CALIFORNIA SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY (CSLA) OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Established by SB 813 in 1983, CSLA delivered statewide administrator leadership training focused on teaching and learning so that each and every student could meet or exceed standards. The legislature appropriated $1.4 million annually for the administration and development of the overall program and $4.6 million for grants to the regional centers. Eliminated due to budget cuts in 2003, the CSLA was structured with a state center and twelve regional centers hosted through grants to county offices of education.

CSLA offered three main programs: The Foundation Program for new and veteran administrators and teacher leaders; School Leadership Teams for the principal, teachers, and other staff; and Ventures for practicing administrators focused on developing cultural competency and equitable schooling. Participation was voluntary and credit for the Foundation Program could be applied to partial fulfillment of a preliminary administrator credential. The Foundation Program was free for initial cohorts. Later a small fee was instituted in order to increase the availability of training for additional participants and new advanced programs.

These programs offered organized participants into cohorts and offered those cohorts intensive, long-term professional learning; for example, 10 to 15 days annually for up to three years for individual leaders and 6 to 7 days annually for two years for site principals with their leadership teams. Training focused on applying leadership actions to leverage points within a system to improve struggling schools and achieve equitable outcomes for students. Sessions included research and real-world applications organized in required and elective modules. Participants completed projects and presented analyses of their progress and impact through exhibitions. Facilitators were screened and trained prior to service in the regional centers.

CSLA also established a training program for developing and supporting leadership coaches. Also, in collaboration with the state's professional organization, the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), CSLA offered semi-annual professional learning seminars and regional peer groups for superintendents through the Executive Leadership Center for California Superintendents (ELC) twice a year, with regional follow through seminars. In addition, the CSLA network provided shorter term technical assistance that customized support to principals and district leaders with a relationship to CSLA. Regional center staff provided specifically requested services consistent with the mission and purpose of CSLA. The nature and scope of the services varied.

STRUCTURE

Authorization

SB 813, 1983, was a comprehensive omnibus bill to reform K-12 education. It included, among many other provisions, lengthening the school day, upgrading graduation requirements, and the initiation of the Administrator Training and Evaluation Project (ATEP) that eventually became the California School Leadership Academy (CSLA) with regional centers, originally named Administrator Training Centers (ATC) and later School Leadership Centers (SLC). The ATEP was authorized for three years with an option to renew each year with satisfactory evaluations, if funds were available. The centers were governed by Memos of Understanding (MOU) with the CDE, and the regional MOU process was facilitated for CDE by central CSLA staff.

Funding

The ATEP (CSLA) was a line item in the governor's budget, approved by the legislature, with funding going to CDE for administration, then to County Offices of Education for training development and regional delivery and support. The County Offices served as fiscal agents for both the central and regional centers. (See below for organizational details.) Over the 17-plus years of the CSLA, CDE applied federal and state funds for the operation of the central and regional centers. The legislature approved one budget augmentation in 1987 to include the San Joaquin Valley counties and Santa Barbara, Ventura and San Luis Obispo counties that were not included in the original grants. With cost of living increases in only some years, the CSLA budget remained essentially the same through 2002-2003. The legislature appropriated $1.4 million annually for the administration and development of the overall program and $4.6 million for grants to the regional centers. The CSLA was eliminated due to budget cuts in 2003.

The CSLA earned funding for special projects, such as a three-year federal LEAD program for California that incorporated national activities related to principal preparation and professional development, documentation of state leadership activities and results, and special topics (e.g., border states' educational opportunities and challenges). For two years, the CSLA also assisted CDE in developing and initiating the High School Investment grant program for 30 high schools integrating academics and career-tech education into pathways.

The CSLA program was free to participants. The annual SLC's budgets governed how many participants and programs could be available based on regional costs. Initially, each SLC received the same amount of funding. However, reconfiguration of the centers later on resulted in one center with a smaller pool of participants having its budget reduced and two very large centers increasing their allocations. With the expansion of professional learning requests and responses across the board, CSLA's advisory committee members in some regions agreed to pay small registration fees for certain program components to enable their centers to offset the increased demand for resources for additional numbers of participants, training sessions, and coaching. (See CSLA Advisory Committees.)

Organizational Structure

A competitive RFP process led CDE to select a set of county offices of education to provide leadership training, and successful counties received grants directed through an MOU. After the first year of implementation, CDE reviewed training curriculum and materials, use of state frameworks and guides, and numbers of participants. Superintendent Honig and CDE then reconceived the ATEP structure where CDE administered regional delivery centers through a central or "core" office. The final structure resulted in the California School Leadership Academy (CSLA) comprising two units: 1) CSLA centralized development and support, operated through a contract from CDE, first to Santa Clara COE, then to Alameda COE, and then to WestEd, and 2) 12-14 regional SLCs operated from grants issued by CDE to lead county offices of education. (See Geographic Coverage). This basic structure continued for the life of the CSLA program.

Superintendent Honig tasked CDE's Deputy Superintendent as CSLA's liaison, and the practice of assigning high-level CDE leaders to work with CSLA continued throughout the program. The CSLA had an MOU and a budget that were monitored by assigned CDE administrators. The CSLA central staff facilitated a similar MOU and budget processes with county offices for the regional centers.

