

Case Study: Impact of the CEC Labor Management Partnership in Santa Clara California

Identifying strategies that effectively strengthen the relationships between school districts, school boards, and employee unions is more important than ever. During the 2018-19 school year alone, there were an unprecedented number of teacher union strikes across the United States, including those in Arizona, California, Colorado, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and West Virginia. While the factors contributing to such events are complex, improved communication, collaboration, and cooperation are critical to helping promote healthy relationships that can avoid the costly disruption of strikes and improve employee performance, retention, and satisfaction.

This case study, prepared by an independent education research and evaluation team,¹ studies the impacts associated with an innovative initiative in Santa Clara, California designed to enhance communication and collaboration across district, school, teachers, support staff, and union leaders. Known as the Santa Clara labor management partnership, this effort was facilitated over the past five years by the Consortium for Education Change (CEC) to support stronger relationships and collaboration to improve teaching and learning in the Santa Clara Unified School District. Additional support to the district was provided through the California Labor-Management Initiative and the California Teacher Union Reform Network. Findings from this case study can inform the efforts of policy leaders across the country who seek to build and strengthen relationships between education leaders and practitioners in order to elevate teacher and student performance and satisfaction. In addition to this case study, Santa Clara is participating in a national study of union-management partnerships and educator collaboration in U.S. public schools conducted through Rutgers and Cornell University.

The Santa Clara Labor Management Partnership (SCLMP) was facilitated over the past five years by the Consortium for Education Change (CEC) to support stronger relationships and collaboration to improve teaching and learning in the Santa Clara Unified School District.

The Challenge: Repairing Frayed Communications Between Teachers, Unions, Support Staff, School Leaders, and District Leaders

The Santa Clara Unified School District serves over 15,500 K-12 students and an additional 6,000 students in preschool through adult school. About 41 percent of the district's K-12 students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and more than a quarter are English Language Learners. The district operates 28 schools serving multiple communities in the cities of Santa Clara, Sunnyvale, San Jose, and Cupertino, California and covers a 56 square-mile area.

¹ This case study was prepared by Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA Consulting), an independent, national public education research and evaluation firm founded in 1983.

Over the past 20 years, the district experienced a series of challenges in maintaining positive communications and relationships between its school board, district leaders, union leaders, and classroom teachers. In fact, relations between these groups in the past dimmed to the point where teachers actively protested for the removal of school board members and district and union leaders struggled to find consensus or to collaborate on key initiatives.

Union and district leaders saw the need to bring in an independent third party with no prior history or ties in Santa Clara to help mend the existing rifts in communication and collaboration.

This level of discord had lasting negative impacts on employee and even student morale across schools. In fact, the lingering challenges that continued over time with these relationships contributed to a lack of buy-in at the school level to a variety of district-led initiatives designed to boost student and school performance. Overall dissatisfaction also produced increases in teacher turnover across schools that not only had adverse impacts on students, but disrupted staff continuity and placed a continuous training and hiring

burden on school and district leaders.

Union and district leaders therefore saw the need to bring in an independent third party with no prior history or ties in Santa Clara to help mend the existing rifts in communication and collaboration. In particular, there was a need for such a third party to offer a structured approach that could involve and encourage leaders from all constituencies to rebuild and reframe existing relationships.

Addressing the Challenge: Santa Clara's Partnership and the Role of CEC

After attending a 2015 California Labor-Management Initiative conference in California, Santa Clara's district leaders asked the Consortium for Educational Change (CEC) to serve as an independent third party to help catalyze needed change. Founded in 1987 and headquartered in Illinois, CEC was selected because of its mission to build collaborative structures and cultures among public education stakeholders, including labor and management, and its desire to support the efforts of the California Labor-Management Initiative. The goal of this enhanced collaboration is to transform education systems to improve student achievement.

CEC was also selected because it brought a structured approach for identifying the source of current communication challenges and for bringing together the organizational leads that represent all key education constituencies. Notably, this includes not only administrators, teachers, and other certified education staff, but also *classified* staff who encompass all school system support personnel such as maintenance, custodial, paraeducators, secretarial, transportation, and other staff whose efforts are integral to the successful operation of districts and schools.

