Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of the entire CCEE team, we welcome you to our inaugural public event, *Equity in Action: A Real-Time Look at What’s Working in California Schools*.

This forum is intended to continue the statewide discussion about creating more equitable educational outcomes for our most vulnerable students in the Golden State. However, *Equity in Action* is intended to go beyond articulating the problems and shines a bright light on concrete practices and strategies unfolding in real-time that address some of the most complex and challenging issues in public education today.

Like all of us at the CCEE, we hope that you too are inspired by the passionate and dedicated educators and educational stakeholders with whom we have formed four critical partnerships since our inception five years ago. Each partnership teaches us extremely valuable lessons about vulnerability, perseverance, fortitude, collaboration, and nurturing a growth mindset—qualities that are required in creating real systems change.

Indeed, today’s event marks the fifth year the CCEE has been in existence as part of California’s new approach to school improvement. Born out of Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) legislation, CCEE was created to “advise and assist” local educational agencies (LEAs) in achieving the goals established in their Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs).

We remain true to that statutory obligation, however the nature of our work has expanded and dramatically evolved over the last couple years as we partner with the California Department of Education (CDE) to grow and strengthen the State System of Support, a crucial component of California’s new school accountability system whose guiding principles are local control and continuous improvement.

Our responsibilities include working closely with county offices of education (COEs), LEAs, membership organizations and advocacy partners to build capacity, develop joint initiatives and coordinate statewide efforts. We promote innovative thinking at the local level and improve decision-making to help close equity and achievement gaps in school communities. At the same time, we take the lead in collecting, analyzing and disseminating best practices to education professionals throughout California.

As such, our *Equity in Action* event is intentionally designed so you can learn directly from educators who are leading the way in delivering equity in California. You will gain practical insights on how educators are collaborating and innovating to tackle issues, as well as get connected to resources that are helping local districts succeed.

One of CCEE’s guiding principles is that continuous improvement is built on trust and creates brave spaces to take risks. I wholeheartedly believe the partnerships highlighted today—and the many partnerships we have formed over the past five years—exemplify this principle.

The CCEE will never lose sight of the underserved students in our educational system that LCFF was enacted to raise up.

TOM ARMELINO
CCEE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
The CCEE Equity in Action: 2019-20 Partnership Highlights Report features four crucial CCEE partnerships that stem from two of the agency’s statewide collaborative efforts: Pilot Partnerships (Pilots) and Professional Learning Networks (PLNs).

Collectively, these initiatives exemplify how educational leaders, teachers and community members across the state are coming together, embracing local control and continuous improvement, building capacity, and using research-based practices to identify root causes and implement their own innovative strategies in real-time to create more equitable outcomes for each and every student.

The CCEE believes the strategies discussed in this report hold promise for other districts in California because they address the myriad of instructional issues negatively impacting some of our most vulnerable students: English learners, African American students, and foster youth.

**Pilot Partnerships**

In 2015, the CCEE formed multiyear Pilot Partnerships with 12 LEAs located in rural, suburban and urban areas. With state funding, the CCEE built the capacity of 12 LEA “pilot” teams so they could design and implement their own continuous improvement cycles centered on best first instruction with a sharp focus on equity.

In this report, we highlight our partnerships with two large urban school districts that are working to improve the outcomes of English learners through teacher professional learning initiatives.

- **Anaheim Union High School District**  
  Learn how district administrators in AUHSD are collaborating with a California State University campus to groom “aspiring leaders” who can effectively implement instructional practices targeting English learners.

- **LAUSD: Local District Central**  
  Explore the ways in which the nation’s second largest district is engaging its teachers and building capacity to improve reclassification and graduation rates of English learners in the heart of downtown Los Angeles.

**Professional Learning Networks**

The CCEE funded 54 Professional Learning Networks (PLNs) across California from 2017-19 with the goal of empowering representatives from LEAs to engage in deep learning, using the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and the California School Dashboard as tools for continuous improvement for the benefit of students.

