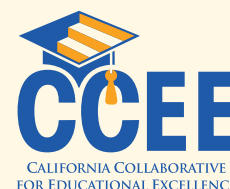
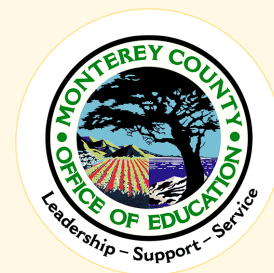


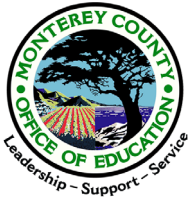
Improving Student Outcomes

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NETWORK REPORT

*Monterey County Office of Education PLNs
(North and South)*

Focus, Actions & Recommendations
2017-2019 Initiative





About Monterey County Office of Education

The Monterey County Office of Education provides the leadership, support and service excellence needed to prepare the diverse students of Monterey County for success in each step of their educational journey.



About the CCEE

The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) is a statewide agency designed to work with you to help deliver on California’s promise of a quality, equitable education for every student. We serve as strategic thought partners working alongside educators to build capacity, identify goals and needs, promote innovative thinking, and jointly solve problems. The CCEE offers a range of services including Professional Learning Networks (PLNs). The CCEE has supported 54 PLNs across California from 2017 to 2019.

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PLN Focus

Sponsored by the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), **the Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE) Professional Learning Networks (North and South)** were developed to provide local districts with resources and support in three main areas:

- 1. Increase student achievement**
- 2. Develop leadership skills**
- 3. Build a collaborative professional learning network**

Districts across Monterey County are wonderfully diverse in geographic landscape and structural makeup; from small, rural districts, to larger-sized urban districts, serving K-6th, K-8th, and 6-12th-grade spans.

As diverse as districts are, similar challenges also exist, such as closing the opportunity gap of historically underperforming students, meeting English learner needs, and best serving students of poverty.

Other **common challenges** include high student mobility, difficulty in teacher recruitment and retention, and limited time to collaborate around cycles of continuous improvement.

Administrators and site leaders were looking for an opportunity to **come together** to work through these challenges and **collaborate** with school teams and other district teams to **find solutions** that would ultimately lead to **increased student outcomes**. MCOE PLNs provided that rare opportunity for districts to have time to work on these challenges together.

One key to the success of MCOE PLNs was the diverse makeup of the network.

Each participant came to the table with the understanding that **everyone had an equal voice**, **all team members were leaders** in the direction of their PLN, and that they were all **mutually responsible** to share their work with their respective school sites/district office. The membership of our PLNs consisted of the following:

- 2 Assistant Superintendents of Educational Services
- 7 Directors and 1 Fiscal Director
- 6 Site Principals
- 1 Coordinator of English Learners
- 3 Teachers on Special Assignment
- 33 Teacher Leaders
- MCOE administrator support team: 3 education services administrators, 1 outside consultant, educational services content experts on an as-needed basis.

PLN Structure

Each PLN met monthly, in-person, with the full team (district and site administrators, TOSAs, Teacher Leaders, COE staff/facilitators) for an entire day (six hours) from August through June for two years. District and site administrators also met monthly for a three-hour debrief and planning session prior to each of the monthly meetings.

Collaborative, structured, and flexible agendas guided the PLN work. Each agenda was driven by the identified needs and discussions of the teams. MCOE facilitators provided agendas a minimum of one week prior to each meeting so that team members could anticipate the work ahead of them and collect any necessary information to help move the meeting forward.

Guiding questions were consistently asked by the facilitators to assist in pushing teams to meet their goals and outcomes.

Content was shared with teams that included a focus continuous improvement and implementation science along with adult learning theory. Academic content, tools and resources were also provided.

Fifty percent of each meeting was spent collaborating together on a locally identified **Problem of Practice (POP)**. Teams utilized Driver Diagrams and Action Planning templates to capture their work and message back to school and district stakeholders.

Shared leadership was the model for discussion and decision making as the teams progressed.

From the beginning, district leaders shared in the facilitation of the team discussions and as time went on, this facilitation was shared with both the site and teacher leaders.

- **District leaders** shared in the facilitation of team discussions, and throughout the year, this facilitation was passed onto the site administrators and teachers.
- **Principals** continued the team's work back at their school sites, often hosting their own PLN meetings at their site.
- **Teacher leaders** of the PLN eventually became the Leadership Team members of the school site, providing updates to their colleagues, answering questions, and "owning" the work of the PLN.

The work of each PLN became the focus of each district, with various PLNs presenting to their school boards, internal administrator meetings, as well as becoming a model for district-wide curriculum meetings.

