

Analysis of the Impact of the Better Together: California Teachers Summit



A report prepared by the Center for Research on
Educational Access and Leadership



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Prepared by



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Executive Summary

In the early twentieth century, the separation of teacher and principal became more pronounced as schools became increasingly complex systems. The transition from one room schools to grade level classrooms changed school personnel roles and responsibilities. As a result, school leadership shifted, creating a clear delineation between teachers and principals. Leadership in education then evolved into an assigned role associated with a title. Leaders were viewed as those in charge who had all the power and authority to determine what happened in schools. School leaders were seen as the point person/spokesperson and overseer of the organization. In this new century, teachers and other personnel in schools are gaining the skills, interest and desire to lead in the classroom and beyond. Through professional learning opportunities such as Better Together described below, teachers emerge as leaders in the classroom and in their schools.

On the last Friday of July, each year from 2015 through 2018, the *Better Together: California Teachers Summit* engaged thousands of teachers across the state in a unique peer-to-peer learning event and connected them to a supportive professional learning community that continued throughout the academic year. More than thirty schools and colleges of education hosted this statewide day of learning. The Better Together Summit focused on the following aims: 1) to provide an opportunity for teachers to share strategies and resources they have used to implement California Standards to meet the needs of all students in their classrooms, 2) to connect veteran teachers, new teachers, and future teachers, 3) to serve as a summit of inspiration for them ahead of the new school year and, 4) to bring alumni back to campus. The annual statewide Summit program included a keynote speech that was livestreamed to 30+ local and regional sites across the State; and a concurrent live program at each site consisting of 1) EdTalks (modeled after the TEDTalk format) by local teachers, and 2)

unconference-style collaborative Edcamp style breakout sessions where teachers shared strategies that worked in their classrooms. Throughout the day of the Summit, social media generated conversations across the 30+ sites, with the Better Together hashtag or username trending on Twitter both regionally and nationally during each annual Summit. Better Together programming continued throughout each academic year, with online and face-to-face local and regional events, an online teacher network, and a guide to free resources for implementing the new curriculum standards and meeting individual student needs.

Better Together was organized by a collaborative partnership consisting of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU), the California State University (CSU) system), and the New Teacher Center,¹ with support from numerous philanthropic and corporate funders². More than 30 schools and colleges of education across the state – in both public (CSU) and independent, nonprofit (AICCU) institutions of higher education – received sub awards from Better Together grants and contributed staff time and other local resources to plan and host the Summit and local/regional Better Together events. Many other stakeholders assisted in this project from school districts, county offices of education, and non-profit entities. Furthermore, the Steering Committee was supported by a Teacher Advisory Council of highly motivated teachers from across the state who supported and guided the direction and activities of Better Together.

The organizing partners implemented an evaluation design that relied primarily on online surveys administered immediately following the Summit and regional events each year. Survey results indicated that 9

¹ New Teacher Center concluded its Better Together project in November 2019 and was not involved in the study described in this report.

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out of 10 teachers who participated in the Summit agreed that it provided them with key learnings to implement in their classrooms. Additionally, 9 out of 10 stated that the Summit's professional learning would have a positive and lasting impact on their instructional practices. Anecdotal data such as unsolicited emails, posts on Twitter and Facebook, and conversations with participants, provided evidence that the Summit impacted teachers in ways that the online surveys could not fully capture. For example, teachers shared that their experience as EdTalk speakers or Edcamp like facilitators at the Summit gave them new confidence and led them to serving as teacher leaders in their schools, while remaining in the classroom. To explore these and other outcomes, the CSU and AICCU, with the direction of the Better Together Steering Committee, retained the services of The Center for Research on Educational Access and Leadership (CREAL) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) to conduct a follow-up study of Better Together impact one year after the final *Better Together: CA Teachers Summit*.

The purpose of this sequential, descriptive, mixed methods study was to examine the short and long-term impacts of Better Together. Furthermore, the intent was to identify learnings that would inform policy, planning, and delivery of professional learning opportunities for teachers. Data from an online survey of 179 respondents (13% return rate) and individual interviews of 17 study participants, as well as 2 group interviews with Better Together Steering Committee members answered the three questions that guided this study:

- What was the impact of *Better Together: California Teachers Summit* on teacher leadership, professional learning opportunities, and networking, particularly for those who participated in leadership roles?

- What were the outcomes of the *Better Together: California Teachers Summit* for students, teachers, schools, and districts?
- What strategies were developed from *Better Together: California Teachers Summit* for teacher professional learning, teacher leadership and networking?

In addition to Better Together attendees, some participants in this study also held leadership roles in Better Together at the local or state level. They included Edcamp facilitators, EdTalk Speakers, New Teacher Center Facilitators, and other educators who participated in a leadership role at one of the Better Together Summit sites. Study participants were identified as teachers from the Pre-K through high school.

