

# A Brief History of Public Education in the United States

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# Who Are Our Students?

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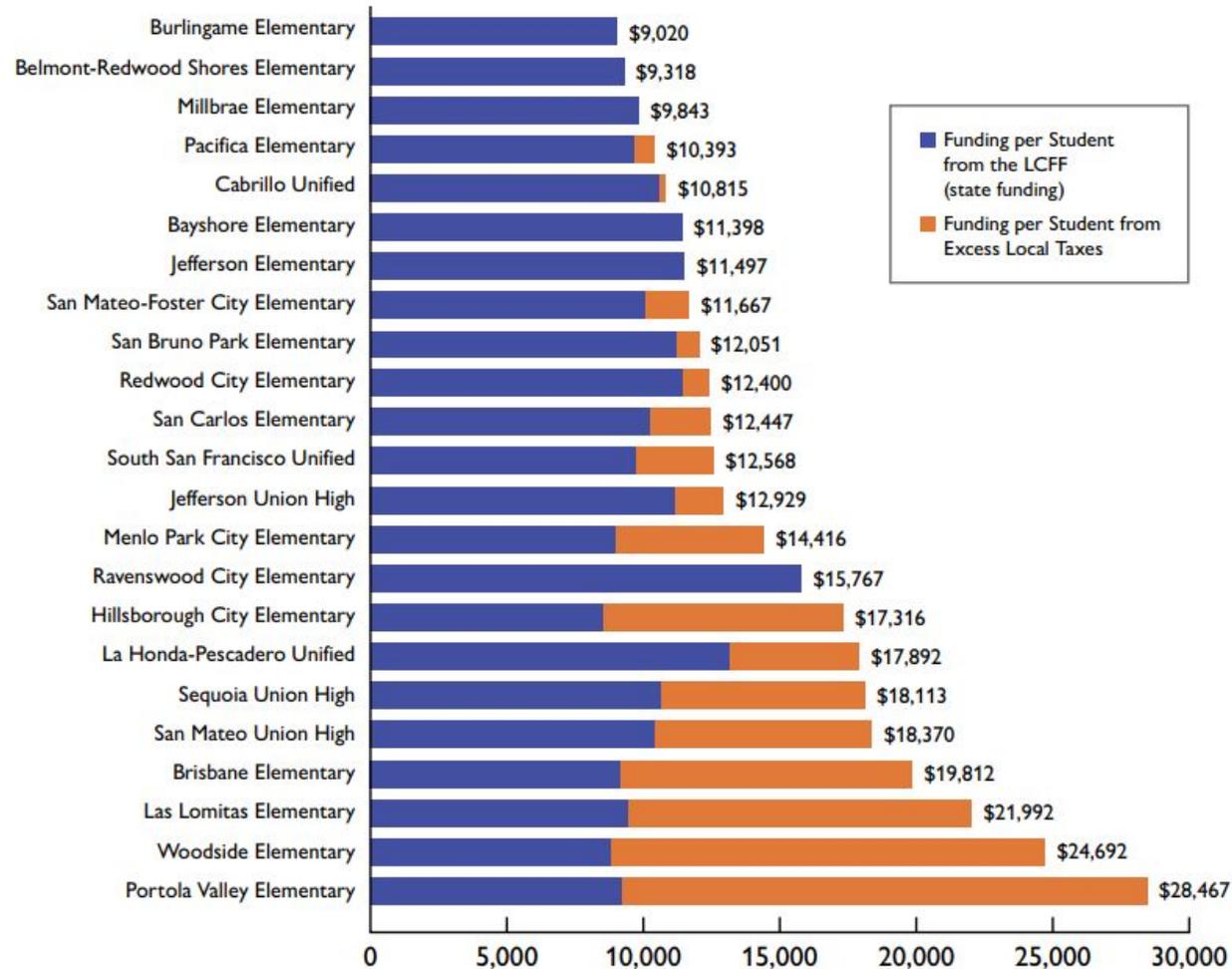
**1 out of 3  
students are  
socioeconomically  
disadvantaged**