Each CCEE-supported PLN developed its own specific areas of focus, which ensured its continuous improvement journey was tailored to specific challenges.

The network partnerships selected for this report are currently focused on dismantling institutional barriers that are preventing foster youth and African American students from receiving a more equitable education.

- **The Foster Youth Learning Network**  
  Understand the power of “networks” through the work of a nonprofit group and six districts located east of Los Angeles County that are building district-level systems to better support foster youth.

- **The CAAASA Statewide PLN**  
  Deepen your understanding about how four school districts and three county offices of education are building capacity around practices to improve academic outcomes for African American students.

**RESOURCES**

To find out more about the focus, strategies, and impact of all CCEE-supported PLNs, as well as CCEE’s 12 Pilot Partnerships, please visit [ccee-ca.org](http://ccee-ca.org) to access:

- **CCEE’s 2019 Pilot Partnership Report: A Journey in Continuous Improvement**
- **CCEE’s 2017-19 Professional Learning Network Initiative Report**
Redefining Professional Learning to Improve English Learner Outcomes

Over 40 percent of students in California’s K-12 education system speak a language other than English at home. This student group is referred to as English learners (ELs) and they come from a wide range of diverse backgrounds—from students who come to this country as refugees to those who have been attending local schools for years.

Some districts and schools have had notable successes in helping ELs attain proficiency in English and meet academic standards, but educational inequities still exist as many districts continue to grapple with how to best meet the needs of these students.

The Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD) serves roughly 6,600 English learners and is one district that is working to solve this problem locally.

This section highlights CCEE’s partnership with AUHSD which is designed to improve outcomes for ELs through a bold and innovative program with California State University, Fullerton.

Anaheim Union High School District

AUHSD is one of 12 LEAs the CCEE selected in 2015 to participate in its Pilot Partnership program – a multiyear effort in which teams of district and school leaders acquire the knowledge and skills to implement continuous improvement cycles around a specific problem of practice.

For AUHSD, its problem of practice is two-fold: 1) far too many English learners are not being reclassified as fluent English proficient and 2) too many long-term English learners (LTEls) and English learners with disabilities are not succeeding academically in meeting grade level standards.

To address these instructional challenges, CCEE provided additional funding and guidance to AUHSD so it could work with Cal State Fullerton’s Department of Educational Leadership to co-design a pioneering Preliminary Administrative Services Credential program called Leadership Education for Anaheim Districts (LEAD).

The program allows AUHSD to tap into its teaching force and groom the district’s next generation of administrators who will have the expertise to improve English learner outcomes.

To accomplish this, CSUF and AUHSD selected a large cohort of teachers and counselors, also known as “LEADers,” who are taking university-level coursework while also working full-time in the district.

Capacity building unfolds in three ways for a LEAD candidate: 1) he/she receives support to improve outcomes for specific EL students 2) he/she coaches a colleague to do the same 3) he/she then leads a team of teachers, counselors and/or school site leaders to build capacity to target EL learning gaps.

By truly understanding the factors that lead to English learner success, and then experiencing success at moving students, LEAD candidates become EL advocates and inquiry leaders among their colleagues.

One more innovative component of the LEAD program: Capacity building takes place among AUHSD district administrators as well.

Working alongside Dr. Jennifer Goldstein, Professor and Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership at CSUF, AUHSD’s cabinet-level administrators co-plan and co-teach the courses that LEAD participants attend, allowing for a deeper understanding of root causes at the district level and how to collectively close the EL student success gap as a team.

By truly understanding the factors that lead to English learner success, and then experiencing success at moving students, LEAD candidates become EL advocates and inquiry leaders among their colleagues.
Evidence of Capacity Building

LEAD participants are currently engaged in leading site teams for EL success. They will then compile student performance data based on defined learning targets, as well as measure whether their respective school sites are becoming more proficient in equity-focused and evidence-based decision-making on behalf of their EL student population.

