COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

Part of the California Statewide System of Support

FINAL REPORT | JUNE 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HOW COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ADVANCES EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

In 2013, California transitioned to the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), a funding model designed to direct resources to student populations experiencing systemic barriers and inequitable outcomes, and to give districts flexibility in deciding how to spend funding to meet those students' needs. A key component of the LCFF is the development of a strategic plan to improve student outcomes, the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). The LCAP documents how districts are using their funds to address priorities created by local community members, with an emphasis on increasing and improving services to students identified as priority populations. Engaging educational partners is an essential part of the LCAP development and annual update process.

The Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) was established following the Budget Act of 2018 (A.B. 1808) after state leaders heard from communities and schools and realized that even though community members were invited to the table to create the LCAPs for each district, there was not a strong sense that all of the community voices were at the table, nor were all the conversations between districts and communities authentic and honest about problems and how to solve them.

The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) partnered with a consortium of three entities—one county office of education (COE), San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools, and two community-based organizations with expertise in community engagement, California Association for Bilingual Education and Families In Schools—as lead agency partners. Lead Agency Partners, in partnership with CCEE, were tasked with administering CEI to provide technical assistance and build the community engagement capacity of COEs and local education agencies (LEAs).

Key Insights and Achievements

The findings in this report originate from CEI's external evaluation partner (RTI International) and CEI's own data collection efforts throughout the 5 years of the initiative. RTI International compiled the data and authored this final report at the direction of CCEE.

Building Capacity and Trust Within Systems: CEI has equipped communities and schools to engage in productive dialogues, building trust that has led to more honest and effective collaboration. This initiative has directly contributed to creating environments where educational equity can flourish.

Quantifiable Improvements: Data collected through CEI's efforts reveal significant advancements. For example, Local Education Agencies (LEAs) engaged in CEI have shown a reduction in suspension rates, which were 0.1% lower than the state average in 2022. These LEAs also maintained stable graduation rates from 2019 to 2021, counteracting the statewide trend of declining graduation rates during the same period.

Institutionalizing Engagement: The changes driven by CEI are not temporary; they are becoming embedded within the operational norms of participating LEAs. For instance, 76% of teams involved in CEI have adopted new leadership programs for parents, aiming to deepen community ties and enhance decision-making processes at the local level.

Maintaining our Momentum

Expanding the reach of community engagement practices is essential for statewide impact. To support this expansion, further development of measurement tools and protocols are needed to quantify the effects of community engagement on student outcomes more accurately. Moreover, integrating continuous community feedback into the policy-making process will ensure that educational reforms remain aligned with the evolving needs of California's diverse student population.

CEI exemplifies California's commitment to creating an education system that values inclusivity and equity, and prepares the state to meet future educational challenges effectively. CEI sets a model for integrating community engagement into educational policy and practice by leveraging community insights and fostering collaborative partnerships.

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW OF CALIFORNIA'S EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

I n 2013, California transitioned to the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), a funding model designed to direct resources to student populations experiencing systemic barriers and inequitable outcomes and to give districts flexibility in deciding how to spend funding to meet those students' needs. This transition was an overhaul of the current school funding system - shifting funding decisions to local education agencies (LEAs) with a focus on equity and closing the opportunity gap for historically marginalized students. Because the needs of students experiencing inequalities in educational outcomes should drive funding decisions, all educational partners,[1] including students, families and community members, should be engaged to better understand and develop strategies responsive to students' learning needs and contexts. Under LCFF, the collaboration between all educational partners and LEA administrators is seen as essential for creating effective policies that aim to enhance the overall well-being and success of students. Not only would funding decisions be better informed, but engagement would improve partnerships between LEAs and families and communities.

A key component of LCFF is the development of a strategic plan to improve student outcomes, the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). The LCAP documents how districts are using their funds to address priorities created by local community members, with an emphasis on increasing and improving services to students identified as priority populations. Engaging educational partners is an essential part of the LCAP development and annual update process. LEAs must be able to demonstrate and document in the LCAP that they have "genuinely thought about the feedback received from educational partners and [are] acting on this feedback in a manner that best serves all students" (California Department of Education, N.D).

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[1] Educational partners as defined as teachers, principals, administrators, other school personnel, local bargaining units of the LEA, parents, students, members of governing boards, advisory committee members, and community members

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE INITIATIVE

The shift to more local control of and accountability for resources to meet student needs resulted in districts and schools needing different types of support from the State. The California Statewide System of Support (SSOS) was established to build local capacity to ensure that districts are equipped to develop, implement, and evaluate strategies to ensure that each student has the resources needed to succeed. The SSOS includes the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), State Board of Education, California Department of Education, county offices of education, and many other entities that serve as leads in particular areas.

The Community Engagement Initiative was established as part of the SSOS following the Budget Act of 2018 (A.B. 1808). This charge was born out of the State Board of Education, the Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the California Department of Education, advocacy groups, and legislators hearing from communities and schools and realizing that although community members were invited to the table to create the LCAPs for each district, there was not a strong sense that all of the community voices were at the table, nor were all the conversations between districts and communities authentic and honest about problems and how to solve them. Just as districts and schools needed to build their capacity to implement their LCAPs, they needed to build their capacity for authentic community engagement and collaboration.

These concerns were codified within A.B. 1808 when the California legislature declared that "Without capacity in California's public school system to conduct meaningful stakeholder engagement, especially as it relates to the local control and accountability plan development process, pupils' families, and communities may not be able to hold school districts accountable for decisions that affect pupil outcomes" (A.B. 1808, 2018).

The state engaged a consortium of three entities—one county office of education (San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools) and two community-based organizations with expertise in community engagement (California Association for Bilingual Education and Families In Schools)—as lead agency partners. Lead Agency Partners, in partnership with the CCEE, were tasked with administering the CEI to provide technical assistance and build the community engagement capacity of county offices of education and LEAs. Statute dictated that the lead agency was required, among many tasks, to develop and disseminate expertise in community

engagement, document outcomes of activities, develop resources that are broadly applicable and actionable statewide, and in general be a resource to LEAs and community interest holders.

A.B. 1808 appropriated $13,274,000 through June of 2024 to establish the initiative and convene professional learning networks to improve local pupil outcomes and community engagement.

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE REPORT

In accordance with A.B. 1808, "by June 30, 2024, the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence and the lead agency selected pursuant to subdivision (c) shall submit a report to the executive director of the State Board of Education, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the executive director of the California Collaborative of Educational Excellence, the superintendent of each of the lead agencies identified pursuant to Section 52073 of the Education Code, and the chairpersons of each of the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the Legislature. The report shall include all of the following:

1. A description of best practices for improving community engagement identified by the professional learning networks established under the Community Engagement Initiative, and any changes in the understanding of best practices throughout the duration of the program.

2. Using the metrics identified pursuant to paragraph (3) of subdivision (f) and additional metrics developed by subsequent professional learning networks, an analysis of the impact of the work done by each team through the professional learning networks on their home communities and school districts.

3. Feedback to improve the community engagement professional learning network protocol and metrics, and additional activities or resources that would assist in continued development of capacity within LEAs and local communities for conducting meaningful stakeholder engagement" (A.B. 1808, 2018).

This report aims to address the above requirements and provide a detailed narrative of the first iteration of the CEI implemented from 2019-2024, or CEI 1.0. Table 1 is a crosswalk of the required content and the sections presented in this report.

Table 1. Crosswalk Between Report Contents and Stature Requirements

Statute	Report Section
A description of best practices for improving community engagement	**3.** Promising Practices in Community Engagement
Any changes in understanding of best practices throughout the duration of the program	**3.** Promising Practices in Community Engagement
An analysis of the impact of the work done by each team through the professional learning networks	**4.** Impact Analysis of the CEI
Feedback to improve the community engagement professional learning network protocol and metrics	**5.** Feedback and Improvement Suggestions for the initiative

In addition to the above requirements, the insights and feedback from CEI 1.0 can be used to inform the planning, implementation and evaluation framework of the new iteration of the CEI that began in 2023 and continues through 2029, also called CEI 2.0.

In 2019, RTI International was selected through a request for applications (RFA) process as the external evaluator of the initiative. Between 2019 and 2023, they collected and analyzed data related to the implementation of the initiative. The information included in this report originates from RTI's external evaluation and CEI's own data collection efforts throughout the 5 years of the initiative. RTI compiled and provided data and authored the majority of this final report. Methods and data sources are detailed in Appendix A.

THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE INITIATIVE

In establishing CEI, A.B. 1808 outlined four goals:

1. **Build capacity in communities and districts to have difficult conversations with each other and build trust, with a focus on improving outcomes for pupils.**

2. **Identify effective models of community engagement and metrics to evaluate those models.**

3. **Develop effective peer-to-peer partnerships between districts and COEs, utilizing CCEE's professional learning networks structure, to deepen community engagement.**

4. **Scale up this work to improve community engagement statewide and incorporate policies and practices that prove effective toward district and COE continuous improvement efforts.**

CCEE had employed the professional learning network (PLN) structure for numerous equity-focused continuous improvement initiatives across the state. The PLN structure convenes educational leaders focused on a specific student population or instructional approach to enhance their capacity to implement and scale research-based practices in their LEA through network collaboration. CEI was to use a similar approach to deepen community engagement practices across the state by convening three subsequent cohorts of LEA teams. Because of the focus on scaling, the agencies selected to lead CEI reimagined the PLN structure as a **peer leading and learning network (PLLN)** to grow participants' capacity to lead the transformation of community engagement efforts in their home district.

CEI COHORTS

Over the past 5 years, CEI convened **three cohorts of LEA teams for a total of 40 teams**. Per statute requirements, each LEA team was required to:

- Consist of district and school staff, families, community partners, and county office staff **affiliated with a single school district**

- Participate and cofacilitate **for at least 3 years**.

Cohort I was to include four to six geographically diverse LEA teams with the expectation that they would serve as lead facilitators as the CEI grew year after year. Selection of Cohort I teams was an in-depth systematic process requiring interviews, site visits, and review of LCAPs. Applications were vetted using a pre-determined criteria in order to select districts with expertise and commitment to authentic community engagement that could also serve as co-facilitators of the PLLN.

In the 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 fiscal years, the CEI was to grow with a second cohort of LEA teams and then a third cohort of LEA teams for the 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 fiscal years. Cohort II districts were selected using a similar process and criteria. Table 2 shows the growth of the initiative over the 5-year period and Figure 2 highlights the range of locations of teams who are currently participating in the initiative. One LEA team from each Cohort left the CEI before the required 3 years due to different reasons, and many LEA teams from Cohort I and II continued to participate beyond this requirement. Per statute, members from the LEA team were required to continue participation as cofacilitators. Green indicates participation as learners, and yellow indicates participation as facilitators.

Table 2. Initiative Growth Over 5 Years

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Cohort I	6 LEA teams	5 LEA teams	5 LEA teams	4 LEA teams	3 LEA teams
Cohort II		12 LEA teams	11 LEA teams	11 LEA teams	9 LEA teams
Cohort III				22 LEA teams	21 LEA teams

LEA Team Composition

Figure 2.

