
WILLIAMS Legislation

Implementing the Williams Legislation in Los Angeles County

Laws Aim for Educational Equity

Williams v. California was a class-action lawsuit filed May 2000 claiming the state's poorest children were being denied equal educational opportunities. The suit alleged that public school students lacked equal access to instructional materials, safe and decent school facilities, and qualified teachers.

Settlement of the lawsuit in August 2004 resulted in a package of laws — known as the “Williams legislation” — aimed at ensuring that all students have the basics of a quality education. The laws expand and create accountability systems so that:

- All students have access to standards-aligned instructional materials and textbooks.
- All students have access to school facilities that are clean, safe, and functional.
- Teachers have the proper certification or training for their assignment, especially those in classrooms with 20 percent or more English Learners.

Focus on Low-Performing Schools

All schools in California must comply with requirements and accountability measures contained in the Williams legislation. But the focus is on the state's lowest-performing schools, defined as those ranked in the bottom one-third (deciles 1-3) of the Academic Performance Index.

- In Los Angeles County, 579 schools in 41 districts have been identified as low-performing and subject to action under Williams, including 382 elementary schools, 114 middle schools, and 83 high schools.
- More than 1.7 million California students who attend low-performing schools are benefiting from Williams — some 640,000 of them (37 percent) in Los Angeles County.

Role of County Superintendent of Schools

The Williams legislation requires the county superintendent of schools to monitor and report on low-performing schools. The Los Angeles County Superintendent of Schools and staff at the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) are responsible for:

- Conducting annual visits — 25 percent of which must be unannounced — of the county's 579 low-performing schools.
- Determining whether students have access to sufficient instructional materials and whether buildings are safe, clean, and functional.
- Monitoring whether teachers have proper certifications for their classroom assignments.
- Verifying whether the school has provided accurate data in its School Accountability Report Card relevant to instructional materials and facilities maintenance.

Textbook reviews must be conducted within the first four weeks of the school year. (In Los Angeles County, schools that have demonstrated textbook sufficiency for two years in a row may complete teacher questionnaires and then be visited after the first four weeks of school.) Facilities inspections occur throughout the school year. Teacher assignments are monitored via new and established reporting procedures.



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Reporting

- LACOE publishes quarterly and annual reports on the results of visits and monitoring. The reports are provided to the governing board of each school district, the County Board of Education, the County Board of Supervisors, and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.
- **Instructional Materials** — Within five business days of a school visit, LACOE prepares a report of any deficiencies in instructional materials found during the visit and submits it to the district's governing board. LACOE must ensure that the district corrects the deficiency in instructional materials within the first eight weeks of the school year. If the deficiency is not corrected within that time, LACOE may request that the California Department of Education purchase the necessary textbooks on behalf of the school district.
- **Facilities** — After completing a facilities inspection, LACOE provides the school principal with a checklist of observations. The expectation is that the school will work with its district office to remedy any problems. A follow-up inspection is conducted after 30 days if any extreme deficiencies are noted during the initial facilities inspection. Schools receiving a "fair" or "poor" rating may request a re-inspection if sufficient improvements have been made. Re-inspections are conducted as time permits toward the end of the school year.
- **Teacher Assignment** — LACOE submits an annual report to the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing and to the Department of Education with final monitoring statistics, including the total number of classes at low-performing schools with teachers who have and do not have English Learner authorizations. The focus is on ensuring that teachers are qualified to teach English Learners.
- LACOE's annual reports are available online at www.lacoe.edu/williams. For other documents and reports, members of the public are encouraged to contact the school or district office.

Role of Parents and Other Stakeholders

The Williams Uniform Complaint Procedure (UCP) is a powerful tool for parents and other stakeholders. It is a mechanism to ensure that schools and districts remedy complaints about textbook shortages, unsafe or unhealthful facility conditions, and teacher vacancies and misassignments.

- A notice advising of complaint rights must be posted in every public school classroom in California.
- Complaint forms must be available at each school site and on the district website.
- The principal or other district official must make all reasonable efforts to investigate the complaint, providing a remedy within 30 days and a written response, if requested, within 45 days.
- Parents not satisfied with the complaint's resolution may bring the issue to the district governing board.
- Parents may appeal decisions about unhealthful or unsafe facility conditions directly to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

LACOE Principles and Goals

LACOE is guided by these principles and goals as it implements the Williams legislation:

- Put students' needs first
- Work in partnership with school districts to identify and solve problems
- Engage all members of the school community in the process
- Ensure compliance with the law

For more information on implementation of the Williams legislation in Los Angeles County, go to:
www.lacoe.edu/williams

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