CEC's structured approach centers on the work of Dr. Patrick Dolan, who created a primer for bringing systemic change to how constituents work together within and across a school district. This primer outlines key parties in any school system that are critical to successful collaboration. These encompass, among other key groups: the board of education, district cabinet leaders, union leaders, teachers and certified staff, support (classified) staff, and school principals. The central tenet of the CEC approach is that these groups are all highly interconnected and that all must be included in any process designed to create lasting change in a public education system.

CEC leaders incorporated Dolan's perspective into an overall Santa Clara "labor management partnership" which focused on providing the following supports in Santa Clara:

1. **Conduct listening visits** each year to gather feedback from all key constituencies. In 2015, CEC staff conducted the first of these visits at multiple school sites in order to assess: 1) How the central office focus on teaching and learning flows through the system as a whole; 2) how principals and site leaders exercise their roles and responsibilities in relationship to the teaching and learning focus; and 3) the level of depth and quality of the collaborative teams at school sites and how integrated their work is in relation to key teaching and learning initiatives. School site listening visits were conducted each subsequent year in new cohorts of schools. Starting with the third cohort of participating schools, CEC and district and union leaders conducted listening visits together so that expertise in conducting such visits could be transferred to district and union leaders and sustained over time.
2. **Gradual implementation:** Rather than attempt to address existing communication and collaboration structures across the entire district, CEC introduced a "cohort approach." Starting in 2015, a first cohort of four schools was selected to participate in the partnership. A new cohort of schools was added each year, with the fifth and final cohort in the 2019-20 school year including several new schools the district recently opened to accommodate growth. This meant that earlier cohorts could serve as mentors and guides for later cohorts, sharing knowledge acquired through experience. The district also provided ongoing support to each cohort through a combination of supports from CEC, the California Teacher Union Reform Network (CalTURN), and the California Labor Management Initiative.
3. **Data synthesis and recommendations:** The CEC team synthesized data from its district and school listening visits to identify challenges and opportunities that could be shared with district and school leaders by cohort. CEC then identified recommendations for improving existing collaboration and communication between schools, teachers, support staff, union leaders, district leaders, and the school board.

4. **Training:** District, school, and union leaders worked with CEC to schedule and facilitate a series of School Leadership Team Trainings/Meetings and District Leadership Team Meetings focusing on bringing together leaders from across staff levels to listen and learn from each other and to reflect on and respond to recommendations to improve existing practices and communication structures. These CEC-led trainings occurred three times each school year and brought classified staff, certified staff, and principals from across cohort schools together with district and union leaders.
5. **Implementing change:** CEC provided training and support for leaders across constituencies to identify, implement, and monitor key reforms, including among others:
 - a. Establishing a joint team that includes union leaders from both the classified and teacher unions, and cabinet-level district leaders to strengthen efforts to promote communication and collaboration at the district level and to extend this collaboration to the school site level;
 - b. Expanding school-level staff autonomy and input into key decisions and elevating the relevance of school site leadership teams (SLTs) including the principal, teacher leaders and support staff leaders. SLTs are utilized to ensure school sites have common goals that are tailored to the needs of their particular students and aligned with district priorities.
 - c. Empowering teachers and support staff by creating dedicated “Innovation Planning Funds.” This included separate pots of money for both certified and classified staff at every school to: 1) identify as a team their most pressing needs; and 2) apply for funds from the district to address these needs.
 - d. Strengthening a District Leadership Team that includes school leadership teams from cohort schools, district leaders, and curricular experts and specialists.

To understand the impacts of the Labor Management Partnership this case study required a varied set of data collection activities, including interviews, focus groups, and a district-wide staff survey.

To understand the impacts of the Santa Clara labor management partnership (SCLMP) supported by CEC over the past five years, this case study required a varied set of data collection activities. This data collection, designed to gather feedback from each constituent group impacted by the partnership, is described in the following Methodology section.

Methodology

APA Consulting's case study research team conducted a site visit to Santa Clara in spring 2019. This site visit gathered data on the CEC's efforts to improve collaboration and communication across key constituents in the Santa Clara Unified School District. During this site visit, APA observed portions of a CEC training and conducted ten focus groups with educators in CEC-supported cohort schools:

1. Elementary school principals.
2. Elementary teachers.
3. Elementary classified staff leaders.
4. Secondary school principals.
5. Secondary teachers.
6. Secondary classified staff leaders.
7. Leadership teams from four individual schools.

