



*California Community Schools Partnership Program*

# Learning from Community School Teachers: COHORT 1 TEACHER FELLOWS REPORT

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

This report provides an outline of the design, implementation, and iteration of a community-based learning (CBL) community of practice as a mechanism for supporting transformational assistance of the California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP). This report highlights guiding principles and effective practices for designing and facilitating a CBL community of practice alongside key learnings and recommendations for other transformational assistance providers across the layers of the system (schools, districts and charter management organizations, county offices of education, regional technical assistance centers).

### Strategy Overview

Community School Teacher Fellows is a community of practice collaboratively led and facilitated by a team of the State Transformational Assistance Center (S-TAC), Regional Technical Assistance Center (R-TAC), districts, and site-level staff and administrators across California who support teachers, site and district administrators, and county office of education staff with community-based learning (CBL) exploration and implementation. In bringing together a diverse and committed group of education champions across the levels of the schooling ecosystem, the S-TAC aims to lead the work of defining and implementing CBL within the California Community School Partnership Program (CCSPP) sites.

Community schools are often characterized only by their integrated student supports and family engagement opportunities. While these elements are integral to the approach, the S-TAC seeks to re-center teaching and learning in community schools implementation alongside other core tenets. One of the five Capacity-Building Strategies - Centering Community-Based Learning - highlights how implementation grantees can approach teaching and learning in community schools.

Through the design, facilitation, implementation, and iteration of a system-spanning CBL community of practice, the CS Teacher Fellows strategy enables the state to collaboratively build out the definition of what it means to be a community school teacher in California and what kinds of learning artifacts constitute exemplars of community-based learning in localized contexts through first-hand engagement with teachers, district staff, and county office of education (COE) staff. Teachers are experts in the field; they are tasked with translating legislation into practice. The CS Teacher Fellows strategy was intentionally structured to uplift teachers' expertise in outlining the possibilities with CBL in California community schools implementation and to leverage this expertise to inform resource creation, guidance, and broader professional

development and technical assistance offered at the school site, district office, county office, and regional levels.

### Guiding Principles and Effective Practices

The CS Teacher Fellows strategy is guided by a number of principles that shape the way the planning team approached designing, facilitating, and refining sessions for Cohort 1 of the fellowship and the ways the team engaged with fellows. As the inaugural fellowship unfolded organically from needs in the field, this set of principles served as a “north star” in collaboratively crafting the approach.

1. Teachers are both the experts and the implementers of community-based learning.
2. The content and structure of the fellowship must be adaptive to the needs and assets of the fellows.
3. Representation from across the ‘vertical slice’ of the CCSPP educational ecosystem is necessary to identify approaches to supporting and implementing CBL across the state.
4. Teachers must have protected time to learn from and with other teachers.

### Key CBL Learnings

During the final session of the Cohort 1 CS Teacher Fellows, fellows reflected on how their understanding of CBL evolved throughout the fellowship and how their practice changed as a result of their learning. Responses generated five key themes, which are outlined below with a sampling of fellow reflections:

1. Fellows’ understanding of CBL shifted from a surface level conceptualization to a deeper, more systemic conceptualization.
2. Fellows identified co-creation and partnership as central to the definition and implementation of CBL.
3. Fellows noted the importance of honoring students’ identities and lived experiences in their design and implementation of CBL.
4. Fellows identified the nurturing of student voice and agency as an integral element of CBL.
5. At the conclusion of the fellowship, fellows were able to recognize that CBL is not necessarily about overhauling their teaching practice, but is instead about building on their existing community-connected assets and aligned pedagogical practices.

## Recommendations: Connections to Capacity-Building Strategies

Diving deep into defining and supporting implementation of CBL highlighted the interconnectedness of all five Capacity-Building Strategies and how exploring CBL through the lens of the other four strategies - collaborative leadership; shared commitment, understanding, and priorities; sustaining staff and resources; and, strategic community partnerships - can strengthen coherent implementation. Transformational assistance providers looking to leverage a community of practice structure should consider how they might align supports through an interconnected capacity building approach.

Effective implementation is supported by cultivating collaborative leadership through intentional recruitment, reflective leadership development, and compensated teacher leadership roles; establishing shared commitment and understanding by grounding educators early in the California Community Schools Framework and using communities of practice as vehicles for collective learning and continuous improvement; and centering CBL as a co-created practice that elevates student voice, leverages needs and assets assessments, and aligns with broader state initiatives for coherence. Sustaining this work requires reimagining staff roles, collaboration structures, and partnerships—including with teachers' unions—to support teacher leadership and scale effective practices. Finally, strategic community partnerships are strengthened by creating multiple, meaningful entry points for collaboration and clarifying roles and relationships between teachers, coordinators, and partners to integrate community expertise into classroom learning. Together, these strategies highlight that deepening CBL depends on coordinated capacity-building efforts rather than isolated supports.

## INTRODUCTION

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## OVERVIEW OF STRATEGY

Community schools are often characterized only by their integrated student supports and family engagement opportunities. While these elements are integral to the approach, the S-TAC seeks to re-center teaching and learning in community schools implementation alongside other core tenets. One of the five Capacity-Building Strategies - Centering Community-Based Learning - highlights how implementation grantees can approach teaching and learning in community schools:

California Community Schools seek to create schools where learning is relationship-centered and racially-just, and classroom-community-connections are vital to school transformation efforts. Classrooms and learning spaces draw from the cultural wealth, funds of knowledge, and indigenous ways of knowing of students, families, and educators to cultivate responsive classrooms that foster a deep sense of belonging. Community-based learning is contextual, culturally-responsive, and nurtures young people's agency to be competent, productive and active participants in a democracy.

Through the design, facilitation, implementation, and iteration of a system-spanning CBL community of practice, the CS Teacher Fellows strategy enables the state to collaboratively build out the definition of what it means to be a community school teacher in California and what kinds of learning artifacts constitute exemplars of community-based learning in localized contexts through first-hand engagement with teachers, district staff, and county office of education (COE) staff. Teachers are experts in the field; they are tasked with translating legislation into practice. The CS Teacher Fellows strategy was intentionally structured to uplift teachers' expertise in outlining the possibilities with CBL in California community schools implementation and to leverage this expertise to inform resource creation, guidance, and broader professional

development and technical assistance offered at the school site, district office, county office, and regional levels.

## EVOLUTION OF STRATEGY

The CS Teacher Fellows strategy emerged out of the broader [Deep Dive transformation partner](#) work wherein the S-TAC team closely collaborated with a selection of three diverse Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) across the state to learn about community schooling implementation across the vertical slice of the educational ecosystem - 'from the classroom to the capitol.' Based on key learnings from two districts in Deep Dive Cohort 1 - West Contra Costa Unified School District and Anaheim Union High School District - and Annual Progress Report (APR) data, it became clear that grantees needed the most support in implementing the CBL Capacity-Building Strategy. Based on CCSPP Cohort 1 and 2 APR data, 63% of grantees self-reported as 'visioning' with Centering CBL, which indicates they are in the process of learning and planning for CBL implementation at their sites, while 33% self-reported as 'engaging' and only 4% in 'transforming.' The two aforementioned Deep Dive Cohort 1 districts were at the forefront of centering CBL in the sense that each district had collaborated with their local teachers union to integrate a 'community school teacher lead' position. Yet, teachers and district staff had lingering questions about the possibilities of such a role, including how to integrate CBL into existing academics and how to collaborate with partners to support the classroom space.