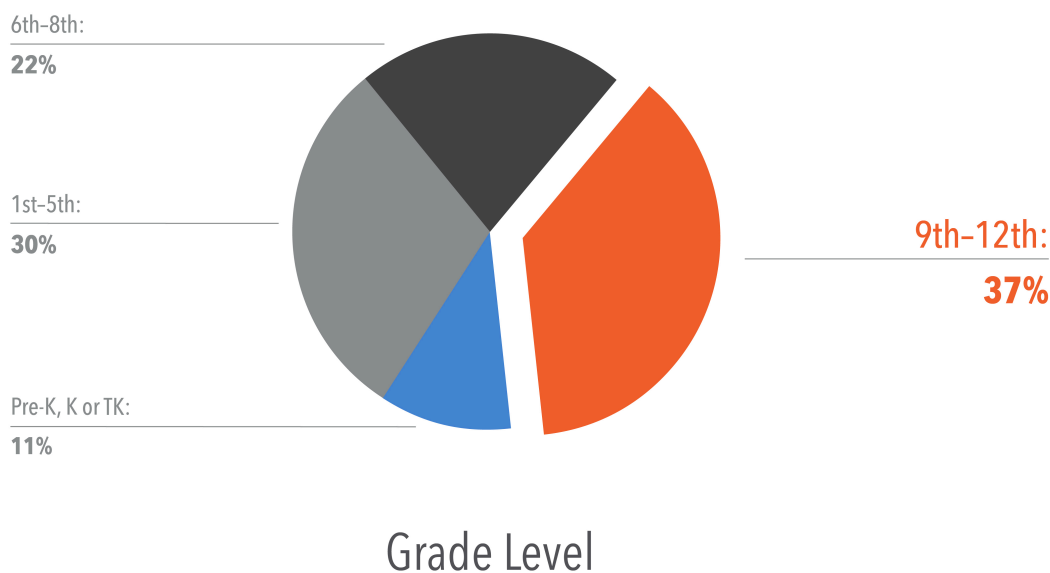


Figure 1. Survey Respondents Characteristics (n = 133).

In this study, we found that teachers, when encouraged, embraced leadership as part of their identity and on behalf of their students. They saw leadership as an action allowing them to lead from their current

spaces rather than leadership as solely role specific. Having a voice, opening their minds, staying connected with their peers outside of their immediate environment and helping to create structures of support for professional learning were embraced, rekindling their passion for teaching as a profession. Teachers desired to co-construct learning with their students and to share best practices with other teachers. They felt invigorated and revived as teacher leaders and learners.

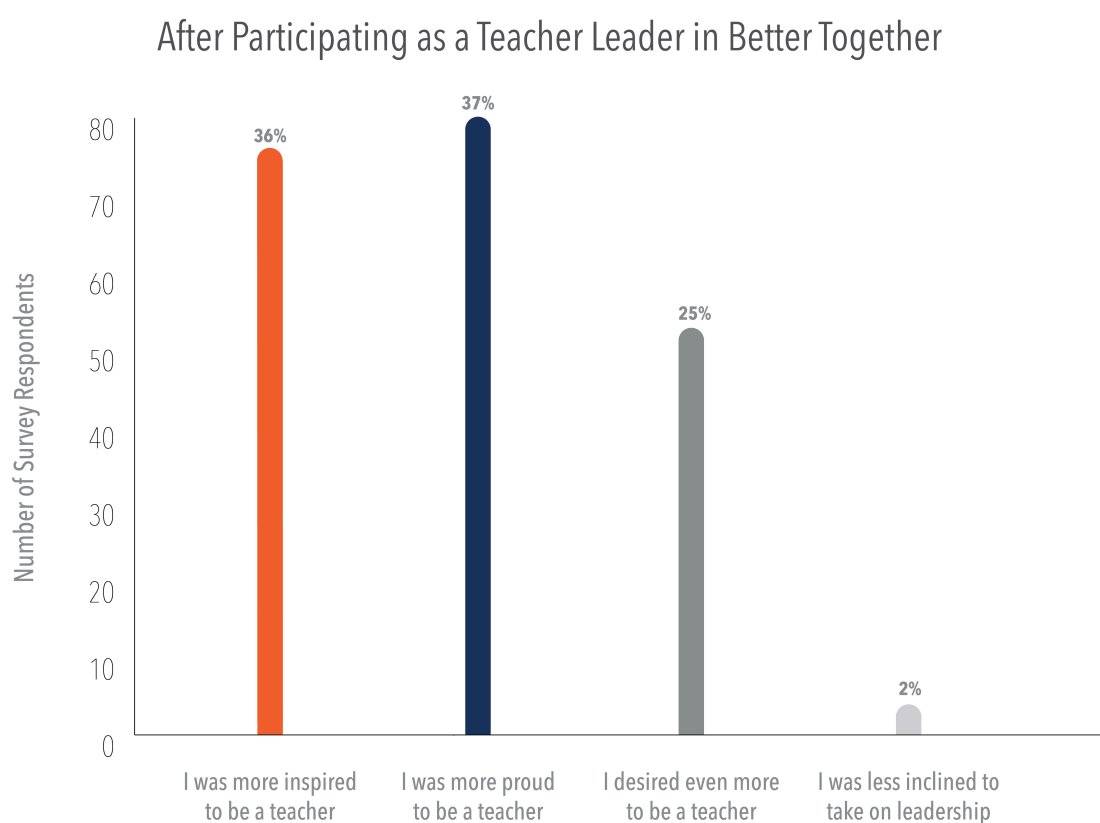


Figure 2. How participants felt after being teacher leaders in Better Together (n = 172).

To this end, teachers in this study were eager to engage in meaningful and collaborative professional learning that was peer initiated, facilitated, and directed. The teachers in this study came from a diversity of

schools in the state of California. They were all invited by Better Together to share their most effective strategies as teachers and to consider developing their leadership skills to lead from the classroom. This included the curriculum, advocacy for all learners, and teacher support and networking.