Elementary focus groups included 24 staff members from across school cohorts, and included school and district level union members and leaders. Secondary school focus groups included 28 staff members from across schools in different cohorts and also included union members and leaders. Subsequent to the site visit and focus groups, APA conducted additional data gathering activities, including:

1. Interviews with district administrative leaders.
2. An interview with the president of the United Teachers of Santa Clara.
3. An interview with a school board member.
4. Interviews with a CEC program leader.
5. A district-wide survey of staff, which was created by APA in collaboration with district leaders. This survey was distributed to all teachers, principals, support staff, and district staff members in May 2019. The survey garnered 670 responses overall, including 108 district staff, 41 school administrative staff, 331 instructional staff, and 190 classified staff. The district currently employs around 700 teachers and 600 classified staff.

Findings from all data gathering activities are reported below.

Impacts and Outcomes

While the degree of some impacts can vary by school, input from the interviews, survey, and focus groups with staff from across the district yielded several key overarching themes regarding impacts of SCLMP in the Santa Clara Unified School District: 1) creation of a more collaborative district-union relationship; 2) positive impacts on school-level collaboration and climate; 3) greater involvement and respect for the

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contributions of classified staff; and 4) increased program innovation tailored to school-specific needs.

Creation of A More Collaborative District-Union Relationship

Staff members across the district uniformly agree that the SCLMP has produced a radical improvement in the district's relationship with both the teacher and classified employee unions. District leaders consistently indicate that they have "better and more open communication now than in the past with union leaders," and that, as a direct result of the SCLMP, the district has fundamentally changed basic communication structures with union leaders.

One tangible example of this change is that, in years prior to the SCLMP, the district's cabinet meetings, which included the superintendent and top administrative officers, were closed to union leader participation. With input and coaching from CEC, leaders realized that dedicated time was needed to build a planning team that included union leaders representing both classified and certified employees and cabinet-level district leaders, including the superintendent. In order to create space for this team to meet regularly, the district converted the existing time typically spent in closed cabinet meetings to include union leaders and to ensure the union voice is represented and heard. As one district leader indicated, it is very unusual for a district to make a point to include union leaders in a cabinet-level team, but "working with CEC and learning from other districts that built strong labor-management partnerships, Santa Clara leaders wanted to try it for themselves."

Union leaders assert that the overall change brought on by this initiative has resulted in a profound "cultural shift" in communication and trust that represents the effort's greatest success.

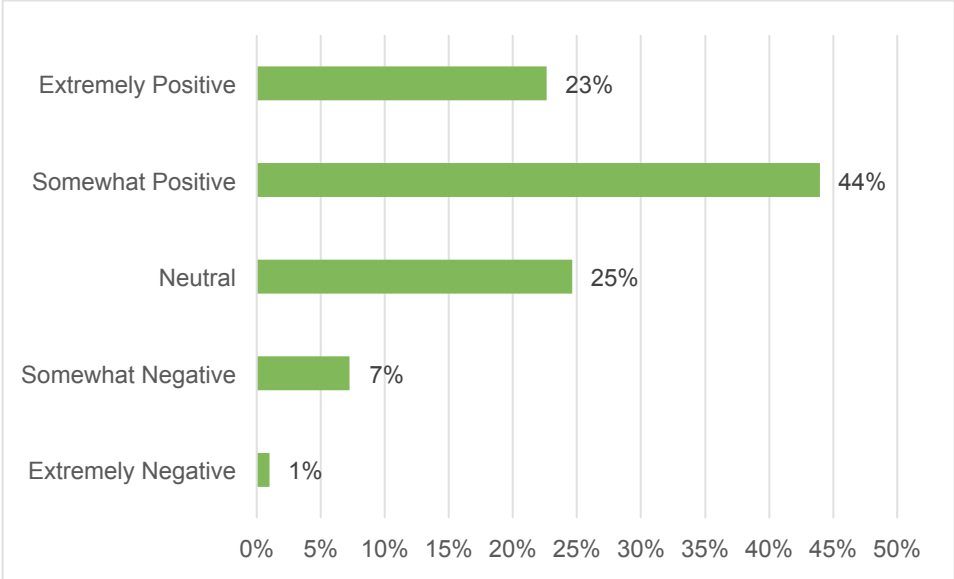
There were significant impacts associated with this concrete change in communication structure. While district leaders at first had to adjust to including union leaders on such a high-level planning team, the change – supported by CEC coaching – eventually became more routine. According to district leaders, the improved communication that this change yielded has "greatly enhanced trust" and averted miscommunication since "now the union president comes first to district leaders with questions or concerns that arise."