Geographic Coverage

CDE and founding CSLA staff configured the first regional centers based on geography and the existing numbers of principals/site administrators in the region. Competitive grant applications resulted in funding 11 centers ranging from one county to 10 counties, and one very large district (Los Angeles Unified School District). Initially, multiple counties in the San Joaquin Valley and the Central Coast's Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo counties were not included. Those counties were later added through a budget augmentation approved by the legislature, and three new centers were created, making 14 centers in all. Later, the Los Angeles Unified School District's Center was incorporated into the Los Angeles County Center and the separate North and South San Joaquin Centers were combined, making the final 12 regional centers.

For the most part, participants' professional learning locations were within their region's center. However, in a few cases, participants engaged with another center more reasonably located near their schools or homes or with long-standing agreements for professional learning services. The Center configuration reflected, but did not exactly match, the COE regions or the ACSA regions.

CSLA Participants

District superintendents or designees selected principals for CSLA and sponsored their participation. In some cases, principals nominated themselves. However, in every case, to participate in CSLA training during school time, a letter of district approval was required. Participants reflected the variety of professionals serving as new and veteran principals, vice principals and teacher leaders, special

program administrators, and district office staff. They varied from those completing their administrative credential requirements, those beginning their assignments as principals, those interested in upgrading their skills for new assignments, and to those monitoring and mentoring principals.

Initially, participant targets were set for 60% new principals, 20% veteran administrators, and 20% aspiring principals. The targets emphasized those early in their careers and thought most likely to be long-term investments for applying training to their practice. The CSLA program was not designed specifically for struggling administrators, as those principals needed their districts' more individualized direction and assistance. However, CSLA participants did reflect a broad range of experiences and skills, different performance levels and grade levels, and rural, suburban, and urban locales.

In the early years, CSLA tried to reach the goal of providing training for new principals (60%) for a couple of years, but principals with three or more years were the ones being registered by superintendents. Superintendents did not think the newest principals could handle more professional development and wanted to handle orientation of the newest principals internally. Additionally, during this time, more experienced principals were the ones most interested in CSAL training. Now more settled in their leadership positions, they wanted to pull their knowledge and skills together, receive updates on state resources that had not been part of their preparation, and use support from peers and CSLA to develop more mature skills and approaches to challenges they were working on. For a time, aspiring leader numbers grew when the Commission on Teacher Credentialing allowed the CSLA program to be counted as non-university credits for the administrative credential. In later years, the number of registered participants from all experience levels were about the same.

Central Office or Core Staff

Superintendent Honig and CDE selected/approved the initial CSLA leadership team comprising a CDE Liaison, Executive and Deputy Directors, COE Liaison, and a Training and Development Director. They staffed positions for a director of business, research and evaluation, and program delivery.

"Core Staff" in the CSLA central office organized the design and development of professional learning programs, along with the work of the regional SLCs into a statewide effort of leadership development focused on improved student learning.

The CSLA Central Office/Core Staff were responsible for the following:
- administering the CSLA program to ensure program integrity and quality;
- organizing the statewide network of CSLA programs, materials, calendars, and services;
- preparing, training, and supporting quality CSLA staff, workshop leaders, and coaches for the CSLA programs;
- developing and publishing new training programs, materials, and technology for workshops and follow-through coaching;
- continuing to develop programs, materials, and delivery processes that align with standards-based education and the framework documents;

- assessing the quality of CSLA programs, facilitators, and materials, and the impact of CSLA programs;
- linking with state programs and initiatives to provide coherent professional development aligned with state law, policies, and initiatives;
- preparing CSLA fiscal and activity reports that apprise CDE of progress toward the accomplishment of the annual contract; and
- executing other activities necessary to ensure high-quality implementation of the CSLA program.

Monitoring and Assessment of Core Center and Staff

The contract between CDE and CSLA required reports and documentation in order to gauge the progress of CSLA in the completion of activities outlined in the annual work plan. Periodic reports provided interim feedback and mid-course adjustments. The year-end summary report provided final documentation of accomplishments and budget status. Using data to gauge the quality of programs, delivery, materials, and personnel was essential in CSLA's efforts to continuously improve and, thus, have maximum impact on administrators and teacher leaders.

Each month the Core Staff submitted itemized invoices and an updated report on progress to the designated CDE representative(s). An annual summary report was due to the designated CDE representatives no later than 30 days following the end of the fiscal year.

Examples of successfully meeting expectations were completion of products, organizing and conducting training sessions, and putting technology-based materials online. Facilitator certification processes also provided a route to measure quality. Evaluations by participants in each of CSLA's programs provided feedback on what was delivered, as well as what was learned and applied in practice. In addition, CSLA continued to survey participants and experts in instructional leadership in order to determine the quality of current offerings and future needs of leaders. Unsolicited feedback was received from various sources, considered, and acted upon when appropriate.

Regional SLC Directors and Staff

Each of the School Leadership Centers was staffed with a Director, an Assistant Director, and support staff. Candidates for these positions were recruited by leaders in the regions and by CSLA staff. Every candidate was paper screened by a panel of COE and CSLA staff or representatives. A joint panel of CSLA and COE staff participated in a mock training session led by the candidate, who engaged with the panel in a more traditional interview. The panel recommended candidates to the CSLA Director for final selection. (See Facilitator Screening Process for additional details on the process.)

Personnel and fiscal services of each lead county office supported CSLA employees as agreed upon in the annual MOU. CSLA director positions were commensurate with high-level county assistant superintendents or division directors, depending on the size of the COE.

