small	10%	33%	**3
	All	10%	28%	
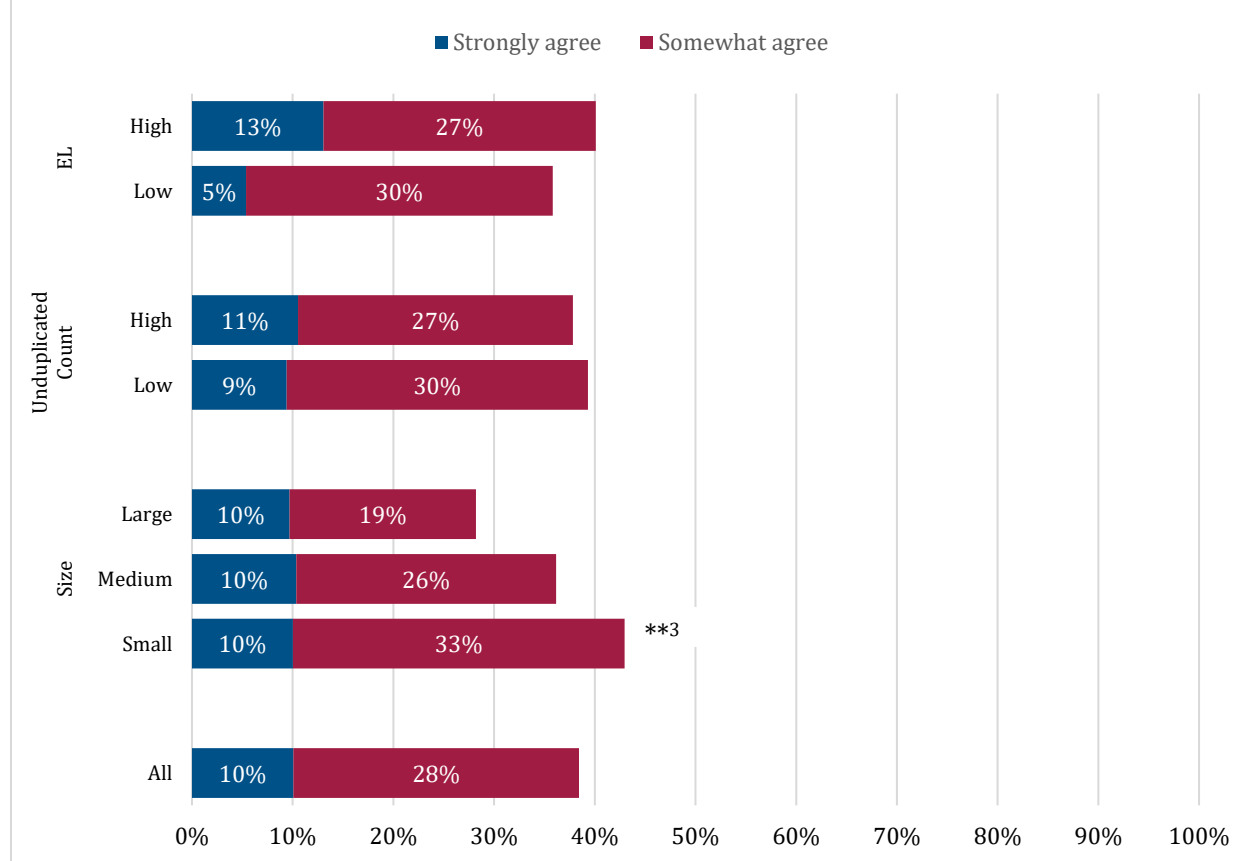
Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

Perceived Benefits: While most superintendents report positive effects of the LCFF on alignment, they are more divided about the LCFF's ability to promote innovation.
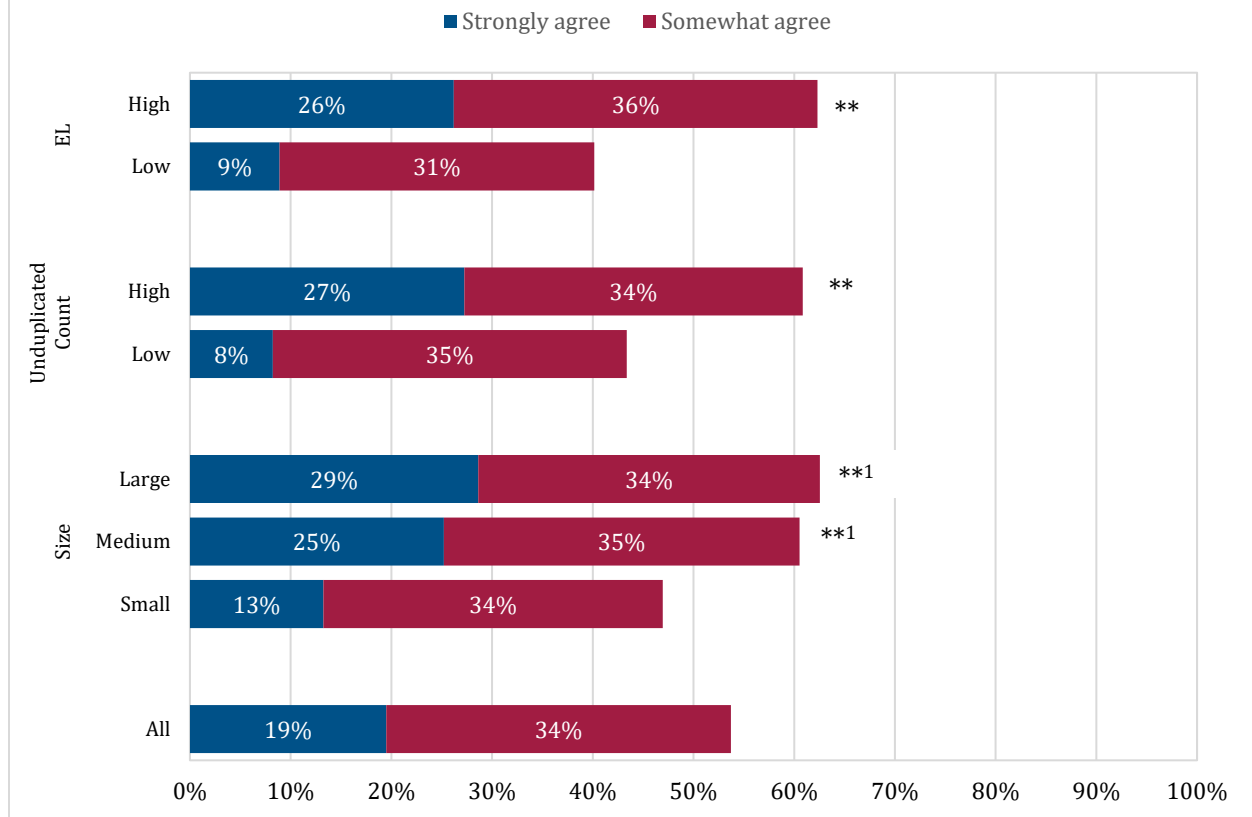
A strong majority of superintendents (82%) agrees the LCFF is leading to greater alignment among goals, strategies, and resource allocation decisions (Figure 5). Respondents in relatively larger districts and districts with higher numbers of unduplicated students and of EL students were more likely to report these effects.

Figure 5: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that the LCFF is leading to greater alignment among goals, strategies, and resource allocation decisions

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree

		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	
EL	High	45%	45%	**
	Low	21%	48%	
Unduplicated Count	High	39%	47%	**
	Low	31%	45%	
Size	Large	45%	44%	**1
	Medium	45%	40%	
	Small	28%	51%	
	All	36%	46%	

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

Superintendents are split in their views about whether the LCFF has enabled their district to make innovative changes that were not possible before the law (Figure 6). About half (53%) report the LCFF has enabled them to make innovative changes, although we cannot know for sure from survey results what they mean by "innovative." These reports were more common in relatively larger districts as well as in districts with higher numbers of unduplicated students and of EL students.

Figure 6: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that the LCFF has enabled them to make innovative changes

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	
EL High	26%	36%	**
EL Low	9%	31%	
Unduplicated Count High	27%	34%	**
Unduplicated Count Low	8%	35%	
Size Large	29%	34%	**1
Size Medium	25%	35%	**1
Size Small	13%	34%	
All	19%	34%	

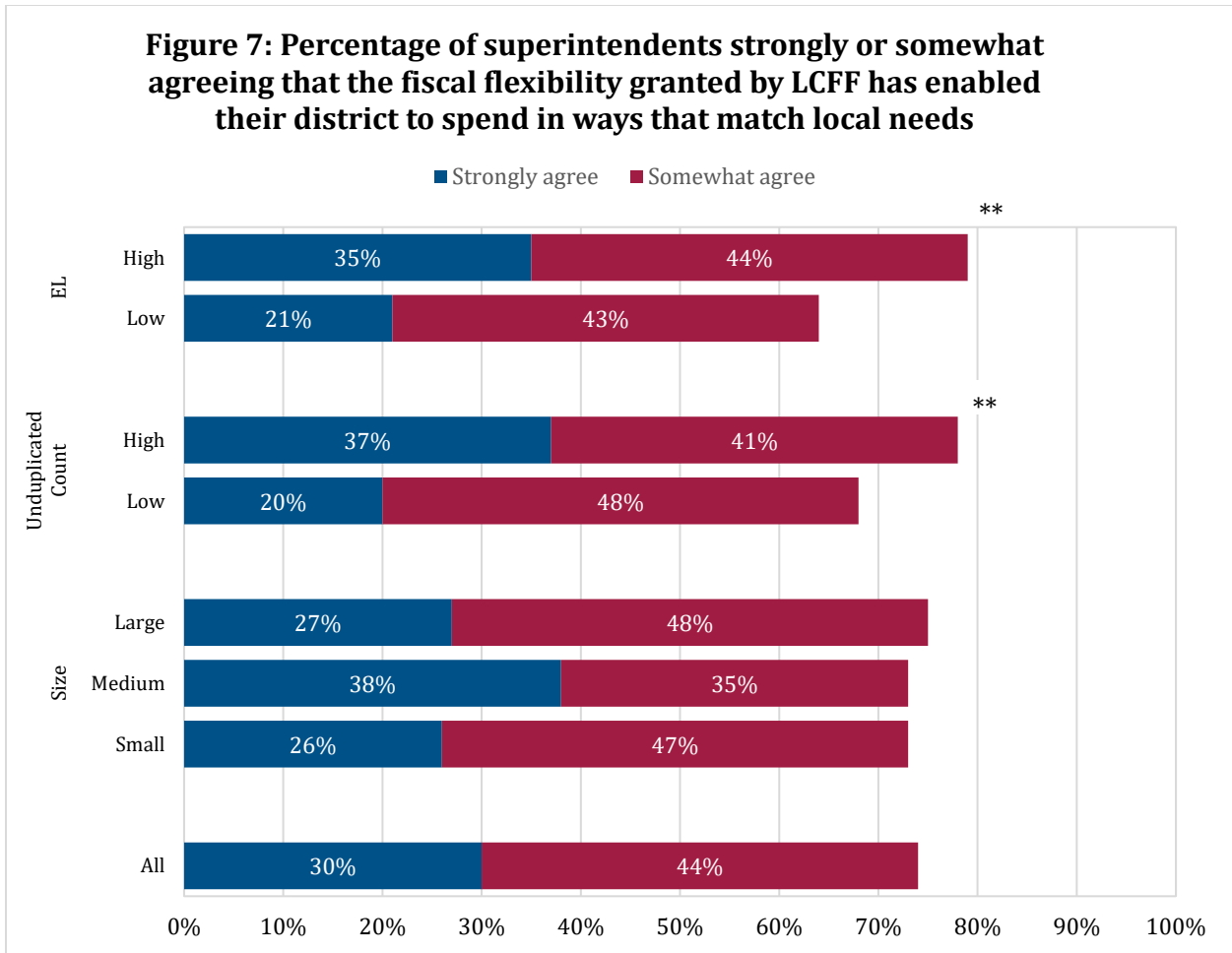(Horizontal axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%)

