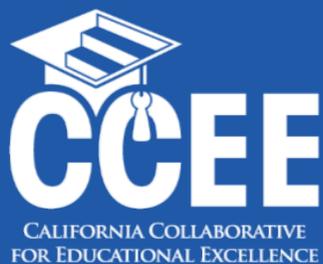# California Collaborative for Educational Excellence
Pilot Partnership Report

A Journey in Continuous Improvement

Acknowledgements

Contents

I. Background: CCEE Pilot Partnership

The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) was established by Governor Jerry Brown and the State Legislature in conjunction with the enactment of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) in 2013. It was designed to fill a unique and essential role in support of the state's more than 2,000 local educational agencies that serve over 6.2 million students. The CCEE's role, simply stated, is "to advise and assist school districts, county superintendents of schools, and charter schools in achieving the goals set forth in a local control and accountability plan [LCAP]…." (California Education Code Section 52074)

The CCEE Governing Board convened for the first time in February 2015, and the first staff members were hired in August 2015. As the only statewide agency with the sole mission of "advising and assisting" districts and charter schools, the CCEE immediately began to breathe life into California's promise to build capacity and focus on continuous improvement. The CCEE provides direct services and support to all types of local educational agencies (LEAs) upon request. We serve as the vital connective tissue in the evolving Statewide System of Support, working with our partners in the California Department of Education, various geographic and subject matter leads, and the county offices of education.

Recognizing the unique opportunity to explore how the CCEE could best provide effective and sustainable support for LEAs, the Legislature and the Governor re-appropriated $5.6 million of the CCEE's initial $10 million in funding "for the purpose of conducting a pilot program to inform the CCEE on supporting local educational agencies in improving outcomes". The funds were made available for expenditure in the 2016–17, 2017–18, and 2018–19 fiscal years. (AB 1623, Statutes of 2016; Budget Act of 2016)

The 2016 Education Trailer Bill specified the Legislature's intent "that this pilot program be used to advise the governing board of the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence in its efforts to provide research-based, quality advice and assistance to local educational agencies.". Furthermore, it charged the CCEE with submitting a plan for implementing the Pilot Partnership to the Legislature, Director of Finance and the Legislative Analyst's Office, and required that "to the extent possible, the pilot program shall include school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools from urban, suburban, and rural areas representing all regions of the state, as well as those with enrollment of unduplicated pupils" and that no LEA would pay for any assistance provided, pursuant to the Pilot Partnership.

The goal of this report is to: 1) Share CCEE's Pilot Partnership two-year journey, which aimed to help LEAs improve student outcomes and enhance equity through continuous improvement. 2) Provide an overview of the activities, outcomes, lessons learned, and successes. 3) Articulate how this work is informing CCEE's support to LEAs through direct technical assistance (see appendix A for a brief description of research methods used.).

Pilot Partnership Theory of Action

The Pilot Partnership theory of action and mission aligns closely with the larger theory of action driving CCEE's work: engagement with CCEE results in capacity building that allows for decision making based on data and stakeholder engagement, which in turn drives improved

student outcomes. The focus and purpose of capacity building is continuous improvement (PACE, 2019). The CCEE theory of action is summarized in figure 1.

Figure 1. CCEE theory of action as presented in slides from the February 1 (slightly adapted), 2019 PACE Annual Conference.

Local Control and Autonomy informing Pilot Partnership

There was a deliberate shift away from the coercion embedded in the "No Child Left Behind" legislation and "Race to the Top" program consistent with California's policy shift towards local control embedded in the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), LCAP, and the California System of Support. The CCEE emphasized the importance of local control and autonomy in their direct engagement with the pilot districts. This created a *commitment* to the initiative as opposed to *compliance* with a mandate. An important tradeoff to recognize when moving from compliance to commitment, is the different interpretations of what the commitment means within the LEA and local circumstances (i.e., resources, staff turnover, and student population that generates varying degrees of progress along an improvement pathway).

The following core values reflect the CCEE's theory of action and guide how CCEE created and supported Pilot Partnerships:

- Equity as a focus for decision making (i.e., closing the achievement gap)

- Continuous improvement as a mindset and method for improving education for California's students: "Continuous improvement as an iterative cycle of 'plan, act, and reflect.' LEA stakeholders become researchers of their own practice through the process of data analysis, developing actions centered on data while monitoring progress on their implementation efforts and, finally, reflecting on the results in order to improve their practice" (CCEE, August 2016b, p. 3).

- Local control and choice: "The Pilot Program proposes that reform within the LEA be developed, organized, and led *by the LEA for the LEA*, in order for authentic and meaningful change to occur and be sustained" (CCEE, August 2016b, p. 2, emphasis in the original).

- Collaboration within Pilot Partnership teams and across Pilot Partnership LEAs in a network

- Initiating change and improvement: "Moving LEAs beyond compliance and into the deep work of second-order change can only be achieved if the process is led by the individuals responsible for implementing and supporting the scope of work" (CCEE, August 2016b, p. 2 – 3).

II. Pilot Partnership Journey

The very nature of CCEE's Pilot Partnership LEA capacity building efforts are uniquely designed to meet the needs, abilities, and aspirations of each of the Pilot Partnership LEAs. This section provides an overview of the history and overview of activities the LEAs embarked on with CCEE for two years. In order to understand the key components of the Pilot Partnership, specific details are provided on how LEAs became Pilot Partnerships, the structure of what it

meant to be a Pilot Partnership, details about each of the LEAs activities and outcomes (to include investments made within the Pilot Partnership).

Recruitment of the Pilot Partnership LEAs

Participating as a Pilot Partnership LEA was, essentially, an invitation to learning. The "invitation" aspect was apparent from the beginning as CCEE encouraged LEAs to engage as Pilot Partnership through presentations at county offices and professional engagement with the original Executive Director and Director of Education. Involvement as a Pilot Partnership meant engaging in learning about *processes* and *outcomes* as a pathway to make meaningful change and improvement within the LEA. CCEE's emphasis on local control and respect for LEA autonomy meant that learning opportunities were offered via Summits (five times throughout the year), coaching, and independent work. Each of these means of engagement were delivered with fidelity, yet within a flexible approach to address the individual needs within different Pilot Partnerships.

Many LEAs across the state expressed interest in joining the Pilot Partnership. CCEE personnel traveled to interested LEAs and met with major stakeholders, to include the school board, Superintendent, union President, Principals, education services staff, parents, and students. These discussions provided opportunities for CCEE to listen to local concerns and priorities to identify the kind of support they could provide. Understanding the details of LEA's contexts helped CCEE determine the right approach to the overall pilot and the "fit" for each of its partners. If an LEA appeared to have sufficient agreement amongst major stakeholders, was interested in focusing on addressing under-served students, and had commitment from the LEA leadership to the Pilot Partnership activities, then formal agreements from the LEA school board and the CCEE board were secured. CCEE aimed to involve Pilot Partnerships that consisted of

county offices of education, urban districts, rural districts, and charter schools or charter management organizations. Although the original intent was to work with a small number of LEAs (4 – 8 [interviews] ultimately), 13 LEAs were part of the Pilot Partnership as of September 2017. Ultimately, 12 LEAs participated in the Pilot Partnership (one joined and two left after September 2017).

