



Report to the Legislature on the Local Solutions to the Shortage of Special Education Teachers Grant Program

Commission on Teacher Credentialing

December 2023

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Executive Summary: Report to the Legislature on the Local Solutions to the Shortage of Special Education Teachers Grant Program

This report fulfills the legislative requirement set forth in Education Code §44417, requiring the Commission on Teacher Credentialing to provide a report to the Department of Finance and the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the legislature on the effectiveness of the Local Solutions to the Shortage of Special Education Teachers Grant Program by December 1, 2023.

The Legislature approved a total of \$50 million for the Local Solutions to the Shortage of Special Education Teachers Grant Program in the 2018-19 state budget. This grant program provided up to \$20,000 per participant for eligible local education agencies (LEAs) to implement locally identified solutions to address the shortage of special education teachers. Successful applicants to this competitive grant program used the funds to increase the supply of special education teachers by prioritizing strategies for identifying, recruiting, preparing, employing, and supporting newly credentialed special education teachers and for assisting teachers who may be credentialed in another field who want to become credentialed special education teachers.

This report is organized with the following headings:

- Introduction
- Background
- Local Solutions Grants Awarded
- Participation in Local Solutions Activities
- Demographic Data of Local Solutions Participants
- Effectiveness of the Local Solutions Grant Program
- Turnover Rate and Reduction of Educators Serving on Intern Credentials, Permits, or Waivers
- Effective Program Practices
- Factors Hindering Full Implementation
- Lessons Learned
- Summary and Conclusion

Overall findings for the project period are summarized below:

- Data compiled from annual reports indicate that LEAs most commonly used grant funding for identifying, recruiting and preparing new special education teachers, and for assisting special education candidates with tuition, to address the teacher shortage.
- Eighty-two percent of the 4,743 unique participants supported by the grant funds have been hired as or are on track to be hired as teachers of record serving special education students.

Report to the Legislature on the Local Solutions to the Shortage of Special Education Teachers Grant Program

Introduction

Education Code §44417 requires the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (Commission) to provide a report to the Department of Finance and the appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the Legislature on the Local Solutions to the Shortage of Special Education Teachers Grant Program by December 1, 2023. Statute mandates the Commission to conduct an evaluation of the grant program to determine its effectiveness in recruiting, developing support systems for, and retaining special education teachers.

Background

The Local Solutions to the Shortage of Special Education Teachers (Local Solutions) grant program was included in the 2018-19 state budget to support the recruitment, preparation, and support of new special education teachers. Authorizing legislation provided a total of \$50 million for competitive grants to eligible local education agencies (LEAs) and provided up to \$20,000 per participating teacher to grantees to implement locally identified solutions to address the shortage of special education teachers.

This grant program allowed eligible LEAs the opportunity and flexibility to design and implement local solutions to meet their needs for credentialed special education teachers. LEA grant recipients were required to use this grant opportunity to increase the supply of special education teachers by prioritizing strategies for identifying, recruiting, preparing, employing, and supporting newly credentialed special education teachers and for assisting teachers who may be credentialed in another field who want to become credentialed special education teachers.

Local Solutions Grants Awarded

In September 2018, the Commission published the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Local Solutions grant. The grant awards were announced in December 2018, and 41 LEAs were funded ([Attachment A](#)) to implement the provisions required of the authorizing statute which include:

- Addressing teacher shortages in special education,
- Helping to recruit and support the preparation of more individuals in the teaching profession,
- Supporting the induction of educators into the profession, and
- Supporting the continued professional learning of credentialed special education educators.

Participation in Local Solutions Activities

For the Local Solutions grant program, grantees were required to report the total number of participants, the distribution of participants across local solution activities, and the amount of funds expended for the local solutions activities.

Local education agencies submitted annual demographic and expenditure reports every July throughout the project period. Grant recipients reported 4,743 unique participants were supported by the Local Solutions grant program. Tables 1 and 2 list the fifteen local solutions activities suggested in authorizing legislation, and reflected in the RFP, and show the distribution of participants and grant funds expended across local solutions activities. It is important to note that any number of the unique participants could participate in one or more of the listed local solutions activities. For example, a single participant may have been at a recruitment fair, then might have benefited from tuition assistance, and finally might have received a signing bonus upon hire. In the overall total of 4,743 unique participants, this individual is counted once; in the table below, the individual is counted as many times as they received support from the Local Solutions program.