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

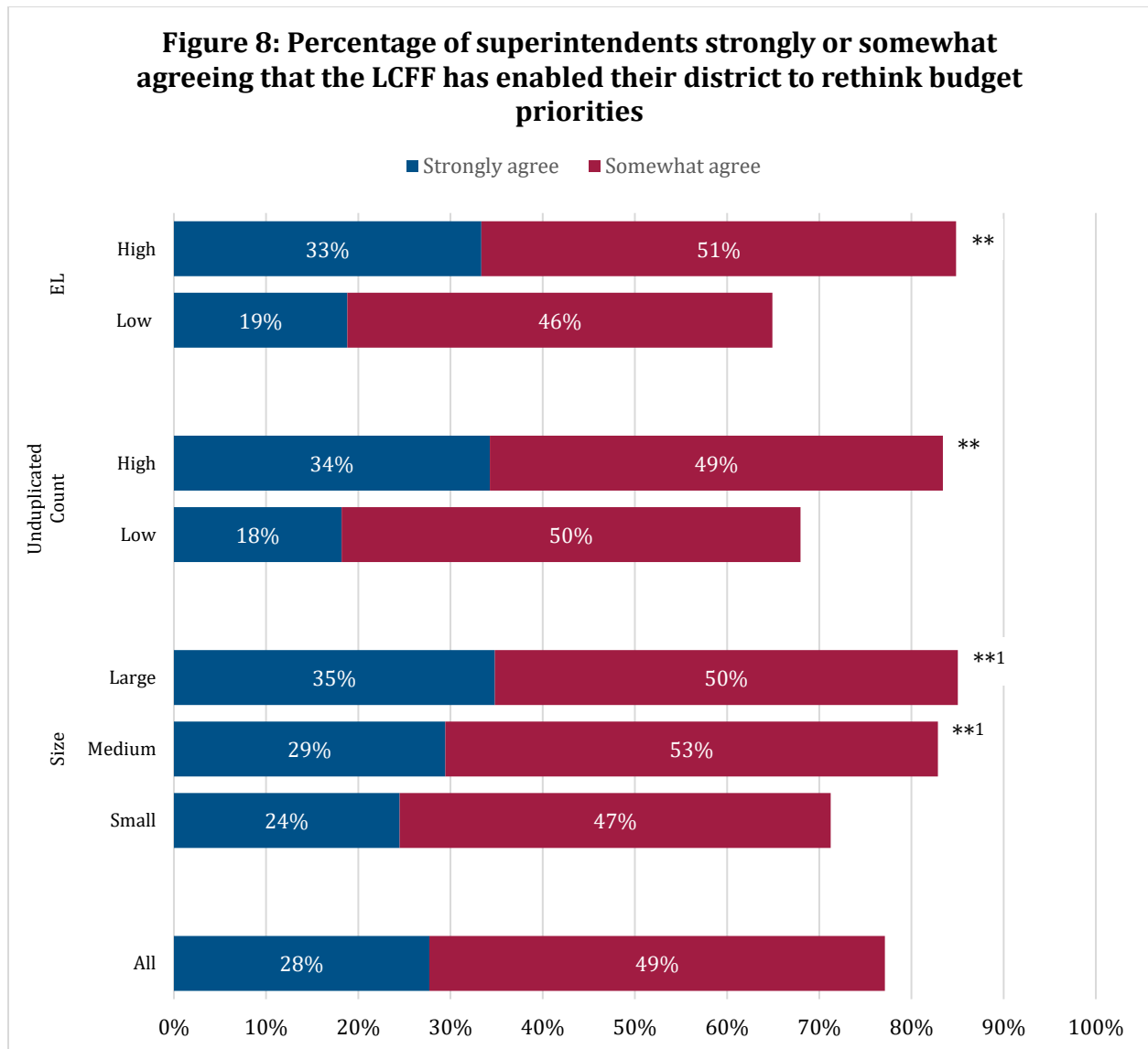## RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND FISCAL FLEXIBILITY

Most superintendents report the LCFF is enhancing resource allocation practices, but also express concerns about inadequate base funding and spending on non-LCFF-targeted high-needs students.

About three-quarters of superintendents (74%) agree that the fiscal flexibility provided by the LCFF has enabled their district to spend in ways that match local needs (Figure 7). This belief was more common among districts with high-unduplicated student counts and higher number of EL students.
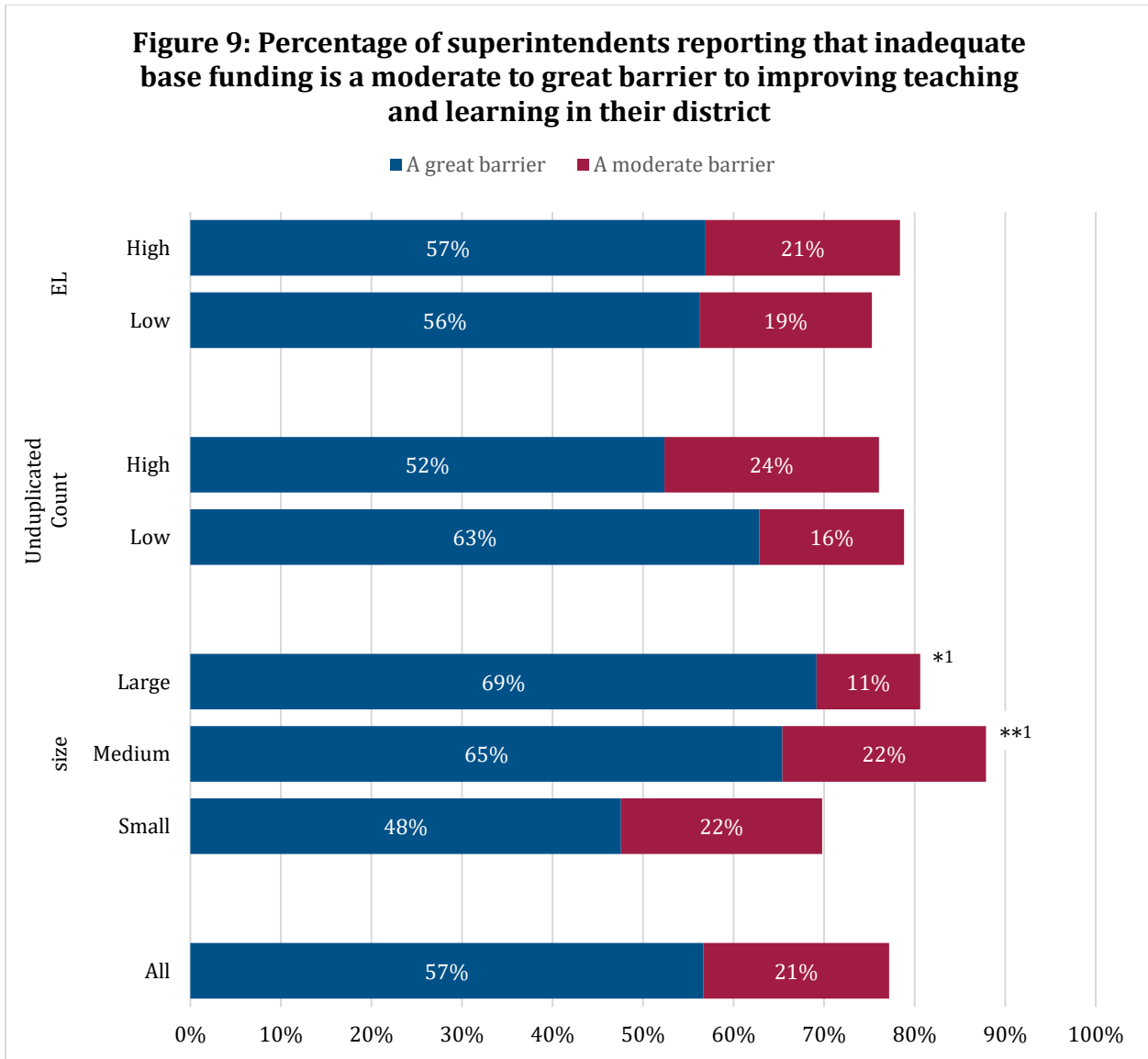
Figure 7: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that the fiscal flexibility granted by LCFF has enabled their district to spend in ways that match local needs

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree

		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	
EL	High	35%	44%	**
	Low	21%	43%	
Unduplicated Count	High	37%	41%	**
	Low	20%	48%	
Size	Large	27%	48%	
	Medium	38%	35%	
	Small	26%	47%	
	All	30%	44%	

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

Similarly, three-quarters of superintendents (77%) say the LCFF has enabled their district to rethink budget priorities (Figure 8). This belief was particularly common among superintendents in relatively larger districts and those with high-unduplicated counts and higher numbers of EL students.

Figure 8: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that the LCFF has enabled their district to rethink budget priorities

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

Nevertheless, more than three-quarters of superintendents (78%) report inadequate base funding is a moderate to great barrier to improving teaching and learning in their district (Figure 9). This concern about fiscal adequacy was more common among survey respondents in relatively larger districts. LCFFRC case study researchers found that district leaders across the board say their base funds are not sufficient to do all they are expected to do.

Figure 9: Percentage of superintendents reporting that inadequate base funding is a moderate to great barrier to improving teaching and learning in their district

■ A great barrier   ■ A moderate barrier

Category		Great barrier	Moderate barrier
EL	High	57%	21%
	Low	56%	19%
Unduplicated Count	High	52%	24%
	Low	63%	16%
size	Large	69%	11% *1
	Medium	65%	22% **1
	Small	48%	22%
	All	57%	21%

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined great barrier and moderate barrier responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

The vast majority of superintendents (90%) believes districts should be allowed to use supplemental and concentration funds for other disadvantaged students not targeted by LCFF (e.g., students of color, other historically marginalized student groups) (Figure 10). This desire for added flexibility tended to be more common among the smaller and medium size districts. This finding also is consistent with LCFFRC case study results where many district leaders told researchers expanding opportunities to use these funds would benefit students in their district.