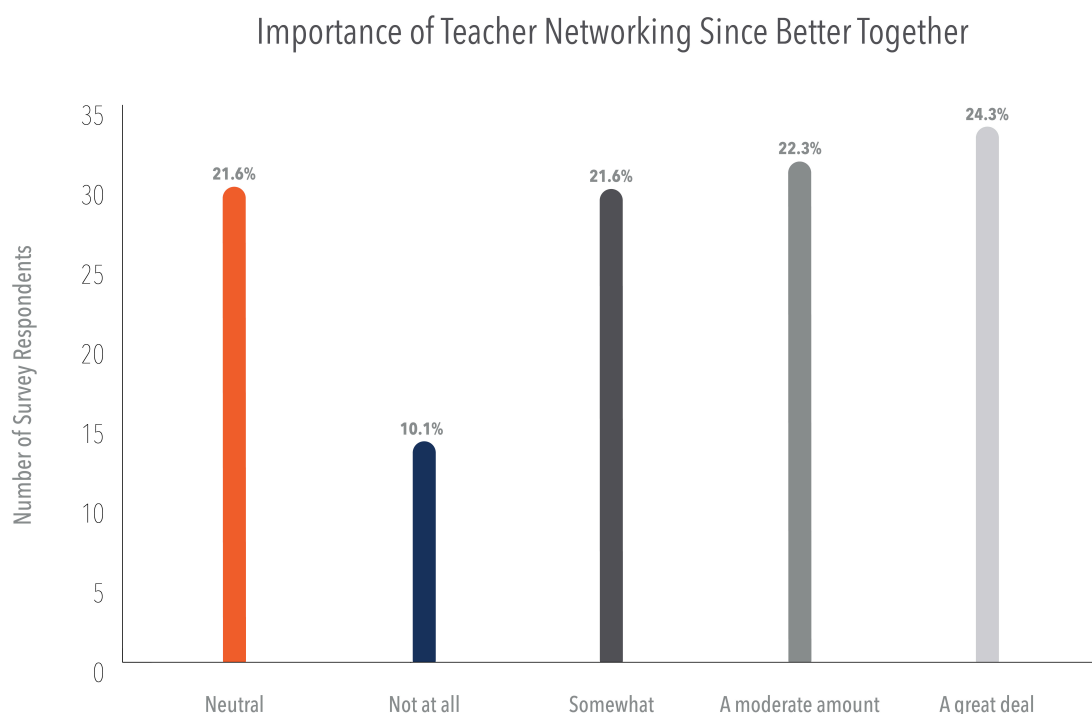


Figure 3. Importance of teacher networking since Better Together (n= 139).

While much has been said about the value of networking, Better Together participants found the networking created through this experience was multifaceted and opened new ways of learning and connecting with colleagues. The interactions and support for each other did not end at the conclusion of the Summit, as participants used Twitter and other social media platforms to share ideas, teaching materials, methods, and pedagogical strategies to support student success. This network of support carried on through the life of group

interactions in online blogs and other posts. Teachers proposed ideas, recieved feedback from peers, and shared the outcomes from newly implemented strategies. It was a rich and highly engaging networking experience.

This grouping of educators' findings revealed emergent themes from the interviews of seventeen participants. These findings included: 1) teacher collaboration, 2) diversity challenges, 3) empowerment of teacher leaders, 4) confidence and passion, and 5) networking. These five themes were key outcomes and impacts of this project. Teachers gained confidence, felt more empowered, recognized the value in diversity of ideas, and range of experiences with equity and resources, and lived through the creation of what felt like a movement to many (See Table 1).

Emergent Themes	Description
Collaboration	Creating avenues for ongoing communication, engagement, and support.
Diversity Challenges	Experiences with equities, opportunities and resources, and ideas for student success.
Empowerment as Teachers and Leaders	Commitment, confidence in knowledge skills, and innovation.
Confidence and Passion	A safe space for multiple voices to speak, learn, and support teacher leadership.
Networking	Sharing of resources, exchanging information, recruiting other teachers, and building community.

Table 1. Qualitative Findings of Emergent Themes

A foundational outcome of this work was the emergence of a statewide network of empowerment and support for teachers and teacher leaders. Teachers were influenced by each other through Better Together

activities, and were able to take their learnings back to the classroom. As a result, many accounts of differences in student achievement and learning outcomes emerged. Teachers discussed increases in math achievement, writing skills, student classroom engagement, and an overall passion for teaching and professional learning.