From the interviews conducted for this report, some LEAs viewed themselves as coming into the Pilot Partnership with experiences and insights to offer other LEAs, even as they were learning themselves. Others viewed being a Pilot Partnership LEA as a way to gain resources and knowledge that they did not previously have. The previous tended to be larger, more urban, and better resourced LEAs. The latter were smaller and more rural. Ultimately, CCEE achieved a mix of rural, suburban, and urban LEAs that ranged as far north as Marin County, far east as the California-Arizona border, and as far south as Orange County. Eight LEAs were urban or inner-ring suburban and four were more rural and/or small town based. Three of the most rural LEAs were remote (in terms of distance) from urban centers and had limited access to major airports.

The LEAs that participated in the Pilot Partnership were:

- Academy of Careers & Exploration – Helendale School District (ACE)
- Anaheim Union High School District
- Borrego Springs Unified School District
- Dos Palos-Oro Loma Joint Unified School District
- Kern County Superintendent of Schools
- Los Angeles Unified School District (Local District Central)
- Newark Unified School District
- Palo Verde Unified School District
- Pomona Unified School District
- Sausalito Marin City School District
- Victor Valley Union High School District
- YouthBuild Charter School of CA

Pilot Partnership Opportunities for Learning:

CCEE's three-pronged approach to learning and supporting capacity building in continuous improvement (CI) consisted of summits, coaching, and LEA independent work. The aim in this approach was to design activities that would maximize learning before, during, and after large summit gatherings. CCEE's activities were intended to help Pilot Partnerships progress towards addressing a problem of practice important to the said LEA, create opportunities to model for Pilot Partnership LEAs CI, and to show them the path to improve in areas of greatest importance based on an analysis of their local data. Summits involved presentations and practice using CI tools and discussions, referred to as consultancies or critical friend conversations. The latter technique taught Pilot Partnership team members to give and receive objective, actionable feedback in the continuous improvement cycles in which the LEA was engaged. Presenters (including outside experts) addressed a variety of topics related to continuous improvement, understanding equity through data and unconscious bias, measuring impact by examining processes with a focus on student outcomes. The following describes in more detail the three-pronged approach to learning, and related activities:

Summits: Summits were designed as collaborative learning experiences for all Pilot Partnerships. LEAs attended the Summits in teams, which consisted of Superintendents, district administrators, school administrators, and teacher leaders. The Summits occurred five times a year at different locations across California. Summit content followed a trajectory that began with orientation to the CCEE mission, introduction to CI tools, opportunities for Pilot Partnership members to become acquainted with one another and the establishment of norms within their own teams. Pilot Partnerships learned about outcomes yielded by processes, such as what is learned from data analysis or how a focus area and root cause analysis might lead to a

theory of action. Learning activities can be summarized into three parts: 1) learning *"what"* (e.g., what is CI, what are important policy initiatives, what is meant by equity?), 2) learning *"how"* (e.g., finding a focus, identifying the root causes, examining data, and, 3) learning *"why"* (e.g., the importance of engaging multiple stakeholders, reasons for using a consultancy protocol). What, how, and why help to specify process and outcomes of learning.

Coaching: The power of learning was intended to occur while at the Summits as well as within the LEA. The depth and relevance of the learnings occurred with the coaching and support provided in between Summits by our CCEE Leads. The Leads were comprised of our CCEE Executive Director, 5 Directors, one Specialist, and a part-time Professional Expert contracted by CCEE. Beyond the learning that occurred at the Summits, capacity was built and developed when the LEAs worked locally to implement what they had learned and in their short cycles.

Coaching during the Summits focused on providing support to LEA team development to build the capacity of their team in continuous improvement. CCEE staff coached their assigned Pilot Partnerships as "Leads" during the periods between Summits with monthly visits and/or teleconference meetings throughout the month. A critical aspect of the coaching support by Leads was the commitment from the Superintendent or LEA leadership, so that Leads made concerted efforts to discuss, support and problem solve when needed with LEA leadership. By checking in with LEA teams on the progress of CI short cycles and engaging with LEA leadership, Leads were able to strengthen the assistance provided in preparing for the next summit and moving the CI process forward in the LEA. Representatives from county offices of education joined Pilot Partnerships from their counties on day 2 of each Summit to follow their progress and also helped provide coaching, feedback and assistance to the LEAs as needed.

Having COEs participate in the summits served to strengthen direct support available to the LEA locally.

LEA Independent Work: Ultimately, the application of process and outcomes learning was the responsibility of Pilot Partnerships through the support of the Leads and took place during and in between summits. As teams, they took what they learned from our summits, data collection and analysis within their LEAs and generated plans that included articulation of a problem of practice and the root causes of that problem. Each Pilot Partnerships problem of practice that served as the focus for their work was unique by design. The LEA identified problem of practices and root causes that ranged from providing accelerated mathematics learning to high school students unable to achieve integrated math learning objectives, to improving reclassification rates for English learners, to re-designing a K – 8 school to align with a full-service community school model. Subsequent to analyses for a specific problem and its causes, Pilot Partnership independent work consisted of action planning and determining how to evaluate the effectiveness of actions within their LEAs. As would be expected, the bulk of their CI work took place independently and Pilot Partnerships reported the results at summits.

The three prong approach to learning used within the Pilot Partnership was driven by the belief that building capacity through continuous improvement would address problems of equity in student outcomes and achievement, that could be articulated and acted upon by local educators in collaboration within the pilot LEA community and through outside support providers. Table 1 below depicts learning opportunities offered to Pilot Partnership LEAs. Process learning involves discovering *how* to understand and address a problem of practice and outcomes learning refers to *what* is learned through action research. By gathering and analyzing data, Pilot Partnerships learned about their current state regarding a specific problem of practice, and later in the Pilot

Partnership experience, they learned what effect their CI efforts were having on student outcomes. An outcome of Pilot Partnership CI work was a commitment to an action plan that laid out future steps Pilot Partnerships were able to take.

Table 1: Learning Opportunities for Pilot Partnership LEAs

Method \ Content	Process	Outcomes
Summits	- Continuous improvement activities - Consultancies with critical friends - Data gathering - Data analysis - Presenters	- Capacity building - Commitments/plans
Coaching - Leads - County office reps.	- Thought partnering - Guidance - Facilitation	- Short cycle implementation - Interpreting data and impact - Problem solving
Independent work	- Practicing CI in LEA - Planning - Implementing - Data gathering	- Data analysis - Commitments/plans

Profiles of the Pilot Partnership LEAs and Continuous Improvement

Descriptions of each Pilot Partnership are presented in alphabetical order with description by region and population type, foci or problem of practice, description of the plan to address the problem of practice, the respective LEA specific fiscal investments CCEE made, and the evident impact of the LEAs CI efforts. The information that follows derives from Pilot Partnership Interviews conducted in 2017, Partnership Investment Strategy documents, summit attendee lists,

census data, California Department of Education web pages (including the California School Dashboard), LEA web pages, and interviews.