Union leaders agree with this assessment. In fact, these leaders assert that the overall change brought on by this initiative has resulted in a profound "cultural shift" in communication and trust that represents the effort's greatest success. Prior to this effort, union leaders agree "there was insufficient communication, insufficient time to build relationships, and a lack of trust that often led each group to view the other as an adversary." Leaders firmly believe this adversarial relationship is unproductive, and does not serve well the interests of either the district or unions. Instead union leaders now have open and regular communication with district leaders and, "there are no

surprises on either side that can breed mistrust.” Equally important, since they have a voice at the table with district leaders, union leaders can “take more ownership of the decisions that are made,” and bring this enhanced sense of ownership and accountability back to their union members to engage them in helping solve problems collaboratively with the district.

Teachers, principals, and classified staff across schools also report a positive change in the district-union relationship resulting from the collaboration. Indeed, as Figure 1 indicates, survey findings from across teachers, principals, classified staff, and district staff indicate that the district-union relationship is viewed by more than two-thirds of survey respondents as one which is now either somewhat positive or extremely positive. Equally impressive is the fact that only eight percent of all respondents report any level of negativity in current union-district collaborations. This is a significant change considering the turbulent and contentious nature of this relationship that was reported as commonplace as recently as five years ago.

Figure 1: What Level of Collaboration Do You View Between Unions and the District?



Response based on 455 respondents across all job categories.

Input from focus groups and interviews indicate that the perceived increase in district-union collaboration has had a ripple effect in terms of additional benefits. For example, as one teacher leader indicated, teachers and support staff in general feel more empowered “to come and talk to the district instead of always feeling like things are being done to them.” This sense of empowerment has led to improved collaboration overall and stronger buy-in from certified and classified staff to collaborate with district leaders to address any new challenges that arise.

Union leaders report that changing the relationship with the district created space for the union to focus on other topics with members than just reporting on district activities and

collective bargaining updates. Instead, union leaders can devote more resources and effort to work on the “professional goals” of the union. In particular the union is becoming a key hub for discussing, identifying, and communicating teacher professional development needs. This shifts the union as a whole to becoming an organization more focused on professional practice.

Positive Impacts on School-Level Collaboration and Climate

One tenet of the SCLMP is to expand collaboration and input not just at the highest level of district-union leadership, but between district leaders and school-level staff as well. A concrete manifestation of this philosophy is the establishment of school leadership teams (SLTs) that meet regularly at each school. These teams are designed to be co-led by the school principal, teacher leaders, and classified staff leaders. They are intended to ensure that all staff in schools become more engaged in solving challenges and that district-wide initiatives are implemented with fidelity and in a fashion that is tailored to school-specific needs. The SLTs become a focal point for the SCLMP since members of these teams attend CEC trainings three times each year as a group. Participants also have opportunities to collaborate and share ideas with SLTs from other schools through SCLMP trainings and other activities.

While the three CEC-led trainings each year are critical motivators, teachers and school leaders indicate that “the real work is what happens back at the school sites, where SLTs work consistently to improve teaching and learning through greater staff collaboration.” The success of these teams is viewed as key because each school site is different with unique student needs and unique challenges. In all cases the overarching goal is to develop more collaboration across teachers and other staff, and “to develop actionable goals that are based on data.”

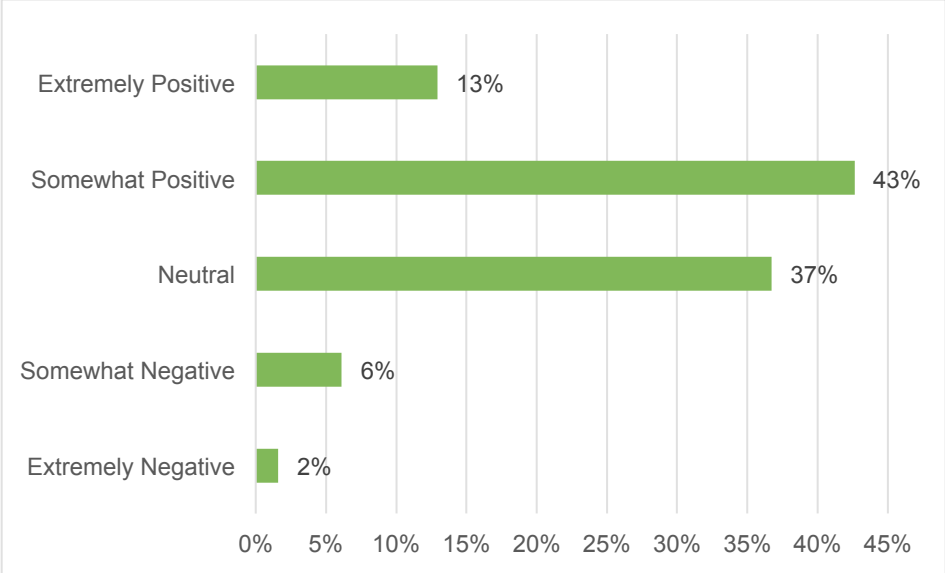
Teachers and certified staff indicate that, when school leadership teams (SLTs) are functioning well, “collaboration as a whole is valued across the school.”