About twenty-five CSLA staff leaders served as regional program directors, along with serving as trainers, facilitators, and coaches for the seminar sessions and follow-through support. Each director and assistant director had been a successful principal at the elementary, middle school, high school, or special site and/or a district administrator. All had additional preparation in presentation and facilitation skills and had successfully completed the required CSLA training for trainers sessions and capacity-building seminars.

The regional CSLA staff were responsible for carrying out the CSLA program as developed. Coming from the region, CSLA staff knew the contexts and cultures of the areas either directly or indirectly and could make minor adjustments when appropriate and approved by CSLA core staff. They were able to fit the statewide professional learning content and logistics with local assets and resources. In addition, CSLA regional staff helped the core staff better understand how to make program requirements apply to regional implementation and design and/or modify the program, recruit new staff and trainers, maintain regional advisory committees, and forecast future needs.

CSLA Facilitators

CSLA facilitators were a key component of CSLA's program and participant success. Program facilitators and coaches included CSLA core staff, regional staff, and others who were successfully screened and invited to attend training for trainers or coaching capacity-building sessions. Like CSLA staff, facilitators were selected from the region's practitioners who were or had been successful administrators. Facilitators represented various grade levels and types of settings. Facilitators had worked with low performing schools, state sanctioned schools, accomplished schools, and improving schools in urban, suburban, and rural areas. They had skill in delivering face-to-face training and support, and in later years, in using a variety of technologies, such as video conferencing, webinars, and web-based resource sharing.

Two facilitators led each professional learning session of about 30 participants, with additional facilitators for larger groups. This provided opportunities for participants and facilitators to share more perspectives and examples on how the session work connected to participants' knowledge and skills and supported varying professional needs. When a second local facilitator was not available, CSLA staff outside of the region often came in to substitute.

At times, CSLA provided experts in specialized areas for additional support to facilitators and participants (e.g., new technology applications or specific research or subject matter). These experts also provided insights into how topical content should address students with special needs or English Learners. They came from other regional consortia (e.g., subject matter projects, counties, higher education, districts, schools, and private consultants). The content experts were not required to go through CSLA's screening process to serve in this capacity, but were encouraged to do so. Many of them did screen and worked as facilitators beyond their specialties.

Facilitator Screening Process

Potential facilitators were recruited by leaders in the regions and the CSLA staff from individual observations or recommendations. Facilitator applications were paper screened by a panel of COE and CSLA staff or representatives, and promising candidates were then invited to be screened by a joint panel of CSLA and COE staff in a three-part process. Potential facilitators were first asked to prepare a training session of a given length that demonstrated content knowledge, training segments, and facilitation skills, and that connected with participants. The panel participated in the mock training session as participants. The second part was a more traditional interview, probing for attitudes about student and professional learning, use of state resources and assessment data, and support strategies for various principal challenges. Immediately following the interview, potential facilitators were asked to conference with the lead panelist in order to review their presentation and interview ratings, using the rating protocols provided to them as part of their screening preparation. Successful candidates were invited to join the appropriate training for trainers sessions and were provided information about logistics and support.

Facilitator Preparation – Training for Trainers (TFT)

Each facilitator was selected and prepared to lead specific content areas that were organized into modules for the Foundation Program or seminar sessions for other CSLA programs. Training for Trainers (TFT) sessions for each module or seminar were required. In TFT, facilitators participated in module and session activities in order to fully understand how they were designed, reviewing key concepts and research that are the foundation for the module, practicing training sections with peers, problem solving anticipated challenges, and demonstrating capacity and willingness to train according to CSLA standards. In the TFT, facilitators demonstrated using and teaching the audio-visual (in the early years) and technology (in later years) indicated in the module's or program's Facilitator Guide. There were at least two facilitators for each TFT session, sometimes augmented by others with specialized expertise. The TFT was two to three days to allow facilitators to experience the module as a learner and then also to work through their role as a facilitator. New module TFT sessions were scheduled in two locations — one north and one south. TFT sessions for continuing/older modules were periodically repeated as necessary to develop new facilitators and refresh or update content for veteran facilitators.

In addition to quality selection and preparation, CSLA offered ongoing support to facilitators and monitored their effectiveness. Workshop sessions had at least two facilitators. This offered varied experience and content knowledge to the participants and working in tandem with another trained facilitator supported instructors in planning, delivery, and problem solving. A core staff liaison was assigned to each module or program to ensure that facilitators had access to needed support, materials, or content clarification that strengthened program delivery and principal learning.

Facilitators were evaluated as part of the participants' end-of-session feedback. Regional center staff collected and analyzed the results and provided facilitators with timely feedback on clarity of directions, content, facilitation, usefulness of resources other effectiveness factors on the CSLA

evaluation form. Struggling facilitators who showed promise were paired with a lead trainer as an apprentice for additional support. Facilitators who continued to struggle were counseled out of CSLA training roles.

