

October 2021

Dear CCSESA Partners,

Collectively, our communities and educational partners have faced an unpredictable public health crisis that forced us all to reimagine our educational priorities. Under the leadership of former Executive Director, Tom Armelino, the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) pivoted from its established statewide priorities and fulfilled the expectations of our educational community in providing support, guidance, and resources to address the most immediate needs surfaced by the pandemic.

With a new transition for CCEE, our team has had the opportunity to prioritize stakeholder feedback in an effort to reassess our organizational priorities, perspectives, and needs. Over the past two months, our team has been conducting various stakeholder engagement activities, including numerous empathy interviews, to gain a better understanding of our stakeholders' perspectives on the three questions below.

- What are the strengths you see in CCEE?
- What are the challenges?
- What ideas/opportunities do you have for CCEE to consider?

We gathered this information and synthesized the feedback to identify common themes. These insights provided an opportunity for us to pause and critically reflect on our practices to assess challenges and new opportunities.

The feedback we received identified several strengths of CCEE. Most notably, there is earned trust between CCEE and its educational partners and stakeholders in addressing the challenges of an evolving K-12 educational landscape. CCEE's capability of being a flexible, nimble, and adaptable organization allowed us to effectively support LEAs in navigating the pandemic. This was reaffirmed by over 130 stakeholders from the following stakeholder groups:

- State agencies (State Board of Education, CDE)
- System of Support partners (county offices, Geo Lead representatives, SELPA Lead representatives)
- State Legislature
- Statewide associations (CCSESA, ACSA, CTA, CSBA, CISC, BASC, and others)
- Local educational agencies (districts, charters)

- Other stakeholder groups (CCEE Advisory Council, Equity Coalition, and others)

Highlighted below is our approach to continue supporting LEAs beyond the pandemic. It is a reflection of our commitment to collaboratively reimagine and rebuild an education system that ensures all students “have the support and opportunities they need to achieve their potential” ([Reimagine and Rebuild California Schools, 2021](#)).

This work relies on us to meaningfully support LEAs in “[laying] the groundwork for long-term systemic transformation via collaboration and co-creation” with students, families, and the larger educational community. CCEE is collaborating with its partners to *reimagine* how these family-school-community partnerships can be leveraged to foster inclusive environments that address whole child needs in both in-person and virtual settings (e.g, [Community Engagement Initiative](#)).

We also seek to *rebuild* our collective wellness by understanding the impacts of trauma, amplifying student voice, and adopting an asset-based approach to mitigate the lingering effects of unfinished learning (see CCEE’s [Playbook for Accelerating Learning](#)). As we engage with our stakeholders, [listen to their experiences](#), and reflect on the lessons learned, CCEE is strategizing ways to restructure and refine our approach to support LEAs in providing the educational experience our students and families deserve.

These are not abstract commitments— CCEE will continue to improve how we leverage the following strengths to support our students, families, teachers, and educational community:

- Relationships and trust built over the course of the pandemic
- Collaboration with stakeholders
- Quality, relevance, and usability of professional learning resources
- Highly respected team and quality trainings

CCEE’s high expectations for continuous improvement apply to all aspects of its work. To further develop our strengths, it was clear CCEE could improve its outreach to partners and stakeholders to maximize its support for the field. As we engaged with our stakeholders to identify additional ways CCEE could improve the value it brings to the field, we heard the following challenges/opportunities come through in their feedback:

- Clarity for the Statewide System of Support (SSOS) - roles and responsibilities
- Engagement by actively engaging stakeholders around immediate needs
- Focus of work for CCEE being more defined (support vs compliance or both)
- Engagement of partners both in structure and ideas for innovation

However, our stakeholders also offered innovative approaches to improve our efforts to meet the needs of the field. This collective feedback provided us with a much better understanding of how CCEE could prioritize the activities aligned to its four agency goals.

- **Goal 1:** Support LEAs currently receiving Direct Technical Assistance and address this expansion of resources/supports to other LEAs
- **Goal 2:** Focus on professional learning that emphasize high priority topics throughout the school year to build LEA capacity and improve outcomes
- **Goal 3:** Facilitate the development and implementation of structures, relationships, and processes to support the expansion of the System of Support for LEAs
- **Goal 4:** Designing and implement strategies and initiatives to share lessons learned from our work and best practices from the field

I look forward to fulfilling these goals and pursuing CCEE's mission of being a statewide inclusive-minded agency designed to help deliver on California's promise of quality, equitable education for every student.

We look forward to hearing your ideas and opportunities for CCEE. Please use this [link](#) to share your reflections and thoughts on how we can continue to improve.

Sincerely,

Matt J. Navo