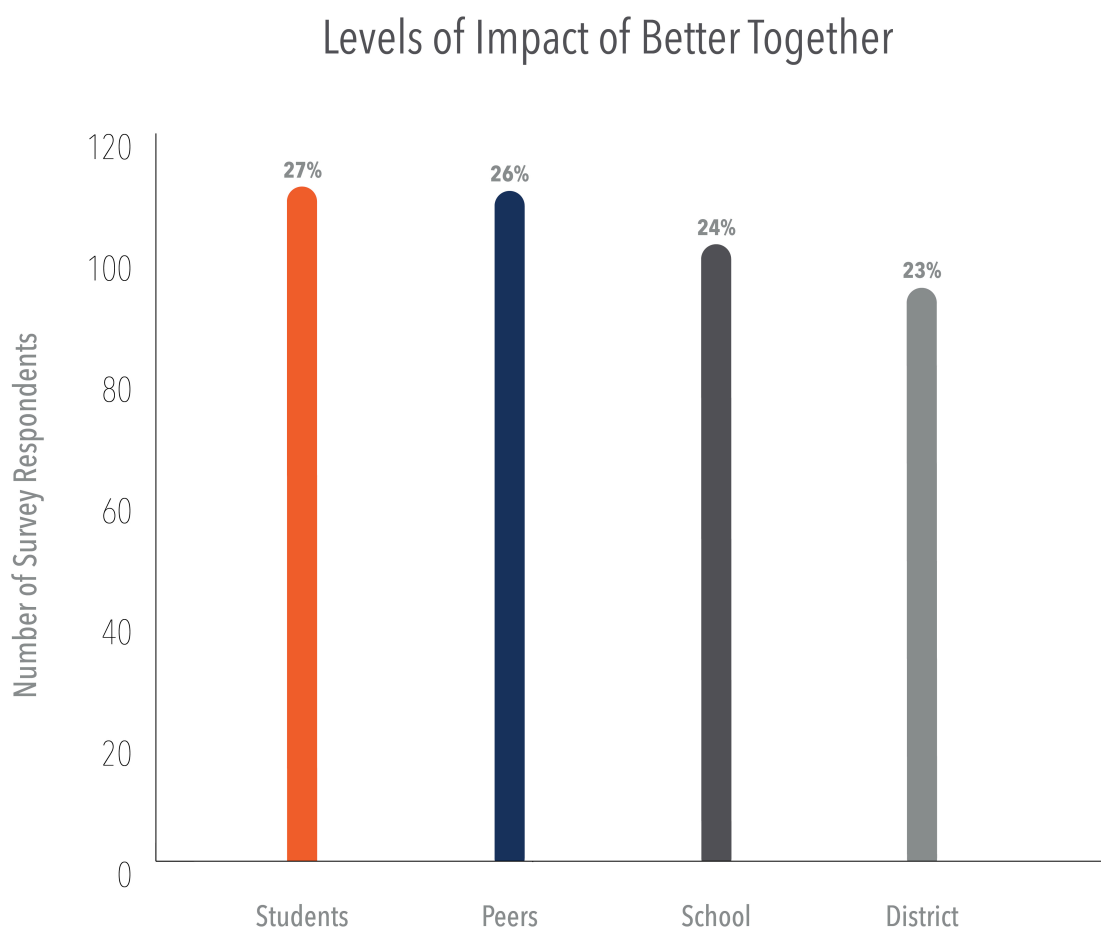


Figure 4. The effect of participating in and learning from Better Together (n = 172).

As with any intervention, there were recommendations offered for program improvement. The consistent recommendation from this study was to continue Better Together in some form. Participants and project leaders were in agreement that this statewide endeavor should continue, as there is a need, and this

project answered that need in multiple ways. Teachers felt valued, respected, and appreciated and believed they had important information, knowledge and resources to offer each other, to improve student learning and professional learning in their home schools and districts. Many of the Better Together participants went on to engage in leadership roles while others continued to lead from where they were in the organization. They felt more valued and strengthened as educators through the networks that emerged from Better Together.

Finally, we recommend that the spirit of the Better Together continue in some format with an infrastructure that supports networking and the sharing of information through online and in person professional learning activities. Teacher leader experts may benefit from a directory of participants to aid in strengthening the work achieved so far. All that was accomplished was due primarily to the hard work of the associations and Steering Committee who worked tirelessly to serve the teachers and teacher leaders of California. We commend them for this successful endeavor.

In conclusion, schools, colleges, and universities should pay close attention to the impact of professional learning on teacher empowerment and networking. The lessons learned from this study demonstrate the strengths in networking that support teachers' collaboration, increased confidence and passion, leading to increased student engagement in schools.

Introduction

In the early twentieth century, the separation of teacher and principal became more pronounced as schools became increasingly complex facilities. The transition from one room schools to grade level classrooms changed school personnel roles and responsibilities. As a result, school leadership shifted creating a clear delineation between teachers and principals. Leadership in education then evolved into an assigned role associated with a title. Leaders were viewed as the persons in charge who had all the power and authority to determine what happened in schools. School leaders were seen as the point person, spokesperson and overseer of the organization. In this new century, teachers and other school personnel are gaining skills, interest and desire to lead in the classroom and beyond. Through evaluation, it was found that teachers, when encouraged, embraced leadership as part of their identity and on behalf of their students. They saw leadership as an action allowing them to lead from their current spaces rather than leadership as solely role specific.

Having a voice, opening their minds, staying connected with their peers outside of their immediate environment and helping to create structures of support for professional learning were embraced, rekindling their passion for teaching as a profession. Teachers desired to co-construct learning with their students and to share best practices with other teachers. They felt invigorated and revived as teacher leaders and learners. To this end, teachers in this study were eager to engage in meaning professional learning that was peer initiated, facilitated, and directed. The teachers in this study came from a diversity of schools in the state of California and they were invited by Better Together to share strategies they use in the classroom and to consider developing

their leadership skills to lead from where they are. This included the curriculum, advocacy for all learners, and teacher support and networking.

While much has been said about the value of networking, Better Together participants found networks to be multifaceted; and it opened new ways of learning and connecting with colleagues. The work went beyond the Summit in that participants accessed Twitter and other social media platforms after the Summit. In this web of networking, teachers shared ideas, teaching materials, methods, and pedagogical strategies to support student success. The interactions and support for each other did not end at the conclusion of the Summit, but carried on throughout the life of group interactions, blogs and other communication methods. Teachers proposed new ideas, recieved feedback from peers, and shared outcomes from newly implemented teaching strategies. Teachers posed problems and solicited ideas and solutions leading to a rich and highly engaging networking experience.

New ideas of teacher leaders, professional learning and networking serve as the foundation for this report. What follows is the story of Better Together's impact and the innovative lens necessary to support teachers in leadership development, professional learning and networking.