CSLA Advisory Committees

Consultation with thoughtful and experienced educators who had interest and expertise in developing effective principals was an important engagement process from the beginning of the ATEP throughout the CSLA program. The original Advisory Board for ATEP was called together to help shape the operations and program of the new program. Members included notable researchers, high-ranking state leaders and staff, district superintendents, exemplary principals, and professional learning experts. As the program developed into CSLA, with regional leadership recognized as important to customizing effective training delivery and regional resources, CSLA instituted regional advisory committees. These committees were convened by the SLC Director and included representatives from district and county leaders, principals and facilitators engaged in training, regional university programs, a CSLA core staff member, and others that the SLC invited to balance representation of the range of districts and participants. In most cases, the committees met twice a year, in person. The advisory committees reviewed the SLC's outcomes and plans for the following year, and helped to set specific targets for number of participants and measures of demonstrated success. As the program was implemented, the committee served to inform professional development activities, provide region information, suggest and/or request materials, confer on principal groupings, comment on draft schedules, suggest and provide training venues, and review samples of participant work products. Each regional advisory committee helped the SLC keep their programs on track, offered suggestions for improvements or extensions, and built a commitment to ongoing SLC support.

CSLA Partnerships and Collaborations with Other Professional Development Programs and Initiatives

The CSLA developed relationships and partnerships with many education agencies and organizations based on CDE priorities and the content, delivery, and resources needed for core and regional staff to be well informed, connected to, and aligned with those engaged in leadership work. These relationships were critical to efficiently and effectively develop and implement the CSLA's programs and services. Broad and deep partnerships included: the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), the Western Assessment Collaborative (no longer exists; SBAC and others replaced it), the California Teachers Association (CTA), the California Federation of Teachers (CFT), the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Network (BTSA), and the subject-matter projects; continued ongoing relationships with various divisions/departments in CDE; education agencies in other states; CA county offices and their Curriculum and Instruction Steering Committees; and California state agencies and institutions (e.g., Commission on Teacher Credentialing, University of California, California State Universities, and private colleges).

County Offices

The CSLA was structured by MOUs with the lead county offices where CSLA's core and regional offices were located. Each of these centers functioned with a county office as a fiscal agent. Additionally, meeting and training spaces were often in county offices throughout the regions. COE staff often were approved facilitators and content experts, and joined capacity-building seminars for coaches. Staff were part of design teams for new training and served on CSLA advisory committees. COEs were valuable connectors to local leaders and resources that helped the CSLA program expand its services beyond its fixed budget. COE leaders promoted CSLA programs with local districts and state leaders and highlighted CSLA in their own promotions of COE leadership training capacity.

Participating Districts

Superintendents and district administrators were key partners in the success of CSLA's program and participants. District leaders selected principals and others to participate in CSLA training. They signed a commitment, with School Board approval, to support principals' professional learning and teacher leader release time and agreed to open district information to participants in order for them to complete projects. Participant supervisors joined periodic briefings about new CSLA program offerings and engaged in developing new training, serving as facilitators and advisory committee members. District leaders hosted opportunities at School Board meetings for CSLA to recognize their district's successful CSLA graduates.

Universities

University staff participated as advisory committee members. They worked on design teams for new initiatives and became trained facilitators. Some staff provided references to research and evidence-base practices, and through the federally funded LEAD project, conducted action research and documented CSLA activities. University staff served as content experts for some trainings and as keynote speakers for the annual Convocation and special events. Various university campuses accepted CSLA training as non-university credits for credentials and certificates.

CSLA PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMS

The CSLA mission guided the program's content and learning approaches:
To help practicing administrators and teachers in leadership positions strengthen their instructional leadership skills and focus their actions on the issues and strategies critical to increasing the achievement of all students in California.

CSLA believed there were theories of adult professional development that were strong predictors of learning that would lead to action. The CSLA Learning Theory described that "Learning is best facilitated…

- where tasks are meaningful to the learner because they emerge from his or her authentic issues, problems, or question and are focused on agreed-upon outcomes
- where learners construct meaning, apply, reflect upon, and receive coaching and feedback on applications in their real-world settings,

- in an environment that is absent of threat, but promotes high challenge, intellectual rigor, and motivated inquiry,
- where learners are empowered to use their personal strengths and hold themselves and one another accountable for appropriate action,
- where learners are viewed as rich resources, valued for their diversity, and interact collaboratively as a learning community,
- through in-depth, problem-solving projects approached from a variety of perspectives,
- where the learner is personally connected to the content and context of learning."

CSLA held certain assumptions about how a participant's professional learning transferred into changed and improved practices that benefitted principals and other leaders, teachers, and students. CSLA believed that participants are more likely to learn and use new ideas and skills when training:

- is long-term, with a consistent point of view about instructional leadership and the leader's role in curricular and instructional improvements;
- occurs in consistent cohort groups that develop collegial networks and support for one another; and
- relies on conceptual frameworks that assist in organizing and using new information (e.g., leverage, organizational culture, systems thinking, as well as student and professional standards).

Participants will learn at sufficiently powerful levels to incorporate and integrate new ideas and strategies into their work when training experiences:

- simulate real-world contexts through case studies, scenarios and vignettes, role playing, and adapted personal stories;
- are built around a high-quality, research-based curriculum; and
- allocate sufficient time to strategize how to apply learning to practice.