Teams vary in size, with some teams as small as **five or six members and other teams with more than 20 members**. This is because some teams had only one representative for each required role (e.g., parent, student, teacher, community partner, COE leader, school leader) while other teams had multiple members representing the same role. For example, an LEA team may have had multiple parents, students, community partners, and district leaders on their team. School and district staff members represented various roles at their LEA, including community or family liaisons; school board members; coordinators, managers, and directors of various programs, such as family and community engagement (FACE), English learner programs, bilingual community services, student services, secondary education, family education, mental health, and wellness; teachers; counselors; librarians; and district superintendents or assistant superintendents. Half of Cohort II and III teams and a few Cohort I teams were able to recruit students to participate at varying rates throughout the LEA teams' CEI tenure.
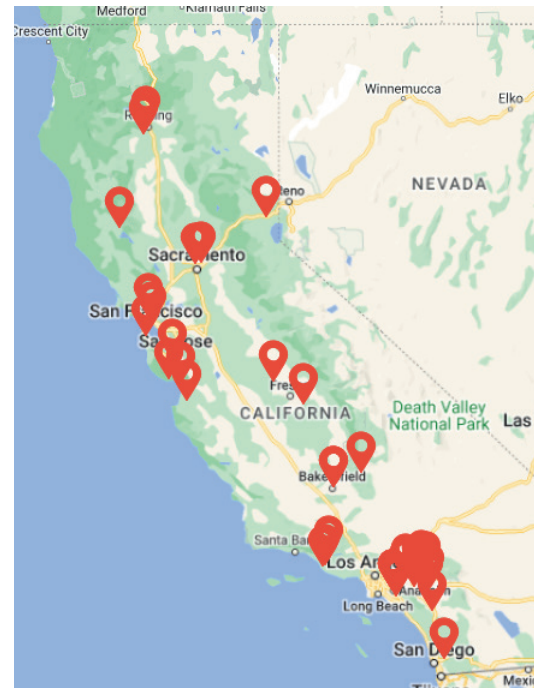
PLLN Meeting Structure

To achieve the goals of the CEI, the cohort of LEA teams come together in a series of PLLN meetings convened both virtually and in-person, except during the 2020–2021 school year when all meetings were held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Four to eight PLLN meetings were held each year

- All the LEA teams within a cohort would convene. As the number of LEA teams increased in Cohort II and III, the cohorts would be divided into subgroups for ease of facilitation and connection.

- Meeting length would vary depending on location and format (e.g. few hours to 2-day in-person meetings)

During these PLLN meetings, participants engaged in several activities to share and learn from one another about promising community engagement practices.

- PLLN meetings always began with a *conocimiento* and ended with *la ultima palabra*. Centered in Dr. Roberto Vargas' Community Learning Theory (Vargas, 2008), the *conocimiento* is distinct from an icebreaker in that it asks participants to engage in deep reflection directly tied to the work of the meeting. *La ultima palabra* is an opportunity for participants to engage in reflection—to share what resonated with them and what they were taking away with them. These activities ensured that the opening and closing of the meetings had reflective and trust-building components.

- LEAs gave presentations to their cohort to share practices each LEA contributed to the network. LEA teams convened in small groups after these presentations to discuss how they could apply these practices to their LEA context.

- Teams' second year in the initiative focused on identifying and working on a problem of practice utilizing improvement science and methodologies. LEA teams received support from their peers to refine and identify promising solutions to their problem of practice.

- LEA teams had opportunities to learn from keynote and expert speakers

- PLLN meetings also provided specific opportunities for idea exchange and relationship building across districts. Participants met in "role-alike" groups to meet with their counterparts from other districts. For example, family and community liaisons from all participating districts would meet in small groups to talk about issues or challenges at their sites, make sense of the content they were learning, and build relationships. Such interactions facilitated the exchange of ideas and enhanced the professional network of participants by connecting them with a broader range of perspectives and experiences.

PROMISING PRACTICES IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This section describes the promising community engagement practices implemented by LEAs participating in the CEI. First, we detail how CEI defines community engagement and the research-based framework for identifying whether a practice is promising. Next, we describe practices districts have implemented since joining the CEI and do a deeper dive into five LEAs.

CEI'S DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In the first year of the initiative, the CEI lead agencies, CEI advisory committee, and Cohort I participants collectively developed a definition of community engagement that recognized the transformative power of equitable relationships between students, families, communities, and districts on students and their outcomes:

Community Engagement is authentic partnerships amongst students, families, districts, and communities that nurture relationships, build trust, ensure cultural, racial, and linguistic equity, and lead to transformative student outcomes.

IMPLEMENTATION OF PROMISING PRACTICES

At PLLN meetings, teams were introduced to the promising practices of their peers within the initiative, with the goal of adapting those practices to the unique contexts of their own communities. The following section includes the promising practices implemented by participating LEAs, including the research and highlights of implementation.

A Research-Based Framework for Promising Practices

Promising practices for improving community engagement in district systems are ones that address the core root causes or challenges that inhibit effective and equitable partnerships between school systems, families, and community partners (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). They establish the conditions that allow systems to effectively build the capacity of site, district and county office staff, family, and community partners to work together to support students' success (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). These components are interrelated and build on one another to create an effective system of community engagement.

1. **Building trusting relationships between schools and families with a focus on equity:** Trusting relationships are the cornerstone of successful partnerships that are tied to student success (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Sheldon & Jung, 2015). These are critical, especially in schools or systems that have not or do not prioritize relationships with non-dominant families. These families may not feel welcome in school systems and believe that schools do not genuinely care or respect families (Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005). Directing efforts toward families that have not been prioritized to demonstrate care and respect can be the first step to repairing or building trusting relationships. Efforts to establish these trusting relationships can be described as promising practices.

2. **Culturally responsive and high-quality engagement strategies that value students', families', and communities' assets and leverage them as experts.** Non-dominant families have not always been seen to possess the capacity or knowledge to partner with schools as experts in their students' learning (Olivos, 2006), despite having high academic expectations for their children and desiring more opportunities to communicate with schools (Quiocho & Daoud, 2006). Efforts to engage those families have often fallen short because staff lack the knowledge, mindsets, interpersonal skills, or tools to engage families and communities in high-quality culturally and linguistically inclusive ways (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Building staff members' capacity to engage in culturally responsive ways and implementing programs so families and students can confidently act as partners are promising practices.

3. **Community engagement is systemically embedded in districts and is a key strategy to affect student learning.** Historically, family engagement efforts have been implemented as "random acts of family involvement" (Weiss, Lopez & Rosenberg, 2010) and not as an integral approach to supporting student

learning. System leaders need to view Family and Community Engagement as a core strategy for improving student outcomes, link activities to student learning, and ensure it is embedded at the system level by prioritizing resources for these activities (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Creating or enhancing systems or structures for FACE, such as hiring staff or building data or communication systems infrastructure, are promising practices.

CEI 1.0 leads' use of a variety of frameworks to undergird 1.0 **led to the creation of a continuous improvement framework called Community Partnerships for Systems Change**. This framework will anchor CEI 2.0 and incorporates the steps to authentically engage families, communities, and students in educational decision making to transform systems for equitable outcomes. Promising practices surfaced during 1.0 have also led to the creation of a variety of learning modules to support the scaling of promising practices across the state.

District Promising Practices Implemented Since Participating

Since joining the CEI, districts have embraced several innovative strategies to enhance community engagement. **Many districts have focused on building trusting relationships within their communities, emphasizing equity and inclusion** (Practice 1). Remarkably, 76% of districts are actively working on trust-building initiatives, while 69% are celebrating and valuing the diverse cultural assets of their families (Figure 3). Additionally, 83% of districts have hired new staff to **strengthen their community engagement efforts** (Practice 3) and are offering professional development to increase cultural responsiveness (Practice 2)[2]. Furthermore, 76% of districts are introducing **new training programs for their staff and leadership opportunities for parents** (Figure 3). These efforts highlight a comprehensive approach to fostering meaningful connections and leveraging the strengths of diverse families.

Figure 3. Strategies Implemented by Most CEI Districts (n=29)

83% Hired new family and community engagement staff at our district.

76% Implemented activities to build trusting relationships with parents, guardians, families, and other community members.

76% Implemented new leadership programs to build parents' capacity.

76% Implemented new professional development for staff related to FACE.

69% Implemented new strategies that value the multicultural assets of diverse families.

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[2] These data were collected from the 2022 end-of-year survey for Cohorts I and II, and a survey administered in January 2024 to Cohorts II and III. The aim of the separate 2024 survey was to capture perspectives from Cohort II and III district leads who had not previously provided this data or who wanted to provide updated data. For more information, see Appendix A.

Two-thirds of districts are also implementing strategies to leverage parents as experts by introducing parent leadership programs and improving how they collect parent input on the LCAP (Table 3). Additionally, two-thirds of districts are strengthening community partnerships to better meet the needs of their students (Table 3). These efforts demonstrate a commitment to valuing parent expertise and enhancing community collaboration.

Table 3. Strategies Implemented by CEI Districts

Strategy	Percentage of CEI districts (n=29)
Building trusting relationships between schools and families with a focus on equity	
Implemented activities to build trusting relationships with parents, guardians, families, and other community members.	76%
Implemented new strategies that value the multicultural assets of diverse families.	69%
Culturally responsive and high-quality engagement strategies that value students, families and communities assets' and to leverage them as experts.	
Implemented new professional development for staff related to family and community engagement.	83%
Implemented new leadership programs to build capacity of parents.	76%
Implemented more strategies to collect parent input on the LCAP.	66%
Improved our culturally inclusive approach to the LCAP tools and processes to engage families and students.	62%
Implemented more strategies to collect student input on the LCAP.	55%
Implemented new leadership programs to build capacity of students.	52%
Community engagement is systemically embedded in districts and is a key strategy to affect student learning.	
Hired new family and community engagement staff at our district.	76%
Formed new relationships with community partners to meet the needs of the students in my district.	69%
Formed new relationships with community partners to meet the needs of the families in my district.	59%
Other	28%

Cohort II district leader:

"I actually really appreciate being able to hear all of the best practices. I think the sharing of best practices for authentic engagement is a huge lesson that I am learning here. And I appreciated that everyone shared not just the things that are working well... they also exposed their vulnerable points...it made us all realize that we are on the same boat. And we are not going to be able to solve everything, but we're looking at things. What are the things that we can solve? So that was a huge piece for me, having all of these other districts that I can go to. That networking is incredibly helpful."

Below, we provide some examples of the new practices districts implemented as a result of their participation in the CEI. Practices were chosen to demonstrate the variety of approaches used by districts.

Practice 1: Building trusting relationships between schools and families with a focus on equity

- Most participating districts across all cohorts have shared various examples of how they are building trusting relationships between schools and families. They achieve this by **valuing their families' cultural and linguistic assets, which helps increase a sense of belonging. By fostering connections between staff members, communities, and families, districts are creating more inclusive and supportive school environments.**

> **Strategies to build trusting relationships with families with a focus on equity**
>
> - District-wide or school-based celebrations celebrating cultural holidays
> - Building bridges with families through racial, cultural, or linguistically specific activities
> - Parent committees for specific racial or ethnic groups

- A few districts have expanded their **district-wide or school-based cultural celebrations to cultures not widely represented in their districts**. For example, one district celebrated Kwanzaa and Juneteenth during the school year. District leaders explained that by intentionally celebrating the cultural assets of families, they are strengthening the necessary conditions, such as trust and relationships, that lead to improved partnerships between families and schools. Another district wanted to improve the community's sense of safety and connectedness after the COVID-19 pandemic and implemented similar multicultural events at their district so families could start to rebuild their relationships with one another and the school district.

