ccee
California Collaborative
for Educational Excellence

Palmdale School District

Leading with Data: How District Leaders Lead Through Complexity to Advance Equity



CERA Conference

November 5, 2026

Slide Link: bit.ly/CCEE-115

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- CCEE's Data Academy
- Panel Discussion
  - From Data Use to Data Leadership
  - Leading Through Complexity
  - Leading Data-Informed Action
- Q&A



Welcome & Introductions



MODERATOR

Jim Shen

Assistant Director of Data for Continuous Improvement

California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE)



COURSE LEAD

Dorcas Kong

Senior Manager of Data Leadership & Innovation

California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE)



PANELIST

Elena Esquer

Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services

Palmdale School District



PANELIST

Martha Thomas

Director of Assessment, Research, and Evaluation

Mt. Diablo Unified School District

CCEE's Data Academy



Who is the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE)?



Statewide leader whose mission is to deliver on California's promise of quality, equitable education for every student

- Teaching, Learning, & Leading Center (TLLC)
- Transformative Systems for Equitable Educational Outcomes (TSEE) Center
- Innovation, Instruction, & Impact (I3) Center

CCEE's Data Academy

Purpose: Strengthen LEAs' data capacity to drive improvement in student outcomes



Data Literacy

DATA ANALYSTS

Strengthen skills to analyze, interpret, and communicate data



Data Inquiry

SCHOOL LEADERS

Lead data conversations and inquiry cycles to improve teaching and learning



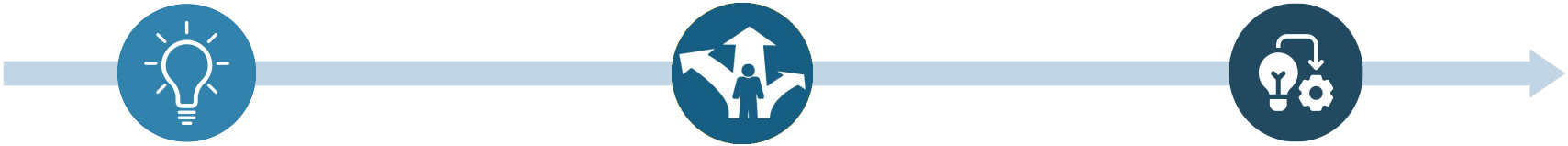
Data Leadership

DISTRICT LEADERS

Shape the strategy, systems, and culture that guide data use across the district

Data Leadership Course

From Learning to Practice



Build Knowledge

Explore leadership concepts, tools, and resources

Practice Decision-Making

Explore real-world dilemmas through case studies and peer discussion

Apply to Practice

Connect learning to district context and leadership practice

Case studies challenge leaders to weigh tradeoffs, exercise judgment, and communicate decisions when there is no single right answer.

What does it actually mean to lead with data?



Data can tell us what is happening.

Data provide information, patterns, and trends.





Leadership shapes what happens next.

Leaders interpret data in context, weigh tradeoffs, engage others, and make decisions.



Advancing equity depends not just on what the data reveal, but on **the decisions leaders make in response**.

Panel Discussion



When you think back to your experience in the Data Leadership course, how has your understanding of what it means to lead with data evolved?

Can you share a situation in your district where the data pointed to an important issue, but determining how to respond wasn't straightforward?

How do you navigate situations where people interpret the same data differently or have different ideas about what should happen next?

When you're weighing different paths forward, how do you keep equity at the center of your decision-making, especially when there are competing pressures or limited resources?

What have you learned about creating the conditions for productive data conversations, especially when those conversations challenge existing assumptions?

What's one leadership practice that's made a difference in your own work and that you'd encourage other leaders to try?

Questions?



Resources

- Interested in joining a future Data Academy cohort? Fill out this form to get notified of future Data Academy opportunities.
- Learn more about CCEE's Data Academy and our other learning networks!

Connect with CCEE at CERA!

Thursday, 11/5

- CCEE Data Academy: Improving Data Literacy and Usage at Panama Buena Vista Union School District (Salon C | 1:00-2:15 PM)
- Inside the CCEE UDL Learning Network: Using Student Voice to Improve Assessment and Learner Agency (Salon 1 | 2:45-4:00 PM)
- Moving the Needle on Black Student Outcomes: Initial Data from the African American Student Success Network (Salon F | 2:45-4:00 PM)

Thank You!



Jim Shen

California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE)

jshen@ccee-ca.org



Dorcas Kong

California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE)

dkong@ccee-ca.org



Elena Esquer

Palmdale School District

meesquer@palmdalesd.org



Martha Thomas

Mt. Diablo Unified School District

thomasms@mdusd.org