To illustrate these beliefs and assumptions, CSLA organized the structure, delivery, support, and monitoring systems of its programs in specific ways. CSLA offered a comprehensive system of long-term professional learning that was developed, over time, for site and district leaders and coaches and included the following:

- The **Foundation Program** focused individuals on an understanding of teaching and learning in an interrelated standards-based system and the leader's role in making it happen.
    The initial principals' program for individual leaders was designed and introduced year-by-year over the first three years of the initiative. This modular program organized and linked content by key systems components (e.g., vision, mission, and goals); curriculum, assessment and instruction; and subject matter areas. To reflect state direction and regional requests, modules continued to be added or updated every year throughout CSLA's tenure. This initial training approach was branded as The Foundation Program.

- The **School Leadership Team Program** engaged teachers, staff, parents, and students with the principal in taking actions that improved instructional practices, resulting in increased student achievement.

As the first cohort of participants completed the three-year Foundation program, principals and their districts requested development and support focused on initiating shared or team leadership. CSLA designed the two-year School Leadership Team (SLT) program. This professional learning helped principals extend and deepen their own learning and leadership practices as they worked with their staff to address specific instructional challenges. Seminars were organized following a cycle of continuous improvement.

- **Ventures** guided experienced principals in deeply studying their school's context and results in order to "get unstuck" and strategically implement equitable practices and improvements. Several years later, the Ventures program emerged as targeted professional learning for small cohorts of Foundation or SLT program graduates. Participants had more than three years of experience and felt stuck in addressing their achievement gap results. They sought to develop understanding about and confidence in addressing equity-based issues that were continuing sources of their schools' and students' underperformance. Seminars were organized as action research projects with field investigations.

- The **Executive Leadership Center** for California Superintendents focused on innovative ideas that stimulate whole district change targeting increased student learning.
  As the Foundation training was developing, the state superintendent and district superintendents called for professional development for practicing superintendents that would help them support principals engaged with CSLA. Select university faculty collaborated with CSLA and the Association for California School Administrators (ACSA) to design the Executive Leadership Center for California Superintendents (ELC). This program offered semi-annual, peer learning seminars pitched at executive leadership development focused on instructional leadership and improving schools. A committee of district superintendents worked with CSLA staff to develop and facilitate ELC seminar activities.

- The **Coaching Network** prepared successful administrators to develop and use coaching skills to support school and district leaders.
  About ten years into the initiative, CSLA began a program to train leadership coaches. Participants engaged in various programs often requested personal coaching to better leverage CSLA learning into improved educator and student outcomes. Unable to respond to the number of calls themselves, CSLA leaders set to broker coaches for program participants. However, they found that leadership coaches were unavailable or non-existent for principals and other district leaders. To mitigate this problem, CSLA collaborated with professional coach leaders to develop a program to train and support those wishing to serve as CSLA leadership coaches. As cohorts of coaches were trained and certified, they were connected to participants asking for them.

In addition, the CSLA network provided short-term professional learning and technical assistance, as requested by participating districts, that specifically tailored information or support to the needs of a principal, a school, or a district engaging in improving student results in a standards-based system. CSLA also hosted special events like regional forums on education challenges and opportunities related

to equitable schooling (e.g., diversity as an asset and developing cultural competency). (See Participant Outcomes). The overall CSLA program also included an annual statewide conference — the Convocation.

To build the CSLA community, recognize participant and sponsor accomplishments, and reinforce key ideas and research introduced in regional training sessions, CSLA convened the Convocation. Annually for the first ten years, then biannually, the Convocation was a celebration of educators completing a CSLA program as well as a showcase for principals' and district leaders' accomplishments. The state superintendent greeted participants and highlighted important initiatives and progress, and state education and policy leaders offered brief remarks. Major researchers whose work was included in training modules and materials lead discussion groups, national thought leaders delivered keynote addresses, and CSLA and participants hosted table talks to share how they applied CSLA learning to their own sites. CSLA core and regional centers supported program events, while districts and participants shared other expenses. Attendees received a "reader" compiled from publications and materials by featured speakers, researchers, and participant colleagues and a directory that included CSLA Associates, those completing a program.

Program Elements in Common

Overall, the CSLA program comprised over thirty modules in the Foundation program, fifteen guides in the School Leadership Team program, and seven Ventures seminar workbooks. Additional materials and resources were developed for fifteen statewide Executive Leadership Center seminars and ten Coaching Network capacity-building sessions. Each of the three long-term programs – Foundation, School Leadership Team, and Ventures – presented CSLA participants with a carefully constructed core curriculum, an expectation that they complete work between sessions, and a call to take action at their schools to improve teaching, learning, and leadership.

The content in each of the programs was organized in a coherent series of seminars that focused on using student assessment and other data as the center of learning and action, and then aligning and integrating standards-based curriculum in planning, applying varied instructional strategies to reach all students, developing and supervising teachers' effectiveness, managing programs and resources, and shaping a culture of continuous improvement. Every seminar included themes of building personal knowledge and confidence, competency in addressing equity issues, and collaboration and distributed leadership among staff, parents, and the broader community.

The seminars included direct instruction, analysis, guided practice, application planning, homework that connected training to their work, and reflection. Activities were organized for individuals, small groups, and whole group participation and included reading, writing, discussion, dialogue, debate, and presentations. A variety of sources were used in seminar materials – conceptual frameworks, student and teacher data, technical briefs, professional journal articles, cases and scenarios, research studies, videos, links to other disciplines, state and federal guidelines and resources, and personal reflections. Varied strategies and materials were used not only to provide leadership content, but also to illustrate

good practices of differentiated instruction that should be expected in classrooms and seen during observations.