- Many districts are also focusing on **creating racial, cultural, or linguistically specific activities to build bridges and foster deeper connections**. For example, one district, with the support of a community partner organization on the CEI team, **has zeroed in on the unique experiences and needs of their immigrant farmworker families**. Many of these families, lacking legal documentation, often feel vulnerable and fearful of government representatives, including school officials. Listening to their concerns, the district allocated funds through their LCAP to establish a community resource and learning center. They also

collaborated with embassies from the families' home countries to help them access necessary documentation and support.

- Another district has taken significant steps to welcome **African American families**. They started a practice of inviting incoming African American pre-K and kindergarten parents to meet family and community engagement (FACE) staff and other school members at the beginning of the school year. Parents participated in a fun scavenger hunt tour, where they were introduced to front office staff, intervention personnel, and other supportive adults. This initiative aimed to make African American parents feel at home on the school campus from day one.

- A third district has focused on **Mixteco-speaking families**. Previously, communication with these families was sporadic. Now, the district has embedded communication into their systems to ensure inclusivity. Mixteco, being a spoken rather than a written language, required the district to adapt by sending voicemails and creating Mixteco videos for their website. This consistent and culturally responsive approach ensures that Mixteco-speaking families are informed and included in the community.

- Other **districts created parent committees focused on specific racial or ethnic groups at their district to improve relationships with parents**. They have used these committees as forums for parents to share their concerns and ideas to improve their district. For example, in one district, parents have shared that they wanted the curriculum and teaching to be more diverse and culturally responsive. This district used that feedback to purchase multicultural literature or libraries for each classroom teacher in the district and hired a consultant to work with teachers on culturally proficient teaching and learning. Another district **established African American advisory groups at school sites**. A principal at one school explained, "We've included them when we have gone over our school plan so that they're aware that the way we do things is that we have this big plan, but then there's monies tied to it, and it's through certain goals that we have for our school, and that we do target our African American students … it goes along with what our school site council has talked about, so that we're making sure to get input on the business side of the school."

Cohort I parent: *"Having something like this committee put together is telling the parents that [the district staff] care because they may not exactly know where to start or what to do. And that's why they're really trying to engage the parents to give our feedback and have a voice and help them determine what it is that is needed."*

Practice 2: Culturally responsive and high-quality engagement strategies that value students', families', and communities' assets and leverage them as experts.

Participating districts are also focused on **building the capacity of parents and leveraging them as experts**.

Districts are expanding their parent leadership programs to be more inclusive and impactful. One district has long offered the California Association for Bilingual Education's (CABE) Project2Inspire program to Spanish-speaking parents, enhancing their ability to support student learning. To reach all families, they recently introduced the program in English as well. Another district organized an all-day parent leadership summit, attracting 200 parents.

> **Strategies to implement culturally responsive approaches to leverage assets**
> - Broadening parent leadership programs
> - Increasing parent and student voices in the LCAP process
> - Implementing professional development for LEA staff on cultural awareness, implicit bias, and/or effective community engagement

Parents from two CEI district teams shared how participating in these programs has transformed them. One parent remarked that she used to see herself as just an individual parent, but now views herself as part of the entire school community, eager to positively impact all families, not just her own. These initiatives are empowering parents and fostering a sense of community and collaboration.

Districts are also **strongly focused on increasing parent and student voice in their LCAP process**. More than half of all districts indicated that they have implemented at least one practice focused on this. One district began implementing new LCAP trainings for parents so they have the background and understanding of the process to engage authentically. Another district is using multiple modes of data collected by staff who are assigned to gather student input for inclusion in the LCAP.

To provide effective and culturally responsive strategies, **districts are implementing professional development for their staff**. For example, districts have begun to embed training around implicit bias to change how staff view their families or institute district-wide **cultural awareness** training. Other districts are providing professional training for teachers and other staff on family engagement. For

example, multiple districts are increasing staff members' understanding of the Dual Capacity-Building Framework to ensure parent liaisons build the process conditions that lead to successful family-school partnerships. Another district hosts a FACE department session for all teachers through its professional development institute. An instructional specialist for the FACE department explained:

> *"We want to explain that everybody should be doing FACE on campuses! Many teachers are intimidated to reach out to parents, and parents are intimidated to come see teachers. We need to bridge that gap so both can have authentic relationships, knowing we're all here to help their students."*

Practice 3: Community engagement is systemically embedded in districts and is a key strategy to affect student learning.

District **hiring shows how districts are systemically embedding community engagement**. Districts are hiring for roles related to community engagement (e.g., FACE Coordinator, District Translator, Restorative Practices Counselor):

- One district created **a new FACE department and the new role of director**. This director is building out the department and will hire new staff. The new department was the direct result of participation in CEI. This district leader said, "I'm sure with input from what we were learning from CEI at the time, this led our district to create this new department, family, and community engagement and thus the role of director."

- Another district has started contracting with a local nonprofit that supports Native leaders in delivering workshops, seminars, and consulting to other organizations. This group will begin coming to a middle school twice a month and a high school once a month to run "student circles" that will deliver cultural curriculum. A district leader explained, "So it's no longer a volunteer, it's a paid position that is budgeted for that we know that is going to happen ... there is value added, that people are going to bring cultural curriculum."

Districts are improving their systems to be more effective and responsive. They are **enhancing their data monitoring practices to better meet families' needs and evaluate the effectiveness of their strategies**. For example, one district is creating a needs and asset assessment to prioritize areas, improving their LCAP process and community school expansion. Another district has developed new tools to track family interactions and address their needs. Improved communication systems ensure families receive messages and can easily interact with school staff.

Districts reported either broadening their community partnerships or strengthening the depth of their partnerships to meet students' and families' needs. For example, one of the districts is focusing their efforts to ensure that their partnerships are intentional and diverse in meeting the needs of families and students, and that they are **intentionally giving space for their voice and expertise by including them as part of multiple committees**. Another district is partnering with more community-based organizations to provide services for families at parent education centers located at multiple sites, not just at the main parent education center. One district has opened a new facility for families that includes laundry machines. This district is beginning to partner with community groups to bring

barbers to the facility regularly for families to access, and they hope to also bring neighborhood health services. A community partner who has advised on the facility noted, "[the] district has taken upon themselves to create a space for families where they have translators, interpreters that are addressing their needs to this community. And not only the needs but being very intentional as far as respecting the culture."

As a final example of deepening community partnerships to better meet student and family needs, a community partner from the Boys and Girls Club who participates on the district CEI team explained:

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF AMERICA

"The Boys and Girls Club started receiving a large amount of donations, basically pallets twice a week from Dollar General. And instead of us just sharing it with our community, what we're doing is we're taking the donations, taking it to the school sites, giving it to our FACE liaisons, and they are sharing it with the families. We are in constant communication. We're a text away from just communication all over."

CASE STUDIES OF PROMISING PRACTICE IMPLEMENTATION

Below are detailed descriptions of five LEAs journeys in CEI and how they have implemented numerous practices to improve family and community relationships. These case studies from all three cohorts were selected to represent a range of practices implemented in the CEI.

Anaheim Union High School District: Empowering Families and Partners through Equitable Practices and Strong Relationships

Anaheim Union High School District began their journey in the CEI in Cohort I and has continued their participation through Year 5 of the initiative. AUHSD serves five cities in Orange County (Anaheim, Buena Park, Cypress, La Palma, and Stanton) and serves 21 schools – 8 Junior High Schools, 9 Comprehensive High Schools, 2 Alternative Schools, 1 Continuation High School, and 1 Special Education School. The district represents a mix of cultures and backgrounds. About 20% of the students are English learners, and 80% are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

Implementation of Promising Practices

Before the CEI, Anaheim had strong FACE programming. Programs and strategies included the implementation of Community Schools in two high schools, a Parent Leadership Academy, Parent Learning Walks, and strong community partnerships to support college and career readiness. During their time in the CEI, they focused on developing new systems across the district to ensure equitable engagement of families and students and ensuring that engagement is culturally responsive.

Building trusting relationships between schools and families with a focus on equity.

Anaheim's problem of practice in the first couple of years of the CEI was "Strengthen districts systems, to engage disengaged families, to address non-academic needs." Anaheim enhanced their relationships with community partners, allowing

> **New practices implemented by Anaheim UHSD**
>
> - Serving more families through expanded community partnerships.
> - Ensuring families, students, and community partners are included when making educational decisions.
> - Strengthening data systems to track family engagement to link to student learning.
> - Building staff capacity to use culturally responsive family engagement strategies and view students and families as experts.

Anaheim **to serve a larger number of families during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially ones they had not served before**. A FACE staff team member said, "I work with a lot of our McKinney-Vinto population, but I have come across families that I wasn't aware of before, and now we've made that connection, to where now they're on my radar and, when I have them on my radar, then I make sure that the rest of my school site team, whether it's the counselors or admin, knows about the family and their struggles with the teachers or know their name and their story as well."

Culturally responsive and high-quality engagement strategies that value students', families', and communities' assets and leverage them as experts.

Anaheim is taking a systemic approach across their district to ensure they are **leveraging the expertise of multiple educational partners in educational decisions**, including parents, community partners, and students.

> *A district leader said: "Really anytime we meet or we're discussing something and we're sharing, the goal is to have students present, families present, community partners present, educators present, both certificated and classified, and then management level present from the district and from the site."*

This approach impacted their LCAP meetings, site level hiring, and their work expanding Community Schools across their district, such as the district-wide Community Schools District Steering committee and site-based committee.

One of Anaheim's FACE staff mentioned how they are intentionally creating authentic spaces for parents and student to share their expertise:

> *And then just being very cognizant that our parents and our students are the experts. They're the ones that are directly impacted...And so having them in the room, being a part of the meeting, not being talked to in a meeting is something that I think that has been a huge change for us. Not that it didn't happen before, but I think the key word for us is intentionally...*

One FACE staff member said, "When we started this work, there was this feeling or sentiment that [community partners] are seen but not heard. And so making sure

that in our teams, they also have that equal voice. They also aren't there just to provide services."

To ensure parents and students have equity of voice in these meetings and that parents and students participate as equals, **they have interpreters at every meeting and engage parents in active conversations to gather input**, instead of solely relying on surveys. They recognize that surveys are not culturally responsive and often have hard-to-understand questions.

Anaheim also provided training for staff and partners to ensure that all staff members used Engagement strategies, even if they did not specifically serve in a specific FACE role. For example, Anaheim provides capacity building to teachers to help them understand that community engagement is a "systemic approach" and see the work as part of their job. They also reached out to school secretaries, so they know how to build trusting relationships with families when they enter the school. As part of the district's rollout of the Community Schools approach, it developed a scope and sequence outlining various activities throughout the year and staff members involved in those activities. Through their ability to deepen their engagement efforts in the CEI, they report being able to expand their approach of "families as experts."

Community engagement is systemically embedded in districts and is a key strategy to impact student learning.

Anaheim is implementing numerous strategies to strengthen the systemic approach to community engagement. For example, they have expanded community partnerships to address their students' strengths and needs. Additionally, they are building staff capacity to incorporate student "Street Data", which helps increase engagement, amplify student voices, and enhance their Community Schools initiatives.