Academy of Careers and Exploration (ACE)

ACE is a grade 7 – 12 charter school located in the Helendale Elementary School District in the town of Helendale (population 5,623; San Bernardino County). An ACE staff member attended a meeting where our CCEE Executive Director and Director shared the Pilot Partnership opportunity with CCEE. The ACE team's initial problem of practice as they joined the Pilot Partnership was to understand the decline in mathematic results from the 2016 California School Dashboard. In addition, math teacher turnover was an issue. For example, the current Principal was initially hired as a math teacher during summer 2017. The focus on mathematics remained consistent throughout their Pilot Partnership experience. Their cycles of improvement resulted in the creation of a pacing guide and analyzing benchmark data during Professional Learning Community (PLC) time. ACE implemented a 7th period online math class for students who failed their 1st semester math course. CCEE invested funds to support this instructional strategy.

Although 30 students were invited to take this course, only 8 students enrolled and took the online course. ACE realized that students who failed math needed face-to-face encouragement and motivation that the online course couldn't provide. ACE used this learning to invest in new strategies and will offer intervention time during the school day utilizing the online course as well as offering after-school tutoring in the upcoming school year. The Superintendent, ACE Principal, two special education and math teachers, have consistently attended summits. ACE's team maximized their summit time together by regularly continuing their team time after dinner.

Anaheim Union High School District (AUHSD)

AUHSD serves over 30,000 students in grades 7 – 12 in the city of Anaheim (population 352,497; Orange County). Prior to participating as a Pilot Partnership, the AUHSD team was focused on multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) and first best instruction. As they continued to examine their data, receive data based on the recommendations from the AUHSD EL Task Force, they worked to improve the reclassification rate, and improve the success of LTELs and English learners (EL) with disabilities. The AUHSD team narrowed their focus on English learners through the CI activities and decided to address their problem of practice by preparing the next generation of teacher leaders in quality instruction to benefit English Learners.

Working to improve instruction for EL, AUHSD collaboratively designed Leadership Education for Anaheim Districts (LEAD), a program to customize leadership preparation in which AUHSD administrators and CSUF faculty co-taught. It is important to note that the AUHSD team that attended summits and worked with the CCEE Lead included a CSU Fullerton faculty member. The LEAD program participants are AUHSD teacher leaders who took on leadership roles at their sites to build the leadership capacity of all staff at their respective sites. The LEAD teacher applicants were nominated and screened by AUHSD, before being cleared to enter the CSUF application process for the program. To support the diversity of applicants, LEAD tuition was subsidized by CCEE and the AUHSD. Teacher leaders developed lesson plans to address specific student learning gaps amongst ELs, as well as coached colleagues and shadowed EL students.

Borrego Springs Unified School District (BUSD)

BSUSD, located in the community of Borrego Springs (San Diego County), is 90 minutes from the closest urban center, Palm Springs. The school district serves 2,582 students, over 73

percent of whom receive free or reduced-price meals. When BSUSD joined as a Pilot Partnership LEA the Superintendent and board were eager to work with CCEE. The focus of BSUSD's CI efforts were focused on students of poverty and ELs through an approach was defined as school readiness. With many BSUSD students speaking a language other than English at home, BSUSD implemented strategies to ensure students started kindergarten with key skills to support academic success by meeting with parents and students prior to beginning school. Through parent learning meetings (which included students and occurred prior to the student's start in kindergarten) students received resources in language development as well as building relationships with district staff. Beyond limited coaching, BSUSD did not take advantage of any additional funding from CCEE.

Dos Palos-Oro Loma Joint Unified School District (DPOL)

DPOL serves just under 2,500 students in five schools, Pre-K – 12. Located in the rural community of Dos Palos (Merced County), 22.4 percent of the district's student population are classified as English learners and more than 85 percent receive free and reduced-price meals. The district became a Pilot Partnership with encouragement from the Merced County Superintendent of Schools. Originally DPOL's focus was on building collaborative teams. At the January 2019 summit their focus changed to improve student behavior through a Positive Behavior Intervention and Support program due to the dashboard data on suspension. Beyond limited coaching, DPOL did not take advantage of any additional funding from CCEE.

Kern County Superintendent of Schools (KCSOS)

The Kern County Superintendent of Schools serves 47 school districts in racially, ethnically, and economically diverse Kern County (population ~900,000). Seventy-one percent of Kern County's school age children were eligible for free and reduced-price meals in the 2017

– 2018 school year. As a result of a presentation made by CCEE, KCOS joined the Pilot Partnership. KCSOS' focus as a Pilot Partnership was to serve LEAs in the county by enhancing their capacity for data analysis and engaging in CI.

KCSOS recognized their role in serving as a resource and ability to build the capacity of their LEAs in CI. They incorporated CCEE's emphasis on networks by creating The Learning Network (TLN) to engage participating districts in their county. KCSOS has engaged with many of its school districts in CI capacity building based on the California School Dashboard. A critical component for KCOS support of the districts' CI efforts is the establishment of a data warehouse, which deployed data warehouse/analytics solutions. CCEE provided funding support to invest in KCSOS' data analytics strategy. Currently, KCSOS has 19 school districts participating in continuous improvement process and all 47 school districts have memorandums of understanding to share data on the warehouse.

Local District Central of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LDC)
With 121 schools Pre-K –12, LDC is one of six local districts in LAUSD, and is larger than most large-scaled US school districts. LAUSD has approximately 20 percent English learners and 77 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price meals overall. The Pilot Partnership focus from 2017 - 2019 has been improving was to improve classroom instruction for English learners. LCD's and strategy was to raise reclassification and graduation rates by increasing quality instruction for ELs. The LEA worked as a team that included district central office support staff, Principals and teacher leaders from schools that vertically articulate (e.g. feeder elementary, middle, and high schools).

During the Pilot Partnership, LDC designed materials and collaboration time for teachers that would increase student instruction that is rigorous and aligned with the California content standards and English Learner Development standards. The CCEE invested funds to support teacher professional development focused on ELD, Title III Coaches, through ELA/ELD content trainings. LDC also engaged school teams and teachers, within and across the school teams participating in the Pilot Partnership, that included classroom observation and data collection based on the instructional practices they agreed to focus on. With positive response and feedback, all secondary schools in LDC will participate in math and ELA/ELD Crosswalk training in 2019-2020, as well as administer common formative assessments with curriculum alignment in math and ELA.

Newark Unified School District (NUSD)

NUSD is a medium-sized school system with nearly 6,000 students in grades K – 12. It is located in the heart of the densely populated East Bay region of the San Francisco Bay Area. Just over 22 percent of students are classified as English learners and 47 percent receive free or reduced-price meals. After attending a CCEE presentation, NUSD joined the Pilot Partnership. NUSD team indicated an interest in using professional learning communities (PLCs) to analyze outcome data from a newly implemented mathematics program and math results from the CA Dashboard.