**1 out of 5  
students are  
English Learners**

**2 out of 5  
students are  
Black or Latino**

# Public School Funding

## Funding per Student: Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) vs. Local Taxes



Source: California Department of Education



CALIFORNIA



# Economic segregation in schools has worsened, widening achievement gaps, study says



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### OPINION

Endorsement: Kenneth Mejia for city controller

### TRAVEL & EXPERIENCES

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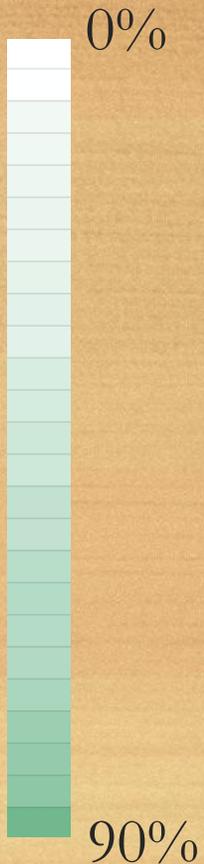
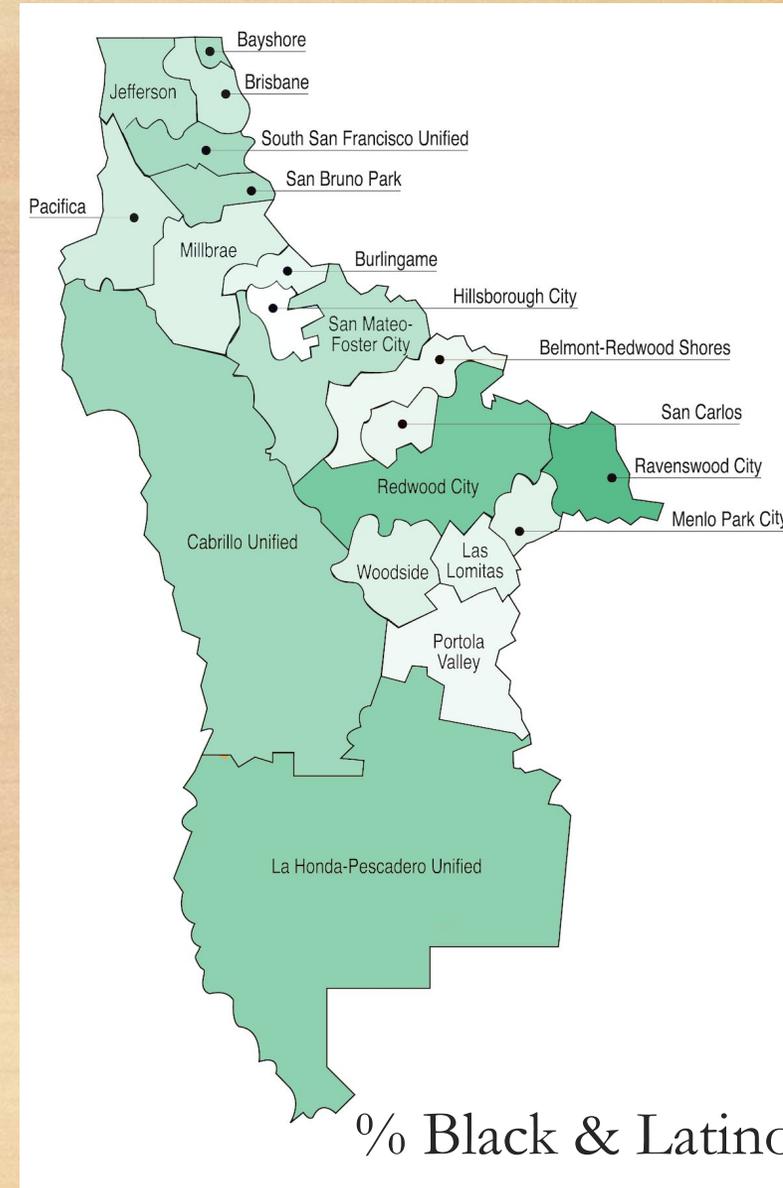
8 places in L.A. to catch the sunset before it gets dark absurdly early