Additionally, while reviewing these data, it is important to keep in mind that the intent of authorizing legislation was to assist LEAs with recruitment, preparation, and support of new special education teachers. As such, grant dollars were expended on participants who were not working toward a preliminary teaching credential and on recruitment events for individuals that did not become program participants. For example, a candidate who already had a preliminary teaching credential may have received grant funds in the form of teacher induction support and another candidate may have attended a recruitment fair and then decided not to accept a position in the LEA.

Table 1: Local Solutions Grant Program Activities: Number of Participants and Funds Expended During the Project Period (2019-23)

Locally Identified Solutions	Number of Participants in 2019-20	Number of Participants in 2020-21	Number of Participants in 2021-22	Number of Participants in 2022-23	Total Participants in Project Period
Identifying, recruiting, and preparing new special education teachers and/or preparation costs for teachers credentialed in other areas interested in becoming special education teachers	1,750	1,073	818	939	4,580
Assisting special education candidates with tuition	533	618	605	678	2,434
Preparation costs of special education candidates to complete an	46	13	0	0	59

Locally Identified Solutions	Number of Participants in 2019-20	Number of Participants in 2020-21	Number of Participants in 2021-22	Number of Participants in 2022-23	Total Participants in Project Period
integrated undergraduate program of preparation for an Education Specialist credential					
Preparation costs of classified personnel to earn an Education Specialist teaching credential	139	97	105	75	416
Assisting newly credentialed special education teachers with student debt payment*	177	126	90	73	466
Living stipends for newly credentialed special education teachers	20	49	28	25	122
Signing bonuses for newly credentialed special education teachers*	77	115	89	118	399
Induction for special education teachers	399	317	361	366	1,443
Teacher service scholarships*	92	83	36	25	236
Service awards	31	23	3	27	84
Preparing mentor teachers to support new special education teachers	586	435	475	513	2,009
Professional Learning Communities	462	331	285	364	1,442
Teacher career pathways	120	158	90	98	466
Other locally identified solutions	230	167	309	126	832

Locally Identified Solutions	Number of Participants in 2019-20	Number of Participants in 2020-21	Number of Participants in 2021-22	Number of Participants in 2022-23	Total Participants in Project Period
Totals	4,661	3,605	3,294	3,479	14,988

*Required four-year service commitment

Table 2: Local Solutions Grant Program Activities: Funds Expended During the Project Period (2019-23)

Locally Identified Solutions	Funds Expended in 2019-20	Funds Expended in 2020-21	Funds Expended in 2021-22	Funds Expended in 2022-23	Total Funds Expended in Project Period
Identifying, recruiting, and preparing new special education teachers and/or preparation costs for teachers credentialed in other areas interested in becoming special education teachers	\$1,344,860	\$1,582,311	\$1,594,227	\$1,529,606.23	\$6,051,004
Assisting special education candidates with tuition	\$2,485,928	\$3,567,700	\$3,507,928	\$3,142,120.62	\$12,703,677
Preparation costs of special education candidates to complete an integrated undergraduate program of preparation for an Education Specialist credential	\$48,242	\$33,074	\$0	\$0	\$81,316
Preparation costs of classified personnel to earn	\$300,762	\$409,488	\$495,697	\$351,729.71	\$1,557,677