With CCEE funding, the NUSD focused on building capacity with teachers and classified staff by providing professional development in their math program, data reporting and analysis. With capacity building in math and the use of data to drive instruction, PLCs will inform teacher expertise and data analysis. CCEE funds also provided a day of governance training to assist with team building for three new board members. In building the capacity of

the community in NUSD, CCEE funds provided outside consultancy to build NUSD's

communication system. NUSD's focus was developed to influence student outcomes through

the continuous improvement process embedded in their professional learning communities

(PLCs). District administrators (Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent/Directors) and a

Principal, were consistent participants in summits and a teacher was added to the team and

attended one summit.

Palo Verde Unified School District (PVUSD)

PVUSD is located in the town of Blythe (population 19,600; Riverside County) near the

Arizona border. Shortly after the current Superintendent arrived in 2016, The Riverside County

Superintendent initiated discussions between CCEE and the new district Superintendent who

brought PVUSD in as a Pilot Partnership. District enrollment is +3,000 students, with 9.9 percent

English learners and nearly 67 percent eligible for free or reduced-price meals. LEA initiated

goals were to be more data-driven to change outcomes for students. CCEE personnel assisted

PVUSD to think through the purpose of analyzing data, and helped lead a sharper focus on

improved record keeping and instruction for students with disabilities. CCEE funding provided

off-site and on-site professional development from outside organizations (including the

University of Michigan) in math lesson study and additional training with the Special Education

department. PVUSD's intent was to increase learning for students with disabilities with the

greater potential to improve learning for all through PVUSD's CI efforts. The Pilot Partnership

(Superintendent and/or district administrator, Principal, and teacher) attended all but two of the

summits.

Pomona Unified School District (PUSD)

PUSD is located approximately 30 miles east of Los Angeles in eastern Los Angeles County. The district serves over 23,000 students in grades K – 12. Just over 23 percent of the district's student population is designated as English learner, and slightly more than 84 percent receive free or reduced-price meals. PUSD's location is in the city of Pomona (population 147,000), and student demographics suggest urban characteristics in a suburban setting. PUSD reached out to CCEE to serve as a partner in their School Improvement Grant (SIG) and sought ways to better align the grant with specific California resources such as the LCAP. After initial consultation PUSD joined the partnerships and participated from the very beginning. Their initial focus was to embed CI in the district's schools as a means of district-wide improvement.

PUSD's CI work focused on professional learning communities (PLCs) in mathematics and foster youth. Their intent was to take their learnings and use them in a more specific application of CI to implement CI more broadly across the district in subsequent years with varying foci on student outcomes (based on school needs). With their learnings, PUSD is able to sustain and share work in CI through the SIG's three schools. Members of the PUSD team (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director, Principal, and teacher specialist) attended all summits consistently from October 2017 through May 2019.

Sausalito-Marin City School District (SMCSD)

SMCSD has one charter school and Bayside Martin Luther King, Jr. Academy (K – 8), which is the sole focus of the Pilot Partnership and located in Marin (Marin County). Marin City is a small enclave of fewer than 3,000 residents in a suburban area of Marin County which is close to the city of San Francisco. Bayside enrolls 127 students, with nearly 31 percent English learners and 75 percent eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Within one of the least diverse counties in the Bay Area, Bayside's student population is 48.7 percent African American and

30.3 percent Latino. By comparison, the high school that Bayside graduates will attend is 3.3 percent African American and 10.4 percent Latino. Bayside has very low student proficiency rates in tested areas, a situation readily acknowledged by the Principal who has been in place since 2017. CCEE brought SCMSD into the Pilot Partnership at the initiation of a CCEE board member and the Marin County Superintendent. Before the departure of the previous Superintendent, SMCSD decided to focus on transitioning to a community school model. After his departure in 2017, a Marin County Deputy Superintendent became SMCSD interim Superintendent for two years. CCEE funding provided personnel to address the community needs. The community's school focus has remained constant and shows promise for influencing student outcomes by addressing students' and families' non-school needs (i.e., helping students become more engaged in learning). CCEE personnel provided sustained assistance in the transition, which was still in progress at the time of this report. SMCSD personnel attended four summits through October 2017, but stopped attending the summits to address the day to day needs and challenging circumstances of the student population.

Victor Valley Union High School District (VVUHSD)

VVUSHD is in the city of Victorville (population 121,000; San Bernardino County). The district serves over 11,000, 7th – 12th grade students in seven secondary schools and one alternative school. Nearly 11 percent of students are English learners, and more than 81 percent receive free or reduced-price meals. District context is somewhat hard to classify. Victorville is a small city isolated from large urban centers and generally considered locally as the urban center. The high proportion of students in poverty suggests urban-type education challenges in a suburban sized community. The VVUHSD Superintendent and a board member approached the

CCEE Director; both eager to participate in the Pilot Partnership. Mathematics was the general focus, which was motivated by low proficiency rates on end-of-year tests.

The focus narrowed over time to focus on the implementation of a program that would support students not yet ready for Integrated Math I. CCEE funds provided professional development, supplemental math programs, math manipulatives, and Chromebooks to access online math programs. Challenges in recruitment of math coaches and tutors shifted the focus and identified new strategies to develop math curriculum for Integrated Math I for struggling students. The VVUHSD Pilot Partnership started with the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent for education services and started growing by the October 2017 summit, ultimately reaching a consistent core of six attendees, which included Principals, central office administrators, and teachers.

YouthBuild Charter School of California (YCSC)

YCSC initiated involvement in the Pilot Partnership when a YCSC team attended a CCEE presentation. YCSC became a Pilot Partnership as a result of discussions with the CCEE Executive Director, which revealed a mutual interest in addressing the needs of students who had dropped out of school and were in credit recovery programs. Chartered by the Inyo County Office of Education, YouthBuild is a distributed school (i.e., they have sites located in Inyo and neighboring counties) that serves 1,240 students 16 – 24 years old, who seek credit recovery and a high school diploma. YCSC serves students in rural, suburban, and urban settings. The student population is nearly 23 percent English learners and over 90 percent eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Early focus as a Pilot Partnership was on recruitment and retention of drop-out students, but this shifted during 2018 to "Democratic leadership" or shared leadership among the new department chairs. The YCSC team collaboratively worked with department chairs on

whole staff professional development as well as creating data collection tools to capture the types of interactions the department chairs were having with teachers. This data informed the type of support department chairs and YouthBuilt leaders provided to teachers. The YCSC will use lessons learned from the pilot to expand the use of "Democratic leadership" to be inclusive and responsive to teacher and student needs. The YCSC team members (Founder, Chief Collaboration Officer, Assistant Principals, and department chairs) attended every summit starting in October 2017, which built a team of six by the last summit in May 2019.