From December 2023 to June 2024, the planning team engaged in the pilot phase of building and implementing a Community School Teacher Lead Peer Learning Network. In December 2023 and January 2024, the team conducted a listening tour to learn more about the current understanding and needs of community school teachers in two of our Deep Dive sites. In May and June of 2024, members from the S-TAC planning team hosted two 90-minute Peer Learning Network Sessions (Session 1 and Session 2 materials). During these sessions, members from the S-TAC engaged a total of 12 community school teacher leads and 1 district staff member across the two Deep Dives. Each session was grounded in student experience, with presentations from students at the [UCLA Community School](#) in LAUSD, about their experiences with community school teachers. In one session, a student shared her Senior Legacy project, inspiring teachers with an example of a community-based learning artifact. The pilot was grounded in foundational elements of community school teaching rooted in the California Community Schools Framework, and the first draft of the community-based learning framework (see current version [here](#)). The pilot also included a peer consultancy protocol during each session wherein a teacher shared an artifact of CBL from their own classroom practice and solicited discussion and feedback. Teachers

took on the role of consultancy facilitator after seeing an example, building their own capacity to support such practices at their school site and district. Finally, pilot participants planned for a session during the Community Schools Empower Summit on June 14, 2024.

The Pilot phase was completed during the 2024 Community Schools Empower Summit where the planning team was able to network with teachers from LEAs across the state to hear what they need to be supported in the work moving forward. Cohort 1 reflects the planning team's learning from the Pilot phase and how we set out to both support the S-TAC with resource development and build the capacity of community school teachers across California.

## **COHORT 1: SCHOOL YEAR 2024-2025**

The inaugural cohort of CS Teacher Fellows built on the Spring 2024 pilot, took place from October 2024 to June 2025, with over 30 fellows spanning five R-TACs and seven LEAs - North Star (Siskiyou Union High School District), Capitol Area (Gateway Community Charters, Wheatland Union High School District), Bay Area (West Contra Costa Unified School District), Southern Coast (Anaheim Union High School District), and Southern Inland (Ontario-Montclair School District, Val Verde Unified School District). Fellows participated in eight virtual sessions that included: student reflections of community schooling experience, Research Practice Partnership (RPP) spotlights with presentations from field experts in CBL and whole child education approaches, shared readings and discussion, consultancy protocols with role-alike teams, and a final celebration of learning of CBL artifacts from teacher fellows. (See the full arc of learning in Appendix A.)

### **Cohort 1 Fellows strategy included a set of six goals:**

1. Build a community of practitioners to inform CBL across California's community schools;
2. Develop relationships and learn about whole child education practices in community with fellows' teaching peers across five R-TAC regions and Cohort 1 and 2 Deep Dive sites;
3. Support resource development on teaching and learning for the S-TAC and, ultimately, for broad distribution across grantees (CBL framework and resource vetting guide, R-TAC CBL strategy for technical assistance, CBL Curriculum Repository and accompanying tools/modules);

4. Develop professional capacity through engaging in consultancy protocols, professional development planning and facilitation, and progress monitoring focused on local measures;
5. Share experiences, resources, and best practices during in-person meetings throughout the year with support from the R-TAC; and
6. Share experiences, resources, and best practices at a Summit strand in Spring 2025.

**Table 1: CS Teacher Fellows Overview of Program**

Community School Teacher Fellows		An overview of how the strategy organically evolved in response to grounded needs and collaboration			
	STAGE 1: NEEDS ASSESSMENT <i>APRIL 2023-APRIL 2024</i>	STAGE 2: SPRING PILOT <i>APRIL - JUNE 2024</i>	STAGE 3: INAUGURAL COHORT <i>OCTOBER 2024-JUNE 2025</i>	STAGE 4 PLANNING FOR COHORT 2 <i>JUNE - AUGUST 2025</i>	
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	Gauge current understanding of and implementation capacity with community-based learning (CBL)	Explore how teacher leaders in two Deep Dive districts conceptualized their role as a Community School Teacher Lead and build shared understanding around the work	Develop collective understanding of community-based learning across the vertical slice (classroom to the capitol); develop resources and learning artifacts to support CBL implementation in community schools across the state	Co-design the second cohort of CS Teacher Fellows to <b>build leadership capacity and co-ownership</b> across the vertical slice, deepen learning of CBL, and build learning opportunities to spread and scale the work	
<b>WHO</b>	S-TAC Deep Dive Team	Community School Teacher Leads from West Contra Costa Unified School District and Anaheim Union High School District (Deep Dive Cohort 1)	Teachers, Site administrators, District Staff (emphasis on professional learning/curriculum and instruction), County Office of Education, R-TAC, and S-TAC from 4 R-TACs (Capitol, Bay Area, Southern Inland, Southern Coast) and 7 LEAs (Siskiyou, West Contra Costa, Gateway Community Charters, Wheatland, Val Verde, Ontario-Montclair, Anaheim Union)	Anyone interested from Cohort 1 (S-TAC, R-TAC, District, Teachers) <i>Emphasis on co-design, co-ownership, and collaboration</i>	
<b>WHAT</b>	Experiences with Cohort 1 Deep Dives, APR data analysis, R-TAC Needs and Assets Assessment	Interview campaign; Two online sessions and one summit presentation; engage in consultancy protocols, ground in student and teacher voices from the field	8 online sessions and one summit presentation; student and RPP spotlights; consultancy protocols, foundational readings and theory, R-TAC/District breakout room, CBL learning artifact and use guide	Gather feedback through exit reflections, focus groups, and exit interviews  Collaborative co-design over the summer in preparation for Cohort 2!	
<b>KEY LEARNING</b>	★ • Community-based Learning is a <b>big question mark</b> in community schooling implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to center student voices and experiences when planning for curriculum and instruction</li> <li>• Important to provide brave space for teachers to share new ideas and workshop plans (protect time for teachers to be with other teachers)</li> <li>• Showcase new research and innovation in the field</li> <li>• Cross-district learning is key! ✓</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CS Teacher Fellows love learning in community with educators from other districts</li> <li>• Foundational readings and theory are important for shared understanding</li> <li>• Need vertical slice team from district/ school site to empower teachers to innovate and scale work</li> <li>• R-TAC and district staff appreciate space to learn from one another and co-create professional learning opportunities/resources for grantees</li> <li>• Practitioner voices and experiences <b>MUST</b> be present and centered</li> </ul>	To be learned	

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

The CS Teacher Fellows strategy is guided by a number of principles that shape the way the Cohort 1 fellows planning team approached designing, facilitating, and refining the fellowship sessions and the ways the planning team engaged with fellows. As the inaugural fellowship unfolded organically from needs in the field, a set of principles served as a “north star” in collaboratively crafting the approach.

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## GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1: TEACHERS ARE BOTH THE EXPERTS AND IMPLEMENTERS OF COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING.