Figure 10: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that districts should be allowed to use LCFF supplemental and concentration funds for other disadvantaged students not targeted by LCFF (e.g., students of color, other historically marginalized students.
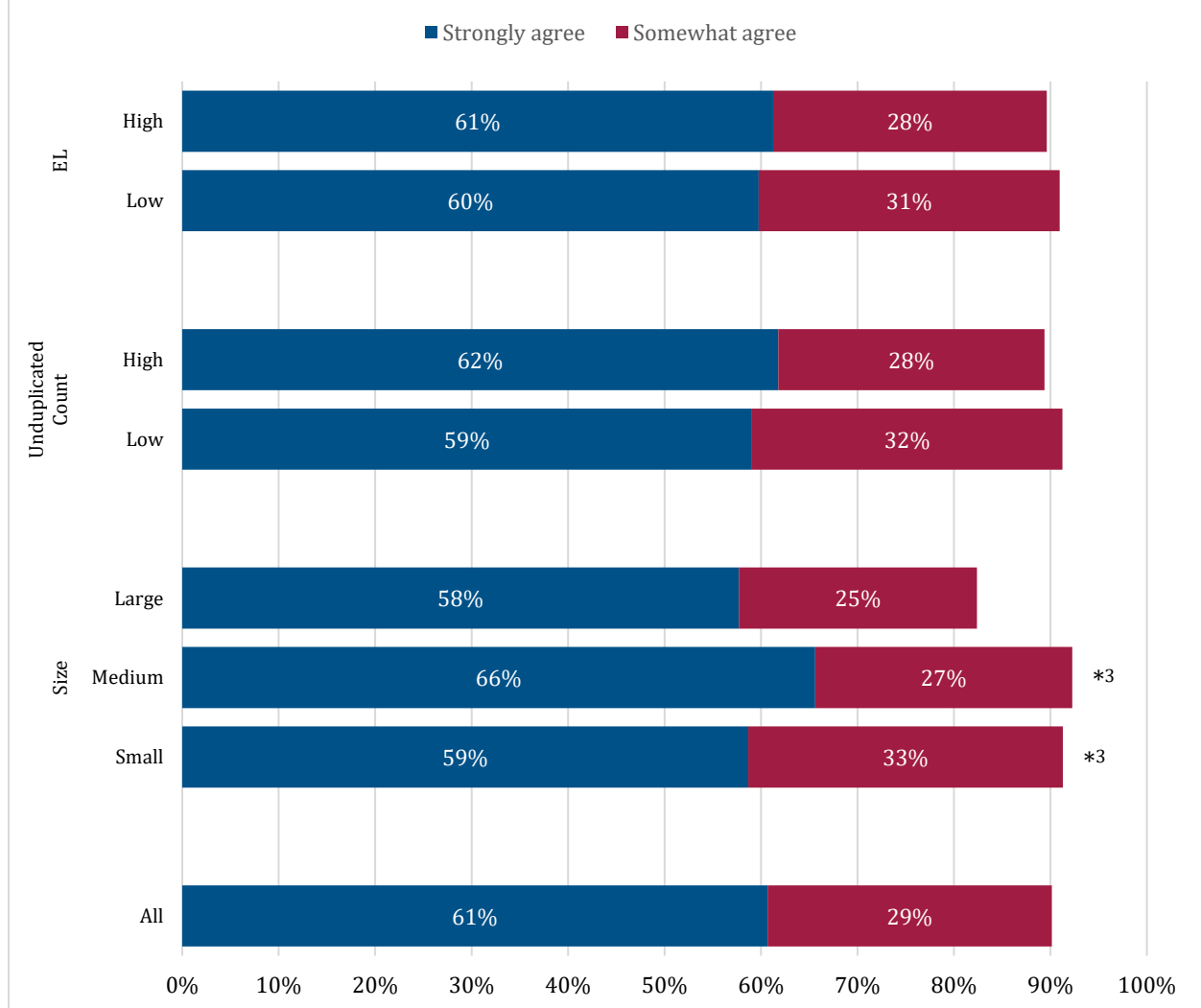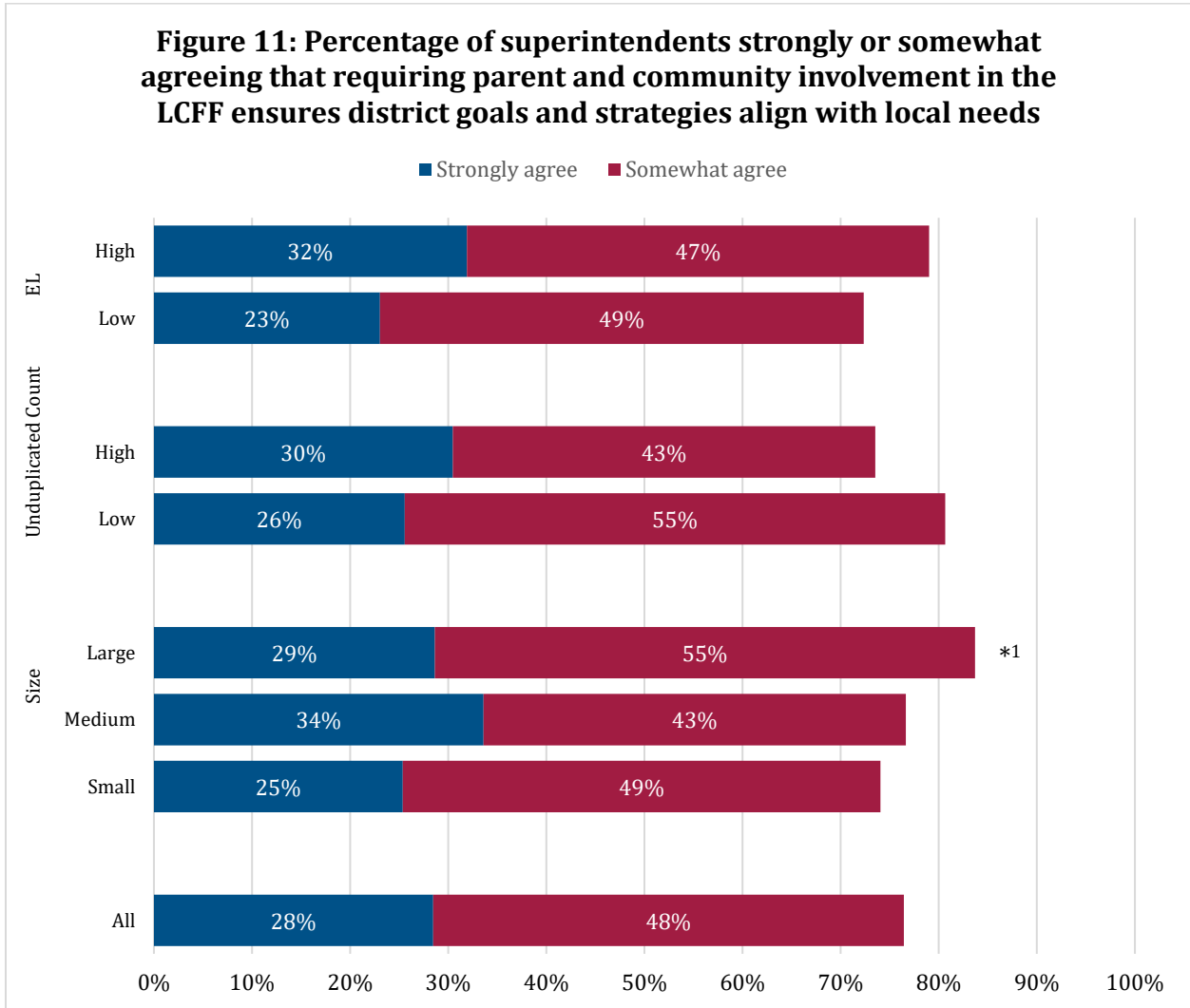

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

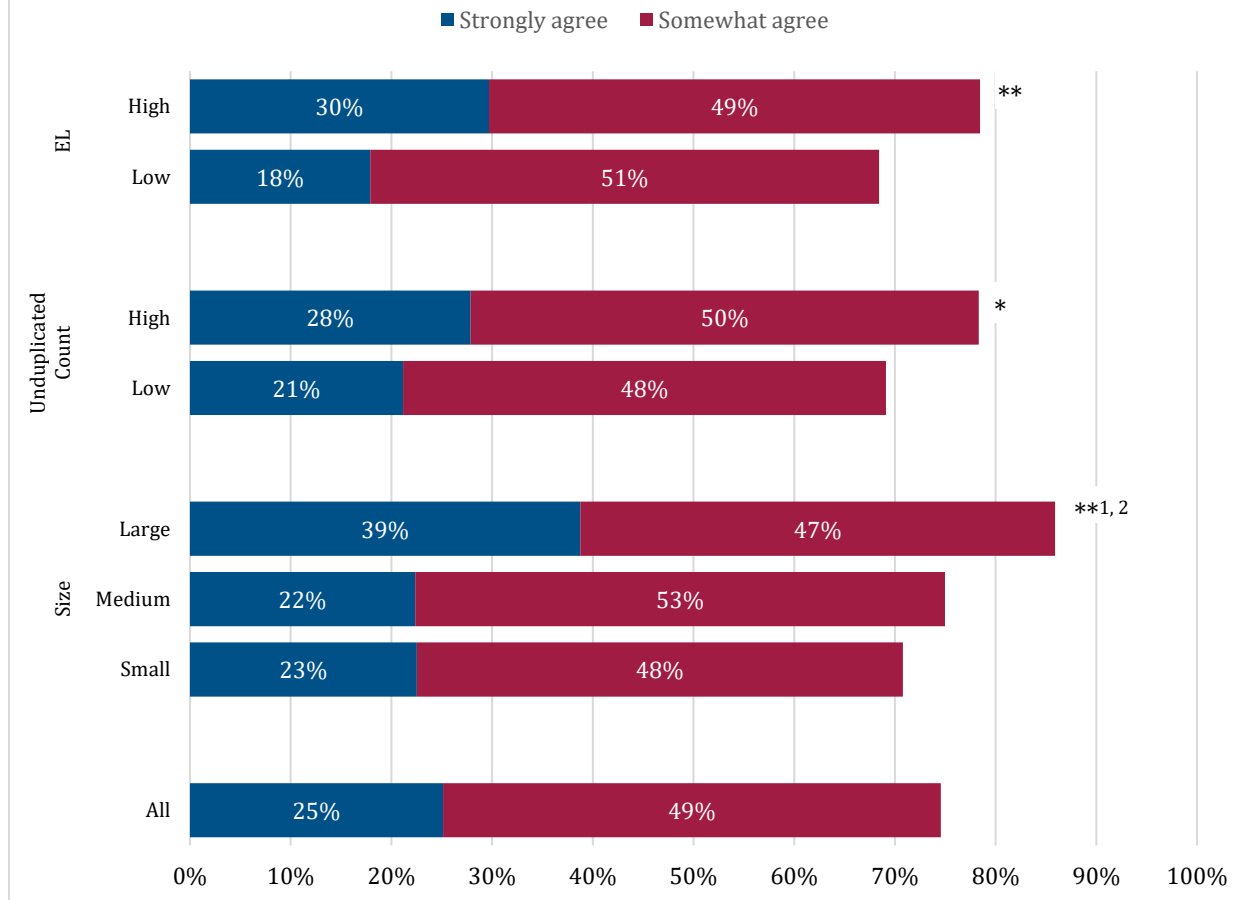### *Most superintendents support the LCFF parent and community engagement requirements.*

About three-quarters of superintendents agree that requiring parent and community involvement as part of the LCFF ensures district goals and strategies align with local needs (76%) (Figure 11) and that LCFF-required parent and community involvement gives historically underrepresented students and families new opportunities to influence district

decisions (74%) (Figure 12). This support for providing opportunities for underrepresented groups was significantly greater for leaders in relatively larger districts.

Figure 11: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that requiring parent and community involvement in the LCFF ensures district goals and strategies align with local needs

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree

Category		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	
EL	High	32%	47%	
	Low	23%	49%	
Unduplicated Count	High	30%	43%	
	Low	26%	55%	
Size	Large	29%	55%	*1
	Medium	34%	43%	
	Small	25%	49%	
	All	28%	48%	

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.
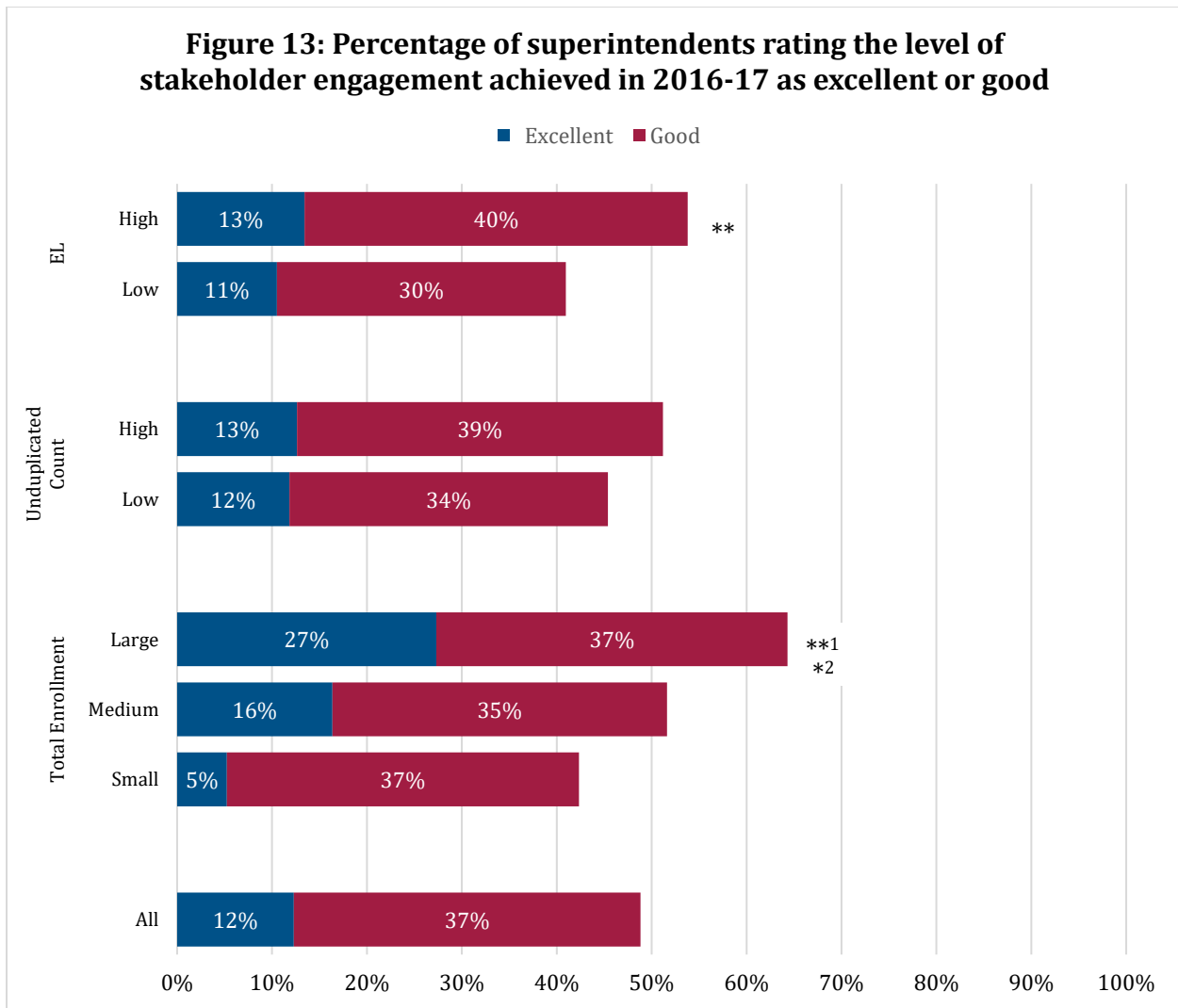
Figure 12: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that parent and community involvement in the LCFF gives historically underrepresented students and families new opportunities to influence district decisions