Table 2: Pilot Partnership LEA Focus and Dashboard Alignment

Academy of Careers and Exploration	
Focus and CCEE Investment Support	**Intended Outcome**
Creating new online math intervention program. Pilot Partnership funds paid for stipends for teachers assigned to an intervention math course (appx. $2,500)	Improved student mathematics scores.
Explanation	**Aligned with Dashboard?**
Mathematics indicator is red for ACE	Yes
Anaheim Union High School District	
Focus and CCEE Investment Support	**Intended Outcome**
New partnership for leadership preparation. Pilot Partnership funds paid for implementation of LEAD program (appx. $127,000)	Improved outcomes for English Learners
Explanation	**Aligned with Dashboard?**
EL student achievement indicator show red in both English Language Arts and Math while AUHSD overall was orange in those categories. 21.2% of students in AUHSD are EL.	Yes
Borrego Springs Unified School District	
Focus and CCEE Investment Support	**Intended Outcome**
Assessment of and support for school readiness, Pre-K.	Students start kindergarten with key skills to support academic success (EL in particular).
Explanation	**Aligned with Dashboard?**

Both ELA and Mathematics dashboard indicators are yellow for Borrego Springs overall, as well as for EL students. Since the California dashboard deals with data from grades 3 and on, it is unclear whether students are entering kindergarten academically "behind."	Yes

Dos Palos- Oro Loma Joint Unified Schools	
Focus and CCEE Investment Support	**Intended Outcome**
Improve student behavior through a Positive Behavior Intervention and Support program. Pilot funds paid for the support of a consultant and related report (appx. $9,000)	Decrease student suspension rates and increase student academic outcomes.
Explanation	**Aligned with Dashboard?**
Dashboard indicators for suspension is yellow.	Yes

Kern County Superintendent of Schools	
Focus and CCEE Investment Support	**Intended Outcome**
Re-structured to provide CI professional development and support in six school districts. Pilot Partnership funds paid for an evaluation of KCSOS's Continuous Improvement Program ($10,000) and data warehouse capacity and analytical software tools ($275,000).	Varies by school (the idea is to give school leadership the capacity to understand and respond to their school's data)
Explanation	**Aligned with Dashboard?**
Varies by school (the idea is to give school leadership the capacity to understand and respond to their school's data)	Yes

Los Angeles Unified School District—Local District Central	
Focus and CCEE Investment Support	**Intended Outcome**
Focus is improving effectiveness of ELD through building capacity for CI and EL teaching strategies. Pilot Partnership funds paid for stipends at five schools for teacher professional development focused on ELD, Title III Coaches, and ELA/ELD content trainings on weekends (appx. $100k).	Improve EL academic performance, reclassification rates, and graduation rates.
Explanation	**Aligned with Dashboard?**
Although the graduation rate is green overall, it is red for EL students. ELA and Mathematics are yellow overall as well as for EL students. On the other hand, EL progress was green in 2017.	Yes

Newark Unified School District	
Focus and CCEE Investment Support	**Intended Outcome**
Build capacity in the continuous improvement process in mathematics through PLCs within the Newark Unified School District community, including the governing board. Pilot Partnership funds paid for Board Member trainings (appx. $19,000), communications consulting to rebrand and market the District (appx. $60,000), and training on newly adopted math curriculum (appx. $100,000).	Re-established trust with the NUSD community and improved outcomes for all students.
Explanation	**Aligned with Dashboard?**
Mathematics indicator is orange for NUSD.	Yes
Palo Verde Unified School District	
Focus and CCEE Investment Support	**Intended Outcome**
Least restrictive environment, special education review with coaching and mentoring support. Pilot Partnership funds paid for an expert to assist with Special Education program (appx. $42,000) and professional development at Elementary Mathematics Lab and related professional development focused on mathematics instructional practice (appx. $200,000).	All students accessing first best instruction for every lesson.
Explanation	**Aligned with Dashboard?**
The dashboard ELA indicator is orange overall, as well as for students with disabilities. Math is red overall, but orange for students with disabilities.	Yes
Pomona Unified School District	
Focus and CCEE Investment Support	**Intended Outcome**
CI focused on math through their PLC work. Due to their CA Dashboard results they also focused on Foster Youth.	Strengthen their PLC and decision making to improve their teacher's ability to use data to inform instruction and improve student outcomes
Explanation	**Aligned with Dashboard?**
Absenteeism: Orange, Suspension Rate: Yellow, Graduation Rate: Green, College/Career: Green, ELA: Orange, Mathematics: Orange	Yes

Sausalito Marin City School District	
Focus and CCEE Investment Support	**Intended Outcome**
Re-structuring K-8 school as a community school. Pilot Partnership funds paid for a community school coordinator (appx. $130,000)	Improved student outcomes aligned to targeted goals (academic, emotional, and behavioral).
Explanation	**Aligned with Dashboard?**
Absenteeism: Red, Suspension Rate: Orange, ELA: Red, Mathematics: Orange; Standards not met for basics (teachers, instructional materials, facilities), implementation of academic standards, or access to a broad course of study.	Yes
Victor Valley Union High School District	
Focus and CCEE Investment Support	**Intended Outcome**
Transition to integrated mathematics in three high schools. New programming and PD for introductory high school mathematics. Pilot Partnership funds paid for a Chromebook Initiative, three math specialists and stipends for math tutors at three high schools (appx. $435,000).	Improved student math scores and graduation rates.
Explanation	**Aligned with Dashboard?**
Mathematics indicator is orange for VVUHSD and Graduation rate is yellow. Mathematics is the lowest dashboard category.	Yes
YouthBuild Charter School of California	
Focus and CCEE Investment Support	**Intended Outcome**
Creation of department head positions democratic leadership to infuse "democratic leadership" into instruction. Pilot funds paid for professional development trainings to support LCAP goals ($15,000).	Improve the department chairs ability to address the needs of teachers and additionally the needs of students
Explanation	**Aligned with Dashboard?**
YouthBuild does not have performance colors for ELA or mathematics. Suspension rate is blue while graduation rate and college/career are red.	Not Applicable

This table indicates most Pilot Partnerships took full advantage of the opportunity to

address areas of substantial and persistent student need, consistent with CCEE's mission. All

Pilot Partnerships provided ample evidence that they focused on improving educational experiences for students.

III. Successes and Lessons Learned from the Pilot Partnership

Successes:

- **Focus on continuous improvement and equity to drive change**. The Pilot Partnership consistently aligned its activities and support to key core values and a theory of action. The engagement with LEAs was grounded in a clear focus on building capacity in continuous improvement and equity driven decision making. There was growth reported by Pilot Participants in their ability to implement continuous improvement practices (see Growth in Pilot Teams' year-over-year growth related to CCEE Theory of Action May 2018-May 2019, Figure 1). Local control and autonomy was an underlying aspect to the individualized support experienced in the different learning opportunities offered in the Pilot Partnership. This supported Pilot Partnership participation and intrinsic motivation to engage in continuous improvement implementation, for example, across the summits the participation average was 41 during October 2017-May 2019.