Anaheim is also developing **an asset and needs assessment** to better understand what areas to prioritize which will improve not only services and programming that school sites offer, but their LCAP process, supporting their expansion of community schools. The district has also been working for a **couple years to devise a system that will allow the district to track parent participation at various events and link to student achievement**. Each family has a family engagement identification number that has a unique identifier that is linked to the student information system. Whenever families attend a school event, they scan their card or provide staff with their telephone number and that data is uploaded to the student information system.

A FACE staff member explained, "I would say that one thing that CEI helped us with as far as our FACE team was speaking with other districts as far as how they capture their data and how they utilize their FACE data. And I think something that we've recently transitioned to is a new program to be able to track the family involvement and how that's affecting student outcomes. So, I would say that CEI was definitely a big influencer in that regard."

Current journey

Anaheim is continuing to build out their district systems for community partnerships as the Community Schools model expands.

Cajon Valley Union School District: Success in Fostering Meaningful Community Partnership

Cajon Valley Union School District began their journey in the CEI in Cohort I and has continued their participation through Year 5 of the initiative. CVUSD is located just east of San Diego, in the city of El Cajon. Originally a K through 8 district, CVUSD now supports 30 schools and more than 16,000 students from pre-K through 12. Their district is highly diverse, with families representing a variety of ethnicities and languages, including English, Spanish, Arabic, Chaldean, Farsi, and Pashto. Approximately 33% of students are English learners, and 10% of families are newcomers to the United States, having been in the country for less than three years. For over 20 years, El Cajon has been a resettlement area for families from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria, many of whom are refugees.

Implementation of Promising Practices

Before the CEI, CVUSD implemented many effective research-aligned FACE strategies such as parent-teacher home visits, academic parent-teacher teams, Poverty Simulation activities, and an established FACE office where district leaders coordinated various engagement activities throughout the district.

Building trusting relationships between schools and families with a focus on equity.

Despite establishing trusting relationships with many families, CVUSD community engagement leaders noticed there were still families that did not have or had very weak connections with staff at their students' school. For the first couple of years in the CEI, the team focused on increasing those connections with families by conducting focus groups with these families to understand their perspectives on the district. In particular, staff noticed how their department had focused on engaging families who immigrated from the Middle East and how they now needed to focus on their Black parents.

Culturally responsive and high-quality engagement strategies are those that value students', families', and communities' assets and leverage them as experts. One of the main ways that CVUSD leverages students, families, and communities as experts is by overhauling their committee meetings where parents and students are asked to participate on school or district-wide decisions. Three new practices have been implemented:

- First, CVUSD made LCAP meetings more inclusive.

  - They included students in the LCAP process, which they had not done before. One FACE staff member explained, "I feel like it was the very first meeting where every district was presenting who they were, and one of the high school districts … they had high school students there and they were talking about getting to the LCAP meetings. And I remember us looking at each other like, oh my gosh, you have to be [in] high school to do this. And now we have for elementary and middle, we don't have high school kids but our elementary and middle school kids, it's phenomenal what their voice has contributed, not just the LCAP, but anything we ask them. They've got very thoughtful suggestions or ideas about their education. And that came directly out of that aha moment, I remember that so clearly, of having the student voice."

  - They also held pre-meetings for parents so that parents are informed of the details of the LCAP meeting. A staff member explained, "It's one thing to have a parent sitting in the room, it's another thing to explain what it is they're sitting through and giving them a level of understanding so they can have a voice."

- In addition to making these meetings more inclusive, they are broadening the agenda to move away from the formal decision-making agenda to provide an open space to engage parents. The open space discussion occurs at the LCAP pre-meetings, the English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) meetings, and District English Learner Advisory Committee meetings. One Cajon Valley parent liaison said, "[We're] not just giving information and going with the agenda, but also give the opportunity to actually hear from them and see what are their concerns and needs." For example, they give 20 to 30 minutes at these meetings to hear parents' concerns by asking, "What's really on your mind? What's bugging you today?" This district is noting the number of parents in attendance at these meetings as evidence of inclusive engagement.

- Finally, they used their family liaisons at every site that run the English Language Advisory Committee (ELAC) to conduct relational activities. The district leader explained, "The staff from the FACE department plan their agenda with [ELAC leader], give them the relational activities they can do to build relationships with parents, such as learning walks with their parents…we make sure that that's a part. Before, the meetings were very compliance oriented, but now these meetings have a relational component."

CVUSD is also **expanding their poverty simulation** activity that helps school and district staff gain empathy for families facing poverty. This activity supports more-empathic and non-judgmental responses to families. Before, the CEI CVUSD used to implement the simulation as a stand-alone activity. But now educators, staff, and families have multiple experiences related to the poverty simulation to deepen their understanding of what families are facing and have more intentional application of the learning. The FACE director explained, "It starts with the poverty simulation, then it goes to the debrief, and then we have a leadership team meeting with the site to continue the conversation. ... It used to be wasted by just leaving it." Now, staff are thinking more deeply about the structural factors that are related to economic insecurity. The director explained, **"I think CEI, in all their work and all our conversations with all the people we have, has pushed us to make this a really thoughtful experience."**

Community engagement is systemically embedded in districts and is a key strategy to affect student learning.

CVUSD is implementing a number of practices and policies to expand and embed effective community engagement at their district.

CVUSD had a FACE department before starting the CEI, but since the CEI, they have grown their staff. They have **increased the number of parent liaisons** in the past few years to meet the specific linguistic and cultural needs of families. For example, they hired two new liaisons specifically who speak Farsi and Pashto to serve their Afghani families. They also moved the **funding of liaisons from grant funding to district funding**, demonstrating the district's commitment to institutionalizing these positions.

They are also building school leaders' capacity to develop a problem of practice based on the Gallup Parent Survey data and engage parents and students to understand the issue. These tools and resources are on the FACE department's website. They are training administrators on how to get to the root of the problem instead of what they think might be the problem, which requires them to talk to parents, teachers, and students and understand what the problem really is. One FACE staff member explained, "No, we're not just going to come up with a problem and try to solve it based on what we think, but that time to listen to families, students, and parents is ingrained in the principle that your job isn't done until you actually talk to all these people and listen and figure out is it truly this the reason?"

Current journey

CVUSD is currently working on a new problem of practice: expanding their community partnerships to include Grossmont Community College to empower families with college and career readiness.

Shasta County Office of Education: Transforming Family Engagement through Inclusive Practices

Shasta County Office of Education (SCOE) was first invited to observe the CEI in 2019 with Cohort I and officially joined the CEI as part of Cohort III. Beginning in Cohort III, the CEI expanded to serve county offices of education. As a member of Cohort III, SCOE leaders from the Early Childhood Services (ECS) Department participate with community and parent team members to improve family engagement in that unit. SCOE serves more than 800 students in their county.

Implementation of Promising Practices

Because SCOE was a member of CEI from the inception, the county implemented new community engagement practices beyond their ECS department. New practices are described below.

Building trusting relationships between schools and families with a focus on equity

As part of their community engagement efforts, SCOE is doing the work to develop trusting relationships with their Native American community in Shasta County. **SCOE leaders are increasing their participation in the local American Indian Advisory Council.** Because Native American students had the lowest attendance rates in the county, SCOE leaders reached out to Native American community members to better understand the historical reasons behind these patterns. The community members offered to meet with SCOE leaders and through those courageous conversations, root causes for low student outcomes were identified. These root causes included generational trauma and mistrust between the two communities. The participation in the advisory council has allowed SCOE to shift their thinking and approach to engaging with the American Indian community.

> **New practices implemented by SCOE:**
>
> - Building trusting relationships with the Native American community by participating in the Native American Advisory Council.
> - Created a student voice panel.
> - Created a department dedicated to FACE services.
> - Planning to leverage data to continue their community engagement journey.

Culturally responsive and high-quality engagement strategies that value students', families', and communities' assets and leverage them as experts

Participating in the CEI has affected how COE leaders approach listening and elevating student voices. The county now implements **student voice panel events, where high school students from across the county come together and share**

their perspectives, experiences, and ideas. Student board members moderate the council. Adults and school staff members across the county are invited to listen and observe, as opposed to moderating the session. A presentation from Cohort I East Side High School on their student voice process was a "lightning rod" and helped the SCOE leadership team think about how to apply this concept to their rural district. COE leaders are also **implementing new practices to develop empathy and better understand students**. For example, SCOE leaders recognize that the learning from **shadowing a student for a day and seeing their daily school experience provides much greater context than administering a survey**.

Community engagement is systemically embedded in districts and is a key strategy to impact student learning.

SCOE has made a commitment to **embedding community engagement into their work and has created an entire team dedicated to FACE** in their ECS department. Since 2022, five staff members have been hired in the department. The department is responsible for several programs, such as the Help Me Grow program. Help Me Grow encourages families to have their children screened for possible developmental delays. Team members partner with each family to identify any needs they have and then are referred to resources to meet those needs. Additionally, SCOE has implemented a Family Wellness program that has proven to be very successful. It is a 12-week program that works with families with children who have developmental disabilities. For the team leaders, this is a clear example of their goal of moving beyond just programming and implementing structural changes to improve. Having a FACE team in ECS is allowing the county to increase interactions with parents and build their involvement and engagement beyond a "transactional" relationship.

Current journey

As SCOE continues in their journey to strengthen CE in their work across their Instructional Services Division, they are also expanding into Community Schools and hoping to incorporate the lessons learned in CEI through into the technical assistance to schools throughout the region in their role as a California Community Schools Partner Program Regional Technical Assistance Center.

Upper Lake Unified School District: Strengthening Ties with Native American Families

Upper Lake Unified School District has been a part of the CEI since Cohort II and continues to participate through Year 5. Upper Lake is a small district located in the northwest section of California. They serve approximately 950 students across one elementary, middle, and high school, and an alternative school. The Upper Lake district is located on the historical Pomo Native land of two local Native American Pomo tribes: the Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake and the Robinson Rancheria.

Implementation of Promising Practices

Building trusting relationships between schools and families with a focus on equity.

Upper Lake's problem of practice focused on engaging families and increasing the student voice from their Native American community. The focus of Upper Lake's work in the CEI was repairing decades of mistrust between the school district and the Native communities in the county caused by poor treatment of families and students. Through their participation, the district has identified several strategies to foster a stronger relationship with the local Native American community. Strategies included the following:

> **New practices implemented by Upper Lake USD:**
>
> - Strengthening participation in the Native American Action Council.
> - Increasing communication between district staff and tribal leaders.
> - Creating space during the school day that allows students the opportunity to engage without needing to choose between school activities and engagement activities.

- **Expansion of the Native American Action Committee (NAAC) across the county.** The NAAC started years ago, but was originally called the Native American Advisory Committee. The goal of this committee was to establish communication between the school district and the two local tribal communities. However, the NAAC was not always productive, nor were relationships between the two groups trusting. The committee has replaced "advisory" with "action," with the intent to give the tribal communities more power in the decisions made in the district. The committee has expanded with more district and Native community member representation, and Upper Lake is aiming to increase family representation.

- **Increasing communication between parents and the district through the use of site principals and tribe education directors.** Education directors are

members of their respective tribes and play an important role in building and maintaining education opportunities available to tribal members throughout the community. School leaders and the education directors are working together to facilitate meetings with parents of students from the local tribes to build relationships and lines of communication.

- **Hosting a Native American cultural night.** For the first time, Upper Lake hosted a Native American cultural night at the middle school that was for all three schools in the district. This cultural night brought tribal families together to display their cultural traditions and assets. District leaders hope to grow this event to include multiple groups. The school leader shared anecdotally that the tribal chair became "emotional" after the event because this was the first time they felt at "home" on one of the school campuses and saw their relatives on the stage performing during the cultural night.