Partnering with the CCEE, the following data sources will be tracked:

**QUANTITATIVE DATA**
- Academic achievement data (A-G, grades)
- Graduation rates
- Suspension rates
- California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) ELA scores
- Reclassification rates of long-term English learners ("LTIEL" to "RFEP," full English proficient)

**QUALITATIVE DATA**
- LCAP goal accomplishment
- Oral language development as measured by classroom observations and scores on culminating assessment of academic language

Next Steps

This fall, LEAD participants will continue to take university-level coursework, lead a school site team to improve outcomes for ELs, and complete the California Administrator Performance Assessment (CalAPA) which is required to receive an administrative credential.

The CCEE, AUHSD, and CSUF believe this novel approach to leadership development has the potential to transform teaching so that English learners across the state are receiving the support and resources they truly need and deserve.
Curriculum Alignment and PLCs 
Target English Learner Performance Gap

The Los Angeles Unified School District is the second largest school district in the nation serving 621,000 students. Approximately 23 percent of those students are English learners, the majority of which attend schools in an area designated as Local District Central, one of six local districts that makeup LAUSD.

Local District Central (LDC) represents the urban core of Los Angeles and is larger than most large-scaled U.S. school districts. Helping ELs advance both linguistically and academically has been a priority in this local district, but educators have long wrestled with identifying and implementing an evidence-based approach resulting in improved learning outcomes for EL students.

A dramatic shift occurred three years ago when the CCEE selected LAUSD-LDC to participate in its Pilot Partnership program. The following brief highlights the work of this partnership in improving outcomes of English learners through 1) curriculum alignment by integrating California English Language Development standards (CA ELD standards) into core content courses and 2) teacher-driven Professional Learning Communities (PLCs).

LAUSD—Local District Central

For Local District Central, its problem of practice is clear: EL students are underachieving compared to other student subgroups.

With the progress of EL students at the forefront of their minds, educators across all levels in LDC formed a team and embarked on a multiyear CCEE Pilot Partnership in 2015. CCEE provided LDC and 11 other “pilot teams” with a coach who served as a strategic thought partner offering one-on-one support. The CCEE also coordinated and facilitated a series of capacity building summits every year in which all LEA teams came together to share professional learning.

After spending quality time understanding EL student performance data and identifying root causes, LCD developed its current strategy which centers on curriculum alignment—i.e., what EL students learn in one lesson, course, or grade level prepares them for the next lesson, course, or grade level.

Teaching is now much more purposefully structured and logically sequenced based on CA ELD standards so that ELs in LDC’s elementary, middle and high schools receive English language support to learn the knowledge and skills that will progressively prepare them for more challenging, complex work.

However, to implement vertical alignment with fidelity, LDC also realized it had to provide more “planning time” and focused professional learning opportunities for its teachers.

That led to LDC’s other strategy—implemented simultaneously—which now focuses on teacher-driven Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). The additional investment created the conditions in which teachers have more time to effectively plan for curriculum alignment and transition “from the theoretical to the practical” in applying their new skills at school sites.

As such, the PLCs now focus on building the capacity of teachers to integrate ELD standards into core content courses so that 1) the standards described at each level address the specific learning needs and abilities of ELs at a particular stage of their intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development, and 2) the standards reflect clearly articulated sequences—i.e., the learning expectations for each grade level build upon previous expectations while preparing ELs for more challenging concepts and more sophisticated coursework at the next level.

In addition, LDC teachers now have the power to shape the professional learning taking place within PLCs, giving them the needed time and space to collaborate, plan, observe, and learn from one another.

“We saw the shift from students not speaking to now engaging in academic discourse. That was one of the greatest gains.”