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The California Community Schools Partnership Program relies on a statewide system of supports to provide technical assistance in implementing community schools. Yet, in order for state-level or county-level staff to adequately design and facilitate technical assistance to center CBL, teachers must be centered. The CS Teacher Fellows strategy honors that teachers, site level administrators, and district staff are at the forefront of implementation and are primed for learning from students, families, and community members about their contextualized needs and assets. The fellowship seeks to provide space for teachers and other site and district-level practitioners to reflect on their learning in the field and plan to deepen their practice in accordance with new learning from the fellowship itself. The S-TAC also seeks to leverage practitioner expertise and needs to inform the content of the fellowship, statewide CBL resources and definitions of CBL, and broader learning opportunities for grantees.

### *EFFECTIVE PRACTICE: APPROACHING FACILITATION FROM THE LENS OF COLLABORATIVE DESIGN AND INQUIRY.*

Each session, S-TAC and district facilitators strived to lead with humility and collaboration in the sense that they clearly articulated that they were not facilitating the space from a point of being the expert in the room or holding all of the knowledge. Rather, the Cohort 1 fellows planning team was holding space and facilitating activities to generate *collective* knowledge to define and support the implementation of CBL. While this approach generated some challenges (adult learners can be accustomed to a ‘sit and get’ approach to professional development), the team ultimately believes this approach led to deeper learning, authenticity, and collaborative inquiry throughout the fellowship. This practice is also connected to guiding principle 2.

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## GUIDING PRACTICE 2: THE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE FELLOWSHIP MUST BE ADAPTIVE TO THE NEEDS AND ASSETS OF THE FELLOWS.

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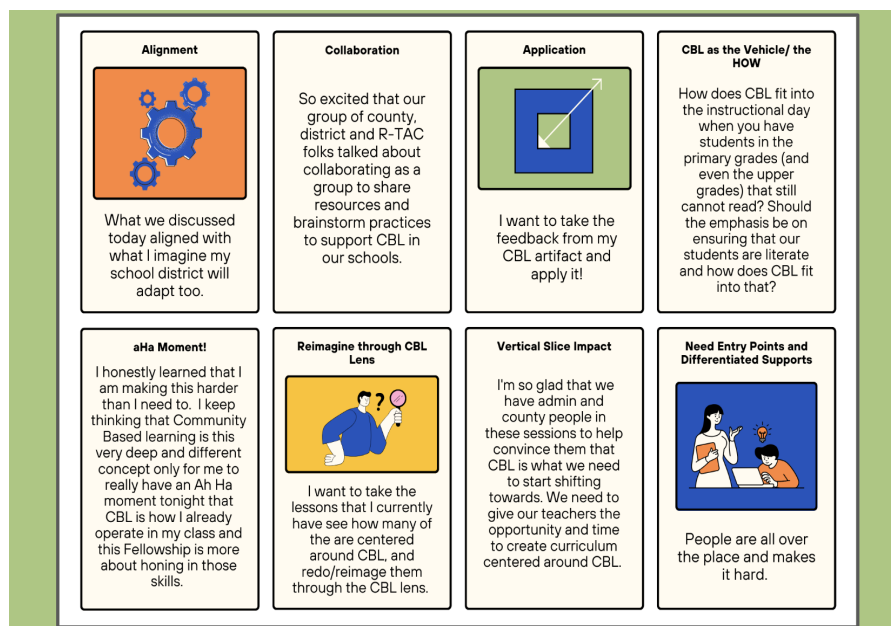
Just as teachers are expected to adapt curriculum and pedagogy to the needs and assets of their students, the fellows planning team sought to be nimble with both the content and the structure of the sessions over the course of the year. As discussed in the evolution of the strategy, CS Teacher Fellows grew out of a genuine curiosity from practitioners and technical assistance providers alike around what it means to be a teacher in a community school in California and how CBL can deepen practice and more thoroughly engage students. The fellows planning team took the first guiding principle seriously--that teachers are both the experts and implementers of CBL--which

means that the reflections of teachers in conversations and in exit ticket surveys routinely shaped what topics were read about, presented on, and discussed in sessions as well as what activities and group spaces were built into sessions. In order to maintain the flexibility to honor the evolving needs of fellows, the planning team opted to partner with researchers and other field experts in a bounded way (e.g., a partner would present on a topic in a single session or provide resources on a particular topic) as opposed to bringing in external partners to support content and structure in an ongoing way.

**EFFECTIVE PRACTICE: LEVERAGING EXIT TICKET SURVEY RESPONSES IN THE BEGINNING OF EACH SUBSEQUENT SESSION.**

The Cohort 1 planning team disseminated an Exit Ticket Survey via a Google form at the end of each session to gauge how useful the session was in supporting fellows in implementing CBL, what their key learnings were from the session, what connections they made to current practices, and what the Cohort 1 fellows planning team could improve upon for the following session(s). During each planning meeting following a session, the team reviewed and discussed the data and areas of strength and areas for improvement in the facilitation, the content, team groupings, and the structure of activities. Then, the team shared a slide of representative feedback with fellows during the beginning of the next session and engaged them in conversation around what feedback most resonated with them. This practice served to transparently demonstrate how the planning team was continuously adapting the sessions to honor the needs of fellows, which ultimately strengthened the structure of the fellowship.

**Figure 1: Engaging With A Cycle Of Feedback**



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### GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3: REPRESENTATION FROM ACROSS THE 'VERTICAL SLICE' OF THE CCSPP EDUCATIONAL ECOSYSTEM IS NECESSARY TO IDENTIFY APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING AND IMPLEMENTING CBL ACROSS THE STATE.

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While the Cohort 1 planning team honors teachers as the ultimate experts and implementers of CBL, the CCSPP involves staff at the S-TAC, R-TAC, COE, district level, and school site level. In order for the S-TAC and R-TAC to provide technical assistance rooted in the realities on the ground, they need to be collaboratively learning with and from implementers. Further, site administrators and district staff can also learn from and with teachers to both improve their own supports for CBL and hear first-hand the barriers to teaching and learning in new ways within local contexts. Engaging fellows across the 'vertical slice' of the system provided challenges as each role engages the work in distinct ways and with a unique set of goals and parameters. Further, the planning team learned the importance of ensuring that future fellows are recruited, in part, for their decision-making capacity and ability to move new work forward within their local system. The planning team recognized that without key engagement from district and school site administrators, there may continue to be CBL innovations within individual classrooms, but the practices will likely not spread. Intentional team composition with and continuous engagement of systems level leaders can support the de-siloing of CBL. Further, LEA leaders can support CBL as a priority and collaboratively define its possibilities with teachers. Despite these learnings, having teachers in conversation with staff across layers of the educational ecosystem was instrumental in identifying what supports teachers need, what barriers exist to implementing CBL deeply and to scale within classrooms and across school sites and districts, and how staff at each system level can better reduce barriers and empower teachers.

#### *EFFECTIVE PRACTICE: STRATEGIC RECRUITMENT OF FELLOWS.*

The Cohort 1 fellows planning team deliberated and outlined the ideal composition of fellow teams from each Deep Dive district/charter management organization and R-TAC. For the inaugural cohort, the S-TAC Deep Dive team worked with Deep Dive LEAs to recruit and select fellows who stood out as teacher leaders or supported curriculum and instruction at the school site or district level. The S-TAC Deep Dive team similarly asked each R-TAC to send a representative focusing on teaching and learning in community schooling implementation. The Cohort 1 fellows planning team leveraged an onboarding survey for fellows both to capture initial understanding of what it means to be a teacher in a community school and how they support teacher growth and development within their current role. While this recruitment and onboarding process was a strong start for the inaugural cohort, the Cohort 1 fellows

planning team learned that we need even more strategic recruitment and selection processes that ensure representation of classroom teachers, site administrators, district administrators, and R-TAC representatives from each Deep Dive. This influenced the recruitment of Cohort 2 Fellows, which is outlined in the next section of this report.