Culturally responsive and high-quality engagement strategies that value students', families', and communities' assets and leverage them as experts.

Upper Lake has also focused its efforts on ensuring Native students and families have their voices heard and perspectives incorporated into the work of the district.

- **Intentionally connecting with the Native American community to generate input for the LCAP.** This has required the district to work closely with the tribe's education directors. Closer connections between the district and the tribes allow them to get **more input** than they have been able to solicit in the past.

- **Expanding Native American school clubs from high school to middle school.** These clubs provide an opportunity for students to demonstrate their voice. Local tribal leaders facilitate events for the students. The district is hoping to expand the clubs to fifth and fourth graders at the elementary school.

Upper Lake has also implemented new professional development for staff related to FACE. Recently, the district implemented cultural awareness training across the district, and the district continues to lead their county with the implementation of Lake County Strong curriculum. This curriculum focuses on local lesson plans. This includes an emphasis on local Pomo Indigenous practices, such as math lessons based on basket patterns or science lessons on local fish that have traditionally been a food source for the local tribes.

Community engagement is systemically embedded in districts and is a key strategy to affect student learning.

Since participating in the CEI, Upper Lake has added two Dean of Student positions, and community engagement is embedded into the job description of this role.

Current journey

They are still actively participating in the CEI and are continuing to implement practices that allow for more engagement with the local Native American community and strengthen their relationships.

Val Verde Unified School District: Committing to Equity and Community Connection

Val Verde Unified School District began their journey in the CEI in Cohort II and has continued their participation through Year 5 of the initiative. Val Verde serves close to 19,500 students across grades Transitional Kindergarten–Adult throughout portions of Perris, Moreno Valley, and an unincorporated area of Riverside County. There are 24 school sites within their district. The demographic breakdown of the district is 0.2% American Indian, 1.5% Asian, 0.2% Pacific Islander, 1.1% Filipino, 79.8% Hispanic, 11% African American, 3.7% White, and 1.8% two or more races. In the district, 87.9% of students are within the socioeconomically disadvantaged bracket. In addition, 21.8% of students are identified as English learners.

Implementation of Promising Practices

When joining CEI as a member of Cohort II, Val Verde knew that they were making gains in family engagement, but after speaking with other participating districts, they realized they needed to dig deeper than the surface-level gains.

Building trusting relationships between schools and families with a focus on equity

Val Verde focused their problem of practice on connecting and building trust with families and students who identify as African American and/or Black. Upon coming to the CEI, one team member stated, "We started to understand that we did have some very important areas of growth, specifically with our marginalized families and families who traditionally are underserved." They also focused on Indigenous families, families with students who identify as LGBTQ+, and Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander families. The district planned community events with the intention of reaching those communities that traditionally did not feel seen or heard at their district. The LEA team reports making great strides toward addressing and building these relationships, but they recognize the work is ongoing.

Val Verde also adopted a community schools approach to support their families by offering cohesive services. They are using outside grants and district-allotted LCAP

> **New practices implemented by Val Verde USD:**
>
> - Building trusting relationships with community members who identify as African American and/or Black.
>
> - Supporting families by offering more cohesive services.
>
> - Creating platforms for families to exercise their leadership and voice within the district.

funds to build and refurbish existing facilities to provide space on their campuses for community resources.

Culturally responsive and high-quality engagement strategies that value students', families', and communities' assets and leverage them as experts

Before and throughout their participation in the CEI, Val Verde worked to create a variety of platforms where **families can exercise their leadership and share their voice**. Team members stated that since their participation in CEI, additional resources have allowed them to embed this practice even deeper. Specifically, team members cited the ability to learn from other districts and share best practices. They continue to monitor data, conduct focus groups, and survey parents.

A community partner said, "One of the things I value from Val Verde and its staff and partners is the ability to listen to the community and to adapt and pivot. ... What Val Verde has done within its programming specifically to the center, is to adapt and pivot, and learn." Others within the team have stressed the importance of gathering families' voices and how their feedback directly affects their LCAP.

Current Journey

Val Verde is continuing to work on their identified problem of practice of better connecting and engaging with underserved, specialized populations.

Case Study Takeaways

The experiences of five diverse school districts provide valuable insights that can be adapted to enhance community engagement in your own school or agency. Here are some actionable themes and strategies that emerged:

1. Intentional Relationship Building

Most districts emphasized the importance of intentionality in building relationships with families and community members, especially those who have traditionally felt excluded.

Prioritize intentional and focused efforts to engage underrepresented families in your community. Host focus groups, plan inclusive events, and work with local leaders to build trust and understanding.

2. Leveraging Student Voices

Incorporating student voices into engagement practices helps create a more inclusive and empathetic school environment.

Create platforms for students to express their ideas and participate in decision-making. This can be through student panels, councils, or feedback sessions. Listening to students can lead to more responsive and effective policies.

3. Expanding Community Engagement Roles

Hiring dedicated staff to focus on family and community engagement (FACE) has proven effective. This can involve creating new departments or expanding existing roles.

Consider expanding your team to include specialists in community engagement. These roles can help build stronger, more systematic connections with families and community members.

Adopting these strategies allows your school or agency to foster more inclusive, trusting, and effective community engagement practices. Implementing intentional relationship-building, leveraging student voices, and expanding dedicated engagement roles are key steps toward creating a supportive and connected educational environment.

IMPACT ANALYSIS OF THE
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE

This section outlines the impact of the Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) on participating Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and student outcomes. It also examines how Peer Leading & Learning Network (PLLN) meetings effectively connect district participation in the initiative to measurable impacts.

METRICS FOR IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Many LEAs found the learning experiences in the CEI invaluable because they did not have other venues to grow their community engagement practices. LEAs from Cohort I and II continued to participate in CEI past their required 2 years because of that opportunity. This section details how CEI participation has affected LEAs as a whole and potential student impact.

District Practices

Evidence suggests that participating LEAs are deepening, maturing, and scaling promising community engagement practices.

According to CEI's 2023 annual report, all three CEI Cohorts reported deepening implementation on at least one community engagement strategy, as reported in the area of family and community engagement self-reflection ratings on the California School Dashboard.[3]

Districts **are moving from "initial implementation" to "full implementation" of the strategies**. Between 2021 and 2023, all three cohorts reported **an increase in their ability to seek out input for decision-making** (Figure 4). On average, Cohort I also rated their ability to build partnerships for student outcomes and relationships between school staff and families higher in 2023 than in 2021 (Figures 5 and 6). Notably, both Cohort II and Cohort III implementation ratings decreased for building

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[3] Districts were asked to rate their current stage of implementation on a scale from 1 (Exploration and Research) to 5 (Full Implementation and Sustainability). Districts rated 12 indicators that were then aggregated into three themes: building partnerships for student outcomes, building relationships between school staff and families, and seeking input for decision-making.

relationships over this period. This could be due to the fact that districts in Cohorts II and III had begun to implement new practices learned from CEI to strengthen relationships and were earlier in the implementation phase for many of these newer practices.

Figure 4. CEI cohorts' ratings of seeking input, 2021 and 2023

Seeking Input for Decision-Making

Cohort	2021	2023
Cohort I	3.9	4.1
Cohort 2	3.8	3.9
Cohort 3	3.5	3.6
Not in CEI	3.8	3.9
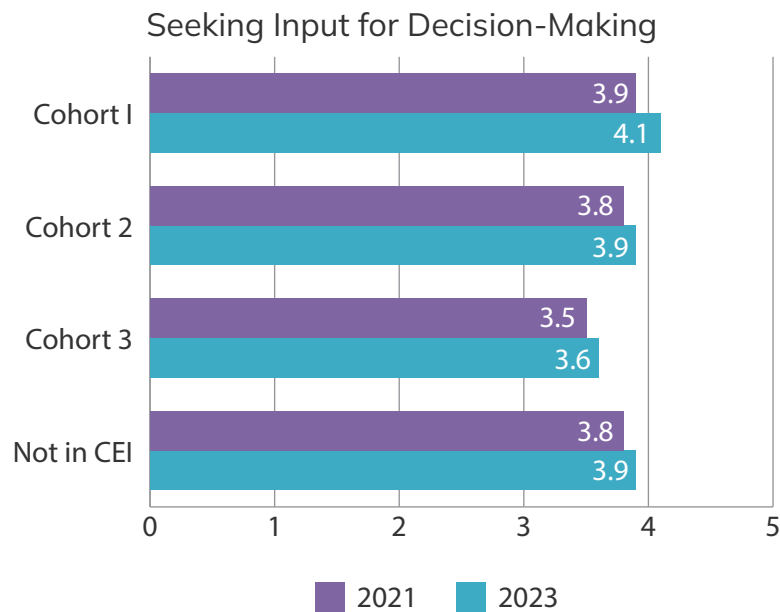
Figure 5. CEI cohorts' ratings of building relationships between school staff and families, 2021 and 2023

Building Relationships Between School Staff and Families

Cohort	2021	2023
Cohort I	3.9	4.3
Cohort 2	3.8	3.9
Cohort 3	3.9	3.7
Not in CEI	4.1	4.2
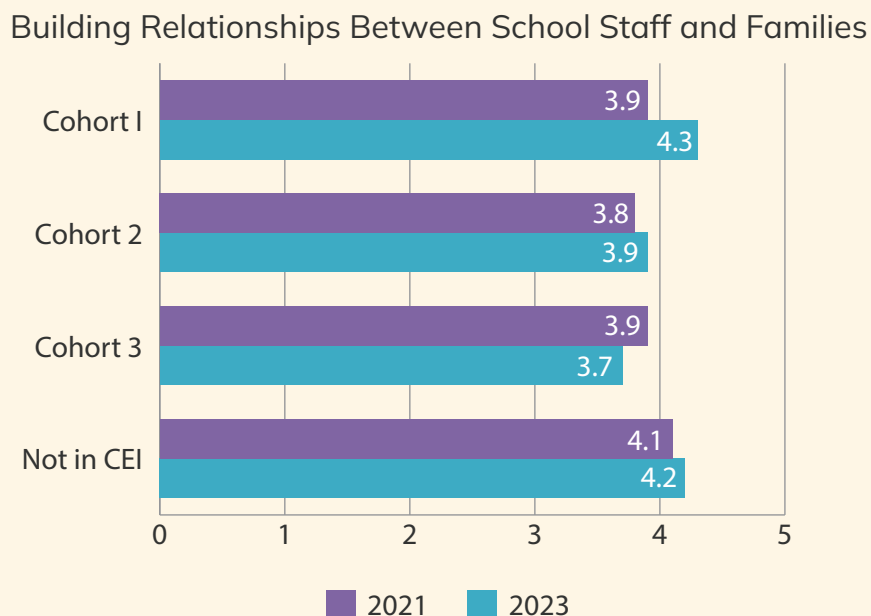
Figure 6. CEI cohorts' ratings of building partnerships for student outcomes, 2021 and 2023

Building Partnerships for Student Outcomes

Cohort I — 2021: 3.8, 2023: 4.2
Cohort 2 — 2021: 3.8, 2023: 3.9
Cohort 3 — 2021: 3.8, 2023: 3.5
Not in CEI — 2021: 3.9, 2023: 4.0