ADALBERTO VEGA
PRINCIPAL,
JOHN LIECHTY MIDDLE SCHOOL,
LAUSD LOCAL DISTRICT CENTRAL
Evidence of Capacity Building

With a renewed spirit and stronger sense of purpose, Local District Central is now making considerable progress in meeting the needs of its English learners. Their collective energy is focused on accomplishing one goal: “All English learners in LDC will achieve one level of progress per year on the English Learner Proficiency Assessment Chart (ELPAC).”

To that end, the following is a list of notable accomplishments since educators have engaged in this work:

- Curriculum alignment among LDC secondary schools that integrate ELD standards into core content courses
- Curriculum alignment of common focus standards and Common Formative Assessments (CFAs) in ELA and math
- Increased awareness of ELD standards for both administrators and teachers
- Common expectations for ELD instruction
- Common monitoring of ELD instruction and student progress
- Increased opportunities for students to engage in academic discourse

Next Steps

Local District Central administrators, school leaders, and teachers are analyzing how to ensure their approach and strategies to-date are sustainable by collecting local and state student performance data. Currently, the local district plans to continue with its focus on vertical alignment based on ELD standards. Next year, all secondary schools in LDC are expected to participate in math and English Language Arts/ELD Crosswalk trainings. LDC will also administer Common Formative Assessments with curriculum alignment in math and ELA and continue the cycle of improvement work.

“Our teachers are excited to continue the work … I think the greatest takeaway is we all feel like we’re on the same page. That’s just a wonderful feeling and we know we’ll see more results from our students.”

ROCIO SOLORZANO
INSTRUCTIONAL COACH,
JOHN LIECHTY MIDDLE SCHOOL,
LAUSD LOCAL DISTRICT CENTRAL
Building Thoughtful District-Level Systems to Support Foster Youth

Foster youth experience significant school instability, changing schools an average of eight times while in care, losing up to six months of their education with each move. The transient nature of these children’s academic lives often results in education records getting lost, credits not properly documented, delays in enrolling at new schools, and/or being forced to attend alternative schools rather than local comprehensive high schools.

This section highlights CCEE’s partnership with the Alliance for Children’s Rights (ACR), a Los Angeles-based nonprofit organization, in establishing a Professional Learning Network (PLN) that focuses on dismantling institutional barriers for foster youth so they have equal access to a quality education.

Foster Youth Learning PLN

The CCEE selected the Alliance for Children’s Rights to establish a network in 2017 that would produce systems change resulting in improved outcomes for students in foster care. ACR targeted an area in the state with a high percentage of foster students, and engaged with six school districts located east of Los Angeles County that collectively serve roughly 2,400 foster youth:

■ Alhambra Unified School District
■ Azusa Unified School District
■ Baldwin Park Unified School District
■ Bonita Unified School District
■ Pomona Unified School District
■ West Covina Unified School District

The Foster Youth Learning Network—comprised of the six districts and the nonprofit—centers its work through an equity lens using the Carnegie Foundation’s Networks for Design Improvement model.

As a regional team, the network focuses on deepening participants knowledge of specific barriers faced by foster youth such as the issuance of partial credits, school stability, immediate enrollment, trauma-informed practices, the disproportionate number of foster youth in alternative school settings, as well as the identification and classification of foster youth within student education programs.

Having gained greater awareness and expertise, the network is courageously moving forward to 1) build thoughtful district-level systems to support foster youth and 2) create and utilize local indicators for foster youth data in the absence of and/or in addition to available state level foster youth data.

Their tools and strategies include:

■ Modification/creation of foster youth board policies that ensure legal compliance and equitable implementation
■ Improvement of foster youth student and stakeholder engagement in the LCAP process
■ Ongoing collection and utilization of meaningful local data to create continuous improvement
■ Increased training of district-level and school site staff on new policies and procedures that can help meet the needs of foster youth
Evidence of Capacity Building

Over the last two years, the Foster Youth Learning Network has seen incredible results by helping the participating districts change policies and practices on the ground level, transforming how their systems engage and treat students in foster care.