***EFFECTIVE PRACTICE: REGIONAL TEAM TIME.***

During the sessions, the fellows planning team built in time for teachers, site administrators, and district administrators to collaboratively learn within their regional team. For example, the Southern Inland R-TAC representatives would have time in a Zoom breakout room with teachers and district administrators from Val Verde Unified School District and Ontario-Montclair School district, the two Deep Dive sites selected from their region. While these breakout rooms evolved in content--sometimes it was a discussion about an RPP spotlight or a foundational text and sometimes it was to share about learning artifacts--the structure of having cross-role conversations proved important in the collective inquiry process and in building relationships between the R-TACs and their grantees. This structure was more thoroughly built out for Cohort 2.

***EFFECTIVE PRACTICE: REPRESENTATIVE FELLOWS PLANNING TEAM - COLLABORATE WITH PRACTITIONERS AS OPPOSED TO FOR THEM.***

Just as the strategy recruited and supported fellows from a diverse set of roles across the levels of the California educational ecosystem, the fellows planning team sought to engage similar representation in their own composition. For the inaugural cohort, the planning team included S-TAC representatives (who had prior experience as teachers and coaches), an R-TAC representative, and a Director of Professional Learning, Curriculum, and Instruction from a partnering school district. This spread of expertise and representation from the S-TAC, R-TAC, and a district supported both intentional planning for fellows from each aligned system level and demonstrated the power of collaborative leadership between technical assistance providers and practitioners. Further, this intentional composition of the fellows planning team served as a model for other S-TAC and R-TAC spaces to intentionally collaborate *with* practitioners over a sustained period of time to co-design, facilitate, and iterate with resources and learning opportunities to support community schooling implementation.

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**GUIDING PRINCIPLE 4: TEACHERS MUST HAVE PROTECTED TIME TO LEARN FROM AND WITH OTHER TEACHERS.**

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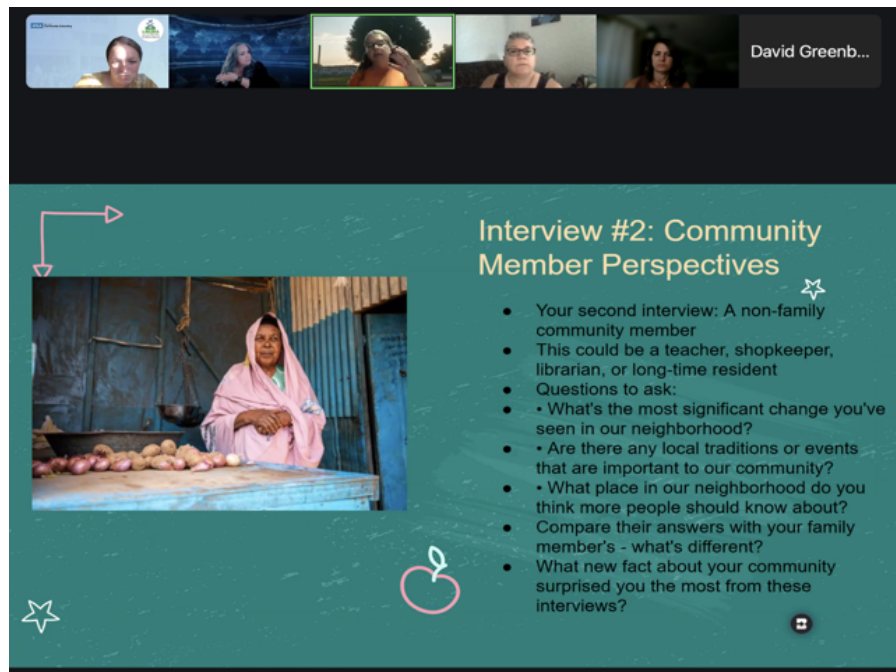
While the fellowship included fellows in diverse roles across several layers of the educational ecosystem, the fellows planning team made sure to carve dedicated space for teachers to engage directly and exclusively with other teachers to workshop classroom practice through consultancy protocols. This time was protected to promote

vulnerability and community amongst teachers and to reduce the intellectual barriers to sharing work in process. The fellows planning team wanted to support teachers by creating a brave space that did not feel evaluative or judgmental, but instead encouraged inquiry and growth. While teachers engaged in peer consultancies, R-TAC and district staff met in a separate breakout room to collaborate on scaling strategies to support CBL implementation.

### **EFFECTIVE PRACTICE: DEDICATED TIME FOR ROLE-ALIKE TEAMS**

The final 30 minutes of each session were spent in breakout rooms in role-alike teams. One breakout room included all R-TAC and district staff members and was led by a district staff member from Anaheim Union High School District and an R-TAC staff member from the Southern Coast R-TAC to uplift collaborative leadership between practitioners and technical assistance providers. Several other breakout rooms were opened up for teachers, who were grouped according to the age group they teach (elementary school and middle/high school). Within these breakout rooms, teacher fellows signed up to both facilitate one time and present one time within a consultancy protocol (also known as a critical friends protocol) to improve upon their CBL artifact and work.

Figure 2: Teacher Fellows Consultancy Protocol In Action



The R-TAC portion of the teacher fellow meeting provided valuable time for R-TAC representatives to come together and build shared understanding. Representatives explored the different configurations of the R-TACs across the state, allowing them to

recognize both the unique structures of their regions and the commonalities that connect their work. Through discussion, they deepened their understanding of the spheres of influence they hold in supporting teachers and districts with the implementation of CBL, clarifying how their role can bridge practice and systems. The conversations also opened space to begin collective planning, particularly through the lens of S-TAC Communities of Transformative Practice (CoTP), to identify strategies that could strengthen the work statewide. These initial plans emphasized the importance of developing universal approaches that maintain flexibility for localized action, ensuring that CBL can be both cohesive and responsive to the needs of each region.

## EVOLUTION OF UNDERSTANDING WITH COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING

During the final session of the Cohort 1 CS Teacher Fellows, fellows reflected on how their understanding of CBL evolved throughout the fellowship and how their practice changed as a result of their learning. Responses generated five key themes, which are outlined below with a sampling of fellow reflections:

### 1. Fellows' understanding of CBL shifted from a surface level conceptualization to a deeper, more systemic conceptualization.

"Since October, my understanding of community-based learning has grown in meaningful ways. I used to think of it as occasional projects that included local topics, but now I see it as a consistent and intentional approach to teaching."

"Throughout our time together, my understanding of CBL has evolved from seeing it as a classroom strategy to recognizing it as a comprehensive, systemic approach that transforms how schools engage with students, families, and communities."

### 2. Fellows identified co-creation and partnership as central to the definition and implementation of CBL.

"At first, I thought it was mostly about helping others through service. Now I see it as a two-way exchange where both students and communities learn from each other. I've learned that real community-based learning means working *with* communities, not just *for* them."