■ Strongly agree   ■ Somewhat agree

Category		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	
EL	High	30%	49%	**
	Low	18%	51%	
Unduplicated Count	High	28%	50%	*
	Low	21%	48%	
Size	Large	39%	47%	**1, 2
	Medium	22%	53%	
	Small	23%	48%	
	All	25%	49%	

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the $p<0.10$ level and ** at the $p<0.05$ level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.
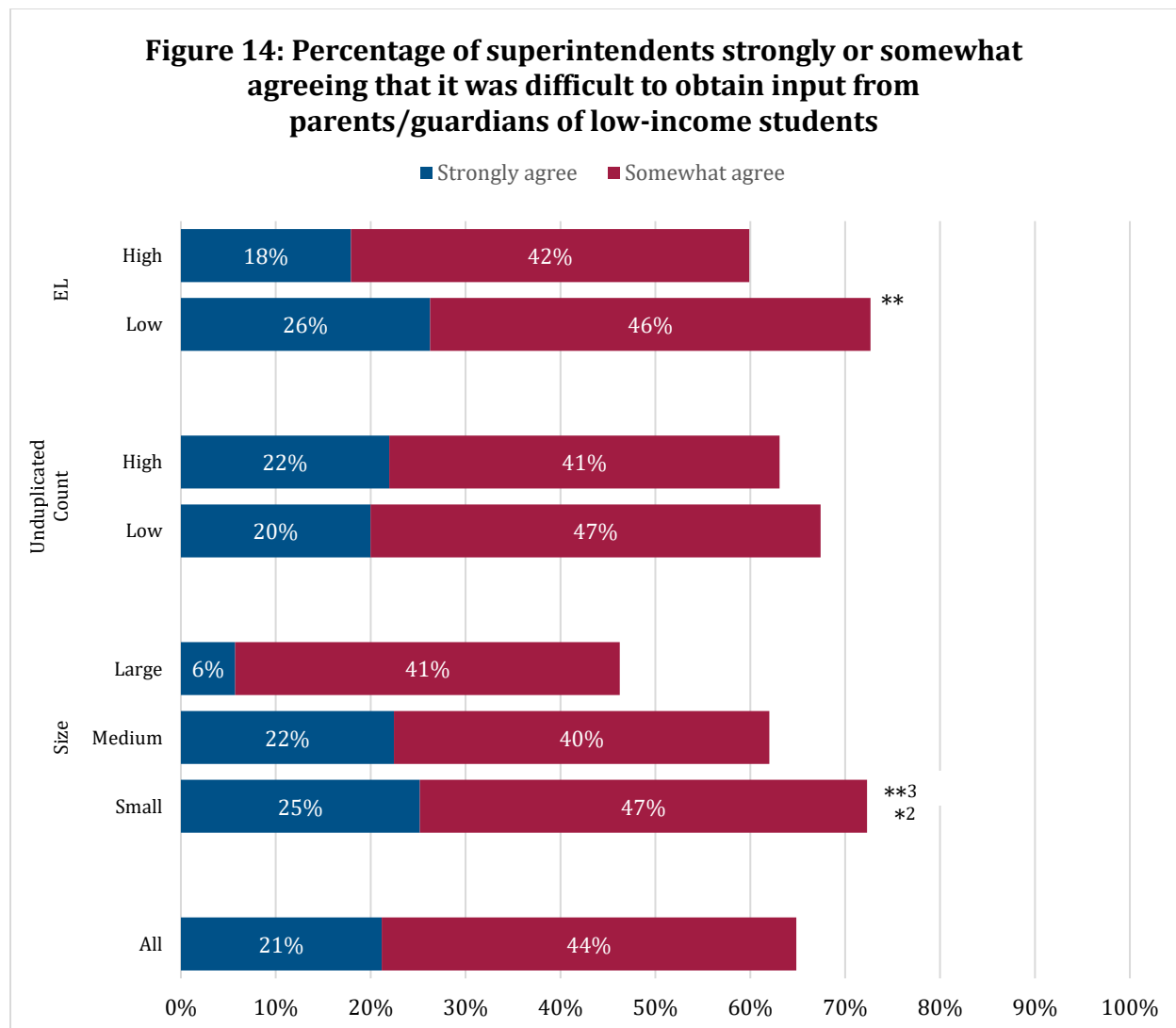
Yet, superintendents face challenges achieving high levels of stakeholder participation and representation—particularly among parents and guardians of the LCFF target group students.

While superintendents believe it is important to involve stakeholders, they report difficulties implementing these efforts particularly for the underrepresented groups. The majority of superintendents (88%) report achieving less-than excellent levels of stakeholder engagement in 2016-17 (Figure 13). This was particularly so for small and medium districts and districts with low numbers of EL students.

Figure 13: Percentage of superintendents rating the level of stakeholder engagement achieved in 2016-17 as excellent or good

■ Excellent ■ Good

		Excellent	Good	
EL	High	13%	40%	**
	Low	11%	30%	
Unduplicated Count	High	13%	39%	
	Low	12%	34%	
Total Enrollment	Large	27%	37%	**1 *2
	Medium	16%	35%	
	Small	5%	37%	
	All	12%	37%	

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined excellent and good responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

Further, the majority of superintendents (65%) say that it was difficult to obtain input from parents and guardians of the LCFF target students. Reponses varied among districts of different sizes (Figures 14-16). Relatively larger districts struggled more with engaging stakeholders representing foster youth. Districts with larger numbers of English learners are less likely to report difficulty engaging parents and guardians of low-income students. Though not depicted in these figures, superintendents in rural/small town districts were significantly more likely than their counterparts in suburban/urban districts to report these challenges with low-income stakeholders (73% of rural/small town superintendents vs. 56% suburban/urban superintendents agreed it was difficult to obtain input from these parents/guardians: difference is significant at p<.05) and English learner stakeholders (59% vs. 47%: difference is significant at p<.05).

Figure 14: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that it was difficult to obtain input from parents/guardians of low-income students

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree

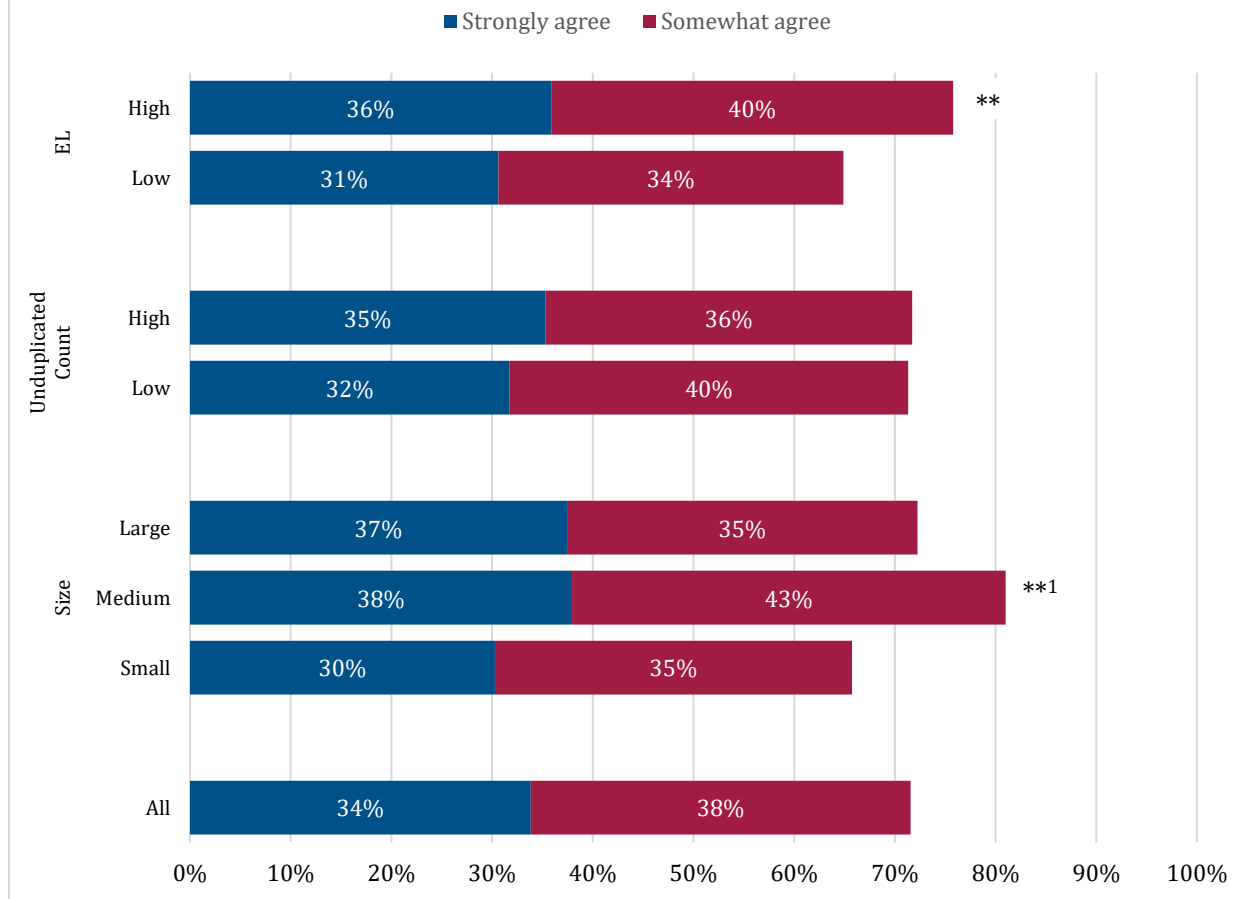| Category		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Significance
EL	High	18%	42%	
	Low	26%	46%	**
Unduplicated Count	High	22%	41%	
	Low	20%	47%	
Size	Large	6%	41%	
	Medium	22%	40%	
	Small	25%	47%	**3 *2
	All	21%	44%	