Legend: 2021, 2023
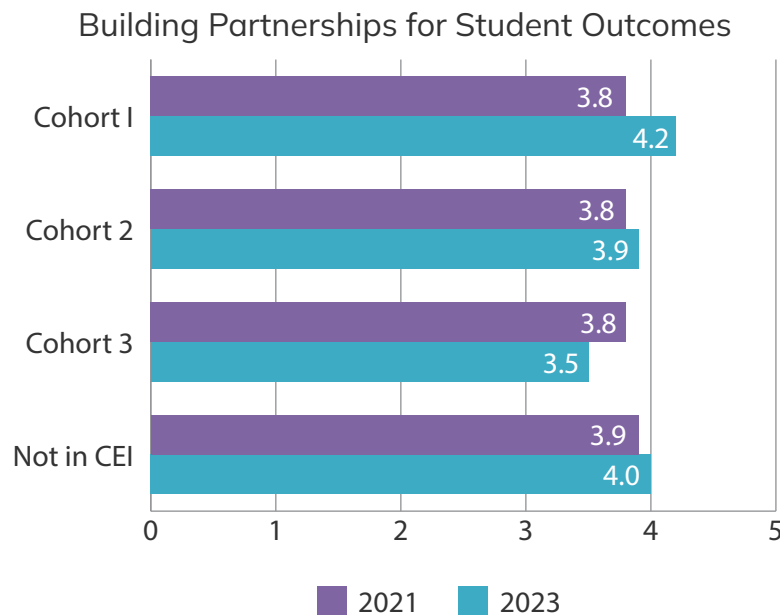
The data collected from CEI participants align with trends seen in dashboard data, demonstrating significant impact:

- **Capacity to Scale Strategies:** In their third year of participation, most respondents from Cohort I (87%, n = 30) and Cohort II (76%, n = 75) believed their district had the capacity to scale their problem of practice strategies throughout the district.

- **Meaningful Change:** Similarly, most respondents from Cohort I (80%, n = 30) and Cohort II (78%, n = 75) agreed that working on a problem of practice led to meaningful change in their district.

Participation in CEI has also resulted in changes to LEAs' LCAP, indicating the institutionalization of CE practices:

- **Incorporation into LCAP:** In 2023, 64% of Cohort II respondents (n = 75) agreed or strongly agreed that they had incorporated their problem of practice strategies into their LCAP. Additionally, two districts in Cohort I reported changes in their LCAP.

- **Community Perspectives:** LEAs are also improving how they incorporate community perspectives in the LCAP by implementing more strategies to collect parent input and enhancing culturally responsive approaches.

For more detailed information, refer to Table 3.

Table 3. Changes in LEAs' LCAP Processes

As a result of participating in the CEI, my district has...	Cohort I (2022) (n = 30)	Cohort II (2023) (n = 73)
Implemented more strategies to collect parent input on the LCAP	53%	57%
Improved culturally inclusive approaches to the LCAP tools and processes to engage families and students in LCAP decision-making	55%	40%

Cohort II district leader:

"So for our LCAP, we were very intentional in the sense that one of our sections of our problem of practice was to make sure that we were very purposeful in our engagement of our African American families. And so since then, we have hired a parent engagement specialist. We have increased the number of services offered specifically geared towards engaging our African American families.... We increased the funding specifically for that, but also, we're doing more activities that we had not done in the past."

Student Outcomes

Effective community engagement practices have been linked to positive student outcomes. The following data compared LEAs that participated in the Community Engagement Initiative with the State of California as part of the 2022 Annual Report

The COVID-19 pandemic and the suspension of the California School Dashboard limited evaluators' ability to directly examine the relationship between CEI participation and student outcomes. It is also important to recognize that hybrid learning between 2020 and 2022 led to irregular patterns of student behaviors and attendance seen in these data for schools across the state and country.

Despite these challenges for educators and evaluators, analysis of available data suggests some positive results in student outcomes and potential links worth further investigation in CEI 2.0.
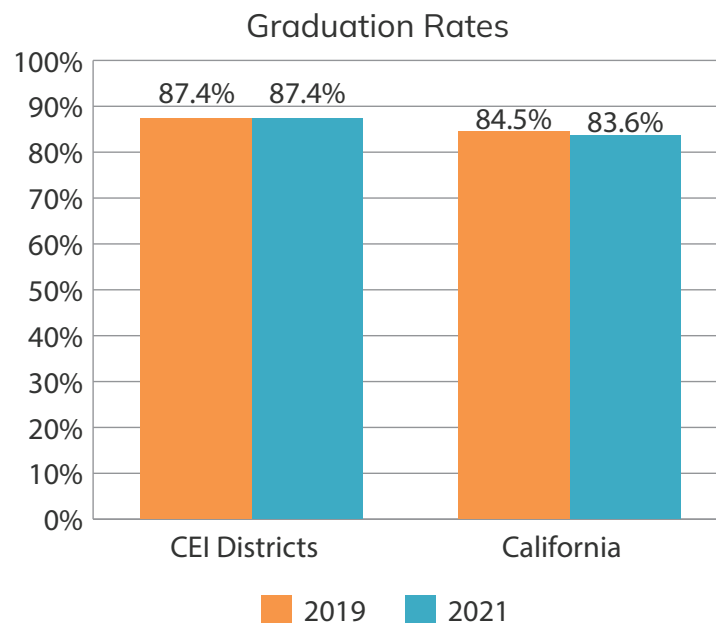
**Figure 7: Suspension rates for CEI Cohorts I and II and the state, 2019 and 2021**

Suspension Rates

	CEI Districts	California
2019	3.9%	3.5%
2021	0.1%	0.2%
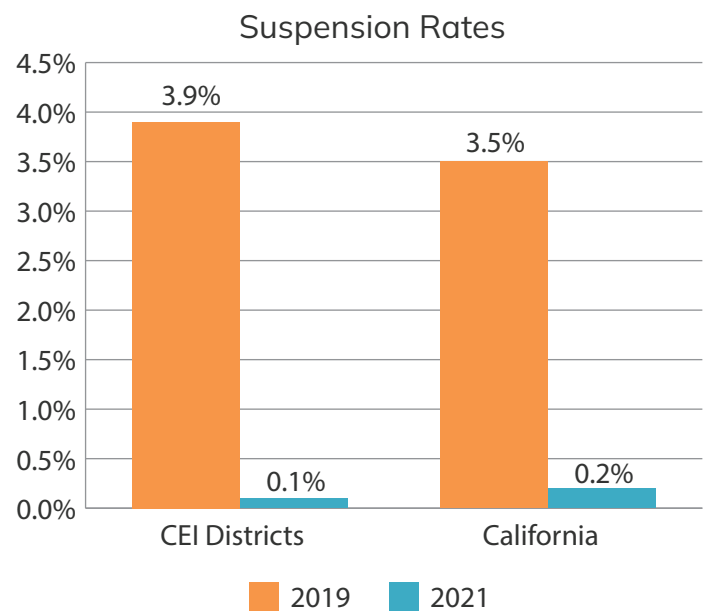
Key Findings from the CEI 2022 Annual Report:

- **Reduced Suspension Rates:** In 2019, before joining CEI, Cohort I and II districts had higher average suspension rates than the state average. By 2021, these districts saw a significant reduction in suspension rates, dropping by 3.8 percentage points to 0.1%, compared to the state average of 0.2% (Figure 7).

- **Maintained Graduation Rates:** While California's overall graduation rate declined from 84.5% to 83.6% between 2019 and 2021, CEI districts maintained a stable graduation rate of 87.4% during the same period (Figure 8).

- **The Need to Improve Attendance:** Chronic absenteeism worsened between 2019 and 2021 for both CEI districts and the state with the average chronic absenteeism rate increasing by 2.2 percentage points for both (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Graduation rates for CEI Cohorts I and II and the State, 2019 and 2021

Graduation Rates

CEI Districts: 2019 87.4%, 2021 87.4%
California: 2019 84.5%, 2021 83.6%

Legend: 2019, 2021

Figure 9: Chronic absenteeism rates for CEI Cohorts I and II and the State, 2019 and 2021

Chronic Absenteeism

	CEI Districts	California
2019	13.1%	12.1%
2021	15.3%	14.3%
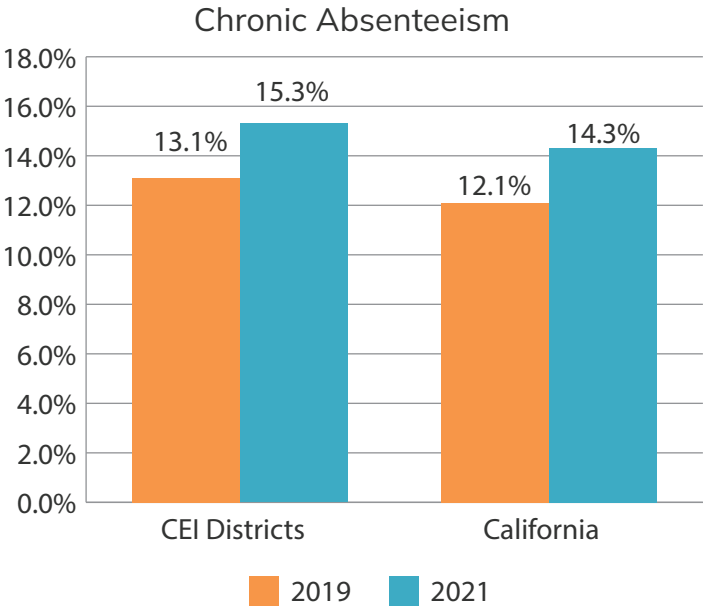
These findings highlight a tangible impact of CEI participation on student outcomes, particularly in maintaining high graduation rates.. Further analysis in CEI 2.0 will help to better understand and strengthen these links and should look deeper at the potential impact on attendance and student behavior.

ANALYSIS OF PEER LEADING AND LEARNING NETWORKS

State statute mandated that the CEI utilize a professional learning network (PLN) structure to foster learning among cohort districts. This approach encourages districts to support one another, incorporating diverse perspectives from families, students, and community partners. These elements align with features of effective education networks that lead to system-wide change and improved student outcomes. Below, we provide evidence of the CEI's effectiveness as a professional learning structure.

Overall Facilitation

CEI participants consistently reported that PLLN meetings were well-organized and effective.

- **Participant Ratings:** Most participants rated the PLLN meetings they attended as excellent or very good, year after year (Figure 10).

- **Meeting Organization:** Participants found the PLLN meetings to be extremely or very organized across the first four years of the CEI (Figure 11).

- **Effective Facilitation:** Cohorts I, II, and III continually praised lead agencies for their effective facilitation of the PLLN meetings. One Cohort II district leader noted, "Our leads really helped us rephrase and look at the bigger picture," highlighting the tangible impact of the facilitation on their understanding of root causes.

