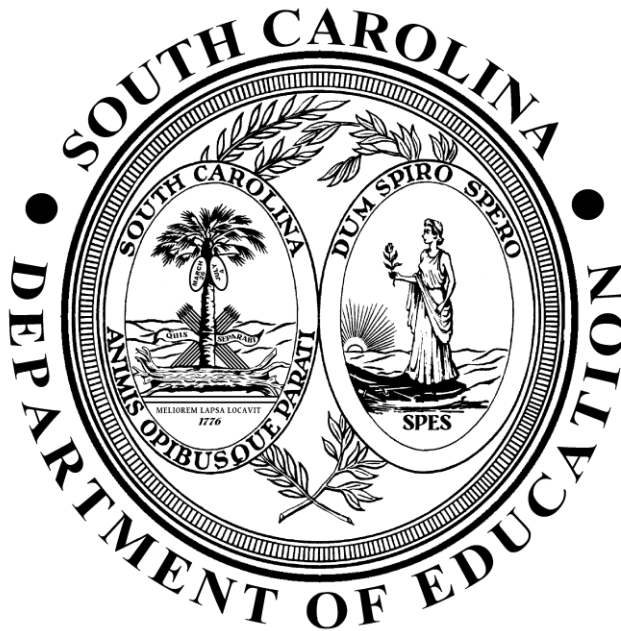


STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Collective Leadership Initiative Pilot
Executive Summary 2018–19

Prepared in Collaboration with the Center for Teaching Quality

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Introduction

The South Carolina Collective Leadership Initiative (CLI), a partnership between the SC Department of Education (SCDE) and the Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ), engaged teams of leaders within schools to lead changes that help students meet the *Profile of the SC Graduate*. A two-year pilot (2017–19) assisted the SCDE in constructing scalable supports for other schools seeking to respond to equity and improvement challenges by engaging teachers and administrators as leaders of effective innovation. A total of nine schools completed the pilot, with districtwide expansion in one Local Education Agency (LEA). Three surveys (administered at baseline in 2017 and the close of each school year in 2018 and 2019) as well as site visits and document and data reviews supported evaluation and internal learning. This report summarizes findings as of the close of year two (2018–19).

During the second year, our monthly data collection about schools' identified adaptive goals, as well as the quality of supports in five face-to-face convenings and learning lab events across the participating schools, served to triangulate findings from the survey around the seven conditions that support collective leadership development. Eight schools participated in all three surveys. Four of the original 12 schools dropped out due to perceived resource constraints or leadership transitions. One additional school joined in 2018. For these reasons, comparisons should be made cautiously as the participating schools changed somewhat. We describe the results organized by seven constructs that correlate closely with successful, collectively-led innovation and improvement efforts within schools. Lessons learned below offer implications for future collective leadership development:

Vision and Strategy for Collective Leadership

Teachers and administrators at CLI schools did not demonstrate a significant change in their perception of CLI's support of the *Profile of the SC Graduate* or the 4.0 Rubric. In 2018 and 2019, respondents were generally positive about collective leadership's support of both. However, there was a statistically significant drop in their perception of the vision for collective leadership development at their schools although they remained relatively positive on the 5-point ("strongly agree" to "strongly disagree") scale at 3.83. Vision for collective leadership proved challenging for teams to communicate across school campuses for the majority of CLI teams.

Implications for the future: To ensure that vision and strategy are clearly communicated:

- 1) Conduct a half-day schoolwide professional learning session to describe collective leadership and to identify a shared problem of practice.
- 2) Host learning labs at CLI schools to showcase what they are doing collectively to improve their schools. Cohort Two schools, as well as other interested schools will be invited to send teams.
- 3) Emphasize that collective leadership is not a program. It is a process.

Supportive Administration

The perception of administrative support also declined significantly across the three surveys from 4.01 to 3.80 to 3.20. Based on feedback from CLI teams, this could be due in large part to teachers becoming increasingly aware of what leadership development could be and that possibility not always matching the reality of their schools. Again, in schools with supportive administrations, respondents perceived more significant progress toward their shared adaptive goals.

Implications for the future: To ensure and develop supportive administration:

- 1) Communicate clearly the role of administrators in collective leadership: catalyzing work and providing coherence.
- 2) Consider more opportunities for integration of the CLI process in the administrator development programs (e.g., Principal Induction Program).
- 3) Encourage stability and consistency in administration, whether that entails efforts to retain staff successfully, ensure that *all* prospective leaders share an orientation toward collective leadership work, or ideally both. As leaders develop in schools, they will step into roles with a certain level of credibility and trust.

Resources and Capacity

Respondents in 2019 perceived resources and capacity at a similar level when compared to 2017 baseline data. Perhaps this is not surprising as no additional resources were provided for participating schools. However, the fact that the responses were similar does make findings around social norms and constructive organizational politics impressive as they did increase without the perception that resources increased.

Implications for the future: To maximize resources and capacity:

- 1) Emphasize the variety of resources at hand to consider, beyond dollars (e.g., rethinking time, internal expertise, community support), to encourage more innovative strategies.
- 2) Share ideas for re-allocation of resources with one another and external partners to creatively address areas of need.
- 3) Identify and strategically develop rising leaders who have additional capacity to develop while performing leadership work.

Work Design

We surveyed CLI schools on the design of their work for teachers and administrators in 2018 and 2019. Responses were positive but not significantly different. In 2019, schools reported finding more time in the preceding school year for teachers to observe one another and offer feedback. However, time for productive collaboration continued to prove challenging for some schools.

Implications for the future: To improve the design of teachers and administrators' work for collective leadership:

- 1) Examine and adjust school schedules to find time to increase collaboration and provide individualized student support.
- 2) Use existing resources to allow teachers to lead while remaining in the classroom.
- 3) Find creative ways to increase peer observation and feedback.

Supportive Social Norms and Working Relationships

From 2018 to 2019, CLI schools demonstrated a significant increase on responses related to social norms and working relationships. This was the most significant increase of any of the seven constructs. This kind of improvement could be a leading indicator of future growth toward other constructs that are dependent on the development of relational trust.

Implications for the future: To cultivate healthy social norms and working relationships:

- 1) Share, at least on a monthly basis, successes and areas to stretch with one another.
- 2) Maintain professional norms that allow for non-judgmental feedback and solution-oriented thinking.
- 3) Revisit norms and relationships to ensure support of a productive culture.

Constructive Organizational Politics

Similarly, respondents reported that their influence had increased significantly. The fact that social norms and organizational politics are significantly improving is cause for optimism about future growth of collective leadership in support of school improvement.

Implications for the future: In order to support constructive organizational politics:

- 1) Create opportunities for peer observation, feedback, and collaboration.
- 2) Increase opportunities for teachers and administrators to work on problems of practice and collection of evidence. This should include identification of initiatives that should stop. Progress will be shared monthly across schools.
- 3) Provide opportunities for schools to “go public” with their stories of impact to further influence external stakeholders.

Orientation Toward Improvement

From 2017 to 2019, schools’ orientation toward improvement did not change significantly. Schools reported a fairly high tolerance for risk taking in 2017, 2018, and 2019, with 2019 representing a recovery from a significant dip in 2018.

Implications for the future: To encourage a positive orientation toward improvement:

- 1) Regularly celebrate risks that schools have taken – both successfully and unsuccessfully.
- 2) Identify shared problems of practice, common evidence, and strategies for improvement so that risks can be shared.
- 3) Provide opportunities for schools to “go public” with their stories regarding risks and rewards to inform and inspire others.