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

Figure 15: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that it was difficult to obtain input from parents/guardians of English learners
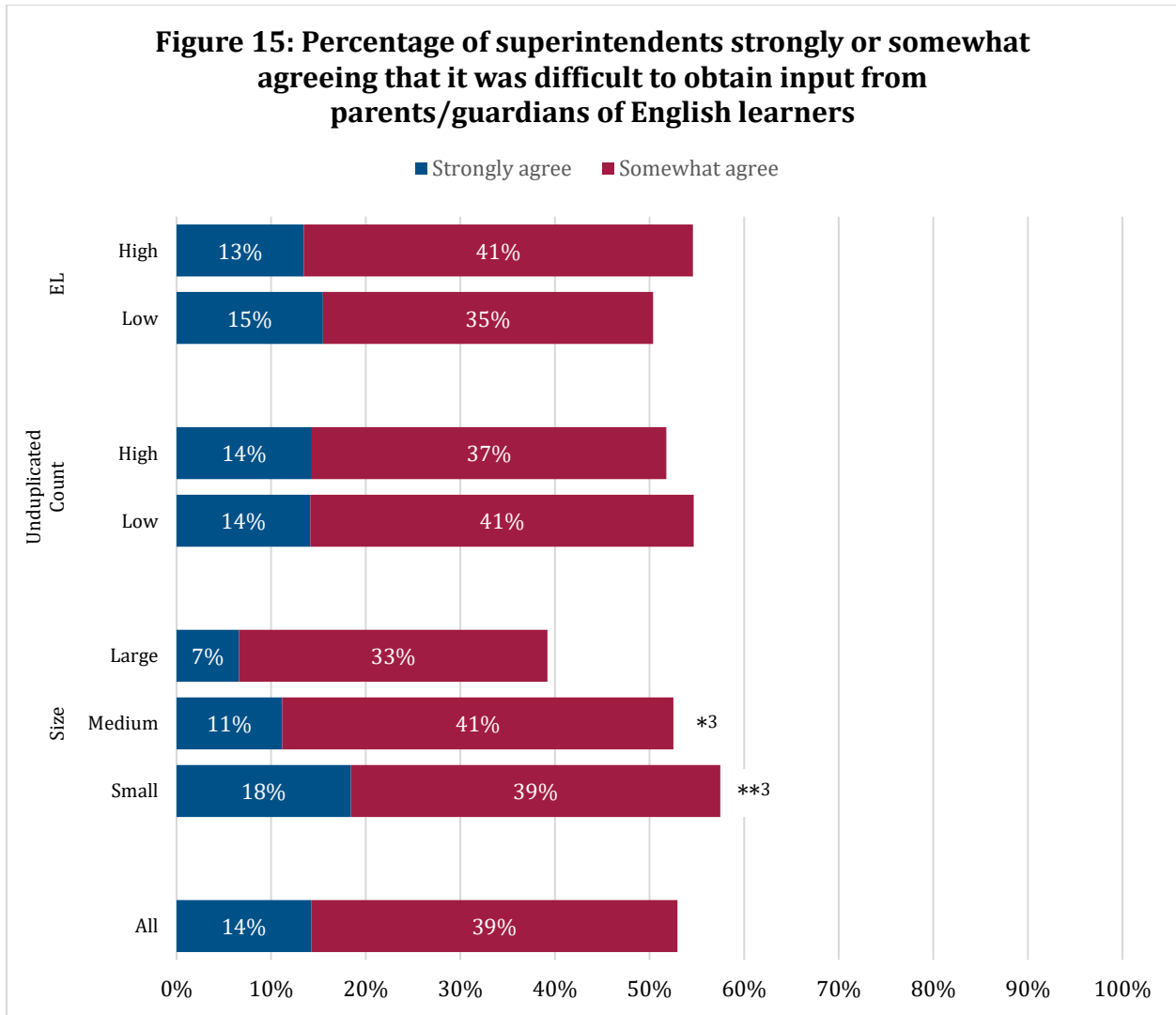
Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

Figure 16: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that it was difficult to obtain input from parents/guardians of foster youth

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

LCFFRC case study data indicate a wide range of possible factors contributing to low levels of engagement, including mistrust in the district to involve stakeholders in an authentic way, stakeholder beliefs about the appropriate roles for non-educators, and limited district-level capacity to engage stakeholders.

Superintendents report using a wide variety of engagement strategies in 2016-17 but say participation in these activities was not widespread and vary in their perceptions of their usefulness.

Superintendents report using many strategies to engage stakeholders but express mixed views on their ability to yield useful information (Table 1). Relatively larger districts were more likely to communicate with existing advisory groups of parents as, to a slight extent, were districts with high numbers of EL students. Districts with high unduplicated counts of

target students were more likely to use parent surveys. (See Appendix B for these comparative data.)

Table 1: Percentage of superintendents using the following LCFF engagement strategies in 2016-17 and reporting they resulted in the most useful feedback from stakeholders
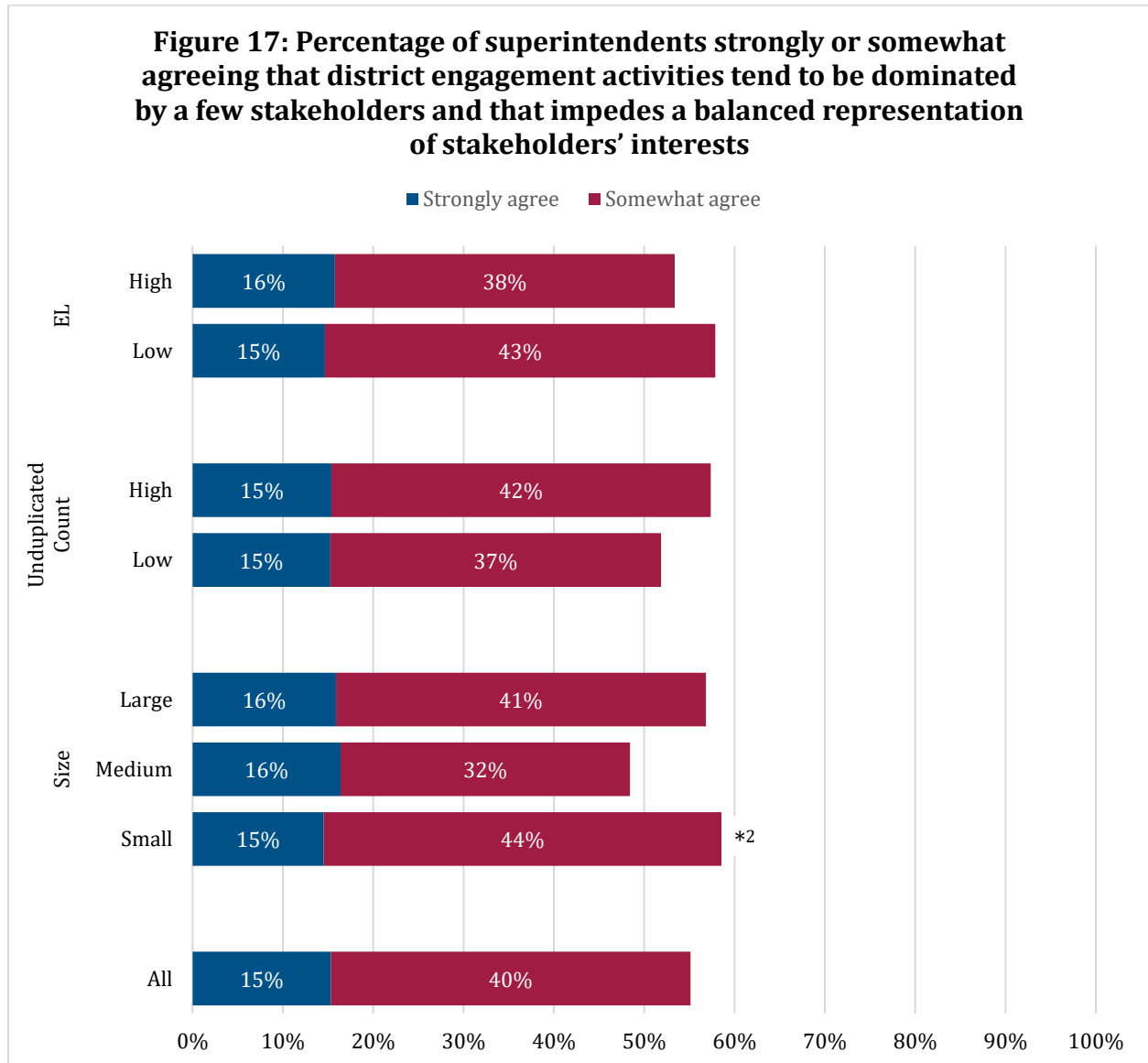
	Used	Most Useful*
Communicating with existing advisory groups of parents (DELAC, DAC, PTA)	93%	37%
Administering surveys to parents	91%	39%
Administering surveys to school administrators, teachers, and/or staff	83%	39%
Convening an LCAP advisory group	76%	30%
Hosting LCAP/LCFF-specific community meetings	72%	9%
Hosting school-specific meetings	66%	13%
Hosting other district-wide or regional meetings where LCAP was discussed along with other topics	58%	5%

* Respondents were asked which engagement strategies resulted in the most useful feedback from stakeholders and could select up to two strategies. As such, percentages in this column add up to more than 100%.

LCFFRC case study data indicate that districts are beginning to evolve from broad, community-wide meetings to gather parent and community input to other approaches they believe may increase participation. In the first year of LCFFRC research in 2013-14, our sampled districts commonly organized large community-wide meetings to solicit input on district goals and strategies for the LCAP, but found that attendance was quite low. In the second and third year of LCFFRC work, many case study district leaders reported trying new approaches to increase both the quantity and quality of participation, such as organizing informal opportunities (e.g., meeting with community members at church, attending Kiwanis meetings) or smaller meetings with single stakeholder groups (e.g., PTA, English Learner Advisory Committee) or at school sites. Leaders believed these "more intimate" settings attracted more participants and fostered more meaningful discussions. While respondents to this survey report obtaining more useful input from local parent and community or employee surveys, it is important to keep in mind that, according to LCFFRC case study research, response rates to such surveys have been quite low, often less than 10 percent.

Finally, more than half of superintendents (55%) say district engagement activities tend to be dominated by a few stakeholders and that impedes a balanced representation of stakeholders' interests (Figure 17). Though not depicted in Figure 17, this perception was particularly true for rural/town districts: 62% of rural/town district superintendents

agreed with this statement vs. 48% of suburban/urban superintendents (difference is significant at p<.05).

Figure 17: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that district engagement activities tend to be dominated by a few stakeholders and that impedes a balanced representation of stakeholders' interests
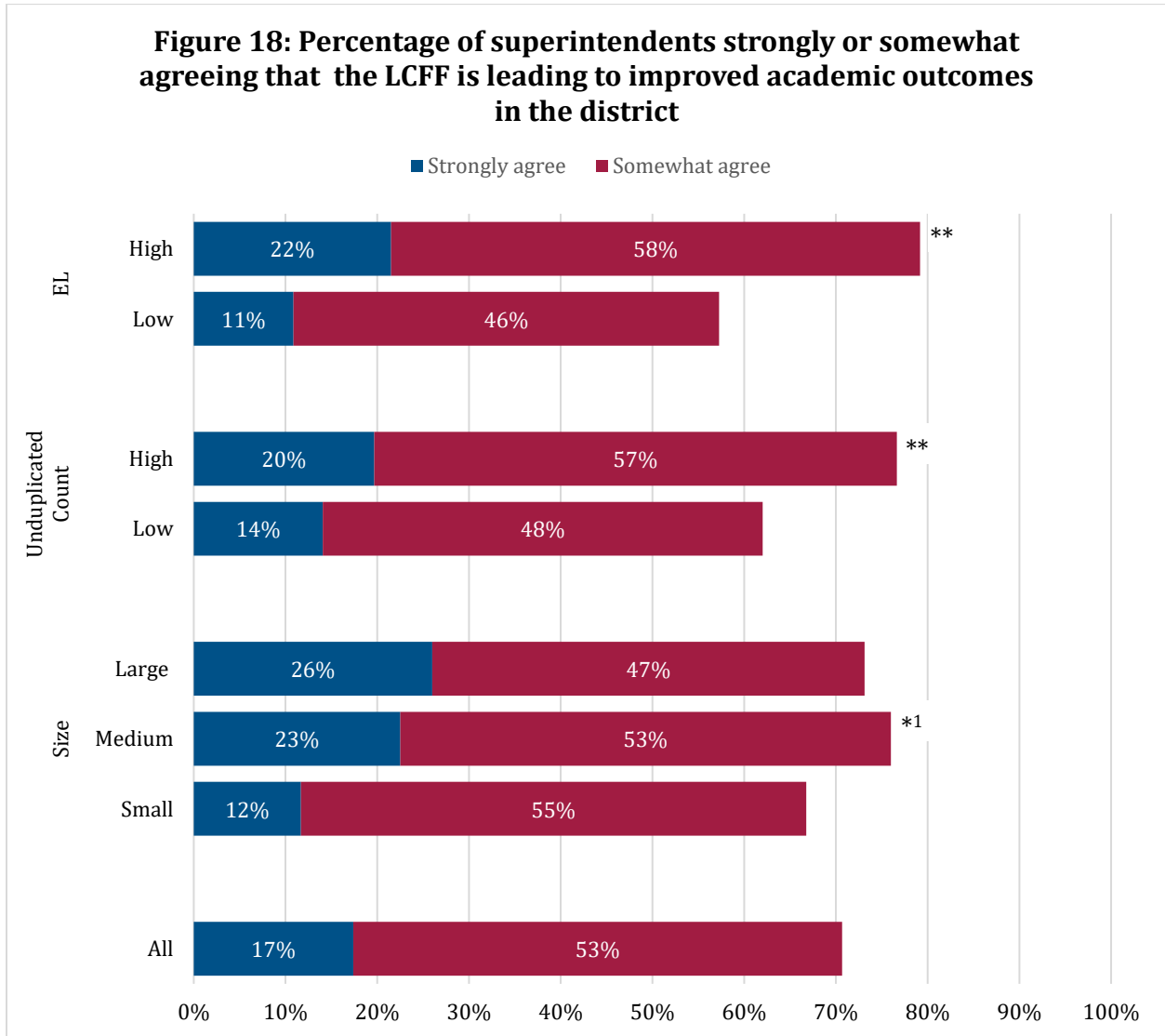