These consistent positive ratings and testimonials demonstrate the success and effectiveness of the CEI's professional learning network structure.
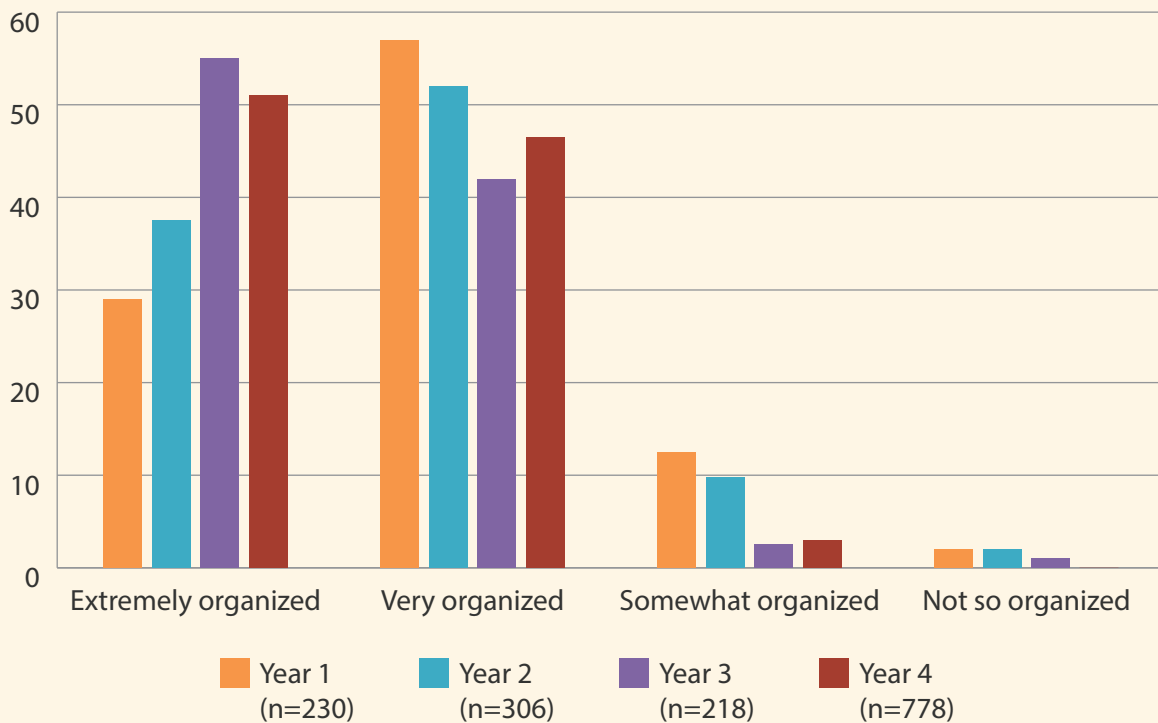
Cohort II school leader:

"The facilitators have been super positive, really good at asking guiding questions and helping us focus in and make sure that we're on track and moving forward."

Figure 10. Overall PLLN Meeting Ratings Across Years

Year 1 (n=232)   Year 2 (n=305)   Year 3 (n=220)   Year 4 (n=779)
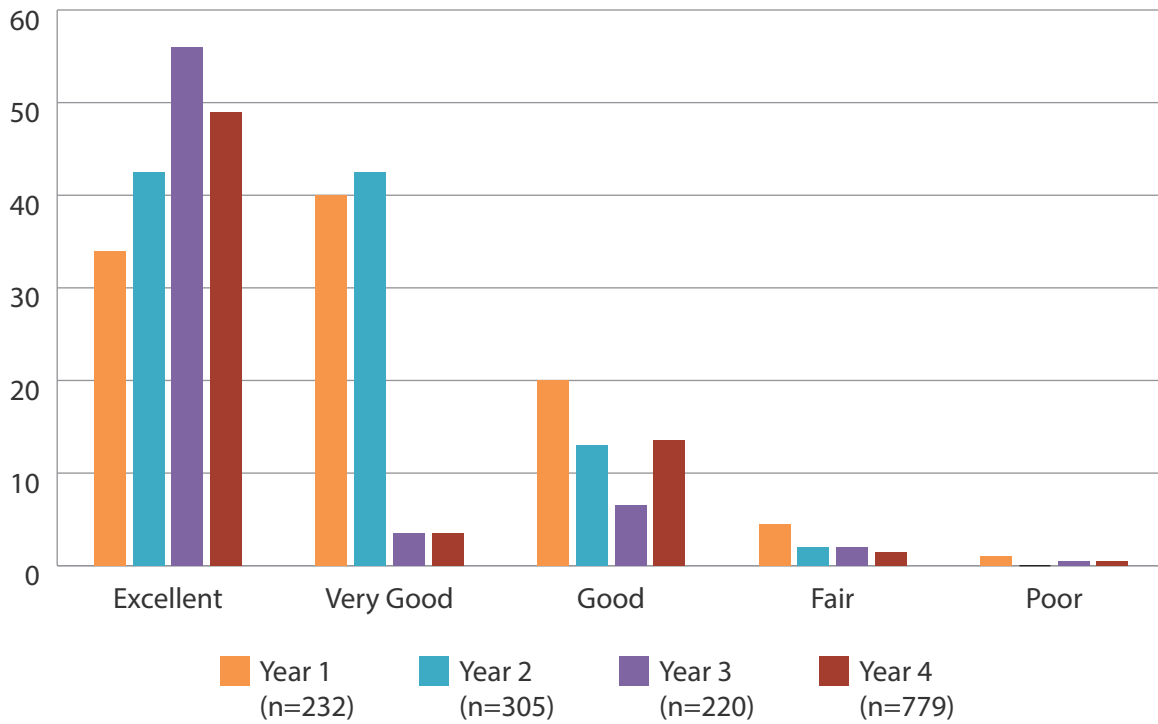
Figure 11. Ratings of PLLN Meeting Organization Across Years

Year 1 (n=230)   Year 2 (n=306)   Year 3 (n=218)   Year 4 (n=778)

Trusting Community

The CEI facilitators were effective in creating a trusting community where most participants felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and questions (Table 4). Across all three cohorts a small percentage of participants did not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, and they spanned across all roles.

Table 4. Percent of participants who agreed they felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and questions in the PLLN meetings

I feel comfortable sharing my thoughts and questions in the PLLN	Cohort I (2022 survey)	Cohort II (2023 survey	Cohort III (2023 survey)
Community Partner, Family, or Student*	63% (n = 8)	84% (n = 25)	82% (n = 51)
District and county office of education leaders	92% (n = 13)	89% (n = 28)	90% (n = 49)
Family and Community Engagement staff	83% (n = 6)	100% (n = 9)	85% (n = 20)
School-Level Leadership and Staff	100% (n = 5)	82% (n = 17)	95% (n = 38)

*Students did not participate in the Cohort I PLLN meetings.

Multiple Cohort II interviewees, particularly parents, also commented on the **energy and positivity facilitators exuded in PLLN meetings, which created a welcoming environment**.

Participants also appreciated that **facilitators created a safe space** to share their challenges without feeling judged. One Cohort II parent remarked that facilitators from the Cohort I school districts made them feel welcome: "I never felt it was like, 'Oh, we were here first. So, we're...' You know, there was never any of that. We were all on the same playing field."

Parent participant:

Me gusta mucho cómo hacen la dinámica entre los facilitadores y el grupo que lleva las reuniones. Eso está, muy, muy bueno. Me gusta cómo transmite la energía a pesar que estamos virtualmente. Creo que eso para mí es importante porque creo que lo hacen con mucho corazón y mucha dedicación y eso se puede sentir.

[English translation: "I really like the dynamic they've created among the facilitators and the group that runs the meetings. That is very, very good. I like the way energy is conveyed even though we're meeting virtually. I'd say that's important to me because I think they're doing it with a lot of heart and a lot of dedication, and you can feel that."]

Peer-to-Peer Relationships

LEAs reported significant benefits from learning and implementing practices shared by their peers at PLLN meetings. These presentations allowed districts to showcase their successful strategies, inspiring others to adopt similar approaches.

- **Inspiration from Peers:** For example, three LEAs were motivated by a Cohort I district to enhance their efforts in gathering student input for their LCAP. Another district received support from a Cohort I district to implement CABE's Project2Inspire, benefiting from their years of experience with the program.

- **Building Relationships:** The PLLN meetings also facilitated relationship-building across districts. "Role-alike" groupings, where participants met with others in similar roles, proved effective in fostering both improvement and collaboration.

Cohort II school leader:

"I learned from [Cohort I district leader] the practice on the LCAP and the Parent Advisory Committee Plus parent group, so I reached out to them, and they were generous to meet with me twice and walk me through their process of how they started the parent advisory committee and how they evolved in the last couple of years. And I actually did take some of their recommendations and ideas for this year's PAC parent group."

Perspectives varied between cohorts on their overall ability to maintain relationships with other cohort districts year after year. Cohort I districts were able to build and maintain relationships within their cohort, even if joining the initiative after the first year. Cohort II districts were also able to maintain relationships, but most participants who joined after the first year had difficulty building and maintaining relationships. Cohort III districts, the newest to join, reported that they were able to build relationships with one another.

> *Cohort III community partner: "My experience participating in CEI as a community partner has been a phenomenal learning experience. It is such a unique and collaborative space; Working students, parents, community partners and educators has helped me feel more connected to our school community."*

Table 5. Participants' Perspectives on Relationships with other District Teams in their Cohort

Percent who agreed or strongly agreed that...	Cohort I (2022 survey)	Cohort II (2023 survey	Cohort III (2023 survey)
I was able to build relationships with Cohort participants from other districts.	50% (n = 8)	63% (n = 16)	63% (n = 156)
Role-alike groups were helpful in **building** relationships with participants from other districts	63% (n = 8)	63% (n =16)	68% (n = 157)
I was able to maintain the relationships with Cohort participants from other districts.	63% (n = 22)	45% (n = 58)	NA
Role-alike groups were helpful in **maintaining** relationships with participants from other districts	78% (n = 22)	55% (n = 58)	NA

NA =Not Applicable. Participants received different questions depending on when they joined their cohort.

FEEDBACK AND IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTIONS FOR THE INITIATIVE

This section details feedback on the successes and areas for improvement regarding the peer leading and learning network approach and metrics used to identify impact and improvement. The section concludes with additional feedback and suggestions for activities and resources.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NETWORK PROTOCOL FEEDBACK

Key aspects of the successful PLLN approach identified by the CEI lead agencies were **adaptability, intentionality, and collaboration**. Lessons learned for improvement included elevating student and parent voices and better supports for PLLN facilitators from the participating districts.

Key Success Factors to Replicate in Future Initiatives:

A key feature of CEI's success, according to the CEI leads, was the initiative's ability to adapt to the ongoing needs of participating districts. They co-constructed meeting activities to ensure they met those needs effectively. This adaptability became especially crucial when the COVID-19 pandemic emerged in Year 1, requiring CEI to pivot and meet districts where they were.

CEI's ability to adapt was driven by continuous feedback collection through surveys and district-lead check-ins. This data allowed CEI to be responsive to participants' experiences and align with the districts' expectations. One lead emphasized, "I think that the survey data is really important. Not only do we review the data on our own, but we sit alongside our facilitators. And so, it's an authentic place where they know what to expect when it comes to the data review."

With each convening, leads shared with participants how their feedback directly influenced the initiative's content. "People were always able to see that their feedback mattered and their feedback was informing our process," another lead

explained. This transparency ensured that participants felt valued and understood, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the CEI.

- **Commitment and intentionality around authentic engagement with districts.** Another successful feature noted by the CEI leads was the intentional focus on relational engagement with participants, rather than a technical or transactional relationship. Building meaningful connections with participants from the beginning was crucial.