### POLITICS

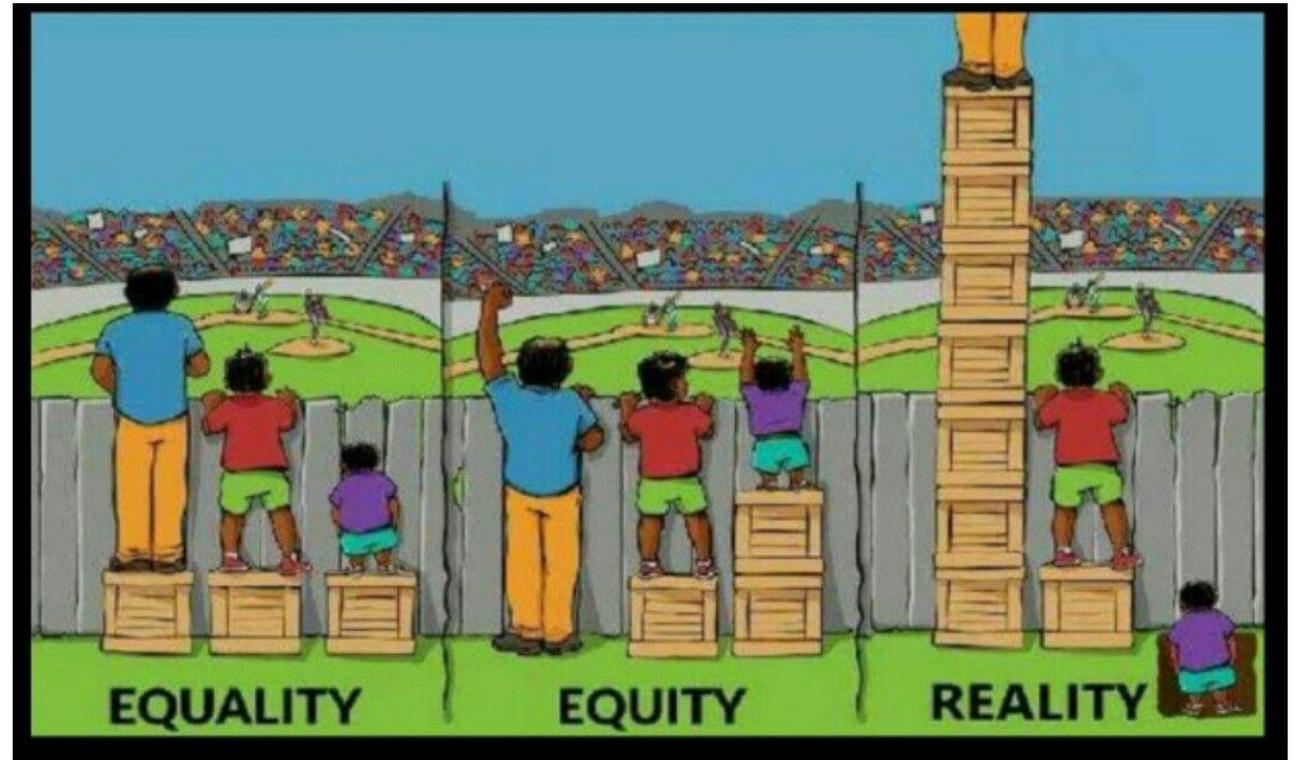
What's on the ballot in California's 2022 midterm election?

“This is not a school issue or necessarily an educational issue,” Ponce said. “This is an economic issue. This is a systemic issue around living wages, around affordable housing, around access and opportunity for families to be able to live where they would like to live as opposed to where they have to live because of the economic constraints.”

# Student population by school district, 2021



# A Deeper Dive



# Is the System Broken?

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Here is what we know.

# Public Education in the U.S.



A Brief History

Thomas Jefferson proposes a two-track education system, with different tracks in his words for “**the laboring and the learned.**” Scholarship would allow a very few of the laboring class to advance, Jefferson says, by “**raking a few geniuses from the rubbish.**”

**1779** Jefferson's Two Tracks

Massachusetts Reform School at Westboro opens, where children who have refused to attend public schools are sent. This begins a long tradition of “reform schools,” which combine the education and juvenile justice systems.