Since collaboration was an important outcome for our leaders, each meeting began and ended with **opportunities to build connections** with members of the PLN, beginning with surface-level interactions that led to more in-depth, deeper discussions on how to address the challenges of each school through both student and adult perspectives.

Opportunities to share best practices, current actions and results were communicated at each meeting. All schools knew at a deep level what was happening at one another's schools. Advice and suggestions were provided by the district leaders and accepted by the MCOE facilitators on ways to move forward.

At the end of each three month cycle, **superintendents and cabinet level leaders were invited to hear about the progress of the PLN work from all sites.** Teacher leaders were heavily involved in these presentations and took full ownership of the content shared. Eventually most districts had the teams share with the school boards and community members the progress they had been making on their POP.

REFLECTIONS FROM MCOE PLN MEMBERS

"The push for formative assessments has made kids perform better. Within the PLN schools, student performance has become the primary driver of collaborative work."

HILDA HUERTA, VETERAN PRINCIPAL

"These meetings are the ones I look forward to and make sure I don't miss."

BEVERLEY EIDMANN, KING CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION

PLN Barriers and Challenges

Membership turnover was one common barrier all districts encountered which reflected the districts' experience of high teacher and administrator turnover. Because significant improvement was experienced by the PLN in year one, new schools were added in the second. New members were brought "up to speed" with current members sharing their work and experiences. Unfortunately, this did not seem to meet the needs of the new members who experienced frustration in seeing how experienced members were moving forward at a rapid pace in comparison to their own.

However, by January, the work seemed to come together for these new members and they began to work as a team and were able to join the process and discussions of the experienced teams. In the future, a specific on-boarding session for new members will need to be held.

The county office, having noted this challenge, will be **adjusting the level of support needed for on-boarding and supporting new members**. In addition to on-boarding, monthly meetings with the site principals will be held to check in with them to address any unmet needs they may have.

Support will be provided to districts wishing to replicate the work of PLN participating schools with their entire district.

REFLECTIONS FROM MCOE PLN MEMBERS

"Being a part of the PLN team has been very rewarding for me. Being so young and new to the field, I am now able to fully see myself as a teacher leader."

SOPHIA DAKIS, SECOND-YEAR TEACHER

Evidence of Impact

One measure of PLN success is connected to student outcomes.

CAASPP results show growth in the percentage of all students meeting or exceeding standards in both ELA and Math for all schools that participated in the PLN.

CAASPP RESULTS:

Percentage of All Students Meeting or Exceeding Standards

PLN PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS	ELA		MATH	
	2016-17	2018-19	2016-17	2018-19
BARDIN - ALISAL UNION	21.81%	28.69%	16.87%	19.94%
ROOSEVELT - SALINAS CITY	16.32%	34.01%	8.51%	26.29%
CHALONE PEAK - KING CITY UNION	26.72%	30.98%	11.81%	15.40%
ROSE FERRERO - SOLDEDAD UNIFIED	31.55%	37.41%	18.61%	29.12%

We know that each district and school had several other initiatives in place and the PLN is not the sole reason for growth, although team members will agree that the work of the PLN contributed to the growth in student outcomes.

As part of the measurement of impact, both PLNs participated in leadership surveys.

Areas surveyed included: **Problem of Practice and Use of Implementation Science; Use of Data and Evidence; Continuous Improvement Cycles; Differentiation and Equity; PLN Effectiveness.**

In all areas growth was noted.

In particular, questions around **POP and Implementation Science reached either 80% of the time or improvement over time of at least 10 percentage points.**

In all PLNs, the **Network Effectiveness reached the highest scores of close to 90% or above.**

Evidence of Impact *continued*

Some of the greatest successes as a result of this work have been:

- **Sharing of best practices** amongst the members
- **Growth in leadership skills, particularly those of the teachers.** As administrators come and go, teachers remain the constant. Having them help deliver the message can have a significant impact on district and site initiatives.
- **High interest in remaining in the network.** Most team members have seen the impact of this work and wish to remain in order to have dedicated time devoted to a specific POP and working with others to share in the work.
- At least **two districts are actively scaling up the work to include all schools.**
- With such a strong focus on students, **this work has been about real application of best practices and actions**, and not just theories and discussions.

However, there is still work to be done.

While survey reports and observations by the facilitators conclude that improvements have been made in ensuring equity for all students is being made, expanding the use of continuous improvement cycles across content areas have not yet been generalized.