While CSLA's programs each had a strong core curriculum, CSLA staff could work with facilitators to adapt content and approaches to fit a specific context or participants' experience levels. As in core curriculum, these personalized activities were captured as "next steps"
recorded at the end of every day in participant journals, team decision logs, project plans, and/or peer coaching notes.

Due to California's ever-changing context, CSLA core staff and partners updated activities, materials, and facilitators every 18 to 24 months.

The Foundation Program

The purpose of the Foundation Program was to develop the capacity of individual school leaders at all levels to facilitate actions within their schools that would lead to learning for all members of the school community.

Foundation Program Goals
The program's design and strategies were geared to enable participants to:
- create and articulate a vision and plan of student learning based upon research and practice;
- use culture-building skills to shape norms of professionalism and continuous improvement;
- develop and use leadership skills to build the capacity of a school community to accomplish its vision;
- analyze leadership actions and reflect on their appropriateness in bringing about significant change;
- redefine the role of leadership in a school as shared leadership within a community of learners;
- provide resources and opportunities for teachers to develop a thinking, meaning-centered curriculum in the various content areas;
- design and use a performance-based accountability system that drives student learning and promotes continuous improvement in a school;
- facilitate the design and implement new structures to increase students' opportunities for more powerful learning experiences; and
- recognize the need for and facilitate the development and implementation of appropriate learning experiences and support structures for California's diverse student population.

Program Organization
The Foundation Program was organized in a variety of ways to meet the needs and schedules of educators. In general, the program was sequenced over two to three years and included, for example, a two-day institute followed by a series of five to six seminars each year. The original Foundation Program consisted of 15 days of training per year, with no more than 7 days when students were in session. The remainder of the training was set to coincide with district professional development days,

intersessions, before or after school, or other professional time. Training sessions occurred monthly, during summer conferences, all day or half days, and on site or off site depending on scheduling participants with approved trainers. Participants who were teacher leaders followed professional development and release time rules in their local working agreements.

Participants worked in a cohort group of about 30 administrators for the training seminars, with a lead facilitator who remained with them throughout the project, and at least one other facilitator. Specialized content presentations, mentoring or coaching, and intensive support could occur in smaller groups, and in some cases individually, by facilitators and coaches with appropriate expertise and experience in face-to-face settings or later, via web-based communication.

Professional learning content was organized into modules ranging from one to three days in length. Seminars included pertinent research on the topic, key issues and challenges, national and state guidelines and advisories, tools for analyzing local information and identifying needs, successful practices in other schools and districts, guided practice activities, planning templates for application of new knowledge, directions for group exercises and discussions, and individual reflection prompts. These were organized into a notebook that became the seminar text and a reference manual for future use.

The core curriculum was sequenced into several activities within four sessions of a day-long seminar. Each activity focused on a specific intent that incrementally led toward the accomplishment of specific learning outcomes and applications. Facilitators used the core curriculum to plan out activities that used short lectures, individual reading, jigsaw reading, videos, audio tapes, cases and scenarios, group exercises, practice presentations, quick writes, journals, and portfolio entries to introduce and reinforce content.

Facilitators used a variety of materials and methods to individualize and contextualize the strong core curriculum. For example, in an activity geared toward analysis of student test scores, work for a new principal included introductory technical material if the principal had never been in charge of data analysis, while for an experienced principal who had analyzed data and led groups in using data, the activity was geared toward review of the process, expansion of techniques, and checking assumptions that might not be based in fact but in opinions reinforced during years of experience. Well-prepared facilitators modeled best practices of focused, active learning, building on individual strengths and needs, using the cohort's group "personality," and stretching the comfort zone of learners.

Each day of training included "homework" assignments. These activities required principals to apply new learning to their own school sites. Examples include sharing information from training with teachers at a staff meeting, collecting additional primary data from students to confirm a preliminary conclusion from assessment data, completing a reading assignment, or validating a preliminary plan with a parent group. Homework assignments extended seminar training, moved theories into practical action, reinforced strategies, and connected individual seminar content.

Modules

The training program for principals was organized into modules that focused on a variety of key areas requiring effective principal leadership. Some examples of topics included:

• Creating a vision, mission, and goals for student-centered learning • Aligning curriculum to standards • Designing and planning instruction for student results • Supervising and evaluating staff • Assessing student performance • Leading professional development • Building school culture and climate • Connecting students to school • Strengthening parent/family involvement • Conducting action research for improved teaching and leadership	• Understanding systems thinking • Aligning resources to support teaching and learning • Leading safe schools • Building cultural competence • Teaching English Learners • Using cycles of continuous improvement • Supporting beginning teachers • Subject matter curriculum: e.g., reading, math, science, history/social studies, visual and performing arts, health and physical education, career-technical education

The CSLA core staff module design team developed the portfolio of modules based on the direction of CDE and the needs and experience levels of principal participants as described by them and/or by district leaders. While modules focused on specific topics in the education system, they were linked together through a set of leverage points (and later CPSEL), program outcomes for participants, themes, and skill development and applications. Lead facilitators, who were with a cohort throughout their program, connected content from session to session.

