

Williams Lawsuit Settlement – An Opportunity to Further Equity

The *Williams* Lawsuit Settlement, reached in late August and enacted into law*, aligns with current goals of equity of educational opportunity and closing the achievement gap in California. This settlement offers an opportunity for county and district superintendents to work collaboratively to support and assist underperforming schools to improve student achievement.

The legislation to implement the settlement will further prompt county superintendents, school district superintendents and their governing boards, parents, and community members to be aware, identify and correct specified impediments to student academic success. New programs and work around district financial accountability and academic support are top priorities that were brought to county superintendents over the last few years by the Legislature, the California State Board of Education and the California State Department of Education in order to best address local and state needs for assistance in a collaborative and supportive manner. The *Williams* Lawsuit Settlement reaffirms the direction and expands the scope of this important work.

The lawsuit claimed that the State failed to provide poor and underprivileged students with equal educational opportunities – including inadequate facilities, insufficient educational tools (instructional materials), and a lack of credentialed teachers. The settlement covers five key areas:

Instructional Materials. All students must have sufficient access to standards-aligned instructional materials or textbooks – materials in all core subject areas that are aligned with the State Board of Education’s adopted academic content standards, the foundation of California’s K-12 educational system.

Facilities Maintenance. Schools receiving state funding for facilities and those schools in deciles 1-3 must maintain schools in “good repair” – schools that are clean, safe, and functional.

Teacher Credentialing and Assignment. Ensure that teachers are assigned and have the proper certification or training completed for their specific teaching assignment, especially those in classrooms with 20% or more English Language Learners.

Public Reporting. Enhances the information reported to parents in the annual School Accountability Report Card (SARC) to include instructional materials availability, teacher misassignments and vacancies and facilities maintenance. Incorporates noncompliance with the sufficiency of instructional materials and facilities maintenance into the Uniform Complaint Procedures and classroom posting of notices.

Concept 6 Year Round Calendar. Phases out the use of the Concept 6 calendar in year round schools by 2012.

County superintendents, in collaboration with school districts, have enhanced onsite review, reporting and support provisions related to these key areas. Schools scoring in deciles 1 to 3, as identified by the 2003 Academic Performance Index, are the focus of the reviews. Together, county superintendents and school districts will work to assure the success of every student and school.

* SB 6 (Alpert), SB 550 (Vasconcellos), AB 1550 (Goldberg), AB 2727 (Daucher), and AB 3001 (Daucher).