The Better Together: California Teachers Summit

On the last Friday of July, each year from 2015 through 2018, the *Better Together: California Teachers Summit* engaged thousands of teachers across the state in a unique peer-to-peer learning event and connected them to a supportive professional learning community that continued throughout the academic year. This statewide day of learning was hosted simultaneously by more than 30 schools and colleges of education that

aimed to: 1) provide an opportunity for teachers to share strategies and resources they have used to implement California Standards to meet the needs of all students in their classrooms, 2) to connect veteran teachers, new teachers, and with future teachers, 3) to inspire them ahead of the new school year and, 4) to bring alumni back to campus. The event was free to all California PreK-12 teachers, teacher candidates, school administrators, and welcomed educators from any school, public, private, or parochial.

The annual one-day statewide Summit brought together between 8,000 and 11,000 California educators each year present across the State's 38 sites. Each year, the Summit presented a different theme. The first Summit focused on implementation of the new State curriculum standards, while subsequent Summits featured "Now More Than Ever" which reflected the importance of teachers coming together to collaborate and learn from each other, and "It's Personal: Meeting the Needs of Every Student." Each year, the Summit program included four elements:

- **Keynote speakers:** The Summit included one or two keynote speakers whose presentations were focused on closing the educational opportunity gap across the state and were simulcast across the state to every Better Together site. Speakers included education expert Sir Ken Robinson and inspirational educator, Professor, and Second Lady Jill Biden.
- **Edcamp Model sessions:** The Better Together leadership team collaborated with Hadley Ferguson, Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Edcamp Foundation, to create sessions similar to the participant-driven professional development model known as Edcamp. The "unconference concept" empowered all participants to have a voice in identifying the professional development topics, discussion sessions, and sharing of best practices, ideas, challenges, and solutions. This model

supports teachers as experts for learning (Hertz, 2010). During the Summit, a representative from the [Edcamp Foundation](#) was present at each local site to help organize the breakout sessions around teacher-selected topics. In addition, each site recruited local teacher leaders and prepared them in advance of the Summit to serve as “Edcamp Facilitators” by guiding the breakout group discussions consistent with [Edcamp model tenets](#).

- **Local EdTalk speakers:** Each local site selected and hosted two to three local TED-style talks given by teachers, offering informative, inspiring and at times, humorous and relatable perspectives on their success and challenges in the classroom. The Better Together organizers, as well as local sites, offered coaching to help teacher leaders prepare what was often their first large-scale public speaking experience.
- **Call to Action session:** To close the day, a facilitated conversation reflected on themes shared, ensuring that every participant left with access to Better Together resource guides and ideas to immediately implement in their classrooms.

Throughout the day of each Summit, social media generated conversations across the 30+ sites, with @CATeachersSummit trending nationally during each Summit. Better Together programming continued throughout each academic year, with online and face-to-face local and regional events, an online teacher network, and a guide to free resources for implementing the new curriculum standards and meeting individual student needs. More than a year after the last Summit, The CA Teachers Summit has almost 6,800 followers on Twitter.

Better Together was organized as a collaborative partnership consisting of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (AICCU), the California State University (CSU) system), and the New Teacher Center.³ These organizations formed a Steering Committee that designed, developed, implemented, and evaluated this day-long learning opportunity and accompanying regional networking events. The project was funded by philanthropic foundations, corporate sponsors, and other partners. More than 30 schools and colleges of education across the state –in both public (CSU) and private (AICCU) institutions of higher education – received sub awards from Better Together grants and contributed staff time and other local resources to plan and host the Summit and local/regional Better Together events. Many other stakeholders assisted in this project including school districts, county offices of education, and non-profit entities. Finally, the Steering Committee was supported by a Teacher Advisory Council of highly motivated teachers from across the state who supported and helped guide the direction and activities of Better Together.

The Steering Committee implemented an evaluation design that relied primarily on online survey data immediately following the Summit and regional events each year from 2015 through 2018. Overall, surveys of Summit participants indicated that 9 out of 10 teachers who participated in the Summit felt it provided them with key learnings to implement in their classrooms. Additionally, 9 out of 10 stated that the Summit's professional learning would have a positive and lasting impact on their instructional practices. Anecdotal data such as unsolicited emails, posts on Twitter and Facebook, and conversations with participants, provided further evidence that the Summit impacted teachers in ways that the online surveys could not fully capture. For

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example, some teachers said that their experience as EdTalk speakers or Edcamp like facilitators at the Summit gave them new confidence and led them to serving as teacher leaders in their schools, while remaining in the classroom. To explore these and other outcomes, the CSU and AICCU, with the direction of the Better Together Steering Committee, retained the services of The Center for Research on Educational Access and Leadership (CREAL) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) to conduct a follow-up study of Better Together impact one year after the final *Better Together: CA Teachers Summit*.

The Center for Research on Educational Access and Leadership (CREAL) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) was retained to conduct the follow-up impact study of Better Together, considering long-term and short-term outcomes as well as learnings and best practices for teacher leadership development. The purpose of this study was to examine the short and long-term impacts of Better Together and identify learnings that would inform policy, planning, and delivery of professional development for teachers. Three questions guided this study:

- What was the impact of Better Together: California Teachers Summit on teacher leadership, professional learning, and networking, particularly for those who participated in leadership roles?
- What were the outcomes of the Better Together: California Teachers Summit for students, teachers, schools, and districts?
- What are the lessons learned from Better Together for teacher professional learning, teacher leadership and networking?

This report provides an overview of Better Together, a brief review of the literature on teacher leaders and issues they may experience, and findings from a survey and interviews. The interviews were conducted from

October 2019 to January 2020 with project leaders and a random sample of project participants who volunteered to be a part of the interview process. Finally, the report offers discussion points and recommendations for consideration.