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

Concerns about low levels of engagement and representation—particularly among traditionally underserved stakeholders and groups targeted by the LCFF—are consistent with LCFFRC case study research. In each year, district leaders reported challenges engaging underrepresented stakeholders. Some case study districts worked with external partners (e.g., community based organizations) to conduct outreach, educate parents, and facilitate meetings in ways that encouraged and, in their views, achieved greater participation among underrepresented groups.
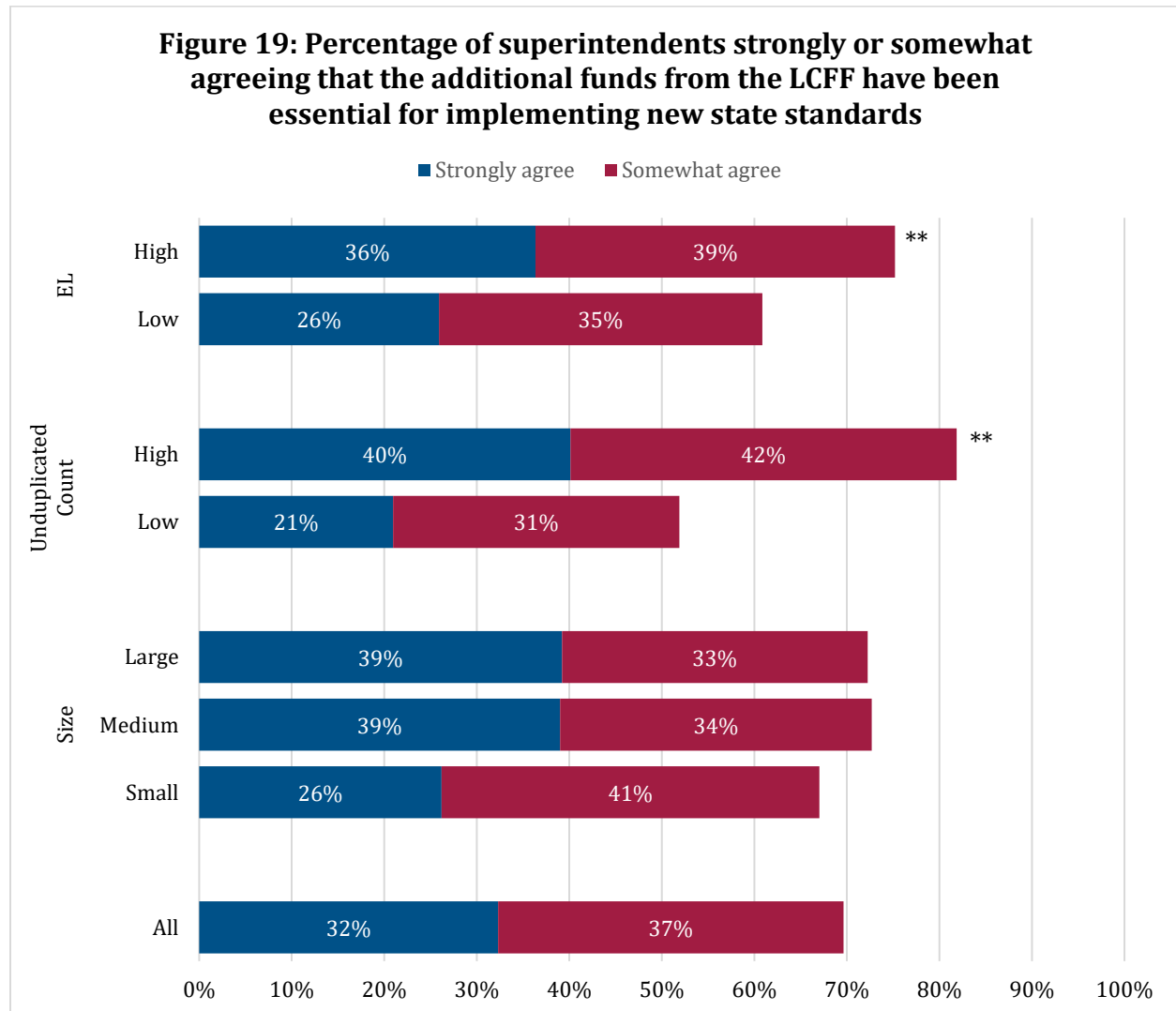
STUDENT SUPPORTS AND OUTCOMES

Superintendents report the LCFF is supporting academic improvement efforts and achievement, particularly for the target group students.

A strong majority of superintendents (70%) strongly or somewhat agree that the LCFF is leading to improved academic outcomes in the district, though only 17% strongly agree (Figure 18). These reports were more common in medium size districts and districts with high-unduplicated counts and high numbers of EL students.
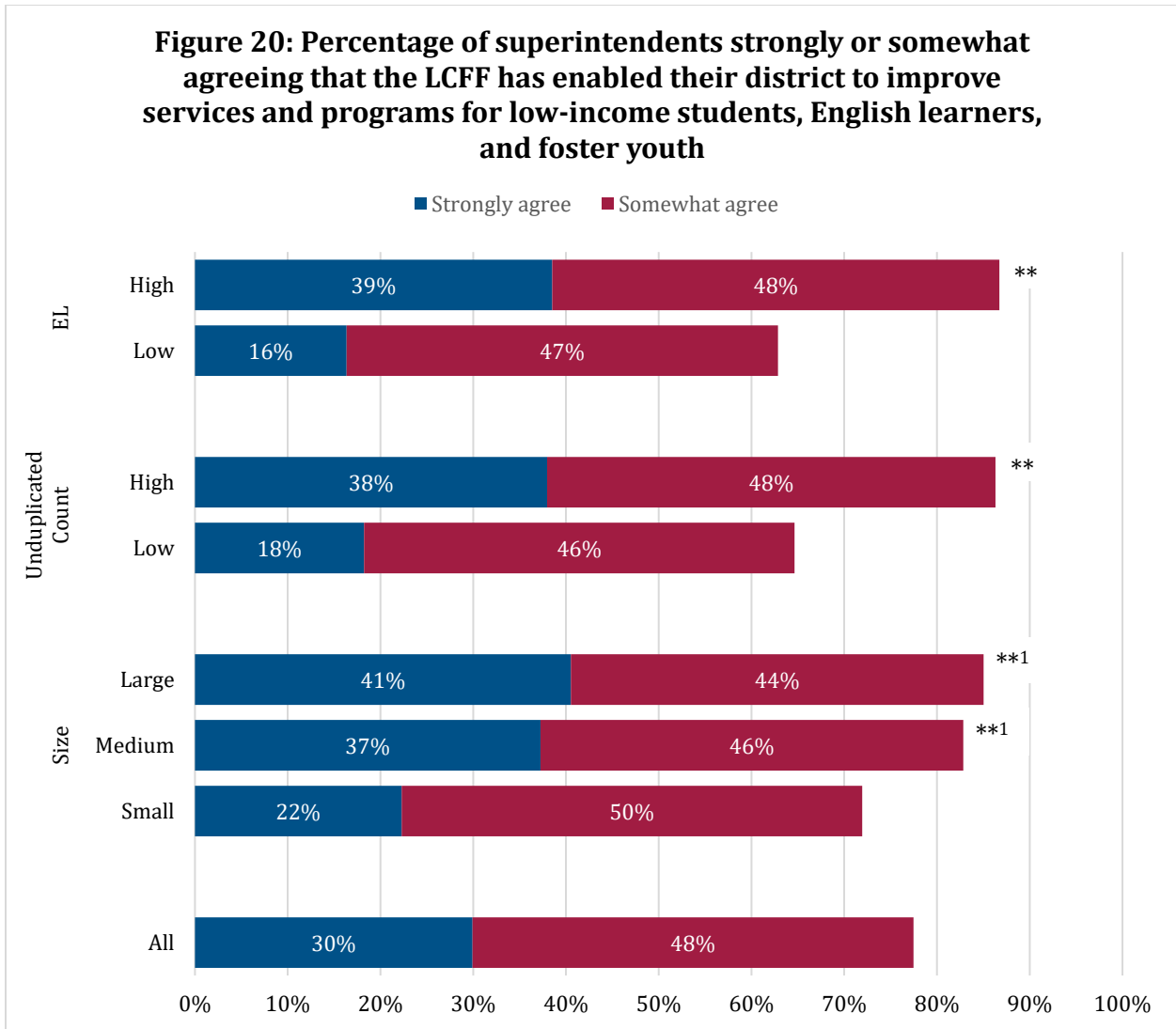
Figure 18: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that the LCFF is leading to improved academic outcomes in the district

■ Strongly agree   ■ Somewhat agree

Category		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	
EL	High	22%	58%	**
	Low	11%	46%	
Unduplicated Count	High	20%	57%	**
	Low	14%	48%	
Size	Large	26%	47%	
	Medium	23%	53%	*1
	Small	12%	55%	
	All	17%	53%	

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

More than two-thirds of superintendents (69%) report that the additional funds from the LCFF have been essential for implementing new state standards (Figure 19). Leaders in districts with high-unduplicated counts and high numbers of EL students were significantly more likely to express this belief.

Figure 19: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that the additional funds from the LCFF have been essential for implementing new state standards

Legend: ■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree

Category		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	
EL	High	36%	39%	**
	Low	26%	35%	
Unduplicated Count	High	40%	42%	**
	Low	21%	31%	
Size	Large	39%	33%	
	Medium	39%	34%	
	Small	26%	41%	
All		32%	37%	

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

More than three-quarters of superintendents (78%) say the LCFF has enabled their district to improve services and programs for low-income students, English learners, and foster youth (Figure 20). Leaders in relatively larger districts and districts with high-unduplicated counts and high numbers of EL students were significantly more likely to express this belief.

Figure 20: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that the LCFF has enabled their district to improve services and programs for low-income students, English learners, and foster youth

■ Strongly agree   ■ Somewhat agree

		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	
EL	High	39%	48%	**
	Low	16%	47%	
Unduplicated Count	High	38%	48%	**
	Low	18%	46%	
Size	Large	41%	44%	**1
	Medium	37%	46%	**1
	Small	22%	50%	
	All	30%	48%	

(x-axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%)

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

Superintendents report their districts used a variety of strategies to support low-income students, English learners, and foster youth, the most prevalent of which was professional development focused on the needs of targeted students (Table 2). The majority of superintendents also report investments in additional personnel supporting social-emotional needs of students (e.g., counselors, social workers), parents (e.g., parent liaison), and instruction (e.g., coaches).