  Leads received feedback from participants that the engagement felt authentic, which made people more open to learning and advancing the work. One participant remarked, "When you walk into the learning space, it felt warm and it felt safe … and there was also an element of fun and with honoring not just the voices in the room but the diverse perspectives in the room."

  Leads also shifted from being content experts to convening experts. This collaborative approach allowed everyone in the room to lead and learn together. While the leads provided external expertise on frameworks and concepts, they

CEI Lead:

"We were about to finish year one and COVID happened, but we still had our agenda of items we needed to cover. We adapted that to meet the needs of the current situation. We had been practicing authenticity as it related to our partnership work. So, when COVID came up, we already had that platform of dual communication."

also created space for districts to contribute their own expertise, helping to shape the initiative's content.

From the beginning, the intention was to bring people together through every stage of the CEI process, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose.

Insights for Future Initiatives:

- **Embedding the core values of student and parent voice in the initiative structure.** Family and student engagement are core values of community engagement. However, CEI leads found it challenging to integrate and elevate student and parent voices from the start of the initiative. They admitted, "It took a while for us to prioritize the voices of students and families and create a process and space for them."

  Participants recognized these challenges due to scheduling difficulties and the fast pace of meetings. One COE leader noted, "There was no real role or space for youth/student team members, nor any guidance on how to include their voices in the PLLN structure." CEI leads acknowledged that these difficulties were partly due to the statute's structure, which had compressed timelines and an organized PLLN that did not initially accommodate these voices.

  They emphasized that the "statute language needs to clearly state the deliverables, outcomes, and roles of parents and students in the CEI." They believe that state initiatives should model full parent and student engagement for LEAs to follow and learn from.

- **Improving expectations and supports for PLLN facilitators.** The CEI required that LEA teams continue their participation as facilitators of the newer PLLN networks. The leads created numerous tools and protocols for facilitators to use, such as how to facilitate a Socratic seminar. The tools and protocols are documented on the CEI website. Leads recommended that CEI needs to be more **intentional about their expectations of facilitators and provide better supports** because different LEA teams were "somewhat uneven in terms of facilitator capacity and effectiveness." Some recommendations for how lead agencies can support facilitators includes taking the lead in creating presentation guidelines, creating PowerPoints, and providing protocols and or frameworks for facilitators to use when leading different conversations. Leads can also provide coaching,

helping LEA teams reflect on their facilitation, and provide ongoing support and guidance as needed.

- **Facilitating intentional peer-to-peer learning to support implementation.** LEA participants became more aware of various promising strategies during their time in CEI and wanted more intentional opportunities to learn how to implement best practices from peers. They provided various suggestions:

  - *Create opportunities during the meetings to sit down with districts and talk about the nuts and bolts of implementation.* A district leader explained: "I would say recommendation, which I think we've already incorporated into the planning part, is really just letting districts have that opportunity to just share their best practices and to talk… So it does help for us to have moments to just even sit in a room and talk. It doesn't even have to be presenting to each other. Sometimes it's just, tell me how you did this part. Because that's the other piece. It's great when we're presenting a portion of what we do or whatever, but then if there's no time to collaborate or talk about it, then it still leaves it as that pending."

  - *Connect similarly sized districts with each other for peer learning.* "I think that because we are a large district, one of the largest, I think we could benefit more with sharing experiences with larger districts, more multifaceted, that share some of the experiences. And I look forward to that in the future."

  - *Offer site visits when meeting in person.* A few districts specifically called out the value of meeting in person, and a number of participants from one district team mentioned the value of doing site visits. A district leader noted, "Maybe there's a local district that is part of CEI, maybe have that as an option. It's impressive to see the presentations and everything, and I loved each one of them, but I think seeing it in person honestly, I think that's more powerful. I would love to see something like that district teams."

METRICS DEVELOPMENT FEEDBACK

CEI 1.0 was tasked with identifying and testing metrics for measuring increases to community engagement. This section will detail the challenges around measuring impact of community engagement and the work CEI has completed during 1.0 to identify and develop metrics. As they move into CEI 2.0, we share how CEI can improve the development of metrics going forward.

There are several ways to measure the impact of community engagement on parents and students. These can range from **simple to complex methods**. Simpler methods include **examining changes in attendance using activity sign-in sheets** or examining parent perceptions using parent surveys after workshops. **More-complex methods include exploring the relationship between parent activities and student outcomes by comparing the outcomes of students whose parents who did and did not attend different activities.** More often, these complex research studies examine the combined effect of a multitude of strategies, recognizing the shared responsibility of educators, community partners, and families on student outcomes (Epstein and Sheldon, 2019, p. 19) versus isolating the effect of one singular strategy on student outcomes. However, **complex studies come at a higher cost because they require longitudinal or comparative data to determine impact** (Epstein and Sheldon, 2019).

Given the complexity of measuring the impact of community engagement, not just family engagement, a tool was needed for CEI participants to gauge impact of their efforts. Districts continued using simpler methods to understand impact of family engagement, such as sign-in sheets, and other basic quantitative metrics, such as school climate surveys. Cohort districts identified that measuring the impact of community engagement was a challenge. After searching for available tools within the state, across the country, and even internationally, CEI **leads determined that there had not previously been a comprehensive tool for measuring impact of community engagement**. For example, school climate surveys often focus on students' and families' perceptions of the school climate and culture or parent knowledge and self-efficacy regarding supporting their child's educational journey. The current LEA self-reflection tool focuses on only on family involvement in decision-making, not students or community members.

To support the districts with assessing growth in their community engagement practices, not just family engagement practices, **CEI developed a self-assessment rubric** that districts could use as they improved various aspects of their practice. This

tool could help districts understand whether they know a practice is effective and whether it will have an impact. Districts across the state, not just those participating in the CEI, are able to self-assess where they are in their community engagement journey. This rubric will become publicly available in fall 2024. The comprehensive resource guide "Elevating Community Engagement" launched by the CEI provides eleven learning modules that support deepening of practices and approaches described in the self-assessment. This can be used as a resource for districts, schools, and charters as they elevate their community engagement practices. The resource guide was launched in February 2024.

The Seven Domains of the Rubric

Foundational Domains

1. **Building Relationships**
2. **Building Collective Efficacy**
3. **Shared Power and Decision-Making**
4. **Operations, Systems, Structures, and Resourcing the Work**

Engagement Practices

5. **Families as Co-Educators**
6. **Participatory Practices With Students**
7. **Community as Collaborators**

Each domain has multiple competencies. Users can rate themselves on a four-point scale from "Not Evident" to "Advanced," and each level includes examples of "look fors" that should be evident within the district.

Going into 2.0, CEI is focused on increasing access to and awareness of their developed tool to all districts in the state. For both the CEI and districts, collecting more data that can be tracked over time and that can be compared to other districts will help measure the impact of community engagement and the initiative for districts and their students.

CONCLUSION

TANGIBLE IMPACT AND LOOKING AHEAD

This report showcases the achievements and impact of the Community Engagement Initiative (CEI), established by the Budget Act of 2018 to enhance community engagement capacity in California school districts. Led by the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), CEI brought together a powerful consortium: the San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools and two community-based organizations, the California Association for Bilingual Education and Families In Schools. They guided forty Local Educational Agency (LEA) teams across three cohorts through the Peer Learning and Leadership Network (PLLN) structure.

Empowering districts to foster genuine and inclusive community engagement has profoundly impacted CEI. Districts have implemented practices that prioritize equity and inclusivity by focusing on building trust, identifying effective engagement models, and cultivating peer partnerships. Many districts have even integrated these changes into their Local Control and Accountability Plans (LCAPs), ensuring long-term sustainability.

We've seen promising signs of improved student outcomes, and we're committed to developing tools to measure the impact of these community engagement efforts. Moving forward, CEI aims to leverage the success of the PLLN approach, scaling authentic community engagement efforts statewide to drive equitable improvements in student outcomes across California.

This initiative embodies the power of collaborative partnerships and underscores the importance of giving every educational partner a voice in shaping our educational landscape. Together, we are building a brighter, more inclusive future for all students in California.

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APPENDIX A: DATA SOURCES

This appendix summarizes the data collected and analyzed for this final report. RTI compiled data from four data sources: annual external evaluation data, post-PLLN meeting surveys, CEI's annual reports, as well as additional data collected by RTI as part of compiling this report.

ANNUAL EXTERNAL EVALUATION DATA

RTI has served as the independent evaluator for the Community Engagement Initiative since 2019. Between 2019 and 2023, RTI collected and analyzed data related to implementation of the initiative through end-of year district team surveys and focus group interviews. Data used for this report come from years 3 and 4 of the evaluation.

Two cohorts of districts and LEAs participated in CEI during year 3, and three cohorts participated in year 4 (Table A.)

Table A. Cohort size by year

	Cohort I	Cohort II	Cohort III
Year 3 (2021-22)	5 teams	11 teams	
Year 4 (2022-23)	4 teams	11 teams	22 teams

End of Year District Surveys

End-of-year District surveys were administered between April- May in both English and Spanish to entire LEA teams participating in the CEI. Response rates are noted in the table below (Table B).

Table B. Survey response rate by year

	Cohort I	Cohort II	Cohort III
Year 3 (2022)	55% (N = 58)	42% (N = 163)	N/A
Year 4 (2023)	N/A	45% (N = 161)	63% (N = 250)

Focus groups and interviews

RTI conducted focus groups members of Cohorts I-II to learn about their experiences in the CEI and how their participation has impacted their individual knowledge and skills as well and district implementation (Table C). Spanish interpretation was provided for Spanish-speaking participants. Each parent or guardian member received a $30 stipend for focus group participation.

Table C: Number of focus group participants by year

	Cohort I participants	Cohort II participants
Year 3 (2022)	24	24
Year 4 (2023)	13	24

2019-2024 CEI POST-PLLN SURVEYS

The CEI leads administered online surveys after each PLLN meeting to capture feedback and inform continuous improvement. Surveys captured participants perspectives on the meeting organization, facilitation, outcomes, and potential next steps. All questions were optional and response rates varied across questions and years. Data from a few questions of those surveys were used in this report. Specific sample sizes for relevant questions are provided in the body of the report. The below table provides counts of all completed surveys from PLLN meetings across a given year. As such, one person could have completed up to 6 or 7 surveys, depending on the year, and the counts are not indicative of individual participants.

Table D: Number of post-PLLN meeting completed surveys by year

	Number of Completed Surveys
Year 1 (2020)	280
Year 2 (2021)	387
Year 3 (2022)	269
Year 4 (2023)	870

CEI ANNUAL REPORTS

CEI publishes annual reports using data from the California School Dashboard. Dashboard data contains information on schools, districts, and county offices of education to provide a more complete picture of what contributes to a positive educational experience for students. As part of the annual reports, data related to Local Indicators, suspension rates, chronic absenteeism, and graduation rates were used to compare outcomes of districts participating in CEI to non-participating districts.

2024 RTI DATA COLLECTION

2024 District Leads Survey

In January 2024 a survey was administered to district leads from Cohort II and Cohort III. Seven of the 11 Cohort II districts and 13 of the 22 Cohort III districts completed the survey. District leads were asked to provide examples of specific practices their district had implemented since their participation in CEI.

Focus groups

Two focus groups were conducted between January and February 2024, one with members of the CEI 1.0 lead agencies (CABE, Families in Schools, San Bernardino, and CCEE) to inform CEI 1.0 recommendations and another with members of the Shasta County Office of Education team to inform the development of their case study.