Review of Literature

This brief review of the literature focuses on teacher collaboration, professional learning networks for teachers and teacher leaders, and teacher confidence and efficacy. These concepts provide context and framework for this study. To understand Better Together as an intervention for teacher professional learning and leadership, this review of the literature provides a better understanding of terminology, perspective, and focus. For the purposes of this study, the term “professional learning” is preferred to “professional development”. While the literature tends to rely on the term “professional development”, we value “professional learning” and recognize it as more applicable and relevant to the life-long learning approach of Better Together.

Collaboration

Collaboration emerges in many different ways for teachers, from classroom instruction to team teaching and research endeavors. A study entitled “The Lower Mainland Project” launched in the United Kingdom addressed the idea of engagement and collaboration for teachers (Valli and Hawley 2002). Strategic Content Learning (SCL) was implemented by teachers in one or more of their classes. The SCL model builds from the work of other researchers who have developed interventions designed to promote metacognition, strategy use, or self-regulated learning (Borkowski, 1986). Collaboration was then encouraged

and facilitated both within and across schools. Teachers were encouraged to collaborate with one another between research visits as well. A teacher explained that implementing SCL in her English/Humanities class “forced me to sit back and think about lower end students in the class and forced me to be more reflective in how to help these students” (Dikilitas 2016). Similarly, another teacher explained, “I felt that I had a real opportunity to reflect on my teaching. It helped me get the big picture of where we’re going with these students rather than just trying strategy after strategy” (Dikilitas 2016).

Researchers have identified technology as a source of collaboration, and they described Twitter-based professional learning as taking place within affinity spaces (Carpenter & Krutka, 2015) or learning communities (Gao & Li, 2016). Research on Twitter-based professional learning has emphasized its size and scope (Rosenberg et al., 2016), its openness and interconnectedness (Carpenter & Krutka, 2015) and its self-directed nature (Visser et al., 2014).

The affinity space research project conducted by The Association for Educational Communications and Technology (2016) consisted of 3,598 unique Twitter users representing a variety of username roles. People and institutions affiliated with primary and secondary education represented over 22% of the coded sample. Other groups connected to education (e.g., administration and government; research, higher education and libraries) represented 24% of the pool, and 14% of the sample consisted of groups whose members were often, but not always, connected to children and schools (e.g., organizations and associations in journalism and media). Researchers collected data using a Twitter Archiving Google Sheet (TAGS; Hawksey 2014). The TAGS collected tweets and retweets using the #educattentats hashtag along with metadata such as usernames and

timestamps. The affinity space was open to a range of other roles and it is not always possible to determine who is participating in an affinity space such as #educattentats.

The results of the study paint the #educattentats hashtag as an affinity space that delivered just-in-time professional learning (Carpenter & Krutka, 2015). The results show that the space was driven and influenced by education stakeholders. Many of the tweets coded were dedicated to either reflecting on the teaching profession or giving support and resources for the teaching profession. Although the extent to which these resources met teachers' needs cannot be determined from their analysis, the fact remains that the affinity space was intended for that purpose.

Educators are becoming more innovative and involved in collaboration efforts in their respective schools (Valli and Hawley, 2002). Research also shows that educators value the ability to have agency with professional learning in their respective fields. Many conferences have a schedule set by a committee that the participants must follow. However, one study has demonstrated a more effective method. Valli and Hawley (2002) explored the affects impact of professionals being able to create their own professional learning experience, and how that autonomy contributed to overall personal, professional, and school growth. In the most common types of collaborative spaces, conferences, and learning networks, more evidence has demonstrated the importance of professionals being able to create their own professional learning experience, and how that autonomy contributed to overall personal professional, and school growth.

Professional Learning Networks

Trust (2012, pg. 133) posited that a professional learning network (PLN), "is a system of interpersonal connections and resources that support informal learning." According to their study, PLNs provided a space for

teachers to acquire knowledge through ongoing collaboration, professional learning, and exchange of ideas to develop, improve, or enhance pedagogical practices. According to Trust (2012), the acquisition of ideas and information was often derived from online spaces, including social media and Really Simple Syndication Feeds, which are a composite of news articles, online posts, and web-related information on a single online platform. Teachers also engaged in PLNS through websites such as Pinterest, Teachers Pay Teachers, and Twitter. Through these platforms, they facilitated discussions, addressed concerns regarding state standards, and remained apprised of innovative practices to support 21st Century K-12 learners. Trust (2012, pg. 137) stated teachers were inclined to, “engage in PLNs because they can solicit help and support, demonstrate their knowledge by helping others, and converse with individuals about new information and feedback.”

Trust, Krutka, and Carpenter (2016) investigated the experiences of over 700 teachers engaged in PLNs, specifically examining the impact of these shared spaces on the affective, cognitive, social, and identity domains of teachers. According to their research (Trust, Krutka, and Carpenter, 2016, pg. 16), traditional professional development provided support for teachers to engage and support their students because, “Teacher PD has long been characterized by narrow aims that are disconnected from the broad, complex, and disparate need of teachers.” However, PLNs not only benefited student achievement but also contributed to the well-being of teachers—a holistic approach to professional learning. Professional learning networks manifested in a variety of complex and multifaceted platforms and communities. For example, several teachers engaged in PLNs through Twitter, Edutopia, LinkedIn, Face-to-Face, while others engaged in a single-sourced PLN such as a mentor-teacher relationship. Collectively, these spaces contributed to the exchange of resources, acquisition of knowledge, and ongoing development of innovative pedagogical practices. The impact of PLN extended

beyond the classroom by supporting the emotional well-being of teachers, "Not only did PLNs seem to invigorate some respondents, but also a handful of educators indicated that their PLNS were integral to supporting their persistence in the teaching profession." As indicated, not only were the affective domain positively impacted by PLNs, but they were able to grow in terms of their identity, cognitive, and social aspects. As more teacher-educators realized the power to develop in these areas, without waiting on school districts to allocate resources for professional learning, the concept of PLNs continued to evolve. The unconference is one example of the evolution of PLNs.