**1848** Massachusetts Reform School

Cities grow tremendously, fueled by new manufacturing industries, the influx of people from rural areas and many immigrants from Europe. During the 10 years from 1846 to 1856, 3.1 million immigrants arrive, a number equal to one eighth of the entire U.S. population. Owners of industry needed a docile, obedient workforce and look to public schools to provide it.

**1846-1856** Growth of Cities

State of Massachusetts passes first its compulsory education law. The goal is to make sure that the children of poor immigrants get “civilized” and learn obedience and restraint, so they make good workers and don’t contribute to social upheaval.

**1851** Compulsory Education

Congress makes it illegal for Native Americans to be taught in their native languages. Native children as young as four years old are taken from their parents and sent to Bureau of Indian Affairs off-reservation boarding schools, whose goal, as one BIA official put it, is to “kill the Indian to save the man.” Many boarding houses were former military sites and were operated by military personnel.

# 1864 Boarding Schools

California had devised a formula of ten. When African Americans, Asian Americans, or American Indians numbered ten students, a school district was empowered to create separate schools for whites and non-white children.

**1870** Formula of 10

Education for European immigrant children included immersion in English-only classrooms without accommodations, placement in 1st grade classrooms regardless of the age of the child and intelligence testing which led to the disproportionate placement of immigrant children in special education classes. Meanwhile in the West and Southwest, separate schools were developed for Spanish-speaking students. These schools focused on teaching English and punished students for speaking in Spanish. Fewer resources were given to these schools and they were generally staffed by less qualified teachers.

## **1900s** Boarding Schools

California school law amended to read: “The governing body of the school district shall have power to exclude children of filthy or vicious habits, or children suffering from contagious or infectious diseases, and also to establish separate schools for Indian children and for children of Chinese, Japanese or Mongolian parentage. When such separate schools are established, Indian children or children of Chinese, Japanese, or Mongolian parentage must not be admitted into any other school.”

**1921** Political Code 1662

A survey of 150 school districts reveals that three quarters of them are using so-called intelligence testing to place students in different academic tracks.

**1932** Intelligence Tests

The League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) lawyers implement a strategy to challenge school segregation in California filed by Mexican-American parents in Orange County. In *Mendez v. Westminster*, parents won a federal lawsuit against several California school districts that had segregated Mexican-American schoolchildren. For the first time, this case introduced evidence in a court that school segregation harmed children of color.

**1947** *Mendez v. Westminster*

Educational Testing Service is formed, merging the College Entrance Examination Board, the Cooperative Test Service, the Graduate Records Office, the National Committee on Teachers Examinations and others, with huge grants from the Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations. These testing services continued the work of eugenicists like Carl Brigham (originator of the SAT) who did research “proving” that immigrants were feeble-minded.

**1948** Educational Testing Service (ETS)

In *Milliken v. Bradley*, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that segregation was allowed if it was not considered an explicit policy of each school district. This effectively legally segregates students of color in inner-city districts from white students in wealthier white suburban districts.

**1974** *Milliken v. Bradley*

President Ford signs into law the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The law guaranteed access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment to every child with a disability. The federal government commits to funding 60% of additional costs. By 2017, federal funding is 14.6%.

**1975** Individuals with Disabilities  
Education Act (IDEA)

As part of the “taxpayers’ revolt,” Proposition 13 passes in California, limiting property tax assessments to 2% annually, effectively freezing the assessed value of homes. Local property taxes are a major source of funding for public schools causing California to drop from first in the nation in per-student spending in 1978 to 46th in 2017.

**1978** Taxpayer Revolt

Proposition 187 passes in California, making it illegal for children of undocumented immigrants to attend public school. Federal courts hold Proposition 187 unconstitutional, but anti-immigrant sentiment spreads across the country.

**1994** Proposition 187

California passes Proposition 209, which outlaws affirmative action in public employment, public contracting, and public education. Other states pass their own initiatives and efforts are made to pass similar legislation on a federal level. In 2020, a ballot initiative to repeal Prop 209 fails.