Teachers and certified staff indicate that, when SLTs are functioning well, “collaboration as a whole is valued across the school.” At one school participating in an SCLMP cohort, staff members report that, after the SLT was created, staff members saw the value in creating other additional collaborative teams. These additional teams were created to address specific subject area weaknesses or student needs. In addition, as one teacher at this school indicated, “after seeing how well the SLT worked, we thought ‘why can’t we do this for students, so that they can feel more ownership in the school too?’” Teachers nominated students to participate on a student collaboration team that mimics the functioning of the SLT. This student leadership group puts out student surveys to regularly get input from all students about concerns in the school and findings are shared with teachers and other students. Students are asked to develop

solutions to identified challenges and to work on implementing these solutions in collaboration with teachers and school leaders.

Impacts of the SLTs appear to be felt across all staff in the district. Large numbers of staff in APA’s focus groups attributed overall improvements in collaboration to the work of the SCLMP. As Figure 2 indicates, data also indicate that nearly 60 percent of survey respondents across the district attribute positive impacts on collaboration in general as a direct result of the SCLMP.

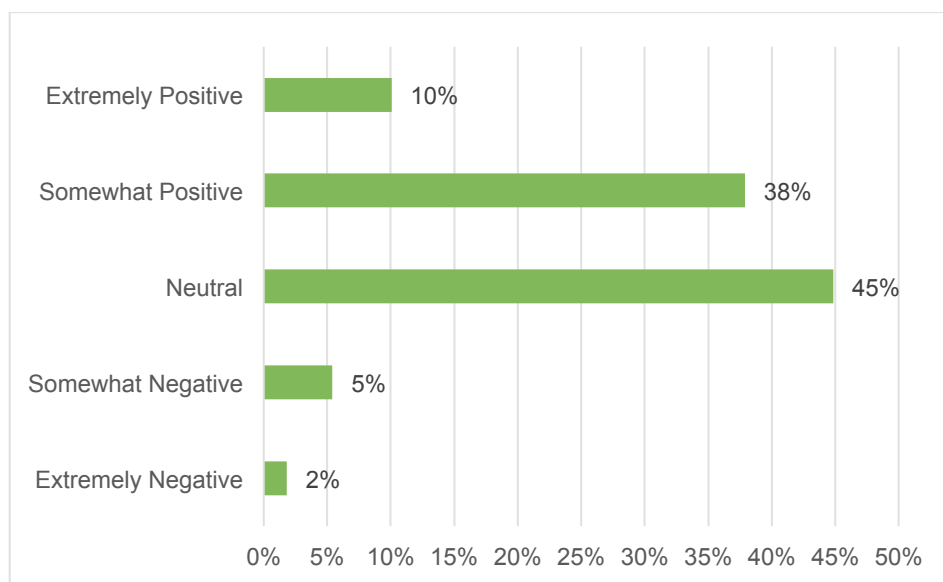
Figure 2: What Impact Has the SCLMP Had on Collaboration Across Staff?



Response based on 441 respondents across all job categories.

Such improved collaboration appears to have further ripple effects in terms of positive impact on school climate. In fact, staff across APA’s focus groups attributed positive changes in school and district climate to the SCLMP emphasis on collaboration. While changes in school climate can result from an array of factors, including community and parent involvement and staff turnover, as Figure 3 shows, nearly half of Santa Clara survey respondents reported discernable positive changes to their current working climate as a direct result of the SCLMP effort.