"My understanding of community-based learning has deepened from seeing it as just project-based work to recognizing it as something co-created with my students, their families, and our surrounding community."

### 3. Fellows noted the importance of honoring students' identities and lived experiences in their design and implementation of CBL.

"Community-based learning means centering students' identities, experiences, and the strengths of their neighborhoods in everyday instruction. It is about building strong relationships, valuing the knowledge that already exists in our communities, and creating opportunities for students to make real world connections."

"What stands out to me the most is how CBL builds a bridge between academic content and lived experiences. It challenges students (as well as teachers) to not only understand the subject matter but to apply it in ways that address local challenges that are meaningful for the students. I also like the reciprocity focus of CBL. The traditional model views the community as a site for observation or data collection. CBL promotes a partnership where both students and community members contribute and benefit."

### 4. Fellows identified the nurturing of student voice and agency as an integral element of CBL.

"Our sessions have deepened my understanding of how powerful student voices can be when learning is rooted in their lived experiences. I've learned that when students see themselves as capable of solving real problems, they become more engaged, creative, and reflective."

"This approach encourages a sense of responsibility and empowers learners to see themselves as agents of change."

### 5. At the conclusion of the fellowship, fellows were able to recognize that CBL is not necessarily about overhauling their teaching practice, but about building on their existing community-connected assets and aligned pedagogical practices.

"I came in with very minimal knowledge of community-based learning... Now that I've been a part of 7 sessions, my understanding has grown and I realized I am already doing a lot of the work around community schools."

"I learned that I knew about it, but did not always have a title for it."

## KEY LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the effective practices and guiding principles that organized the teacher fellow strategy throughout the 2024-2025 school year, the inaugural cohort experience unearthed several key learnings and recommendations tied to all the CCSPP Capacity-Building Strategies. Diving deep into defining and supporting implementation of CBL highlighted the interconnectedness of all five Capacity-Building Strategies and how exploring CBL through the lens of the other four strategies - collaborative leadership; shared commitment, understanding, and priorities; sustaining staff and resources; and,

strategic community partnerships - can strengthen coherent implementation. The fellows planning team will work to codify the strategy by incorporating these key learnings and recommendations into Cohort 2 planning and implementation during the 2025-2026 school year and to inform the development of adaptable CBL communities of practice for R-TACs and school districts across the state.

### Collaborative Leadership

While the fellows planning team had a strategy of representation across the 'vertical slice' of the educational ecosystem for Cohort 1, there was only one fellow who served as a site administrator and only four fellows who served as district staff members. The fellowship was primarily composed of classroom teachers, coaches, and teachers on special assignment. The fellowship would benefit from more intentional team composition to impact potential for innovation and scale within schools and across districts.

### Recommendations

1. Work with Deep Dive sites (or focus LEAs) to guide their recruitment and selection process.
2. Leverage a clearer set of recruitment guidelines and points for consideration:
  - a. 3-4 fellows from each Cohort 3 Deep Dive Site (or focus LEA)
  - b. Fellows can be recruited and selected from a single CCSPP school site (to build a team of innovation within the district) OR from across the district
  - c. 2 fellows must be full-time or partial release classroom teachers
  - d. Remaining 1-2 fellows should be school site or district level leaders able to influence decisions within community schooling, curriculum, instruction, and assessment
  - e. Examples: Teacher leader or coach, assistant principal, principal, instructional coach, district curriculum staff, union representative, community school coordinator
  - f. LEAs may have additional district staff join the sessions as is helpful
  - g. LEAs can decide the best route for recruiting and selecting teacher fellows by conducting their own interview process or leveraging existing teacher leadership or community schooling structures. S-TAC can consult with LEAs to support the recruitment and selection process as needed.
3. During the kick-off and introductory sessions, engage fellows in self-reflective leadership identity activities to support fellows in developing a collaborative

leadership skillset for CBL. CBL requires a different approach to collaboration to co-lead and co-design with other teachers, with students, with families, and communities. Such a skill set needs to be intentionally nurtured and developed.

4. Compensate fellows for their time and to honor their commitment to professional development.

### Shared Commitment, Understanding, and Priorities

Fellows entered the strategy at varying stages of understanding both with community schooling broadly and with CBL. CS Teacher Fellows from districts who demonstrated a more evolved and wide-spread shared understanding of community schooling were able to move more quickly with the curricular and pedagogical shifts linked to CBL implementation. These districts also sent cabinet-level leadership to the fellowship to learn about CBL with their teachers and supported their teachers with implementation beyond the fellowship itself.

### Recommendations

1. Intentionally establish a shared understanding of the California Community Schools Framework and the role of teaching and learning within the Framework early on in the sessions. Engage fellows in reflecting about where their personal practice, their school's approach, and their district's approach to community schooling aligns with the Framework and identify specific areas for personal growth.
2. Recognize and leverage that the CS Teacher Fellows Community of Practice serves as a tool unto itself for developing shared understanding and commitment with community schooling and CBL. 'Use the group to change the group.'
3. Leverage a continuous improvement approach to tracking progress on personal goals related to deepening CBL implementation.
4. School sites and LEAs should examine the composition of school site and district community school advisory councils to see if there is adequate teacher representation. Consider leveraging existing collaborative leadership structures to support the centering of CBL within the community schools approach.

### Centering Community-Based Learning

The design of the fellowship centered around the premise that California community school teachers are the experts in the field and, as such, should be a part of the process of defining what it means to design and implement CBL in the classroom. The fellows planning team relied on fellows to share reflections and experiences from their

own classroom practice to help build our collective understanding of the work and to develop the Community-Based Learning Planning Guide. As previously discussed, this approach caused some challenges in the sense that fellows expressed wanting greater clarity around the 'what' and 'how' of the work. Yet, with repeated discussion of co-creation and connecting current practice with elements from key readings and the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (CSTPs), teachers began to see themselves as CBL practitioners.

### **Recommendations**

1. Continue to articulate CBL as co-creation and partnership with other teachers and school staff, with students, families, community members, and community organizations. CBL requires continuous communication with the 'community,' however the teacher and students define the concept.
2. Empower teachers and school staff to define community *with* their community as opposed to assuming the definition to be self-evident or universally the same in each context. In taking this approach, we found that teachers took greater ownership of their work and expressed greater clarity with CBL. Some fellows defined community as the student community within their classroom or across their school, while others focused on the local geographic community or the national or global community.
3. Support fellows in leveraging the needs and assets assessment structure that is foundational to community schooling broadly as a part of how they routinely engage their community in co-designing CBL experiences. A classroom connected needs and assets assessment coupled with additional street data collection approaches (e.g., empathy interviews, community voice circles, student surveys) supports teachers in tailoring learning experiences and pedagogical approaches to the needs of their students. Further, districts can support teachers by promoting a district-wide adaptive structure for conducting needs and assets assessments at the classroom level.
4. Center student voice and agency when defining and implementing CBL. While the content of CBL can take many forms depending on the definition of community and the needs and assets of that community, the role of the student in co-designing and owning their own learning journey must remain a throughline.
5. Explore and center alignment of CBL within community schools and across other state education initiatives to promote coherence for implementers. To support teachers in streamlining the multiple, sometimes competing demands of varied state educational initiatives, district and school leadership can identify the

connections between initiatives and leverage a shared vision to promote coherence with different strands of the work. For example, CBL is connected to other whole child education concepts including socioemotional learning, civic engagement, vocational education, and trauma-informed instruction.