  Pilots improved their ability to engage in continuous improvement work and enhanced their focus on equity. Pilots strategy efforts changed practices in their LEAs that has high potential to impact student outcomes. Pilots (nine out of 12) focused their CI directly on teaching and learning challenges to student outcomes in the future. Overall, teaching and learning foci aligned with growth areas identified on the California School Dashboard. CCEE also achieved and sustained a focus on a commitment to improving outcomes

resulting from a problem of practice through continuous improvement to drive change, as opposed to compliance with rules or mandates. In addition, the Pilots recruited encompassed LEAs serving traditionally under-served students, such as English learners and students in poverty.

- **Team approach taken to address instruction supports implementation of CI.** CCEE learned very quickly that there was great power in investing in teams focused on instruction, similar to instructional leadership teams. The Pilot teams grew beyond Superintendents and school leaders to include principals, teachers, and others, which led to CI work being more deeply embedded in the LEA. Pilot teams that had representation from a range of stakeholders—e.g., central office administrators, principals, and teachers—were best positioned to engage in action research to plan and execute CI cycles and actions. Most Pilots (nine out of 11; SMCSD not counted because of minimal Summit attendance) had little to no turnover on their teams attending Summits, enhancing the likelihood of embedding CI in Pilot LEAs.

Based on survey results, major themes of what participants learned were centered on building capacity to engage in CI and use of discussion protocols. Teams identified the need for more team time to work, think, and plan—time that was built into future Summits. By January 2019, equity and teamwork/collaboration were identified as the most common learning gained from the Summit. In May 2018, similar to January 2018, participants emphasized CI tools, but with short cycles and collaboration showing more prominence. The ongoing investment in the LEA team by CCEE was clear throughout the design of the Pilot Partnership. LEA teams shared in open ended responses from the last Summit in May 2019 a sense of a thorough understanding of CI as long-term work,

enhanced realization about the challenges of generating equity, and appreciation for partnership pairings.

- **Three prong approach to learning supported capacity building in CI.** The design of the Pilot Partnership learning opportunities was critical to building capacity among LEAs in CI. Although the needs of the LEAs varied, offering different modes of learning opportunities gave LEAs the time and attention to the activities that would help them target a problem of practice. Summits served as a time for LEA teams to focus on the impact of their PDSA cycle and receive feedback from other LEAs in the Pilot network. The Lead's coaching time provided both at the summits, and in between the summits, served to support strategic actions and problem solving. This left the independent work to be a part of a gradual release experience for Pilot Partnership teams to implement their learnings and short cycle design. A survey of the current state in continuous improvement given to participants in year 1 and year 2 of the Pilot Partnership revealed an average 20% growth in areas such as collaborating and coaching each other, gathering data to inform a problem of practice, and decision making practices by LEAs.

  Pilots Partnership LEAs utilized the Summits to learn and practice CI processes, share their work with other teams, and receive feedback to improve their practice (CI Skill Rating January 2019 survey on participants' perceptions of their pilot team's CI skills-short cycle, capacity, critical friends, and action, Figure 2). Usefulness of what was learned in Summits is reflected in aspirations to continue to use CI skills beyond the conclusion of the Pilot LEA program (open ended survey). Leads' relationships with Pilots kept them engaged and on course overtime. In addition, leads reinforced and extended learning from Summits, which maximized the value of the Pilot LEA program

for Pilot LEAs. For most Pilots, Summits fueled the work they wanted to accomplish in their LEAs and Leads kept them on course and moving forward (interviews).

Lessons Learned:

- **Further clarity on the CCEE continuous improvement curriculum and process for individualized support is needed for scaling up.** When Summit content became more specific and stepwise, leading to specific deliverables, Pilot learning was more evident. A clear "curriculum" similar to that which ultimately emerged in Summits may be helpful to LEAs receiving assistance from CCEE in the future. Learning while acting on what was learned (as in taking content from a Summit and applying it in the LEA in preparation for the next summit) without a clear path may not follow a linear path or support sustainability. Structural clarity and sequencing of continuous improvement experiences would enhance the learning between Summits, Lead coaching, and independent work (Lead interviews).

  As CCEE continues to scale up its support to LEAs, such as in its direct technical assistance, clarity in accessing learning opportunities and individualized support will be essential in order to address scale of need. The Pilots were recruited based on interest and consisted of a small number of Pilots. As key members of the California System of Support, the technical assistance need of LEAs by CCEE will essentially grow. The Lead role is most important to the LEAs with the least resources, as well as LEAs demonstrating high levels of need or distress. A learning orientation for generating CI requires tolerance of differences across participants and the capacity to keep participants on an improvement trajectory. A three-pronged approach is a necessary condition for

individualizing the Pilot LEA experience and in continuous improvement capacity building, however clarity is needed in determining which LEA will need CCEE's approach for individualized support. Clarity in a process will help ensure that CCEE's approach to capacity building in continuous improvement and addressing equity in student outcomes can be appropriately scaled up.

- **Building capacity in continuous improvement takes time, and change will inevitably occur.** Although CCEE worked to establish reciprocal expectations for CCEE and LEAs in the Pilot Partnership, there were changes within CCEE and the LEAs that impacted the progress of the Pilot Partnership. Turnover imperils CI progress, which would be the case in any organization. LEA contextual factors such as politics, turnover, available resources, and location may inhibit participation in Summits and CI efforts. Pilot teams tend to be stable, but turnover in key positions in their LEAs-have the potential to generate uncertainty about their longer-term effectiveness unless the leaders at the LEA embrace the work of the CI team.

- **Lead's facilitation to help support learning both within the Summits and within the LEA is key to supporting the LEA in their capacity to sustain improvement.** Many Pilot team members interviewed commented on the value of their Leads as facilitators who helped to keep the Pilot focused and motivated to take the next steps. However, the changes in CCEEs Leads supporting the Pilot Partnerships also changed in some cases, which was reported to be a challenge by Pilot Partnership LEAs for consistency in the CI efforts. These changes are bound to happen in organizations. CCEE ongoing efforts in capacity building and support must be able to adapt and adjust to changes. Annual check-ins with the LEA leadership Superintendent for example to determine commitment and

ensuring support matches LEA need, coaching capacity, and CCEE being clearer on measuring impact with LEA and their problem of practice to keep motivation going.

- **Measuring impact of continuous improvement on student outcomes takes time, but growth in processes and systems are critical for attaining these outcomes.** In order for sustainable change to occur capacity must first be built. This requires building trust, honest and critical feedback and dialogue, and time to experiment and implement new strategies based on formative and summative assessments. Additionally, mind shifts from operating within old "top down" models of accountability to a collaborative approach of continuous improvement requires time and resources to become continuous. Technical assistance in the past, although oft criticized in its approach, allowed for blame to be shifted to the provider and less ownership of the LEA and in turn less accountability to student outcomes. In a model built within a system of support with expectation of local input within local context comes local onus as well. Therefore, time is needed to truly engage the leaders and participants within the LEA to invest in trust and take a stronger lead role in development and implementation of a theory of action grounded in equity. Mind shifts do not occur over night and educators need opportunities to change their experience in order to truly build and sustain efforts of improvement. Additionally, student outcomes may not reflect immediate change until sustainability and capacity are built.