Locally Identified Solutions	Funds Expended in 2019-20	Funds Expended in 2020-21	Funds Expended in 2021-22	Funds Expended in 2022-23	Total Funds Expended in Project Period
an Education Specialist teaching credential					
Assisting newly credentialed special education teachers with student debt payment*	\$972,570	\$868,115	\$807,665	\$731,889.29	\$3,380,239
Living stipends for newly credentialed special education teachers	\$88,647	\$123,392	\$35,045	\$54,420.70	\$301,505
Signing bonuses for newly credentialed special education teachers*	\$1,165,612	\$1,192,998	\$1,127,833	\$1,559,462.79	\$5,045,906
Induction for special education teachers	\$871,248	\$919,426	\$1,028,250	\$1,186,386.88	\$4,005,311
Teacher service scholarships*	\$402,406	\$242,925	\$86,533	\$88,143.00	\$820,007
Service awards	\$8,406	\$191,096	\$46,000	\$78,738.39	\$324,240
Preparing mentor teachers to support new special education teachers	\$1,210,839	\$781,635	\$960,143	\$982,160.67	\$3,934,778
Professional Learning Communities	\$447,263	\$441,780	\$452,119	\$342,704.23	\$1,683,866
Teacher career pathways	\$271,183	\$152,963	\$116,891	\$220,809.33	\$761,846
Other locally identified solutions	\$713,777	\$639,477	\$678,914	\$735,281.43	\$2,767,449
Program Administration (Up to 5% of Grant Award)	\$467,447	\$432,746	\$376,167	\$378,463.56	\$1,654,825
Totals	\$10,799,190	\$11,579,126	\$11,313,412	\$11,381,916.83	\$45,073,646

*Required four-year service commitment

Identifying, recruiting, and preparing new special education teachers and assisting special education candidates with tuition garnered the most participants. Not unexpectedly, identification and recruitment of candidates, tuition assistance, and signing bonuses were provided to a significant number of individuals and as a result, are areas where the most funds were expended. The next largest areas of expenditure that were not direct monetary support for participants were for Induction programs; other locally identified solutions that all include support structures for new special education teachers that are unique to each LEA; and the preparation of mentor teachers, who are instrumental to the success of support programs for educators.

Nearly all of the \$50 million authorized by legislation was encumbered and disseminated to grantee LEAs, as listed on [Attachment A](#). Grantees have a liquidation phase in which to continue spending grant funding as described in the funded applications.

Demographic Data of Local Solutions Participants

Local Solutions grantee LEAs were required to gather and report demographic data related to number of participants by race, ethnicity, and gender. The data presented in the following tables are the figures submitted by LEA grant recipients and were self-identified by program participants.

Similar to the tables above, in the overall total of 4,743 unique participants, individuals are counted once; in the tables below, individuals are counted for as many years as they received support from the Local Solutions Program. For example, a participant in a program that used grant funds to provide teacher induction support for newly hired special education teachers would be included in the demographic data for two years.

Number of Participants by Ethnicity and Race

In annual reports, LEA grantees indicated the number of participants in the Local Solutions grant program by self-identified race and ethnicity, as indicated above. Table 3 reports race and ethnicity data of Local Solutions teacher participants and Table 4 reports the self-identified gender of program participants.

Table 3: Number of Participants Self-Identified by Ethnicity and Race During the Project Period (2019-23)

Ethnicity and Race	Number of Participants 2019-20	Number of Participants 2020-21	Number of Participants 2021-22	Number of Participants 2022-23	Total
Hispanic/Latinx (of any race)	561	517	498	621	2,197
American Indian or Alaska Native	30	29	22	20	101

Ethnicity and Race	Number of Participants 2019-20	Number of Participants 2020-21	Number of Participants 2021-22	Number of Participants 2022-23	Total
Asian (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Asian Indian, Laotian, Cambodian, Filipino, Hmong)	85	162	148	194	589
Black or African American	118	99	87	102	406
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (Guamanian, Samoan, Tahitian)	3	9	11	24	47
White	402	867	580	778	2,627
Two or more races	79	96	129	131	435
Decline to state	509	268	519	293	1,589
Total	1,787	2,047	1,994	2,163	7,991

Grantees collected from participants self-identified ethnicity and race data annually. As such, the 4,743 unique individuals supported by grant funds are counted in Table 3 for as many years as they received support from the Local Solutions Program. Of the participant data reported during the project period, numbers remained fairly consistent with at least one quarter of Local Solutions participants self-identifying as Hispanic or Latinx and approximately 20% of participants representing other BIPOC groups.