Carpenter and Linton (2018) examined the perception of 105 teachers attending an unconference event, entitled Edcamp. Carpenter and Linton (2018) explained, "Edcamps reject many traditional conference elements such as advance agendas and pre-planned presentations in order to avoid limiting participants' creativity, collaboration, and engagement." These unconferences were typically a one-day event, did not have a sponsor, were free for attendees, and were developed by educators, for educators. Further, they moved beyond a prescribed or preconceived notion of what teachers need. To this end, the Edcamp/unconference model was tailored to meet the needs of individuals in the room. After exploring an unconference event, Carpenter and Linton (2018) discovered that teachers were often inspired to change their classroom practices to include the use of technology and new instructional practices. They also increased collaboration with other teachers, felt more committed to and developed more courage to try different approaches, and increased engagement and skills for their students.

Valli and Hawley (2002) also found that a successful professional learning network allows educators to learn what they interests them and collaborate with colleagues with the same interests. In their study of the

Edcamp program, many participants were excited to create their learning opportunities. One teacher, Wendy, characterized Edcamps as, "Differentiated PD. We talk about how [differentiated instruction] is good for our students, why not us?" (p.223). Participants could choose which sessions to attend and move to and from sessions as they liked. They created their own professional learning experience. Ultimately, learning at unconferences took place in formal settings and also continued in informal spaces, including the lunchroom or during snack break. These are spaces where teachers can collaborate, learn from, and talk to each other.

The research shows that to be most effective, teachers need to continuously improve their teaching skills, be involved in school decision making, and be involved in the professional learning of others (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Skills such as leading groups and workshops, collaborative work, mentoring, teaching adults, and action research need to be incorporated into professional learning opportunities to help teachers adapt to their new leadership roles.

Confidence and Efficacy

Drawing from the National Writing Project, Dierking and Fox (2013) found several factors that contributed to teacher confidence: gaining knowledge, having a voice, establishing networks of support, and having autonomy in their classrooms. Teachers' sense of self-worth increased when they could support, influence, make decisions, or contribute to the decisions in their classrooms. Dierking and Fox (2013) suggested, "That enhanced teacher knowledge in concert with support from various levels within the social context can create teachers with stronger voices, indicating an increased feeling of autonomy and power in their classrooms and possibly in other areas of education" (pg.,141).

In a study of teacher confidence, Edinger and Edinger (2018) examined the implications of social capital on teacher efficacy and job satisfaction. According to Bridwell-Mitchell and Cooc (2016), social capital provides teachers with key resources for school improvements e.g., trusting relationships with colleagues and individuals outside of their schools. Findings suggested that if teachers established a positive rapport and developed a trusting relationship with the school community (e.g., leadership, colleagues, and students), and were efficacious in their teaching and learning, they were more likely to be engaged and sustain their roles as teachers. Nolan and Molla (2017) drew from an interpretivist theoretical perspective to evaluate factors that contribute to teacher confidence. In a qualitative study, they interviewed four cohorts, drawing on pre- and post-mentoring program evaluations. Similar to Dierking and Fox (2013), Nolan and Molla (2017) found that teacher confidence was increased by the acquisition of knowledge through professional development and ongoing involvement in professional learning. Therefore, teachers are more likely to be confident when they acquire knowledge and skills (human capital), participate in networks of collaborative learning communities (social capital), and exercise professional agency (decisional capital).

Thomas and Mucherah (2016) studied the impact of providing a community-based immersive learning (CBIL) experience for preservice teachers enrolled in a teacher preparation program. Thirty-two teacher candidates participated in the study, conducting student-teaching in the classroom setting, attending community meetings with their students, and collaborating with faculty to discuss their experiences. Thomas and Mucherah (2016) found that teachers placed in a CBIL context with “real world” experiences were more prepared and confident to engage with culturally and socioeconomically diverse groups. The opportunities to

engage learners in real world experiences coupled with providing a space to process their experiences, increased their confidence to support teacher learning.

Methodology

This sequential, descriptive study employed a mixed methods research design to answer questions about program impact. Quantitative data were obtained primarily from respondents using a survey that asked both forced-choice and open-ended questions. Qualitative data were obtained from the open-ended questions on the survey and from participant interviews. The survey and interviews provided insight into the experiences, perceptions, and actions of participants and provided rich narrative description and explanation of the quantitative findings.

This report is based on survey responses from 179 Better Together participants who were, facilitators, speakers, and presenters. Overall, the study had an average response rate of 13%. Individual interviews were conducted with volunteers from a random stratification of survey respondents who were teacher advisors, Edcamp facilitators, EdTalk Speakers, and additional teachers. The stratification ensured representation across these various roles and levels of participation. Additionally, the Better Together Steering Committee members participated in two different group interview sessions. The professional role sample sized provides a summary of participants by role reflecting overall representing of Better Together participants. The sample size of this study is generally aligned with the overall sample of participants for this project.

Professional role	Average from 2015-2018	CREAL Survey
Teacher	65%	70%
Administrator	6%	4%
School Support Staff	4%	1%

Table 2. Professional role sample size n = 103.