### **Sustaining Staff and Resources**

Both within the CS Teacher Fellows strategy and within the broader Deep Dive strategy, we have seen districts conceptualizing centering CBL as a way to sustain the community schools approach beyond the CCSPP grant funding cycle. Strong district-level practices include aligning CBL goals within the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) and School Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) process and integrating CBL practices within district-wide and school site professional learning spaces.

### **Recommendations**

1. Leverage existing teacher leadership structures at the school site or school district level to support CBL implementation and scale best practices across schools and districts. For example, some districts have built out partial-release coaching structures to support teaching and learning in community schools wherein teachers teach 2-3 periods a day and support CBL the remaining periods of the day (through direct coaching and support, through collaboration with the community schools coordinator). Other districts have begun exploring how existing classroom observation structures can more intentionally incorporate CBL. Districts might consider the inherent connections between the CSTPs and the elements of CBL and leverage this alignment in classroom observations. There is also an opportunity to collaborate with the local union to incorporate CBL into observations through alignment with the CSTPs.
2. Consider building or strengthening partnerships with the local teachers union to support CBL opportunities for teachers and to build structures to scale the work across schools and the district.
3. Reimagine collaboration amongst school and district staff to support CBL and whole child education. Consider leveraging collaboration spaces to encourage partnership and co-planning amongst teachers, community school coordinators, counselors, school social workers, and family engagement specialists.

### **Strategic Community Partnerships**

A key element of CBL is 'community connected' learning experiences whereby the learning is meaningfully connected to the rich assets of the community—such as its people, businesses, organizations, and nonprofits—or to the pressing issues facing the community, enabling young people to relate their learning to their own lives and

environments. Designing and implementing strong community connected learning requires strategic partnerships with community members and community organizations. This proved daunting to some fellows - thinking about breaking down the walls between the classroom and the community.

### *Recommendations*

1. Provide multiple entry points for collaborating with community partners to design and sustain CBL opportunities. Support teachers in asset-mapping their communities to identify potential partners linked to identified needs and assets. Encourage teachers to imagine the many possibilities in leveraging community partnerships for learning, some of which are more involved than others. For example, internships and externships are more involved and sustained partnerships whereas partnering with a community organization to volunteer or advocate for needs might be less involved and/or a more accessible entry point.
2. Building on the recommendations of 'sustaining staff and resources,' provide guidance on ways to meaningfully strengthen the relationship between community school teachers and community school coordinators as it relates to the classroom learning space. Consider how teachers can leverage the expertise of their coordinator to build connections with the community broadly and to specific community organizations to design and implement learning experiences. The district can also support training and guidance in this area.

## **CONCLUSION: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE AND SCALING THE WORK**

Building on the spring 2024 pilot, Cohort 1 of the CS Teacher Fellows proved to be a meaningful and supportive structure in collaboratively defining CBL and developing resources and technical assistance across the layers of the California educational ecosystem. Yet, given the laboratory-like environment of the learning spaces and the intentionally small number of fellows in the strategy, the S-TAC recognizes that this is just the beginning of understanding the meaningful and supportive structures that can assist CCSPP grantees with centering CBL and its interconnectedness with the other four Capacity-Building Strategies. In addition to the repository of CBL artifacts created and refined by Teacher Fellows and showcased during our celebration of learning in session 8 of the fellowship (see appendix for resources) and the development of the Community-Based Learning Planning Guide, the CS Teacher Fellows strategy inspired the Southern Inland R-TAC to build out their own localized version of a CBL community of practice for the 2025-2026 school year in both Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The planning team hopes that by bringing together all eight R-TACs in

Cohort 2 of the fellowship, the structure can support R-TACs - in partnership with LEAs within their regions - to collaboratively build out adaptive strategies for supporting and scaling the implementation of CBL across the state within their respective regions.

While Cohort 2 should intentionally grow to incorporate fellows from all eight regions and Deep Dive sites within each region, the Cohort 1 planning team encourages future fellows planning team to consider the balance of expanding the strategy with maintaining a relationship-centered community of practice. Similarly, R-TACs and LEAs adapting this CBL community of practice strategy should consider a similar balance of size and scope. The S-TAC and R-TACs may consider the role of the CS Teacher Fellows Community of Practice as a foundational component of a broader state-wide strategy to support CBL implementation and its interconnectedness with the other four Capacity Building Strategies, while honoring the inherent strengths and limitations of the community of practice structure. The Cohort 1 planning teams cautions against over-expansion of the community of practice structure itself in order to maintain the close-knit community, quality of mentorship and support, and personalized attention provided to each fellow. Further, the planning team encourages consideration of recruiting returning fellows to deepen expertise and provide mentorship to new fellows.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Natalie Fensterstock** is currently a PhD candidate in Social Welfare at the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs and serves as a researcher with the UCLA Center for Community Schooling. She has supported the implementation of the California Community Schools Partnership Program through the Deep Dive strategy for the last four years, with a particular focus on supporting capacity building in community-based learning with educators and systems leaders. Prior to her time at UCLA, Natalie taught middle and high school English in the Bay Area of California, where she also mentored new teachers. Her research interests lie in examining how community schools function as a coherence strategy for whole child policy initiatives, district systems, and school practices, with a focus on the intersection of education, policy, and social welfare. Natalie holds an M.A. in Social Sciences and Comparative Education from UCLA.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: Arc of Learning

Session Date	Focus Areas and Experiences	Key Resources
<b>Session 1</b> October 16, 2024	Introduction to CS Teacher Fellows <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Spotlight</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Slides</a> <a href="#">Collecting Street Data</a>
<b>Session 2</b> November 20, 2024	Grounding in the CS Strategy/ Role of Teaching and Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Spotlight</li> <li>• RPP Spotlight: Symone Gyles - Community-based science learning</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Slides</a>
<b>Session 3</b> January 29, 2025	Grounding in community data and science of learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RPP Spotlight: Center for Whole Child Education and CANDLE - transcendent thinking</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Slides</a> <a href="#">Transcendent Thinking</a>
<b>Session 4</b> February 19, 2025	Unveiling the CBL Planning Tool and Trauma-Informed Schooling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RPP Spotlight: Trauma-informed instruction and school climate</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Slides</a>
<b>Session 5</b> March 19, 2025	The unifying characteristics of CBL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying CBL Planning Tool to existing learning artifacts</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Slides</a> <a href="#">CBL Foundational Reading Learning Artifact Example Folder</a>
<b>Session 6</b> April 16, 2025	CSTPs and CBL Connections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesizing CSTPs, CBL elements, and school/district/county vision and mission</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Slides</a> <a href="#">CSTPS and CBL Connections</a>
<b>Session 7</b> May 21, 2025	Theoretical Foundations of CBL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Synthesizing three theoretical frameworks with evolving understanding of CBL</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Slides</a> <a href="#">Theoretical Foundations of CBL</a>
<b>Session 8</b> June 4, 2025	Celebration of Learning: Charting our collective evolution of CBL understanding	<a href="#">Slides</a>