Table 4: Number of Participants Self-Identified by Gender During the Project Period (2019-23)

Gender	Number of Participants 2019-20	Number of Participants 2020-21	Number of Participants 2021-22	Number of Participants 2022-23	Totals and Percent
Male	235	381	373	439	1,428
Female	1,179	1,393	1,231	1,422	5,225
Nonbinary	0	8	13	16	37
Decline to state	373	265	377	286	1,301
Total	1,787	2,047	1,994	2,151	7,991

Grantees collected from participants self-identified gender data annually. As such, the 4,743 unique individuals supported by grant funds are counted in Table 4 for as many years as they received support from the Local Solutions Program. The data reported for gender remained consistent throughout the project period with the vast majority of those who provided data self-identifying as female.

Effectiveness of the Local Solutions Grant Program

The intent of the authorizing legislation for the Local Solutions grant program is to provide funding to LEAs for the recruitment, preparation, and support of new special education teachers. The legislation also requires that a participant who received a teacher service scholarship, signing bonus, or student debt payment shall agree to teach at a school within the jurisdiction of the grant recipient and work as an education specialist serving a caseload of pupils who receive special education services in a special education setting for four years. Participants have five years to fulfill the four-year service commitment. Table 5 reports the hiring data of these participants. It is important to note that any number of the unique participants could have received funding for one or more of the listed local solutions activities. For example, a single participant may have received student debt payment as well as a signing bonus. In the table below, the individual is counted as many times as they received support from the Local Solutions program.

While reviewing this table, it is also important to note that Table 5 includes information as of the most recent report due date. These figures may change until all participants have completed their four-year service commitment.

Table 5: Project Period (2019-23) Employment for Grant Funds that Require a Four-Year Service Commitment

Grant Funds	Participants Receiving Grant Funds	Participants Hired by Grantee LEA as of July 2023	Participants on Track to be Hired by Grantee LEA	Participants Hired in Another CA LEA as of July 2023	Participants Not on Track to be Hired/Not Working for Grantee LEA
Teacher Service Scholarships	982	695	316	27	51
Signing Bonus	136	117	82	19	11
Student Debt Payment	502	433	247	23	5
Total	1,620	1,425	645	69	67

Of the Local Solutions participants who received one or more of these three types of financial support, 92% were hired in the grantee LEA or another California LEA. Commission staff have contacted all the programs who supported recipients not on track to be hired to offer assistance on reminding participants that they have five years to fulfill the four-year commitment and/or on tracking them in their employment as an education specialist within California but outside the grant funded LEA.

Turnover Rate and Reduction of Educators Serving on Intern Credentials, Permits, or Waivers

Local Solutions program leaders were asked to provide anecdotal evidence on how the implementation of the grant has reduced the LEAs turnover rate as well as the number of educators teaching with intern credentials, permits, and waivers. The overwhelming majority of program leaders noted that while turnover rates remain consistent, they are able to fill

vacancies with more fully credentialed teachers than before their participation in this grant funded program.

The following are sample responses from grantees regarding turnover rates and teachers on intern credentials, permits, or waivers:

- Our LEA has reduced our Special Education vacancy pool significantly over the period of the grant. Prior to the grant, we started the year with non-credentialed, emergency-permitted staff. That has not been necessary since implementing the grant. The number of intern permits our LEA had over the project period has remained static. The statewide shortage of fully credentialed teachers has perpetuated along with the lag of interns meeting all requirements.
- Our turnover rate in the past couple of years has remained steady, although we are still experiencing attrition with our special education teacher workforce. The number of special education teachers that are serving on intern credentials, permits, and or waivers have also remained relatively the same. We have seen teachers that were initially employed with us on emergency permits enroll in the teacher preparation programs and eventually earn their teaching credential.
- Turnover has been significantly reduced and new hires are much more likely to hold the required credential (greater than 60% change).

Effective Program Practices

Throughout the data reports and emails received by Commission staff, grantees expressed overwhelming enthusiasm and gratitude for the Local Solutions grant program and the opportunities the funds have provided to improve the number and quality of special education teachers. Program leaders have contacted Commission staff expressing an interest for continued funding for this grant program and explain that the pipeline created using Local Solutions grant funds filled a specific void that other grant programs do not fill and that the funding made a significant difference in attracting, training, and retaining the types of teachers they want in their classrooms. Most programs have indicated that offering signing bonuses and tuition reimbursement/payment are very effective recruitment strategies. However, having a strong mentoring program to support participants is almost universally noted as the practice that is improving special education across grantee LEAs.