The following is a snapshot of results from each of the participating districts since the network was formed in the 2017-2018 academic year:

**ALHAMBRA USD**
Increased the percentage of foster youth who received partial credits from 66 percent to 83 percent after implementing changes to their student information system to make the issuance of partial credits automatically calculated.

**AZUSA USD**
Increased its graduation rate for foster youth from 29 percent to 83 percent, as well as awarded 100 percent of its foster youth partial credits.

**BONITA USD**
Increased the number of foster students experiencing school stability from 15 percent to 25 percent by changing enrollment and disenrollment practices and ensuring school of origin rights were invoked whenever appropriate and possible. This new enrollment process also led to a drastic reduction in the number of foster youth placed in alternative schools.

**POMONA USD**
Reduced the percentage of foster youth enrolled in alternative school sites from 57 percent to 2 percent over the course of a single year after overhauling its enrollment practices and creating credit recovery programs at its comprehensive high schools.

**WEST COVINA USD**
Reduced the percentage of foster youth enrolled in alternative settings from 60 percent to 30 percent.

Next Steps

While the Foster Youth Learning Network does not hold all the answers to achieving a truly equitable education for foster students, it is evident the network’s approach, strategies, and practices are starting to have a positive impact on removing barriers for foster youth within a region.

Over the next year, the network will focus on incorporating its learnings, tools, and strategies into a resource entitled *Best Practices Guide* so that other districts in California can duplicate and improve upon the foundational work completed by this collaborative group.

“This work really involved ‘courageous transparency.’ Because you’re admitting to what you’re doing well, what you’re doing poorly, and what you’re not doing at all.”

MARK RODGERS
SENIOR DIRECTOR, SPECIALIZED STUDENT SERVICES, BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Identifying and Dismantling Barriers to African American Achievement

African American students makeup the lowest performing ethnic group in California’s K-12 schools. Only 20 percent meet or exceed state standards in math, and only 32 percent meet or exceed English Language Arts standards. In addition, the African American suspension rate and African American high school dropout rate are the highest compared to other ethnic groups in the state.

With the goal of taking effective action to improve outcomes for these young people, the California Association for African American Superintendents and Administrators (CAAASA) responded to CCEE’s request to form a Professional Learning Network that would focus on identifying the root causes of inequities experienced by African American students. More importantly, however, the CAAASA PLN intentionally expanded its focus so network participants could also explore, examine, document, and share the pedagogies and practices that are successfully impacting African American students in certain districts in order to bring about real change across the state.

The CAAASA PLN is distinctly different than the 54 other CCEE-supported PLNs because it is a “statewide network” that includes four school districts and three county offices of education (COEs):

- **Districts**
  - Compton
  - Fresno
  - Lynwood
  - Pittsburg

- **COEs**
  - Los Angeles
  - Napa
  - San Diego

The network engaged in deep analysis and examination of the problem collectively, resulting in the identification of root causes that include but are not limited to insufficient teacher qualifications, external and internal politics, racial bias/belief systems, site and district leadership, and system accountability.

In addition, five key areas emerged which helped guide the network in exploring solutions: 1) quality of instruction 2) external and internal politics 3) racial bias and belief systems 4) leadership across all levels 5) system structure and accountability.

To gain multiple perspectives relative to the achievement of African American students, each PLN participant adopted a problem of practice to explore how their organization provides support. This approach provided insight into:

- Systems solutions
- Data identification
- District early warning processes
- Targeted literacy solutions
- Culturally responsive learning environments
- Positive racial identity through tiered student support
- Collaboration with local/community agencies as advocates for Court and Community schools
- Courageous leadership at every level of the system
- Student discipline solutions through social-emotional learning (SEL)

Pittsburg Unified is using Early Warning Indicators to quickly support the needs of African American boys. Based on district benchmark data, 55 percent of students identified through EWIs at the beginning of the school year demonstrated significant academic growth at the end of the school year.
Evidence of Capacity Building

The actions each network participant took after researching perceptions, pedagogies, and practices that successfully impact African American students’ educational experiences include:

**FRESNO USD**

African American students who took part in a summer literacy group advanced one or more reading levels in just five weeks. The program engaged African American educators and provided culturally responsive teaching. The district has since offered a midyear weekend literacy group and is doubling the size of the summer program.