Lessons Learned

BUILDING TEACHER LEADERS | As a result of our work and planning for the future, MCOE has found that those who are closest to the work drive the work. It has been the growth of the teacher leaders that has been most prominent. In addition to having shared the PLN work with their colleagues, they supported and crafted the message of the district on the urgency of this work; as these are our future site and district leaders. Having built their capacity to see themselves as leaders and developers of actions has been powerful.

ADULT CHOICE AND DIRECTION | As much as the facilitators wanted to move on and keep to a perceived timeline, we found that teams needed to guide the direction and focus in an authentic and organic way. Many times the request for more time was made before we realized that it was their timetable that was most important and should take priority in order for deeper learning to occur. Flexibility in the adjustment of the agenda was critical in order to meet the needs of the teams.

COLLABORATION IS KEY | Focusing on collaboration was essential. As the capacity of our teams increased, they began to want to share their knowledge and perspectives - from the first-year teachers to the highly experienced assistant superintendent. It has been through shared leadership, learning and growing with one another, that the COE facilitators learned invaluable lessons themselves. Providing teams the time to have in-depth discussions about what and why students are progressing (or not) needed to be held. As long as we kept the dialogue at a superficial level, we got superficial responses and never truly determined the root cause. Additional time allowed for those deep conversations to happen and conclusions drawn which led to improved actions and services.

GUIDING QUESTIONS | One other area that we found to be most helpful were the guiding questions. The questions helped teams get to the deeper issues. We believed that the time taken to develop strong questions, challenged teams to reflect on their work and allowed for quality dialogue. Our team of facilitators also had an opportunity to learn from one another, to ask deeper-level questions, to listen reflectively, and build a strong relationship with all PLN members.

EQUITY | As facilitators, we continued to ask how the systems are supporting ALL students, and returned to the idea that equity begins with having difficult, unrelenting, and often uncomfortable conversations. The MCOE PLN will adjust to provide an opportunity to look at deep systems and equity work, through the focus of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) next year. Teams need to think about how behavior and social-emotional learning supports with academic growth and the barriers that our systems may have inadvertently placed on students, especially our most high-risk students.

Recommendations for the Field

The MCOE PLN has recommendations for the field in the following six areas:



TIME | Time is a precious resource for our schools. Dedicated time to hold discussions and get work done is essential. The achievement gap didn't happen overnight, nor will solutions.



RELATIONSHIPS | Districts working side by side improve relationships and understanding of one another. District leaders need to experience the challenges of classroom teachers as they try to juggle all that is required of them.



CAPACITY AND CONFIDENCE | Building capacity and confidence of all leaders needs to be an outcome of PLNs. Continuous improvement is necessary, as is the leadership of all in order to have changes made.



EQUITY | Equity remains a challenge. We cannot be satisfied with 80% of students understanding instruction. We need to think outside the box, dig into root causes, check in with students who are struggling, focus on our systems of support. We need to help teachers understand that they can influence beyond their own classroom and be an invaluable resource to the larger system.



SHORTER CYCLES | Shorter cycles of continuous improvement. We often found that things had to be perfect for our team members before they were willing to move on. Three months is a long enough time to see impact. Often our teams would continue exactly the same for months on end and were hesitant to assess for growth. Perhaps a change in language to experiment or hypothesis might help move the work along.



COLLABORATION | Without collaboration of the PLN members, this network would not be viable. From the teacher leaders to the site and district administrators to MCOE facilitators, working together and sharing our successes and heartaches allowed us all to move the work forward.

REFLECTIONS FROM MCOE PLN MEMBERS

*"I have seen tremendous growth
with my students."*

AMANDA BASSETT, VETERAN TEACHER

*"Having taken advantage of dedicated
PLN time to focus on a site-driven Problem
of Practice, and through the growth of the
leadership skills of the principal and teacher
leaders, there has been a shift in the attitudes
and perspectives of site teachers."*

RANDY BANGS, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Resources Used in the PLN

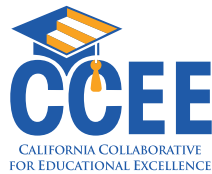
- **Collaborative Leadership** – Dewitt
- **Eight Essential Features of Effective Networks** – Fullan
- **Learning to Improve** – Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, LeMahieu
- **The Art of Coaching** – Aguilar
- **The Art of Coaching Teams** – Aguilar
- **Visible Learning** – Fisher, Frey, Hattie



901 Blanco Circle
Salinas, CA 93901-4455
831.755.0300

P.O. Box 80851
Salinas, CA 93912-0851
831.373.2955

montereycoe.org



915 L Street, Suite 1430
Sacramento, CA 95814
916.619.7494

CCEE Southern California Office
47110 Calhoun Street
Indio, CA 92201
916.619.7480

ccee-ca.org