Participant Outcomes

The Foundation Program, and later the other CSLA programs, was built around anticipated outcomes for participants' learning that would lead to effective leadership. As a result of active engagement in the CSLA program, what did principals know and what were they able to do that would apply to improving teaching and learning? For example,

As a result of this training, principals increased their capacity to provide guidance and direction for instructional improvement and were able to:

- describe their role as an instructional leader and the district's goals and expectations for principals
- develop and implement a standards-based vision of teaching and learning
- link student achievement goals to school plans, teacher goals, and personal improvement goals
- collect, use, and interpret data to inform decisions
- understand the purposes of various types of assessments and apply them appropriately
- identify and share sound instructional practices that relate to student learning goals
- practice observation and conferencing skills that promote teacher learning
- create structures and processes that facilitate strong teaching
- manage components of school operations so that teaching and learning are maximized
- align resources with teaching and learning goals

- develop and try out additional strategies to work with diverse communities
- plan and practice presentations to various audiences related to student achievement, school goals, strategies, plans, and learning strategies

Principals and other leaders reported that they had expanded their knowledge bases about education issues, improvement strategies, and California's student and professional standards, curriculum frameworks and guides, and assessment system. They expressed that they were committed to changing their schools and could articulate a thoughtful vision of what they wanted to accomplish. Principal supervisors reported seeing participants' increased confidence in leading staff discussions about changes because they had stronger facilitation skills and could back up their positions with research and examples. District leaders who were interviewing for administrator positions volunteered that they were "able to tell someone from CSLA" because of his or her ability to articulate goals and suggest improvement options.

Monitoring and Support for Principal Learning

Individual principal progress on meeting anticipated outcomes was monitored in various ways. Each participating principal:

- Self assessed his/her current leadership capacity against CSLA leverage points – and later, against the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSEL) and Descriptions of Practice (DOP). The self-assessment provided baseline information for the principal's goals and coaching conversations.

- Developed an individual capacity-building plan that included individual growth goals focused on reaching leadership goals directed at increasing teacher and student outcomes. This plan included benchmarks and indicators of success.
- Drafted a design for a preliminary time-phased action plan, following the guidelines of the district, that targeted specific student and school improvement goals and maximized allocated site resources. This plan was the basis for collaborative discussions to fine-tune the plan and determine implementation strategies.
- Produced work in seminars, homework, and coaching sessions that demonstrated their level of understanding. Lead facilitators and/or coaches provided feedback.
- Reflected on personal feelings and opinions, as well as the results of planned and unplanned actions, and recorded them in a journal. Principals chose to make public selected journal entries by including them in their portfolio, providing them to a coach, sharing them in discussions, or including one in their final exhibition presentation.
- Built a comprehensive, annotated portfolio that included selected products and artifacts, documenting levels of understanding of seminar materials, interconnectedness of concepts, and preliminary applications. The portfolio also contained self-assessment rubrics and the individual learning plan. Portfolio work could be part of seminars or homework assignments. At the end of Year One training, principals engaged colleagues and/or supervisors in a conversation about their progress, using portfolio artifacts as evidence.
- Prepared and participated in an exhibition process as a summative activity for leadership training. This included using a protocol to develop an analytical report and leading an

interactive discussion with colleagues and guests around the impact of their leadership actions. The basis for this could be their time-phased action plan.

The School Leadership Team Development Program

The School Leadership Team Program (SLT) was designed to develop leaders who had the capacity and will to facilitate actions within their schools that increased the achievement of all students. The SLT development program focused on enabling each school team to:
• create a shared vision of schooling that reflected the evolving goals of the school community and allowed all students equal access to effective learning experiences;
• articulate and work from research-based learning theory and practices shared by and to members of the school community;
• facilitate the ongoing process of developing a thinking, meaning-centered curriculum based on agreed-upon student outcomes;
• develop and use an outcome-based approach in all aspects of the school's work;
• use facilitation skills to enable others in the school community (teachers, parents, and students) to collaborate in a schoolwide change effort;
• redefine the role of leadership in the school as shared leadership within a community of leaders;
• guide a schoolwide change process that addressed the instructional challenges requiring improvement;
• guide members of the school community to assess the school's progress toward its vision and to engage in a process of continuous improvement;
• develop a repertoire of tools to create and sustain a culture of professionalism, experimentation, and continuous improvement in the school; and
• develop and use networks to gain access to resources, materials, and knowledge in specific and essential areas that supported changes needed to advance student learning.

SLTs included members from elementary, middle, and high schools in every level of API. Each SLT was composed of the principal (required) and varied combinations of teacher leaders, classified staff, a district liaison, and often, parents, community members, and students. Typically, a team attended five to six seminar sessions per year for two to three years, working with other SLTs grouped into cohort teams from different districts. At times, a district sponsored multiple teams, forming a homogeneous cohort. All teams were required to have district superintendent approval to participate.

Curriculum for the SLT program was organized by segments of a cycle of continuous improvement. Team sessions developed common knowledge and skills required of successful teams: developing as a high performance team; disaggregating and analyzing data (including SAT 9 and the API) to support teachers in improving curriculum and instruction; analyzing and selecting practices, textbooks, and materials to meet each student's needs; using student achievement standards and goals in action planning; monitoring program implementation; and shaping school culture to support everyone's learning and improvement. CSLA expected teams to take action between seminar sessions in order to meet their goals. Skill development and leadership actions were assessed through a team portfolio that

showed evidence of actions taken by the teams. CSLA developed an SLT assessment rubric for this purpose.

