

In This Issue

- August 14, 2026 Meeting

Web Links

- [CCEE Advisory Council Webpage](#)
- [CCEE Website](#)
- [CCEE Resources](#)

Advisory Council Members (Superintendents) Statewide [Map Link](#)

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Heather Armelino, Enterprise ESD
John Campbell, Kings Canyon USD
Joshua Lightle, Paramount Union SD
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Michele Cantwell-Copher, Fresno COE
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Ryan Bentz, Glenn COE
Ted Alejandre, San Bernardino COE
Todd Cutler, Lake Tahoe USD
Todd Finnell, Imperial COE
Troy Brown, San Joaquin COE

CCEE Member Emeritus

Gary Waddell, Ed.D.
Christine Lizardi Frazier, Ed.D.

CCEE Executive Director

Matt J. Navo

Advisory Council Highlights

August 14, 2026

This newsletter is intended to inform the field. Please share this with your regional superintendents or any interested parties.

INTRODUCTION

The Advisory Council (AC) met on Friday, August 14, 2026, to provide input and guidance on the work of the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE). AC Facilitator Gary Waddell and Executive Director Matthew Navo welcomed members and thanked them for taking time during the busy start of the school year to participate. The meeting focused on three key areas: Getting Down to Facts 3, Advisory Council feedback, and significant changes underway in California's education governance.

Executive Director Navo also welcomed new Advisory Council members Superintendent Ruben Aurelio of Vallejo City Unified School District and Matthew Shirley of Magnolia Union Elementary School District, as well as CDE partners Erika Torres, Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Joshua Strong, Education Administrator for the Local Agency Systems Support Office (LASSO) within the Student Achievement and Support Division.

The next AC meeting will be held on Friday, October 2, 2026.

HOT TOPICS: Getting Down to Facts (GDTF) Report 3

Susanna Loeb, Professor of Education at Stanford University, presented findings from [Getting Down to Facts 3](#), a statewide research effort examining the current state of California's education system and opportunities for improvement. The research involved 112 researchers, 55 technical reports, and input from more than 2,000 Californians. Loeb highlighted the significant progress California has made through initiatives such as LCFF, universal meals, expanded learning, Transitional Kindergarten, teacher residencies, and community schools. However, she noted that implementation and outcomes remain uneven across the state, with local leadership and capacity playing an important role in how successfully these initiatives are carried out.

GDTF organized the primary system-level challenges around the "ABCs": Accountability and Alignment, Balance between state guidance and local control, and Capacity. She noted that California has many accountability tools and strong goals, but they are not always connected in ways that effectively guide improvement. Loeb also discussed the need to find a better balance between local control and state guidance, noting the administrative burden created by numerous choices and reporting requirements. Finally, she

— 2026 - 27 Meeting Dates (Times: 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.)

August 14, 2026

October 2, 2026

December 4, 2026

February 5, 2027

April 2, 2027

June 4, 2027

Links / References

- [Agenda for August 14, 2026](#)
- [AC Bylaws](#)

emphasized the need to strengthen capacity at the district and school levels, including access to professional learning, implementation support, and coordinated resources.

The discussion following the presentation focused on the practical implications for districts and the state. Superintendents raised questions about professional development time, collective bargaining, labor relations, the emerging state governance structure, and what districts can do without waiting for legislative action. Loeb encouraged local leaders to use existing resources, experiment with new approaches, and intentionally track implementation and outcomes to learn what works. Overall, the presentation emphasized that California has made substantial investments and established ambitious goals, but greater coherence, clearer roles and accountability, reduced administrative burden, and stronger capacity are needed to consistently translate those investments into improved outcomes for students.

AC members were encouraged to review the [GDTF Website](#) and Susanne Loeb's [GDTF PPT](#) for more information.

CCEE Topic: AC Survey Results

Gary Waddell shared [AC survey results](#) and feedback gathered through surveys and individual conversations with Advisory Council members about the Council's work and priorities. Overall, members expressed high trust in CCEE and its leadership and valued the Advisory Council as a connection between research, best practices, district and county realities, and state policy. Members also indicated that the topics being addressed are timely and relevant, while expressing interest in opportunities for deeper discussion and more direct engagement with specific issues.

For the 2026–27 year, the strongest areas of interest identified by members were governance and state leadership changes and role clarity within the Statewide System of Support. Other areas identified for future discussion included funding sustainability, technology and AI, upstream drivers of student outcomes, political navigation and board relations, and leadership development. Members also suggested several structural changes, including a brief survey before each meeting to identify current “hot topics,” opportunities for facilitated breakout discussions, and potentially holding one Advisory Council meeting in person each year to allow for deeper conversation and relationship-building.

Overall, the feedback suggested maintaining the current value and relevance of the Advisory Council while creating more opportunities for member voice, deeper dialogue, and connection to emerging issues. Gary and CCEE leadership indicated that the Council's 2026–27 work will be anchored in governance and state leadership changes and role clarity within the Statewide System of Support, while continuing to incorporate member-requested topics. The team also committed to seeking input before meetings and exploring opportunities for in-person engagement and more interactive formats.

CCEE Quick Updates: Assembly Bill 181

The discussion centered on the major changes to California's education governance structure under AB 181 and what they could mean for CCEE and other state education agencies. A new Education Commissioner, appointed by the Governor, is expected to be in place by January 2027. A subsequent review will examine how agencies—including CCEE—are aligned and working together, with a draft report expected in June 2027 and a final report in October 2027.

Matt emphasized that the new structure could create greater clarity and coordination at the state level, but the transition will be complex. The Education Commissioner will need to navigate multiple stakeholders and understand California's education system quickly, while making significant decisions within a relatively short timeframe.

The Advisory Council also discussed the uncertainty around who will be selected as Education Commissioner and who is advising the Governor on potential candidates. There were no clear answers at the time of the meeting. CCEE will continue to monitor the transition and make the governance changes an ongoing topic for the Advisory Council.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Executive Director Navo concluded the meeting by sharing new reports and upcoming opportunities for the Advisory Council with resources available to districts and county offices: Secondary Redesign has an RFP being developed for LEAs interested in participating and receiving funding to reimagine their secondary school systems; Data Academies, which provide training on using data for analysis, instructional practice, and leadership; and Connecting California, a free virtual conference showcasing statewide System of Support resources and expertise. Members were encouraged to share both opportunities with their networks.

- [Core Working Group Report](#)
- [Statewide System of Support \(SSoS\) Design Team Report](#)
- [2026- 27 CCEE Data Academy \(Applications close 8/27\)](#)
- [2nd Annual SSoS Virtual Conference: Connecting California](#)

The CCEE is a statewide organization created in 2013 to advise and assist Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) and the County Office of Education (COE) in accomplishing the goals identified in their Local Control Accountability Plans (LCAPs). If you would like more detailed information on the CCEE and its current initiatives, please visit the CCEE website at <https://ccee-ca.org/>