**PITTSBURG USD**

Early Warning Indicators (EWIs) are being utilized to identify students in need of support within a cohort of third grade African American boys. Based on district benchmark data, 55 percent of students identified through EWIs at the beginning of the school year demonstrated significant academic growth at the end of the school year.

**LYNWOOD USD**

District leadership utilized school climate survey data to inform the district’s Equity Department, form new non-profit partnerships, and provide multiple layers of parent and student engagement. As a result, 100 percent of African American students who enrolled as seniors during the 2017-18 academic school year either attended a two-year college, four-year university, or entered the military.

**COMPTON USD**

Invested in professional development for both principals and teachers in cultural proficiency and trauma-informed practices. After training, 61 percent of participants demonstrated increased awareness on how to promote an equitable, positive school climate and intervene when racial discrimination arises.

**LOS ANGELES COE**

Established the “Equity and Access Unit” which convenes educational leaders countywide to address problems and identify systems-approach solutions for African American students.

**NAPA COE**

Engaged with one of its districts serving the largest number of African American students and developed an explicit improvement target for African American suspension rates in their Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).

**SAN DIEGO COE**

Partnered with a nonprofit organization to provide a school specifically for homeless students under the umbrella of Juvenile Court and Community Schools (JCCS). Nearly a quarter of the school’s students are African American or multiracial. More than 80 percent of the school’s students are graduating high school, more than three times the rate of homeless students statewide.

Next Steps

The CAAASA PLN has produced a widely distributed report entitled *Equity in Action: PLN Project Report and Recommendations 2019* which outlines 13 recommendations for California’s K-12 system. In addition, the collective group believes the following research and actions need to continue:

- Develop statewide data tools that allow educators and communities to determine the weaknesses and strengths of instructional practices
- Implement a progress monitoring system to quickly identify African American students in need of intervention
- Advocate for culturally conscious leadership and teaching as integral actions within the LCAP
- Train school board members on the external/internal politics of institutional racism and its impact on a superintendent’s ability to lead equity efforts
- Push for LEAs to fund African American student achievement initiatives through the LCAP

Looking ahead, the CCEE and CAAASA hope this network empowers adults in California’s educational system to act courageously to provide positive educational experiences and outcomes for African American students.
The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) is a statewide agency designed to help deliver on California’s promise of a quality, equitable education for every student.

Our agency does this by working collaboratively with other state agencies, partner agencies, county offices of education (COEs), and stakeholders so we—as a collective group—can tackle challenges as a team.

Designed to “advise and assist,” we do not carry out compliance or accountability functions. Rather, we serve as strategic thought partners working alongside educators to build capacity, identify goals and needs, promote innovative thinking, and jointly solve problems.

We serve a critical role in strengthening and growing California’s innovative System of Support, a component of the state’s new school accountability system whose guiding principles include local control and continuous improvement.

Our specific responsibilities include facilitating and enabling communication among System of Support Geographic Lead Agencies, co-leading the Community Engagement Initiative, supporting the work of Special Educational Resource Lead Agencies, analyzing and disseminating promising practices, and collaborating on innovative projects.

Complementing our overall role as facilitator in the System of Support, the CCEE also offers specific services including Direct Technical Assistance, Professional Learning Networks (PLNs), and professional learning in the form of training and toolkits.

The CCEE is staffed by a team of accomplished and experienced educators, researchers and facilitators who are passionate about assuring each and every student in California receives a high-quality education.

We’re here to help.

To learn more about the CCEE, visit our website at ccee-ca.org. To get connected to CCEE services and resources, contact our team at 916.619.7494, ccee@ccee-ca.org.