IV. Conclusion

CCEE designed the Pilot Partnership program to engage LEAs in learning about CI by addressing long-standing student outcome challenges. CCEE stayed true to important values

throughout, the foremost of which was working toward greater equity and performance outcomes for students, while preserving local control and autonomy. Practices and outcomes evolved over more than two years in the Pilot Partnership. CCEE has taken the success and lessons from this evolution in supporting LEAs in continuous improvement to effectively individualize support to LEAs in a manner that builds capacity of LEAs to realize positive change that benefits students. CCEE is well-positioned to take lessons learned described in this report and growth opportunities described in this section into their new work partnering with LEAs in fiscal distress and direct technical assistance. In addition, the CCEE has the capacity and knowledge to share tools, strategies, efforts to build relationships of trust, with specific examples within small to large school districts, charter schools and county offices to partner with and support the growth of other LEAs in their ability to increase outcomes for students.

CCEE Growth Opportunities to Inform CCEEs Direct Technical Assistance:

In the spirit of continuous improvement that is reflected in the Pilot Partnership journey with LEAs , we offer the following six growth opportunities that will allow the CCEE to build on the strengths of the Pilot Partnership and stimulate CCEE's thinking about the next phase of its work in direct technical assistance.

1. CCEE will be intentional in the use of clear structures for the CI pathway early in their work with LEAs. Acknowledging the need for orientation to CI and the philosophy behind CCEE's work, introducing a defined structure LEAs can follow early in their relationship with CCEE will help them make a fast transition from learning *what* and *why* to learning *how.* Learning how to engage in CI focused on student achievement and equity is the essential support that CCEE provides for LEAs. An initial application of a

clearer structure for engaging in technical assistance in the direct technical assistance that CCEE provides has been in the work with two districts in fiscal distress: Inglewood Unified School District and Vallejo Unified School District.

Like the Pilot Partnership, CCEE's technical assistance theory of action is grounded in building capacity in continuous improvement, equity driven decision making to address student outcomes, and local control and autonomy. CCEE has used lessons learned from the Pilot Partnership program to develop clear processes for technical assistance and support for LEAs that are challenged with chronic and complex issues. Communication tools explaining CCEE's direct technical assistance support within the State System of Support have been developed. To create consistency and address fidelity of support, a Direct Technical Assistance Handbook with a framework and protocols that reflect CCEE's continuous improvement support is currently in process and will be completed in early fall 2019. This handbook will serve CCEE's direct technical assistance with LEAs as well as potentially serve as a tool for other LEAs.

2. Deliverables described in sequence help guide LEA CI work, but can easily become onerous. To use deliverables as a means to maintaining focus while not overburdening LEAs requires co-creating deliverables the LEA finds meaningful and CCEE believes reveal important progress. CCEE will engage early within the LEA to identify their goals and objectives (possibly including a problem of practice) and LEA-defined measures of success as the bases for deliverables that demonstrate focus, progress, and impact in ways that support LEA work. These work products can be used as a formative assessment for both the LEA and CCEE that helps them make necessary course corrections that ensure ultimate success.

3. To help identify critical problems of practice and to create a focused path for improvement, CCEE has developed an academic review process called the Systemic Instructional Review (SIR). Based on school and district turnaround research and state driven instructional reviews, the SIR was designed as a comprehensive examination of data to determine specific problems of practice—including systems and structural challenges—that contribute to inadequate pupil achievement. The SIR aims to recognize the strengths of an LEA in 12 instructional areas while also focusing the LEA on pivotal areas of need. Coaching and other resources are coordinated in partnership with the LEA based on the SIR and stakeholder discussions. CCEE has seen an important need to replicate the learning and networking opportunities that the Summits provided Pilot Partnership LEAs, and partners (i.e. County Offices of Education) to address the problems of practice the SIR surfaces. The CCEE has the resources, tools and lessons learned to provide further opportunities for LEAs to participate in future Summits.

4. The CCEE will continue to ensure that teams comprising of multiple stakeholders from different levels of the LEA are engaged early in the CI process. Superintendents, central office administrators, site administrators, and teachers involved in CI from or near the beginning of the Pilot Partnership were more committed to working together as a team to adopt changes that improved student achievement and addressed equity related challenges. This is especially critical as the urgency to improve LEA systems and student outcomes require clear commitments from every level of the LEA. The superintendent or a key district office leader is essential to the success of students and must be engaged in the continuous improvement activities of the LEA to assure support and sustainability. Site leaders and teachers too are central to the implementation of improvement strategies

and need to be directly involved in the design and implementation of the theory of practice. This is often not the case and teachers and other instructional staff are expected to attend professional development and/or implement improvement strategies without the understanding and context of the change.

5. CCEE must operate within a loose/tight concept in its efforts to support LEAs. While we must continue to operate within a spirit of collaboration, a key feature of the Pilot LEA program is to develop intentional partnerships and coaching, we must be intentional to assure key strategies/tools and expectations that affect student success are addressed early in the work with LEAs. This approach continues in CCEE's direct technical assistance to IUSD, Vallejo, and other LEAs. It involves providing customized, targeted support to address complex problems of practice. However, as CCEE continues to scale up technical support to LEAs, we must further examine how to best foster collaboration and partnerships with stakeholders with urgency, especially in particular situations, to address specific needs impacting students and school communities, while still adapting to complex systems that vary among LEAs.

6.   The three-pronged approach to learning was effective for engaging LEAs in building capacity in continuous improvement. This approach involved networking in Summits, coaching and facilitation from Leads, and independent work to make progress focused on student achievement and equity. This was most effective for LEAs willing and able to participate fully in all three learning tactics. However, the emphasis on learning highlights a challenging feature of CI work: learning, and thus CI, requires extended periods of time and patience to allow for the change to take hold and become part of the everyday fabric of the LEA. This is just as true for students as it is for the

adults devoted to producing high quality education experiences for them. Students need time to adjust to new learning and strategies and be directly involved in understanding what works and what doesn't. CCEE has learned this lesson well while at the same time recognizing that when it comes to student progress and equity, time is of the essence and in order for minds to shift and learning to take hold. The end result is recognizing that CI work happens best when practiced with patience combined with a bias for action and within elements, such as those identified in the SIR, of systemic change.

In summary, CCEE's philosophy and strategies utilized in the Pilot Partnership to address complex and chronic challenges with LEAs did create a foundation for CCEE's direct technical assistance efforts. The Pilot Partnership demonstrated a high potential to assist LEAs to learn how to improve and to sustain improvement trajectories over time. In addition, the Pilot Partnership established a proof of concept that can serve as a model for how continuous improvement support is designed for LEAs in need of specially designed technical assistance throughout California.