The following are sample responses from grantees regarding effective program practices:

- The IEP support mentors have been the most effective in reducing stress and building self-efficacy leading to Special Education Teachers continuing to work within the program.
- Tuition reimbursement appears to be the practice that best supported our candidates through this process as well as continued employment as a para-professional throughout so the candidates could gain experience while earning credentials.
- The signing bonus, tuition assistance, and living stipends have been the most effective program practices for recruitment and retention of special education teachers. The largest district in our consortium reports "At a time when declining enrollment is impacting the resources districts have to attract teachers, the Local Solutions Grant

allowed us to offer the signing bonus, financial support and emotional support to teachers which brought them to our district and allowed them to build the relationships they needed to be successful." Additionally, other consortium LEAs noted that the signing bonus, in particular, helped with "the high cost of living in this area."

Factors Hindering Full Implementation

During the first half of the project period, the COVID-19 pandemic was a significant factor hindering implementation of many Local Solutions programs. Program leaders noted having to cancel professional development events as well as difficulty with recruiting both participants and mentors because of the myriad impacts of the pandemic on teachers' personal lives. The following are sample responses from grantees regarding hindrances to full implementation of the Local Solutions grant program:

- The teacher shortage has increased the number of teacher candidates entering the profession through alternative certification routes.
- We have been able to implement our proposal as written, however we were not broad enough in our thinking when we originally wrote the grant, as it was focused primarily on the seven intern teachers we had at the time. In hindsight we should have included more areas where we needed funding, such as recruitment practices and additional support for currently credentialed special education teachers.
- We have been able to implement our plan; however, the goal was to not only hire teachers into these hard-to-fill areas, but also retain them over, at a minimum, of 8 semesters. Over the 4 years of participation, we have hired 25 teachers, and have retained 14.

Lessons Learned

Local Solutions grantees indicated many lessons learned and made connections between that which was proposed in the approved grant proposals and the reality of the day-to-day work related to local solutions activities. In their 2022-23 annual reports, program leaders reflected on how the Local Solutions grant helped strengthen practices within their LEAs and which of those strategies will be sustained now that the grant program is ending.

The following are sample responses from grantees regarding lessons learned and sustainable practices related to the Local Solutions grant program:

- This has changed the way our HR departments view recruiting. Potential teachers are looked at in more detail and individual programs are developed to best meet the needs of the candidates. LEAs understand the importance of supporting our new/potential teachers financially and through expanded mentor and induction programs.
- The consortium partnership has changed its recruitment, hiring, and other practices of support related to special education teachers through promoting a renewed focus on creating a teacher pathway to grow from within. Many of our grant participants are graduates and county residents deeply committed to giving back to their community. Our administrators and principals were excited about having grant participants with experience and knowledge about our schools, students, and the communities we serve as future special education teachers.

- We cannot continue to offer tuition assistance or a sign-on bonus. We are directing candidates to apply for the Golden State Teacher Grant if they qualify. We are hoping to continue some of the mentoring practices but will do so in a more limited capacity due to funding limitations.
- We will continue with the Classified grant. This funding will continue to assist our classified employees in their transition to credentialed teachers. It is limited in the maximum dollar amount and does not assist those new to education or current credential holders. We will assist those new to education as well as classified employees in getting information about the Golden State Teacher Grant. The limitation of that grant is who qualifies and the requirement for service in a priority school. Some of those who are interested in enrolling are deterred by the priority school list because there are so few from our region and surrounding area.

Summary and Conclusion

During the project period, nearly all of the \$50 million in Local Solutions grant funds was encumbered to be disseminated grantees to support 4,743 unique participants. Funding allowed grantee LEAs the opportunity and flexibility to design and implement local solutions to meet their needs for credentialed special education teachers. LEA grant recipients were required to use this grant opportunity to increase the supply of special education teachers by prioritizing strategies for identifying, recruiting, preparing, employing, and supporting newly credentialed special education teachers and for assisting teachers who may be credentialed in another field who want to become credentialed special education teachers.