Figure 3: What Impact Has the SCLMP Had on Climate?



Response based on 446 respondents across all job categories.

Perhaps one of the most powerful and consistent findings is the overwhelmingly positive effect which the SCLMP produced for classified staff.

School leaders, certified staff, and classified staff across focus groups report that these positive changes in climate have boosted employee productivity and reduced turnover, both of which translate into positive impacts on student engagement and learning.

Greater Involvement and Respect for the Contributions of Classified Staff

Perhaps one of the most powerful and consistent findings from this case study in the Santa Clara Unified School District is the overwhelmingly positive effect which the SCLMP produced for classified staff. It was consistently expressed in focus groups with custodians, paraprofessionals, attendance clerks, administrative assistants, and others that classified staff now feel “more respected,” “more listened to,” and “more integrated into their school communities.” In some cases, staff members indicate that they “feel like they are truly part of the school for the first time ever.” Notably, these same sentiments were also expressed and reinforced by the teachers, principals, and district leaders participating in focus groups.

Interviewed staff members provided numerous examples of the impacts associated with explicitly including classified union leaders in district-level planning discussions and meetings. For instance, the district recently created a new cross-school paraprofessional trainer position, which interviewed staff viewed as a direct result of enhanced collaboration between the district and classified union leaders. Union leaders heard from their members about the need for such a position to provide more consistent and effective training to paraprofessionals across all schools. Through the enhanced collaboration emphasized through the SCLMP, the union and district were able to engage in productive conversations regarding the most feasible approach to address

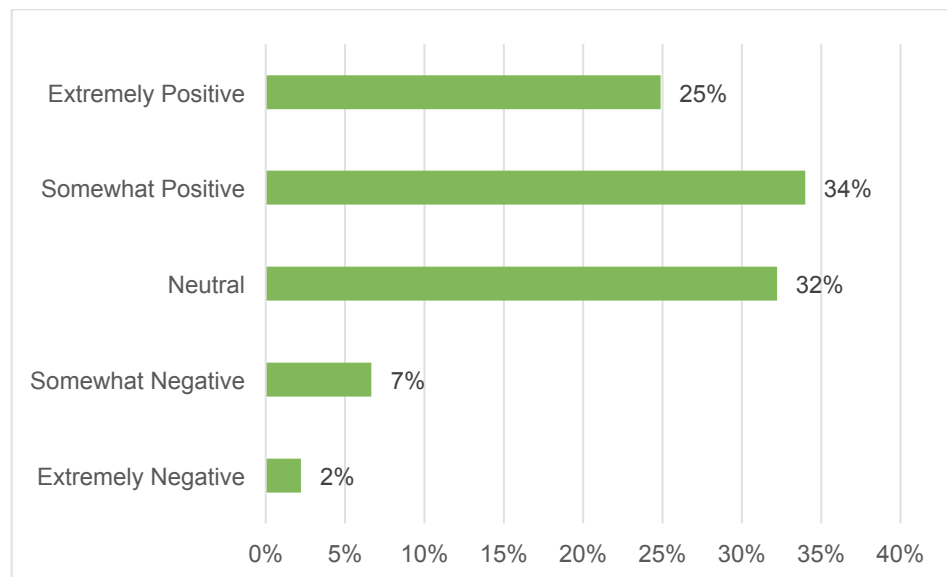
the identified need. Creation of the cross-school paraprofessional position was viewed as a major success that classified staff indicate “would not have been possible without the SCLMP.” Staff indicate this success has produced tangible benefits to students who are now exposed to higher trained, more consistent, and more effective instructional support. It has also produced tangible benefits to teachers, since paraprofessionals and teachers are now also encouraged in several schools to set aside time to plan together to ensure that paraprofessional support is better aligned with classroom instruction.

To further enhance the role of paraprofessionals in student instruction, CEC collaborated with the classified union and the district to offer a half day training for paraprofessionals on labor management collaboration. The goal of this training was to help these classified staff members “find their voices” more on SLTs to further enhance their ability to collaborate with teachers and other instructional staff in the schools.