Table 2: Percentage of superintendents using the following strategies in all or most schools to support LCFF target students in 2016-17

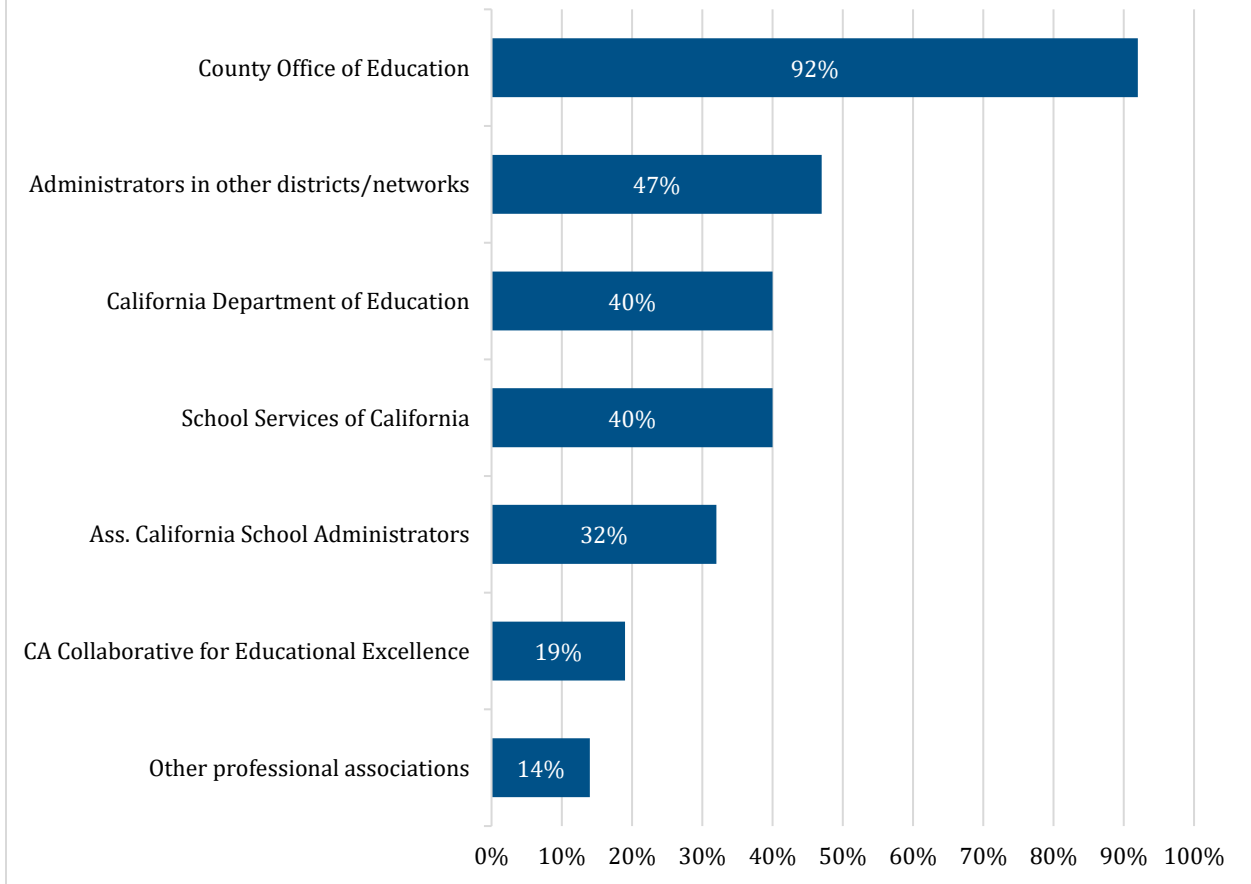|	All Schools	Most Schools
Professional development focused on needs of target students	84%	8%
Counselors, social workers, and other staff supporting social-emotional needs	65%	13%
Tutoring and non-school hour academic programs	51%	19%
Personnel to engage parents to support their children's learning	48%	14%
Instructional coaches	49%	12%
Reducing class size and/or student-staff ratios	40%	15%
Improvements to facilities	40%	9%

It should be noted that LCFFRC case studies suggest districts continue to struggle to differentiate professional development for English learners and foster youth.

GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FOR DISTRICTS

Superintendents received a variety of kinds of support and guidance on the LCFF and LCAP and a minority would like more.

The most commonly cited source of support on LCFF and LCAP matters in 2016 -2017 is the County Office of Education (Figure 21). Other sources of support are far less common.

Figure 21: Percentage of superintendents reporting receipt of LCFF guidance and support from the following organizations

Organization	Percentage
County Office of Education	92%
Administrators in other districts/networks	47%
California Department of Education	40%
School Services of California	40%
Ass. California School Administrators	32%
CA Collaborative for Educational Excellence	19%
Other professional associations	14%

Superintendents received guidance in various LCFF- and LCAP-related areas, and about a third receiving this guidance would like more assistance in how to improve stakeholder engagement, measure progress toward LCAP goals, use data for continuous improvement, understand and use the new California School Dashboard, and complete technical aspects of the LCAP template (Table 3).

Table 3: Percentage of superintendents reporting receipt of the following types of guidance and support, and among them, the percentage wanting some or a lot more support in these areas
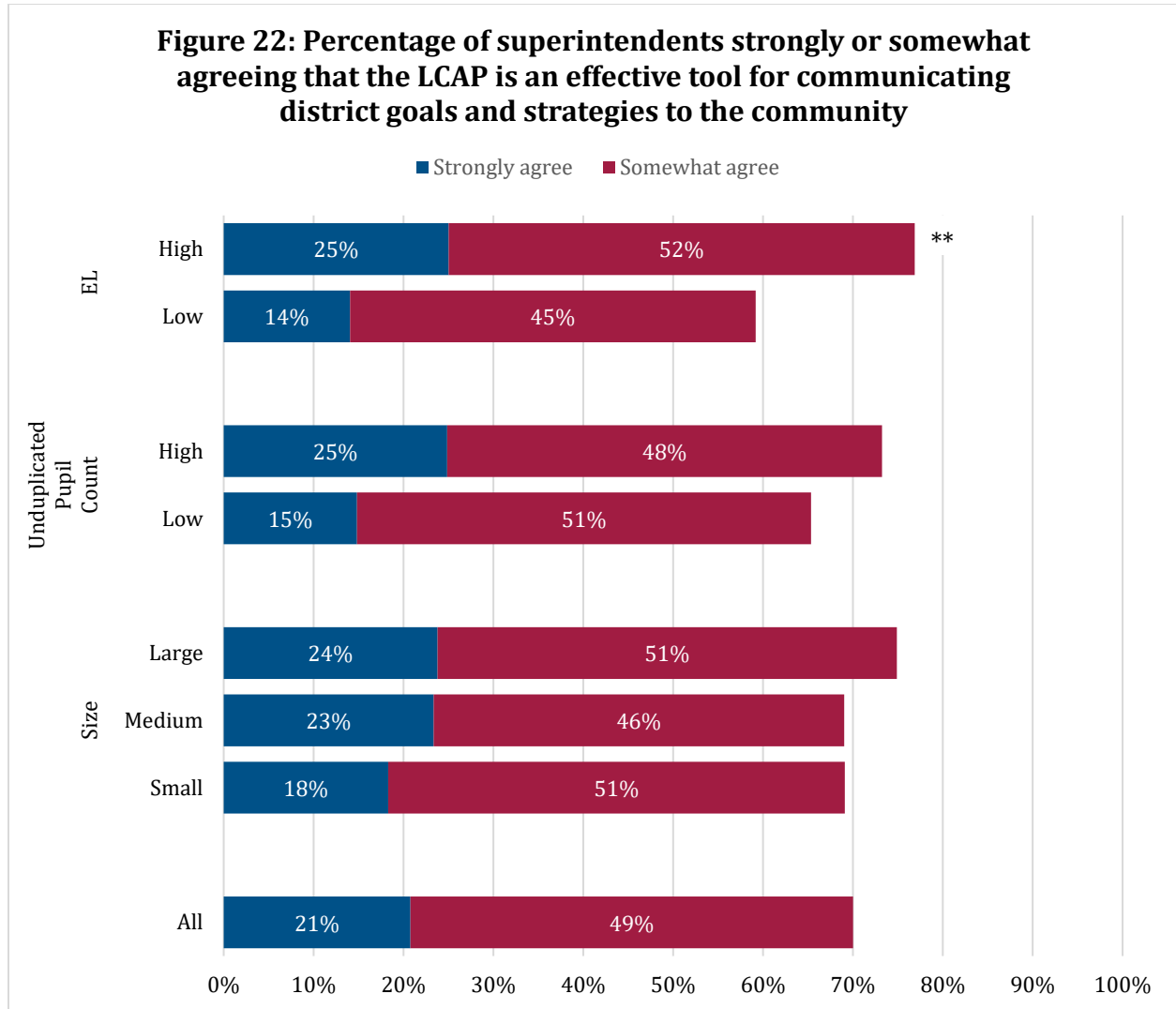
Guidance and support for how to …	Received Support	Wants Some or A Lot More Support (Among Those Receiving Support)
complete technical aspects of the LCAP template	83%	32%
understand and use the new California School Dashboard	75%	36%
understand the appropriate uses of base, supplemental and/or concentration funds	66%	25%
develop LCAP goals and strategies	59%	26%
measure progress toward LCAP goals	58%	39%
use data for continuous improvement	47%	37%
communicate your LCAP to parents and community members	42%	28%
develop the district's budget	39%	21%
improve stakeholder engagement	39%	42%
involve school board members in the LCAP process	17%	17%

COMMUNICATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Superintendents express mixed views about the communication and accountability mechanisms of the LCFF and the new California School Dashboard.

A strong majority of superintendents (70%) strongly or somewhat agree the LCAP is an effective tool for communicating district goals and strategies to the community, though nearly half (49%) only somewhat agree with this statement (Figure 22). Superintendents in districts with higher proportions of EL students were more likely to say the LCAP is an effective communication tool. These results diverge from LCFFRC case study findings where district leaders widely criticized the LCAP as unwieldy and not particularly useful for conveying information to parents and community members. LCFFRC case data also indicated that while many district leaders complained about the LCAP, they were finding ways to handle its complexities and did not want the state to force them to learn yet another new process or instrument. In fact, many district leaders in case study districts

were developing more user-friendly vehicles, including summaries and info-graphics, to communicate to external audiences.

Figure 22: Percentage of superintendents strongly or somewhat agreeing that the LCAP is an effective tool for communicating district goals and strategies to the community

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree

		Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	
EL	High	25%	52%	**
	Low	14%	45%	
Unduplicated Pupil Count	High	25%	48%	
	Low	15%	51%	
Size	Large	24%	51%	
	Medium	23%	46%	
	Small	18%	51%	
	All	21%	49%	

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

Superintendents were more mixed about the new California School Dashboard, an online tool demonstrating how districts and schools are performing on state indicators, with disaggregation by student subgroups (Table 4). State policymakers intend the new Dashboard to serve as both a source of data to inform the development of LCAPs as well as an accountability mechanism identifying districts and schools needing support. About half or more of superintendents said the Dashboard helps their district measure progress toward LCAP goals (62%), is easy to understand (56%), captures the most important measures of performance (53%), and is an effective means to communicate outcomes to the community (49%). However, only 29% said the Dashboard provides timely information on student outcomes.

LCFFRC

Table 4: Percentage of superintendents agreeing with statements about the new California School Dashboard

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree
The new California School Dashboard will help our district measure progress toward our LCAP goals	11%	51%
The information displayed on the new California School Dashboard is easy to understand	8%	48%
The new California School Dashboard captures the most important measures of district and school quality and performance.	7%	46%
The information displayed on the new California School Dashboard is an effective means to communicate outcomes to our community	9%	40%
The new California School Dashboard provides timely information on student outcomes	5%	24%

Superintendents in relatively larger districts are more likely to report the Dashboard helps measure progress toward LCAP goals. Those in relatively larger districts and districts with high unduplicated counts and high proportions of EL students agree more strongly that the Dashboard captures the most important information. Superintendents in small districts more often say that the Dashboard captures timely information but still only slightly above a third report this. (See Appendix B for these comparative data.)

Given the newness of the Dashboard—it was fully implemented in the 2017-18 school year—it will be important to continue monitoring how district leaders are using this tool and whether it provides useful information to guide other aspects of the California's new finance and accountability system.

CONCLUSION

When California enacted the LCFF in 2013, the state upended 40 years of reliance on categorical funding for education. A picture is now emerging of how districts are experiencing implementation of this new law that replaces state direction with local control. This report on a statewide survey of California superintendents adds significantly to this picture.

Policymakers should be gratified that superintendents support the underlying principles of the LCFF, including the equity goal and the notion that students with greater needs should receive more resources. Superintendents also support the LCFF requirement to engage parents, community members, and other education stakeholders in setting district goals and allocating resources. They say the LCFF is leading to greater goal alignment, enabling districts to match dollars with local needs, and, as the law intended, improving supports and services for low-income students, English learners, and foster youth. These positive reports suggest that state leaders should largely stay the course with the LCFF, but consider adjustments that respond to the following concerns.

- **Fiscal adequacy.** Superintendents believe districts remain underfunded, that base funds do not allow them to meet their obligations to all of their students. State leaders should take seriously these pervasive concerns and act on the request for adequate and additional funding.

- **Flexibility.** While superintendents applaud additional funds for the historically underserved target students, they also overwhelmingly would like to be able to use supplemental and concentration dollars to support other historically disadvantaged students in their districts. Expanding the definition of "unduplicated" students to allow targeted funding to be used for other low-performing groups could help address this concern. Legislation toward this goal currently is pending.

- **Engagement.** Stakeholder engagement remains a challenge as well, especially engagement of parents and guardians of the target student populations. These findings suggest a need for more support and more models of effective stakeholder engagement. The state—perhaps through county offices of education or the CCEE—should invest, for example, in disseminating information about promising practices, support trainings in community engagement, and partner with intermediary organizations to reach traditionally underserved groups.