**1996** Proposition 209

California enacts a new school funding formula, the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF). The law aims to improve outcomes by providing more resources to meet the education needs of low-income students, English language learners, and foster youth. The law provides local districts greater flexibility over how they choose to spend state funding. In exchange for greater flexibility, school districts must provide greater transparency to local communities on how the money will be spent by producing a 3-year spending and academic plan called the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).

# **2013** Local Control Funding Formula

Researchers conclude that California is the 3rd worst state when it comes to school segregation for African Americans, and the state in which Latino students are most segregated. The report also finds that the poverty of California's children has increased markedly in the last generation, particularly for Latino and African-American students. Black and Latino students attend the same disadvantaged schools together, resulting in “double segregation” or, in some cases, “triple segregation” by race, income and language.

# **2014** California's Segregated Schools

In California, Governor Gavin Newsom signs Senate Bill 419, which bars schools from suspending students in kindergarten through 8th grade for willful defiance—defying teachers and other school staff, or disrupting school activities.

**2019** Willful Defiance

In March 2020 districts in the state of California begin distance learning. Many would stay in distance learning until March 2021.

**2020** COVID-19

California becomes the first state in the U.S. to require all students to complete a semester-long course in ethnic studies to earn a high school diploma.

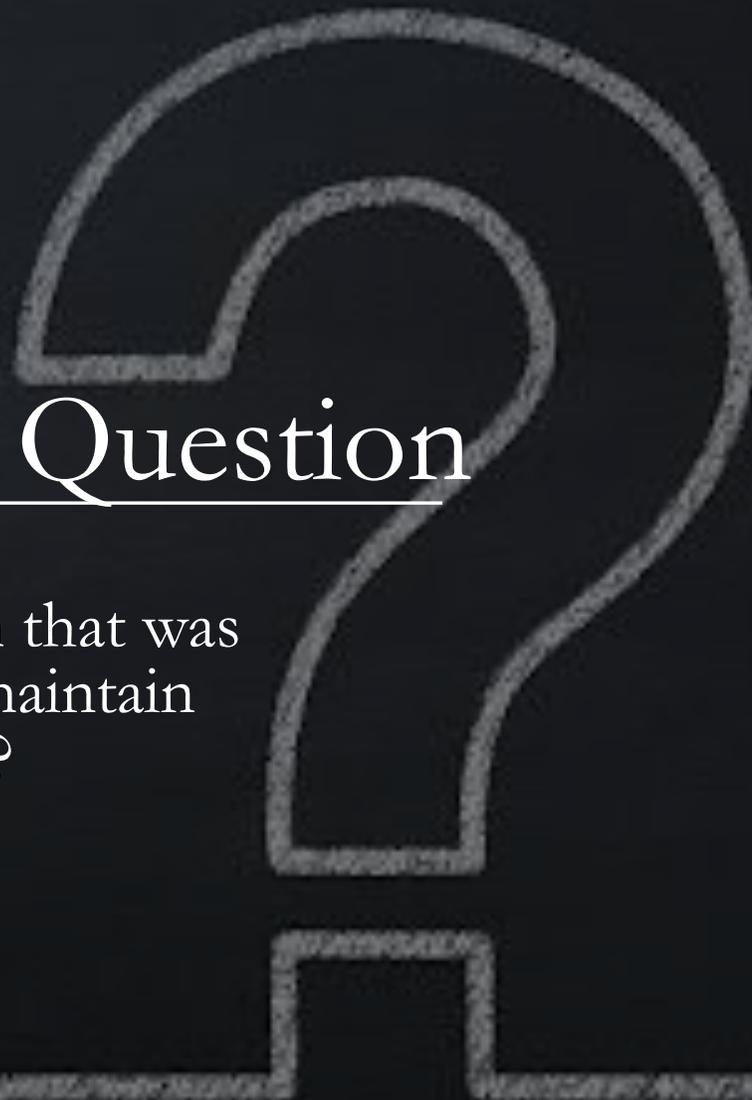
**2021** Ethnic Studies

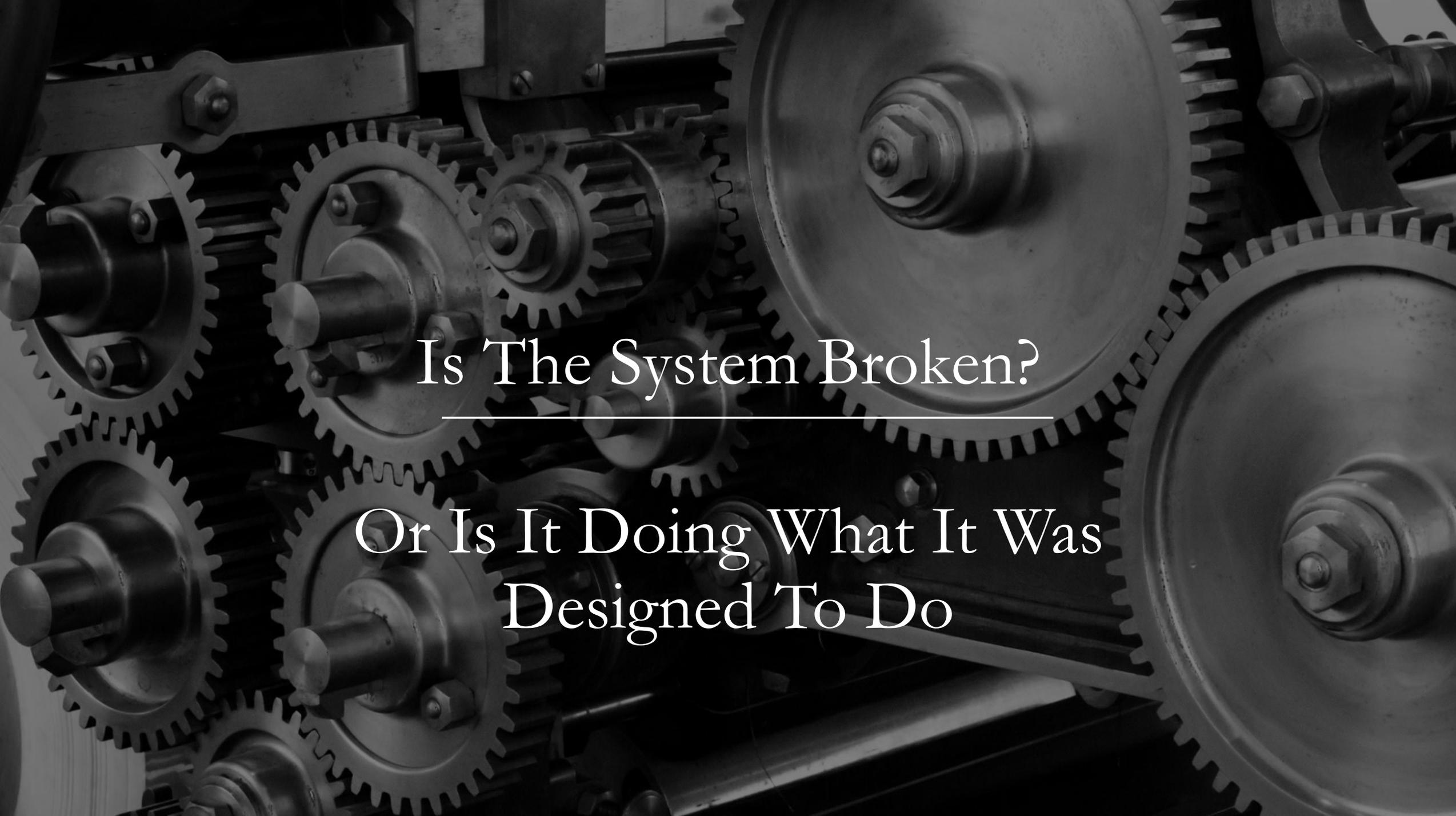
In 2022, California lawmakers committed to allocating \$650 million each year to the universal free meal program, as well as \$54 million in the 2021-22 budget to supplement state meal reimbursements to districts.

**2022** Free Meals

# The Essential Question

Can we use same system that was designed to create and maintain inequity to create equity?





Is The System Broken?

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Or Is It Doing What It Was  
Designed To Do

REIMAGINE

REINVENT

DISRUPT