Another major SCLMP success is that, for the first time ever according to focus group participants, classified staff are encouraged to communicate regularly with students and to become part of school-wide efforts to establish a strong culture of caring and communication. All classified staff across schools, including cafeteria, custodial, transportation, and other support staff are now receiving training on understanding and addressing student behavior and social emotional issues. The emphasis of this effort is on maximizing opportunities for all adults in schools to establish connections with students. This emphasis is important given that discipline referrals impact not only teachers who have behavior challenges in the classroom, but front office and classified staff as well who handle the referrals. Creating a more unified approach to student discipline and involving all staff, including classified, increases the number of adults with whom a student can create a positive relationship, and has the potential to reduce the overall number of discipline challenges and referrals.

This effort has created “a fundamental change in how teachers, principals, and district leaders view the role of classified staff,” and has led to an overall substantial increase in the mutual respect shown to these employees. As shown in Figure 4 below, this elevated respect is directly attributed to the SCLMP by a large majority of survey respondents across the district.

Figure 4: What Impact Has the SCLMP Had on Respect for Classified Staff?



Response based on 450 respondents across all job categories.

Establishment of school-level funds are widely viewed across staff as a strong example of the district “putting its money where its mouth is” in terms of supporting school-level collaboration and decision making.

More tangible evidence of the elevated respect for classified staff produced by the SCLMP is that classified staff members are included on SLTs and a portion of SLT meetings are typically now used to help classified staff solve problems that may not have been addressed in the past. Staff report that the power of this enhanced collaboration can be felt across school buildings, including by students. For instance, one school created posters displayed around the school to explain how all students, teachers, and staff can support the cleanliness of the building and the efforts of the custodial staff by adhering to certain practices around waste disposal. This not only helped keep the school cleaner, but “when students see the adults working together more effectively, it sends a strong, unified message that everyone in the school is on the same page and the same team,” and “creates a more positive school atmosphere in general that students can definitely feel.” Teachers and other instructional leaders believe that such a positive atmosphere is, in turn, conducive to creating an improved overall learning environment for students.

Increased Program Innovation Tailored to School-specific Needs

Perhaps the single defining operational outgrowth of the SCLMP is the district’s decision to make a significant investment in two funds that allow school-level teams of certified staff to apply for “innovation funds” and classified staff to apply for “collaboration funds.” In some schools the classified and certified staff worked together to submit fund applications, while in others these two groups work separately. The funds could be used

by these teams to design and implement innovative strategies tailored to meet specific student needs. Establishment of these school-level funds is widely viewed across staff as a strong example of the district “putting its money where its mouth is” in terms of supporting school-level collaboration and decision making. In fact, the district has set aside nearly \$1.5 million per year for three years to support these efforts.

To gain access to these funds, school-level teams submit project proposals to a joint team of union and district leaders. This team reviews the proposals, offers feedback, and ultimately renders a funding decision. The fruits of this process can be impressive. Just a few examples include:

- An elementary school used the funds to pay for release time and substitute teachers to enable teacher teams to focus more deeply on improving writing instruction. The school also used the funds to purchase materials to support writing instruction and to pay for teachers to attend writing-focused workshops and training. The funds not only enabled these supports to occur, but equally important, according to the school’s principal, it created a “unified energy across the school to focus on writing,” which was enhanced by the fact that staff knew this focus was their own choice, and not a top-down mandate from the district. According to the principal, data already show significant improvements in student writing skills as a result of the effort.
- A middle school SLT identified ongoing challenges with some of its students mastering grade-level academic work. The team applied for, and was awarded collaboration funding to pay paraeducators to provide tutoring support to targeted students after school. The funds also covered more time for the paraeducators to attend additional staff meetings in the school. This enabled them to work more closely with teachers so that after school tutoring would be well aligned with classroom instruction. Initial data gathered by the school after one year of implementation indicated participating students developed a better understanding of key academic concepts and showed improved learning confidence overall.
- A high school SLT identified the need for additional support for incoming freshman to help navigate their first year in high school. The school created a proposal for innovation funds to implement a new “advisory program” for freshman. This program, which was funded by the district, uses innovation dollars to pay teachers stipends to lead twice-weekly advisory periods with freshman. Freshman remain with their same teacher advisor throughout high school, which provides an added resource to support the efforts of counselors in the school. Teachers also receive funding to attend research-based trainings on how to implement student advisories, and to create lesson plans and curriculum for advisory periods. Staff in the school report positive impacts of this

intervention in helping freshman transition and cope with the pressures of high school and with postsecondary planning.