- **Timeliness.** The California School Dashboard, the final piece of the LCFF to be put in place just a year ago, receives mixed reviews at this point. On the plus side, superintendents say the Dashboard is easy to understand and captures the most important measures of student performance. But, most say, it does not provide timely information on student outcomes. These findings raise important questions about the usefulness of the Dashboard in its current form and suggest a need to improve the timeliness of the data the Dashboard provides.

Finally, we have noted throughout this report the importance of context. A district's size, sometimes its urbanicity, and whether it has a larger or smaller concentration of low-income students, English learners, or foster youth are related to superintendents' experiences with the LCFF and perceptions of the efficacy of the law. As the state continues to develop and implement its new System of Support it must give careful consideration to ways in which context impacts the kinds of targeted and differentiated support that will enable districts to realize anticipated improvement.

As the LCFF continues to mature, as superintendents and other educators and parents and community members gain more experience shaping the LCFF's opportunities and requirements to fit their local situations, it will be important to continue to flesh out the picture of LCFF implementation. Understanding these on-the-ground experiences are essential for identifying ways to improve the LCFF and helping to achieve its equity goals.

APPENDIX A

METHODS

The Local Control Funding Formula Survey of Superintendents was designed by the LCFF Research Collaborative. On behalf of the LCFF Research Collaborative, Fluent Research, an independent research and evaluation firm, administered the survey online and by telephone among 350 qualified superintendents and other district administrators[7] in public school districts in California. Qualified respondents included superintendents and other district administrators who have a role in making decisions about the implementation of LCFF in their district, had served in their position in their district for at least two years, or were in their first year and were familiar with the implementation of LCFF policy during the 2016-2017 school year. Sample balancing was applied to ensure results were representative of public school districts in California.

Prior to Fluent fielding the survey, LCFFRC researchers ensured the instrument was reviewed by state policymakers and researchers familiar with the LCFF and pilot tested with and revised based on feedback from a group of recently retired California Superintendents.

Interviewing Procedures
Interviews were conducted between September 14, 2017 and March 8, 2018. Interviews averaged 14 minutes in length when completed online and 29 minutes when completed by phone. Several measures were taken to achieve a high response rate for the survey, including employing a multi-mode interviewing approach (online and telephone), an extended field period, multiple contacts (by email, postal mail and phone), controls on sample management, and offering participants a summary of the survey results. Attempts were made to contact participants who had not yet completed the survey up to 10 times by email and up to 6 times by phone. In addition, a letter of support from the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) was included with the survey invitation. ACSA also contacted its membership to encourage participation in the survey.

Sample Selection and Weighting of Results
The sampling frame was built using the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS) UPC Source File for grades K-12 for the 2015-2016 school year, the most recent file available when the study was being planned.[8]

Districts in the sample included elementary, high and unified public school districts (per LEA classification). Districts classified as the following were excluded from the sample: County Boards of Education (CBE), County District Office, Juvenile Court, Home and Hospital, and all-charter school districts. This yielded a total population of 944 districts.

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[7] Ninety percent of respondents were superintendents: 10% were other cabinet level leaders with LCFF decision-making authority (e.g., associate/deputy superintendent, chief financial officer).
[8] Source: cupc15-16.xls, downloaded from https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/sd/filescupc.asp

Superintendents were selected for inclusion in the study using stratified random sampling, specifically a 3 x 2 stratification plan (three levels for district size by two levels for unduplicated pupils proportion), yielding 6 sampling strata. The stratification plan defined 2015-2016 district size by the following three levels: small districts (less than 2,000 students), medium districts (2,000 – 9,999 students), and large districts (10,000 or more students). The two levels for proportion of unduplicated pupils in 2015-2016 were defined as follows: low proportion of unduplicated pupils (55% or less), and high proportion of unduplicated pupils (more than 55%). All qualified public school districts in California were divided into our six sampling strata, and superintendents were then randomly sampled from each stratum.

Final results were weighted by district size and unduplicated pupil count to bring these variables into alignment with their actual proportions in the population. Table A1 provides a comparison of the demographic profile of the weighted and unweighted total sample. Even though the sample was weighted on only two variables (district enrollment and unduplicated pupil count), the weighting yielded a sample which is almost identical to the overall population in terms of region, district type, reduce/free lunch, English language learner, homeless students, foster students, and migrant students.

Table A1:
Demographic Profile of Weighted and Unweighted Sample

	Population	Unweighted Survey Respondents	Weighted Survey Respondents
	(N = 944)	(N = 350)	(N = 350)
District Enrollment			
Small (< 2,000 students)	53%	49%	53%
Medium (2,000 to 9,999)	31%	33%	31%
Large (10,000 or more)	16%	18%	16%
Unduplicated Pupil Count (Proportion of Total Enrollment)			
55% or less	41%	49%	41%
56% or more	59%	51%	59%
Region			
Los Angeles	8%	9%	9%
Los Angeles Area	13%	13%	12%
Bay Area	17%	21%	20%
San Diego	6%	5%	5%
Sacramento/North	26%	24%	26%
Central Valley	30%	28%	29%

Table A1 (continued)
Demographic Profile of Weighted and Unweighted Sample

	Population	Unweighted Survey Respondents	Weighted Survey Respondents
	(N = 944)	(N = 350)	(N = 350)
District Type			
Elementary School District	56%	56%	55%
Unified School District	36%	35%	35%
High School/K-12 District	8%	9%	10%
Free and Reduced Fee Meal			
51% or more	57%	51%	58%
Under 51%	43%	49%	42%
English Language Learners			
11% or more	61%	59%	61%
Under 11%	39%	41%	39%
Foster Children			
1% or more	44%	47%	49%
Less than 1%	56%	53%	51%
Homeless			
1% or more	52%	54%	56%
Less than 1%	48%	46%	44%
Migrants			
1% or more	33%	29%	32%
Less than 1%	67%	71%	68%
Urbanicity			
Rural	35%	31%	33%
Town	17%	17%	18%
Suburb	32%	35%	34%
Urban	16%	17%	15%

Sample Disposition and Completion Rate

The final sample disposition for this survey is shown in Table A2. Attempts were made to contact a total of 763 superintendents (81% of all district superintendents in California). Nineteen superintendents could not be contacted (their emails bounced back). Nine superintendents did not meet our screening criteria because either the survey respondent did not have a role in making decisions about the implementation of LCFF in their district, or they were in their first year and were not familiar with the implementation of LCFF policy in their current school district during the 2016-2017 school year. Of the remaining 735 superintendents who could be contacted, 350 completed surveys, for a response rate

of 48 percent. The 350 survey respondents comprise 37 percent of all superintendents in California. The margin of error for proportions in the sample as a whole is +/- 4.3 percent.[9]

Table A2:
Final Sample Disposition for Superintendents

Total Number of Contacts (by email or phone)	763
A. Total Completes	350
B. Partial Completes (after passing screener)	12
C. Non-eligible Respondent	9
D. Refused Interview (during phone)	16
E. Phone Disconnected	0
F. Email Bounceback	19
G. Unknown Eligibility, No Questionnaire Returned	357

Responders vs. Non-Responder

Table A3 provides a comparison of superintendents who completed the survey (responders) to potentially eligible superintendents who received the survey but did not complete it (non-responders).[10] Responding and non-responding districts were nearly identical on all characteristics reported in the California unduplicated pupil count database, with no statistically significant differences.

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[9] The margin of error for proportions was calculated using a formula that accounts for both clustered sampling and the fact that the survey sample comprises a substantial proportion (37%) of the total population of all superintendents. https://cals.arizona.edu/classes/rnr321/Ch4.pdf

[10] Potential response bias was assessed by comparing characteristics of districts of superintendents who chose to participate vs. districts of superintendents who opted not to participate. Superintendents who were no longer in their position, could not be contacted (i.e., emails were returned as non-deliverable), or did not meet eligibility criteria did not have the option to participate, and were therefore excluded from non-responder analyses in Table A3.

Table A3:
Demographic Profile of Responders and Non-Responders (Unweighted Data)

	Population	Responders	Non-Responders	Chi Square	df	p
	(N = 944)	(N = 350)	(N = 399)			
District Enrollment				2.05	2	0.84
Small (< 2,000 students)	53%	49%	52%			
Medium (2,000 to 9,999)	31%	33%	28%			
Large (10,000 or more)	16%	18%	20%			
Unduplicated Pupil Count (Proportion of Total Enrollment)				0.46	1	0.93
55% or less	41%	49%	46%			
56% or more	59%	51%	54%			
Region						
Los Angeles	8%	9%	10%	4.58	5	0.95
Los Angeles Area	13%	13%	13%			
Bay Area	17%	21%	16%			
San Diego	6%	5%	7%			
Sacramento/North	26%	24%	24%			
Central Valley	30%	28%	30%			
District Type				0.21	2	1.00
Elementary School District	56%	56%	55%			
High School District	8%	9%	9%			
Unified School District	36%	35%	36%			
Free and Reduced Fee Meal				0.05	1	1.00
51% or more	57%	51%	51%			
Under 51%	43%	49%	49%			
English Language Learners				0.17	1	0.98
11% or more	61%	59%	58%			
Under 11%	39%	41%	42%			
Foster Children				2.73	1	0.43
1% or more	44%	47%	41%			
Less than 1%	56%	53%	59%			

Table A3 (continued)
Demographic Profile of Responders and Non-Responders (Unweighted Data)

	Population	Responders	Non-Responders	Chi Square	df	p
Homeless				1.12	1	0.77
1% or more	52%	54%	50%			
Less than 1%	48%	46%	50%			
Migrants				0.73	1	0.87
1% or more	33%	29%	32%			
Less than 1%	67%	71%	68%			

APPENDIX B

Additional Comparisons of Superintendent Responses, by District Type

Table B1: Percentage of superintendents using the following LCFF engagement strategies in 2016-17, by district type

	Small	Medium	large	Unduplicated		EL	
				Low	High	Low	High
Communicating with existing advisory groups of parents (DELAC, DAC, PTA)	90%	96%**[1]	99%**[1]	93%	93%	90%	95%*
Administering surveys to parents	93%	88%	93%	87%	94%**	91%	91%
Administering surveys to school administrators, teachers, and/or staff	80%	85%	91%**[1]	80%	85%	78%	87%*
Convening an LCAP advisory group	68%	81%**[1]	91%**[1,2]	77%	75%	76%	76%
Hosting school-specific meetings	63%	71%	67%	67%	65%	66%	66%
Hosting LCAP/LCFF-specific community meetings	65%	79%**[1]	80%**[1]	69%	74%	67%	75%*
Hosting other district-wide or regional meetings where LCAP was discussed along with other topics	54%	59%	70%**[1]	57%	59%	53%	61%

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

Table B2: Percentage of superintendents agreeing with statements about the new California School Dashboard, by district type

				Unduplicated		EL	
	Small	**Medium**	**Large**	**Low**	**High**	**Low**	**High**
The new California School Dashboard will help our district measure progress toward our LCAP goals	54%	69%**[1]	73%**[1]	59%	64%	57%	65%
The information displayed on the new California School Dashboard is easy to understand	60%*[3]	55%	46%	55%	57%	53%	58%
The new California School Dashboard captures the most important measures of district and school quality and performance.	48%	50%	74%**[1,2]	43%	60%**	44%	58%**
The information displayed on the new California School Dashboard is an effective means to communicate outcomes to our community	49%	47%	52%	46%	51%	48%	50%
The new California School Dashboard provides timely information on student outcomes	36%**[2,3]	22%	19%	24%	32%*	28%	30%

Notes: * indicates statistically significant difference between combined strongly agree and somewhat agree responses of groups at the p<0.10 level and ** at the p<0.05 level. When comparing responses based on district size, 1 refers to a comparison to superintendents in small districts, 2 to medium districts, and 3 to large districts.

APPENDIX C

LCFF Superintendent Survey Final Weighted Results
LCFF Superintendent Survey Weighted Tabs

About

The Local Control Funding Formula Research Collaborative (LCFFRC) brings together a diverse set of policy experts who, since 2014, have been documenting implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), California's pathbreaking finance and governance system. Operating under the auspices of Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE), principal LCFFRC researchers are Julia Koppich (J. Koppich & Associates), Daniel Humphrey (Independent Consultant), Julie Marsh (University of Southern California), Jennifer O'Day (American Institutes of Research), Magaly Lavadenz (Loyal Marymount), and Laura Stokes (Inverness Research).

Acknowledgment

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