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Adult Education—Regional Occupational Programs Go From Permissive to Prescriptive in State Budget

Governor Jerry Brown's May Revision maintained the status quo for existing K-12 and community college adult education programs for two years allowing school districts and county offices of education (COEs) to retain authority to independently continue existing adult education programs, but provided that over time they join regional adult education consortia to gain access to additional dedicated adult education funding and to ensure coordination with other local adult education providers.

It included \$30 million for two-year planning and implementation grants, and intended to provide \$500 million in Proposition 98 state funding effective 2015-16 to fund adult education schools jointly operated by regional consortia of K-12 local educational agencies (LEAs) and community college districts.

At least \$350 million of the proposed \$500 million would be apportioned to existing adult education providers, provided those districts/COEs maintain their 2012-13 level of state-funded spending for adult education and correctional education in 2013-14 and 2014-15. The remaining \$150 million would be available for other consortia to be developed and funded by districts that either have reduced or eliminated their programs in the past or have yet to develop adult education programs.

In a surprising change in direction, the trailer bill language implementing the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) now contains a provision requiring *all* school districts and COEs to maintain their 2012-13 level of spending for regional occupational centers or programs and/or adult education, in both 2013-14 and 2014-15, regardless of intent to participate (or not) in future adult education consortia. This shift from permissive to prescriptive programmatic funding of these programs this late in the Budget development process will have budgetary impacts on some districts and COEs who had assumed any budget approved in Sacramento would retain the continued flexibility that has been provided for years through the tiered categorical process, and that was proposed in the Governor's Budget. Recall that categorical flexibility was provided to mitigate deep cuts in discretionary funding imposed by the state during the recent recession, cuts that are yet to be restored.

—Jeff Bell and Michael Ricketts

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