**APPENDIX B: Feedback from CS Teacher Fellows: Helpfulness of Sessions and Connections to Current Practice**

How helpful was this session in supporting CBL implementation (Scale of 1-5)?	Selected Fellow Feedback on Utility of Session in Supporting CBL Implementation	Selected Fellow Feedback on Key Learnings from Session and Connections to Practice
<b>Session 1: Introduction to CS Teacher Fellows</b>		
4.27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking is key for me and hearing best practices, ideas, wonderings, and hopes from others with the same vision helps me think about how I can implement or improve upon what is already happening.</li> <li>• (R-TAC) I got some great ideas about systems to share with our grantees.</li> <li>• I am still trying to figure out exactly what a community school is and what I can do to move this forward.</li> <li>• I still don't understand what this looks like in practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have always believed in the whole person learning and I like that this content focuses around that idea. We can't even begin to address reading and writing and math if we have students that can't even focus on being in the seat. I also liked hearing about street data and how that really is the down to earth nitty gritty data.</li> <li>• Seeing the different community-based learning principles serves as a guide for the work we do in the classroom. This was something the Community School teacher leads in our district were discussing/wondering how to create and to see it already there is amazing!</li> <li>• Because our students are changing, we as educators need to change, too. I cannot teach the same way I was taught or even the way I taught before the pandemic. I need to adjust my teaching to my students and what their needs and interests are.</li> </ul>
<b>Session 2: Grounding in CS Strategy/ Community-based Science Learning</b>		
4.18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (R-TAC) As a SI-R-TAC it is extremely</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My school really works hard at</li> </ul>

	<p>helpful to hear from teachers and districts how to support the implementation and sustainability of community schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Today's session has not only motivated me but inspired me to try a different approach.</li> <li>• The storytelling made CBL more tangible for my classroom!</li> <li>• I still need more examples of what community-based learning is</li> </ul>	<p>giving voice to our families, students and communities. I want to meet with my principal to discuss ways the school is making this happen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think storytelling is a great way to relate the curriculum to real-life experiences, which is something I try to do in my classroom.</li> <li>• I noticed many connections. First and foremost, building relational capacity is equally as important as teaching the content. In fact, I would argue that students will not be able to fully engage with the content unless relational capacity (community) is built and only then will I be able to truly connect the lessons to my students' lived experiences and broader community.</li> </ul>
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**Session 3: Community Data and the Science of Learning and Development/ Transcendent Thinking**

<p>4.14</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I loved tonight's session. It was motivational, inspiring and refreshing. I especially loved the scientific explanation of brain research on thinking/cognitive overload...I think if I can find a way to help our staff visualize their own cognitive overload and what causes it to connect it to our students experiences and the cognitive overload many of them face on a day to day basis, it may create empathy and then compassion and when put into action/practice community-based lessons.</li> <li>• The guest presenters were very thought provoking and helped me get a better understanding of how to support community-based learning. I thought the break-out sessions were a great opportunity for us to share ideas and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Honestly, it was more personal, I stress that I am not doing this whole teaching thing right, but today in our breakouts I hear that I am actually doing it more right than wrong.</li> <li>• I feel that I can finally put a name, transcendent thinking, to what I'm trying to do in my classroom. I'm excited that there is research supporting what I'm trying to do, and what many teachers are trying to do in the classroom. We are often harangued by our admins and the district for not being faithful to the curriculum, when what we should be faithful to, our</li> </ul>
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	<p>get feedback from our peers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Love the time to share ideas with my region and other members from around the state.</li> <li>● I am still trying to understand how to do CBL at primary grade levels</li> </ul>	<p>framework, should be transcendent thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Transcendent Thinking was a great refresher and reminder about my "purpose" and I felt validated about why I can't always remember those great ideas.</li> <li>● My key learnings are from the presenters on transcendent learning, it reminds me of inquiry based learning where students find agency and relevancy with the things they're learning. I am a proponent of anything that centers around the child and their needs.</li> </ul>
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**Session 4: Unveiling the CBL Planning Tool/ Trauma-Informed Schooling**

<p><b>4.17</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Every time I collaborate with others I leave inspired and ready to take what I've learned and apply it in my practice. Very grateful to collaborate with such a talented group of educators with a shared vision.</li> <li>● Great tool to start with, need more processing time.</li> <li>● I still need time to process the information that was presented and the tools and resources that have been provided. I am sure I will use the information and tools but I have to have the time to experiment to see how I will implement it and measure the outcome (results).</li> <li>● I think the time is very compacted (understandably), it would be nice to have more time actually collaborating.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cocreation of CBL understanding</li> <li>● The RPP spotlight on trauma informed practices helped me recenter myself and my biases!</li> <li>● Strong connections in that the trauma informed practices presentation affirmed the work that I'm doing</li> <li>● I had personal connections with the trauma informed presentation. I was a student with trauma and so I try really hard to support those students in my classroom. I use strategies that were listed on the slides and plan to implement a few more when I return to school.</li> <li>● Community-based learning has many facets and it is important to be strategic and specific when planning, but more than anything I am continuing to reflect on how I can have</li> </ul>
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		<p>shared leadership even when planning and designing lessons and projects. How can I ensure student voice is present but even moreso, student agency and leadership. How can I use the tools to guide my planning and instruction?</p>
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**Session 5: The Unifying Characteristics of CBL**

<p><b>4.47</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The article that we read at the beginning was great. It was super helpful in providing a very specific and concrete overview of CBL.</li> <li>● This session reflects the S-TAC being very mindful and listening to the needs expressed. Slowing down and bringing the breakout rooms with examples is amazing.</li> <li>● Having the exemplars and analyzing them through the lens of the CBL Planning Tool helped me gain a better understanding of the process of creating lessons through CBL, and helped me with planning and completing the CBL Planning Tool for my own artifact. Kenisha shared her artifact - community circles (for SEL, behavior, attendance). She inspired me to do something similar with my students.</li> <li>● (R-TAC) The R-TACs need more time to unpack our roles, share our resources, and discuss our support of grantees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I never saw the connection between Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and CBL, but after reading the article, the relationship and alignment between the two was much more obvious.</li> <li>● I can do more as an administrator to support community schools in classrooms.</li> <li>● This is helping me determine how to set up the process for supporting CBL next year.</li> <li>● I honestly learned that I am making this harder than I need to. I keep thinking that Community-based learning is this very deep and different concept only for me to really have an Ah Ha moment tonight that CBL is how I already operate in my class and this Fellowship is more about honing in those skills.</li> <li>● I think as teachers CBL is how we want to teach and what we want our students to be engaged in. I'm so glad that we have admin and county people in these sessions to help convince them that CBL is what we need to start shifting towards. We need to give our</li> </ul>
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		teachers the opportunity and time to create curriculum centered around CBL.
<b>Session 6: California Standards for the Teaching Profession and CBL Connections</b>		
<b>4.24</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● (R-TAC) Having a group conversation with other R-TACs is amazing because we can learn so much from each other in all circles we may be a part of as R-TAC</li> <li>● I enjoy reflecting and sharing insights with other educators outside of my own district to inform where we are as a whole (regarding education and CS). Also, filling out the tool about my artifact and getting feedback from peers was beneficial, too!</li> <li>● The consultancy group was helpful to me making connections with my learning artifact and how I can implement that at my school</li> <li>● Would still like examples</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Collaboration with other R-TACs- love it!</li> <li>● CSTPs are a direct leverage point for CBL</li> <li>● I see strong connections between today's discussion and my work at South Junior High, where we prioritize student engagement and community partnerships to address challenges like low literacy, high suspension rates, and chronic absenteeism. The idea of structured onboarding for new hires also resonates with me, as it could help align staff with our community school approach and ensure consistency in our efforts.</li> <li>● I see that many of the initiatives we use currently align with community schools already. That's a relief as it can feel like we're taking on too much if we're adding an additional layer.</li> </ul>
<b>Session 7: Theoretical Foundations of CBL</b>		
<b>4.42</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It was a great opportunity to share ideas with other members from different schools. I feel inspired to kick off next school year with more meaningful activities to bridge the gap between our school and our community.</li> <li>● This session has expanded my knowledge and understanding, but I still need support specifically with Indigenous Ways of Knowing. Also it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The focus on relationships, place, and cultural identity directly connects to my work in community schools, where we uplift student voice and community partnerships. It reaffirms the importance of grounding learning in real-world experiences that build belonging and agency.</li> <li>● I see it directly links to the</li> </ul>