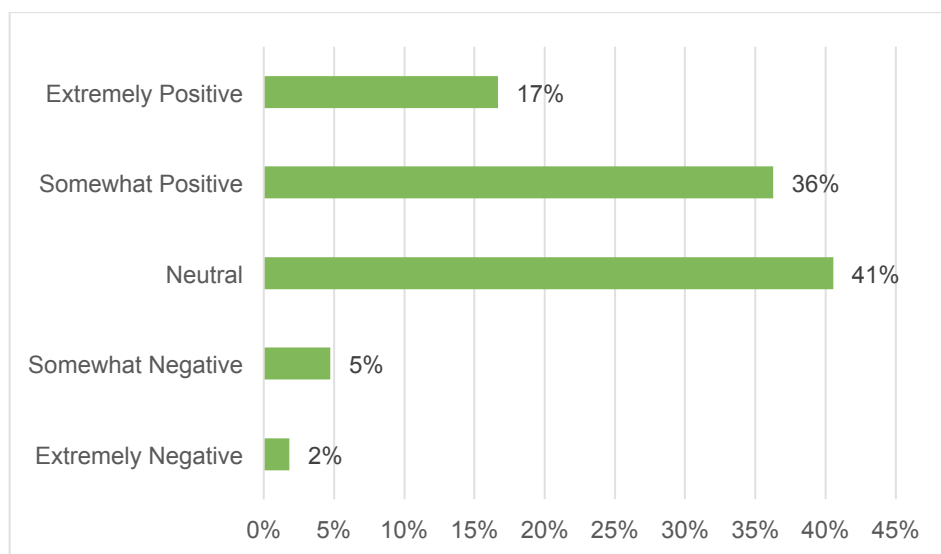
- Several schools have used the funds to enable teachers to identify, pay for, and attend specific professional development opportunities more tailored to their needs. Teachers indicate this more tailored training has a profound effect on staff morale, staff empowerment, and instructional quality.

The decision to set aside significant funds to support these activities was approved by the district's school board and included as part of a negotiated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with union leaders. Board members and district leaders indicate that such negotiations have been "smoother" in recent years and attribute this specifically to the effectiveness of the SCLMP. A key purpose for including the funds in the MOU was, "to recognize that each school site is unique and to provide teachers and classified staff the opportunity to have more input and to generate their own ideas for improving their schools."

One challenge expressed regarding implementation of the innovation funding is the need to ensure that supported activities are not misaligned with other district initiatives or with the goals of school principals in their role as instructional leaders. Challenges for principals can also arise in managing the myriad elevated teacher and classified staff voices that the funds can promote, and in dealing with the added administrative burden of supporting certified and classified employee teams through the funding process, including application procedures, fund management, and district reporting requirements.

However, teachers, principals, and classified staff overall applaud the new emphasis on school-level innovation, and indicate that such innovation not only energizes staff creativity, but boosts morale and can improve instruction and outcomes for students. In fact, as shown in Figure 5 below, a majority of respondents across the district (53%) attribute positive effects on teaching and learning directly to the SCLMP.

Figure 5: What Impact Has the SCLMP Had on Teaching and Learning?



Response based on 444 respondents across all job categories.

In terms of implementing the innovation and collaboration funds, school leaders and staff also applaud the fact that any unused funds can be carried over to the next school year. This encourages schools to use the funds as efficiently as possible without pressure to spend the monies down at the end of each year.

Conclusion

In a short period of time and with a relatively modest investment of staff time to participate in trainings and facilitation, the Santa Clara labor management partnership has produced impressive results in the Santa Clara Unified School District. Other districts around the country should certainly take note of the positive impacts this effort has had on district-union relationships.

Equally important, however, district and policy leaders should take note of the ripple effects these positive impacts have had on other critical areas. Such areas include school-level collaboration and climate, the level of engagement of classified staff with students, the overall level of respect for classified staff, and the promotion of innovation, creativity, and school-level buy-in by providing funds to support innovation and collaboration funds. The district has seen such value in this work that it has taken concrete steps to ensure its sustainability, including making it a priority that the new, incoming superintendent was not only aware of this work, but that they viewed it as a consistent, ongoing priority.

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-Assistant Superintendent, Santa Clara Unified School

Underlying these ripple effects, as one district assistant superintendent stated, is a revitalized recognition across the district that “the system can do a better job at listening to what students need” and that, “improved union-district relationships can significantly help with this job, as can building more ownership at the school level for identifying interventions to meet specific student needs.”