IV. Appendix

Figure 1. Pilot teams' year-over-year growth related to CCEE theory of action—May 2018 – May 2019.
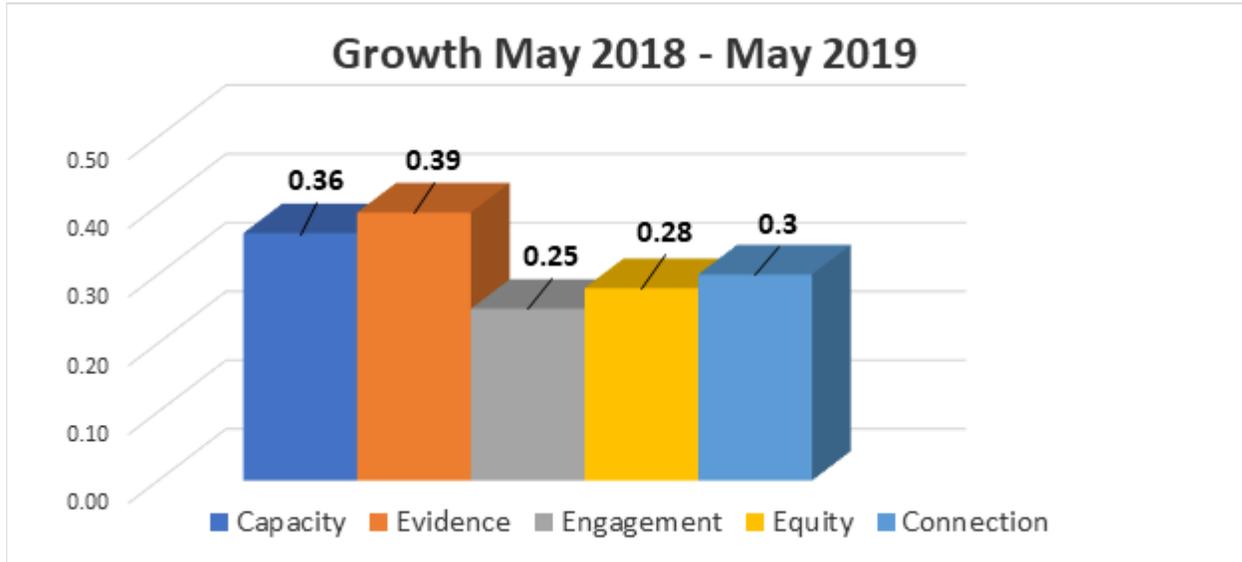

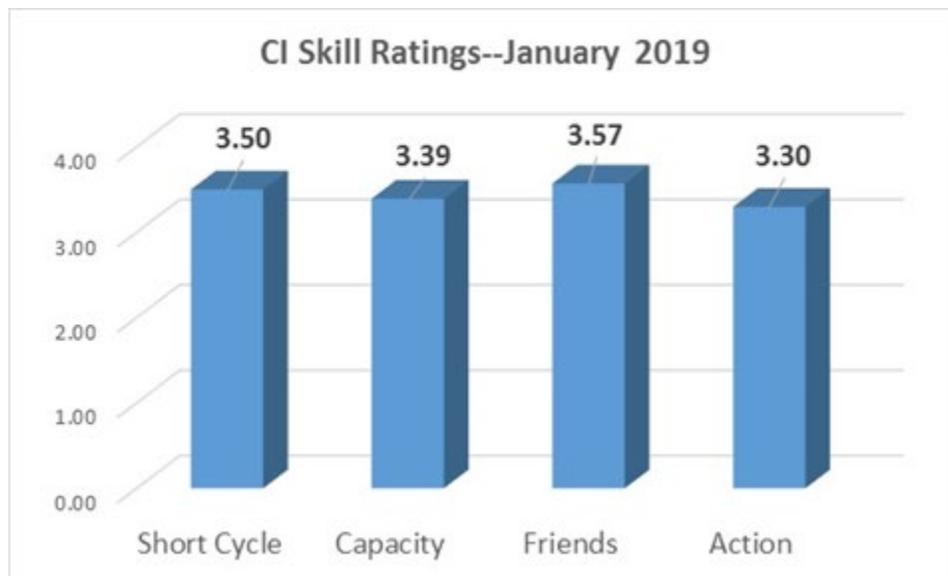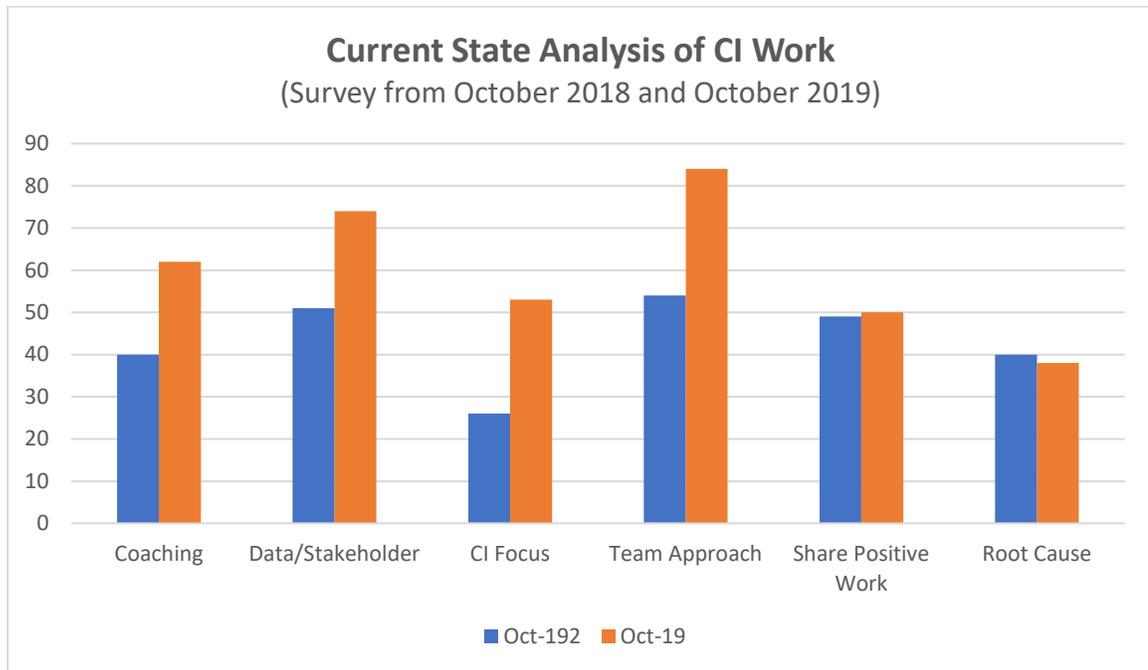*Figure 2.* Pilot team members' assessments of team skills.

Figure 3: Current state analysis of CI work participants' survey (reflects 80-100% likely agreement response; below reflects 6 of 15 questions total)

Current State Analysis of CI Work
(Survey from October 2018 and October 2019)

- Coaching: "We are good enough at coaching each other on our journey towards the targets."

- Data/Stakeholder: "We gather facts from multiple settings, data sets, and stakeholders to identify problems and the extent of these problems."

- CI Focus: "Where we work, everyone knows why we implement the improvements we do."

- Team Approach: "The way we work with improvements stimulates and anchors our collaboration."

- Share Positive Work: "We talk often about positive examples of improvements."

- Root Cause: We always identify the root cause of our problems."

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