	<p>reviewed the foundations of community-based learning and connected all the previous sessions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I like knowing that some good teaching strategies (that maybe I stopped doing) are related to CBL and am excited to bring back with a new lens to planning and instruction.</li> <li>• More examples and clarity of focus.</li> </ul>	<p>work I'm doing as an educator/teacher as well as my leadership role with a school initiative called Capturing Kids' Hearts. I want to leverage student relationships with their peers and allow them to lead the campus goals and culture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some key learnings I took from today's session is that we as educators can also be the student and learn from the students we teach. They may not know everything but they do know some things that we do not know. We must also learn to listen.</li> <li>• My group and I discussed how our community schools differ from others in the state. It was nice to have some space to discuss ways we can enhance services and professional development opportunities at our school to better tie in the community.</li> <li>• You have all created a great space for learning and sharing. This type of practice is something that we can replicate at the county and LEA level.</li> </ul>
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**Session 8: Celebration of Learning - Charting Our Collective Evolution of CBL Understanding**

**What had the biggest impact on your learning during the sessions?**  
*Selected Responses*

- Working with teachers across the state had the biggest impact. Hearing their ideas, seeing their examples, and having time to reflect with them through the consultancy protocols really helped me think differently about how I design lessons and build more community-centered experiences for my students.
- The biggest impact on my learning during the sessions has come from the conversations with peers and student spotlights. Hearing directly from other educators about how they are implementing community-based learning gave me practical ideas and the confidence to try new approaches in my own classroom. The student spotlights were especially powerful

because they reminded me of the real impact this work can have when students feel seen, valued, and connected to their learning. These moments helped me shift from theory to action and deepened my belief that community-based learning can transform not just classroom culture, but student outcomes as well.

- The most impactful part of my learning came from reflecting on my own work. It helped me realize how powerful it is to connect students to the community around them and to highlight the diversity that exists within it. This experience reminded me that students thrive when they see themselves and others reflected in their learning.
- The biggest impact on my learning came from the conversations with regions and the peer feedback during the consultancy protocols. Hearing how others approached similar challenges gave me new perspectives, and the targeted feedback I received helped me refine my ideas and apply them directly in my classroom. Being able to test out those strategies and see positive results made the learning feel immediately relevant and valuable.

### Points of Pride from Fellows

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Co-Design</b></p> <p>I am most proud that this entire PBL/PTA was co-designed with students from inception to the day of the event. It capitalized on students' funds of knowledge and passion to engage in civics advocating for real change in their communities. Their work was presented in front of an authentic audience of city council members, school board members, and the greater community.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Centering Student Voice</b></p> <p>I'm most proud of how the CBL artifact centers student voice and real-world relevance. It gives students the chance to engage with meaningful issues in their community while building critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills.</p> <p>What excites me most is seeing students take ownership of their learning—using their experiences and creativity to make a real impact beyond the classroom.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Real-World Impact</b></p> <p>I'm most proud that my VACANT to Vibrant Project CBL artifact centers student voice and agency while fostering meaningful collaboration across departments. I'm excited by its real-world impact—addressing a genuine community need—and its potential to expand into other curricular areas, deepening interdisciplinary learning and community connection.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Student Ideas</b></p> <p>I'm really impressed with the ideas that the students are coming up with, and I love many are engaged and passionate about their ideas.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Culturally Responsive</b></p> <p>The use guide is clear, adaptable, and culturally responsive, making it easy for other educators to implement while tailoring it to their students' needs.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Excitement</b></p> <p>I am most excited for my student's microscopic images! They did a phenomenal job with the lab and did an even better job capturing pictures of their rainwater quality!</p> <p>What excites me most is how the artifact encourages student agency and reflection. I've seen firsthand how much more invested students become when they can connect their writing to real-world issues and feel like their ideas matter.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Connecting Levels of the System</b></p> <p>Connecting Community Schools to onboarding staff.</p> <p>We had a thrilling conversation around the relationship between STAC and RTAC. The relationship change we are looking forward to is STAC as the facilitator and gatherer of shared knowledge that is generated by the collective work of the RTACs.</p>

## APPENDIX C: Resources

### Readings

- [Foundational Reading: Community-based Learning: Engaging Students for Success and Citizenship](#)
- [CSTPs](#)
- [Theory Overview](#) (includes links to theory readings)
- [10 Ways to Collect Street Data](#)
- [Transcendent Thinking Reading: Building Meaning - Building Teens' Brains](#)

### Tools

- [CBL Guide and Planning Tool](#)
- [CBL Artifact Assignment](#)
- [CBL Unit Planning Template](#)

### Data Sources

- [Onboarding Survey Responses](#)
- [Exit Ticket Survey Responses](#)
- [Padlet Reflections on Session Learning](#)
- [Padlet Reflections on R-TAC Learning](#)

### Community-Based Learning Artifacts

Each R-TAC folder contains individual fellow folders with final learning artifacts.

#### From Cohort 1 (2023-2024) Deep Dive Teams

##### [North Star R-TAC](#)

Siskiyou Union High School District

##### [Bay Area R-TAC](#)

West Contra Costa Unified School District

##### [Southern Coast R-TAC](#)

Anaheim Union High School District

#### From Cohort 2 (2024-2025) Deep Dive Teams

##### [Southern Inland R-TAC](#)

Val Verde Unified School District

Ontario-Montclair School District

##### [Capitol R-TAC](#)

Gateway Community Charters

Wheatland Union High School District

### Slide Decks

Pilot Slides Spring 2024

- [Session 1](#)
- [Session 2](#)
- [CS Empower Summit - June 2024 Los Angeles](#)

#### Cohort 1 Slides 2024-2025

- [Session 1](#)
- [Session 2](#)
- [Session 3](#)
- [Session 4](#)
- [Session 5](#)
- [Session 6](#)
- [Session 7](#)
- [Session 8](#)
- [CS Empower Summit - June 2025 Fresno](#)