A five-year study of the SLT Program by the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) showed that using a specific set of CSLA strategies supported principals and teams to improve student achievement. The report noted that these strategies were being applied in a wide array of school and district contexts through the CSLA network of regional centers. This research also described the importance of a team receiving district support to meet its student achievement goals. To provide support, some districts formed a district team that met with teams from every school in the district. In other cases, the district team focused on its work with the district's underperforming schools. Based on this UCSB study, CSLA created four days of training on developing a coherent district infrastructure for district office leaders and staff.

Additional details about the SLT Program can be found in *Nine Lessons of Successful School Leadership Teams* (WestEd). [1]

The Ventures Program

The Ventures Program was designed to prepare participants to initiate and sustain a schoolwide transformation that produced improved performance results where students met standards. In it, participants conducted action research by creating an ongoing narrative analysis of the school's change process. They described the culture in their schools and its influence on the quality of instruction and student learning. The program emphasized developing a leader's capacity and will to look at equity issues that were restraining student learning opportunities, especially for traditionally underserved students.

Ventures' participants were recruited principals with three or more years of experience, not those newest to their jobs, and who were serious about institutionalizing systemic changes and who had the authority to make significant changes. Like other CSLA programs, Ventures' participants were required to have district approval to register for the program. SLCs convened participants in relatively small cohort groups of about 15-18 principals or district office leaders, each cohort serving as a collegial support network. Participants met five to six times a year.

The Ventures Program included knowledge- and skill-building, group discussions, and guided practice during its seminars and field work assignments between sessions. Key components of the curriculum content included:
- elements and infrastructure of a coherent, standards-based education system that supports student learning and achievement;

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[1] This book distills a decade of on-the-ground innovation and research pointing to what school leadership teams can do to focus on and increase student achievement. It is available for purchase at https://www.wested.org/resources/nine-lessons-of-successful-school-leadership-teams-distilling-a-decade-of-innovation/.

- collection and analysis of ethnographic, narrative, and quantitative data in order to articulate and challenge hypotheses regarding the system and its results;
- presentation of data to a variety of appropriate audiences;
- the power of a school's culture to influence behavior;
- the importance of relationship building; and
- assessment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices and approaches for the purpose of improving them to meet student-centered goals.

During seminars, principals analyzed their school data with the help of CSLA facilitators and cohort colleagues. They then considered approaches and strategies most likely to effect desired changes and, ultimately, school transformation.

Grounded in state-of-the-art research, Ventures' design and conceptual framework supported leaders in understanding how organizational change actually takes place. Ventures was uniquely designed as a performance-based approach to leadership development. Participants conducted action research, using ethnographic research methodology organized in a cycle of inquiry, to study their own school settings. Based on data collected between seminars, participants focused on how their own settings – assumptions, policies, structures, and practices – impacted students' learning and achievement at standard.

The Ventures Program required every participant to complete a project and present a system transformation strategy and its outcomes to a panel of peers. The project and exhibition centered on specific criteria related to student-centered teaching, instructional and change leadership, curriculum and instruction, diversity, personal learning, and transfer of professional development to on-the-job applications. There were three stages of an exhibition: 1) the exhibition proposal – description of the performance project and documentation of evidence, 2) proposal implementation – actions and artifacts documented in a journal and supported by training and coaching and, 3) formal argument in defense of the exhibition of achievement – analysis of progress and presentation of accomplishments and next steps using the list of CSLA criteria, supported by evidence. The SLC staff reviewed each participant's work against CSLA criteria and provided feedback and additional coaching, if needed.

An early study of the Ventures Program conducted by Claremont University found that the rigor of the program attracted a relatively small cluster of school leaders. Several participants used Ventures to support their doctoral programs. The study's findings reported that the Ventures Program appeared to enable participants to make a conceptual leap forward in both their understanding of how their schools need to change and how to change their schools so that they produce increased progress toward students meeting standards.

STUDIES AND COMMENTARY

The California School Leadership Academy served California educators from its authorization in 1983 to its reformation in 1985 and through its discontinuation in 2002–2003. More than 15,000 site, district, and teacher leaders participated in CSLA's Foundation Program, and thousands more in School

Leadership Teams, Ventures, and the Executive Leadership Center for California Superintendents. CSLA program completers, also known as Associates, and their supervisors, researchers, and supporting educators and policymakers recognize CSLA as a key contributor to the state's education system. A few examples of this follow:

- The CSLA was identified as one of California's professional learning assets in *Greatness by Design* (2012)
- The CSLA, which created ongoing training for school leaders (superintendents, principals, teachers and other staff), both as individuals and as teams, became a model for Leadership Academies in more than 20 other states (Darling-Hammond, Orphanos, et al., 2007).
- Conclusions from a study of the practices of 44 graduates during their three-year training academy found that the CSLA was a highly effective model of instructional leadership development (Marsh, 1992).
- "Overall, CSLA offers some of the most carefully designed, conceptually integrated, locally sequenced, and reform-focused programs in the country. Its set of training modules, regional structure, attention to developing leaders for a standards-based setting, and efforts to produce a coherent and powerful collegial culture make it a well-developed professional development package. The program's ability to build a strong network and cohesive professional culture across the state is unique among programs." (Peterson, Kent. *The Professional Development of Principals: Innovations and Opportunities*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation (1st, Racine, WI, February 7–9, 2001))

Other information and artifacts are available upon request.