In 2022-23 annual reports, LEA grantees were asked to provide project summary information, to the best of their knowledge. Those data demonstrate that:

- 67% or 3,158 unique participants have been hired as special education teachers of record by grantee LEAs.
 - Of the 3,158 participants hired by grantee LEAs, 85% or 2,676 unique participants have been retained by their employers.
- Another 4% or 172 unique participants have been hired as special education teachers of record by other California LEAs.
 - Of the 172 participants hired by other California LEAs, 78% or 134 unique participants have been retained by their employers.
- An additional 12% or 576 unique participants are on track to be hired as special education teachers of record by grantee LEAs.
- Last, 4% or 147 unique participants have not been hired nor are they on track to be hired by grantee LEAs or other California LEAs.

While analyzing the overall effectiveness of the grant, it is important to note that legislation only requires grantees to track hiring data for participants that received a teacher service scholarship, signing bonus, or student debt payment. As such, there are 690 participants for which grantee LEAs have incomplete data. Anecdotal information was gathered from grantees about participants who were supported by grant funds who are not currently employed as teachers, who are not on track to be teachers of record in special education classrooms, or who

are not in contact with the grantee LEA. Grantees reported having knowledge of participants that left the program and no longer wish to pursue a teaching career as well as participants who are:

- Working in grantee LEAs but not as teachers of record (as coordinators, as paraeducators, in administrative roles, etc.).
- Taking longer than expected to complete teacher preparation coursework and pass required exams.
- Teaching elsewhere in the country.

In conclusion, with data showing that 82% or 3,906 of the 4,743 unique participants have been hired as or are on track to be hired as teachers of record serving special education students, grant funds were effectively used to support local efforts to address the shortage of special education teachers.

Attachment A

Local Solutions to the Shortage of Special Education Teachers Grant Program

Grantee LEA	Grant Funds Encumbered During the Project Period
Alameda Unified School District	\$1,262,439.92
Alhambra Unified School District	\$1,000,000.00
Burbank Unified School District	\$244,807.23
Butte County Office of Education	\$151,577.10
Castro Valley Unified School District	\$314,852.96
CHAMPS Charter High School of the Arts	\$42,033.33
Clovis Unified School District	\$924,985.56
Davis Joint Unified School District	\$1,078,556.76
High Tech High	\$1,192,139.33
Kern High School District	\$1,272,229.37
Lake County Office of Education	\$1,084,875.82
Las Virgenes Unified School District	\$354,081.53
Los Angeles Unified School District	\$4,004,721.67
Manteca Unified School District	\$203,796.67
Monterey County Office of Education	\$2,452,781.63
Multicultural Learning Center	\$60,000.00
Napa County Office of Education	\$964,226.08
Oakland Unified School District	\$1,534,456.99
Patterson Joint Unified School District	\$167,999.50
Placer County Office of Education	\$2,313,769.37
Poway Unified School District	\$123,400.00
Riverside County Office of Education	\$473,642.56
Riverside Unified School District	\$270,868.00
Sacramento City Unified School District	\$147,999.23
Sacramento County Office of Education	\$1,000,000.00
San Benito High School District	\$187,015.53
San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools	\$1,232,271.28

San Diego County Office of Education	\$995,000.10
San Francisco Unified School District	\$379,823.82
San Joaquin County Office of Education	\$156,998.27
San Jose Unified School District	\$481,517.00
San Luis Obispo County Office of Education	\$8,000,000.00
San Mateo-Foster City School District	\$393,346.67
Santa Ana Unified School District	\$545,680.65
Santa Barbara County Office of Education	\$2,400,000.00
Santa Clara County Office of Education	\$7,390,833.15
Sonoma County Office of Education	\$1,327,513.80
Stockton Unified School District	\$779,355.00
Tracy Unified School District	\$201,411.68
Tulare County Office of Education	\$2,398,515.13
Westside Union School District	\$461,193.34
Totals	\$49,929,152.90