Survey

Several types of survey questions were used to solicit responses from participants that included: Likert scale, multiple choice, select all that apply, and open-ended (See Appendix A). These questions focused on the respondents' demographics, professional roles, learnings and experiences from Better Together. The survey included questions about leadership roles before and after attending Better Together as well as short-term and long-term impacts after attending.

Interviews

Participants shared their experiences during and after Better Together activities (See Appendix B). In the interviews, respondents elaborated on their experiences with Better Together. These responses added insight about how the experience changed their self-perception as a leader, collaboration efforts at their worksites, and any unanticipated outcomes from this intervention. In addition, two group interviews were conducted with the Better Together Steering Committee members who described their experiences, perspectives on goal attainment, future directions, and next steps for this statewide collaboration. The group

interview questions focused on goals, project design, and evaluation, as well as short-term and long-term university, school district, and organizational impacts (See Appendix C).

Procedures

After IRB approval, the Steering Committee provided the contact information for Better Together participants relative to survey dissemination. The survey was then sent via Qualtrics in October 2019 (n=1,346). An automated reminder was sent after two weeks and another message via text was sent by a Steering Committee member in early December as a final attempt to encourage responses. After closing the survey, each respondent who indicated in writing a willingness to be interviewed was categorized by role in Better Together and a random selection by category was concluded. Twenty participants were asked to schedule an interview via email for the third week of November. The following week interviewers contacted all twenty members by phone and were successful in scheduling 19 interview, of which 17 were completed by December 6th. Seventeen online interviews were conducted in the months of November and December 2019. Interviews lasted from 30 minutes to 75 minutes and all were recorded with the exception of one where the recording device failed. In addition, two group interviews were conducted in January 2020 with the Better Together Steering Committee members via ZOOM. These sessions were 60 and 90 minutes.

Analyses of Data

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS for frequencies and correlations. Open-ended survey responses were analyzed using open-ended coding for common themes/responses and in some cases frequencies were recorded and reported, however, in most cases these data were treated as qualitative and analyzed for emergent themes through open-coding.

Interviews were transcribed using Otter and confirmed for accuracy by C-REAL researchers. Qualitative data were then analyzed through semi-closed codes guided by the research questions to identify emergent themes and exemplars to support emergent themes.

Findings

This section of the report provides a summary of data describing the frequency of responses to the survey questions and qualitative data from interviews. Qualitative data was analyzed through semi-closed coding methods to identify anticipated impact, unanticipated impact, and lessons learned as a result of the Better Together process.

A total of 172 respondents completed the survey and data was collected on respondents' demographics, learnings, and experiences while involved in Better Together. A frequency analysis was conducted to present demographic data and identify trends among Better Together respondents. Additionally, a correlation analysis was conducted to examine the short-term and long-term impacts of Better Together on professionals' leadership.

Demographics

The largest group of respondents were 9th through 12th grade teachers ($n = 49$, 37%). Teachers of 1st through 5th grade ($n = 40$, 30%) were the second largest group, followed by 6th through 8th grade ($n = 29$, 22%) and Pre-K, K, or TK ($n = 15$, 11%).

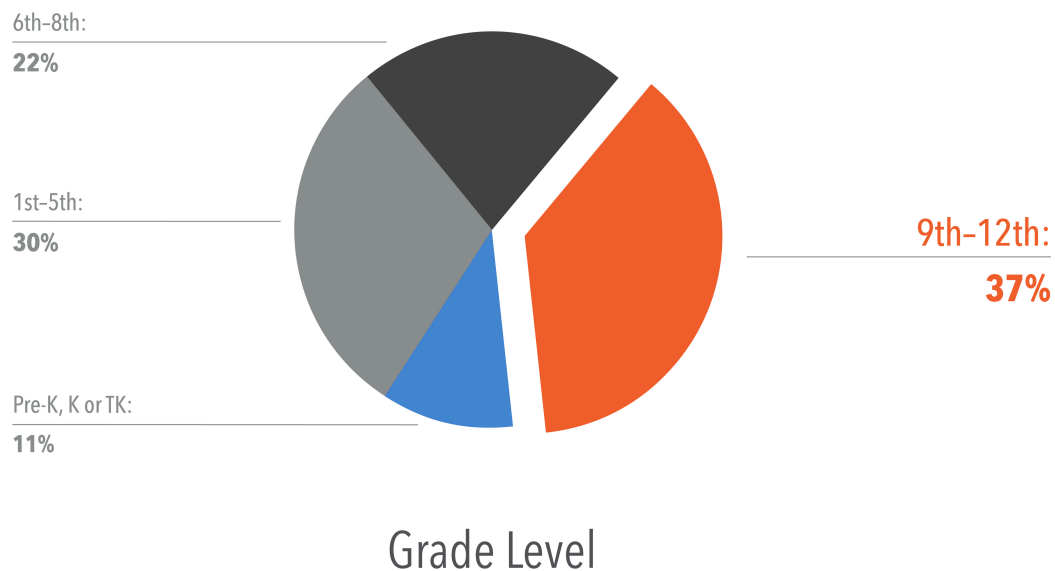


Figure 1. Survey Respondents Characteristics ($n = 133$).

The most common professional roles were teachers ($n = 96$, 70%) and teacher leaders ($n = 26$, 19%), while the remainder of respondents included administrators ($n = 6$, 4%), school support staff ($n = 1$, 1%) and other ($n = 9$, 6.5%). Respondents who identified as “other” were prompted to specify their role. They provided a variety of answers related to their roles as teachers, participants, or school representatives.

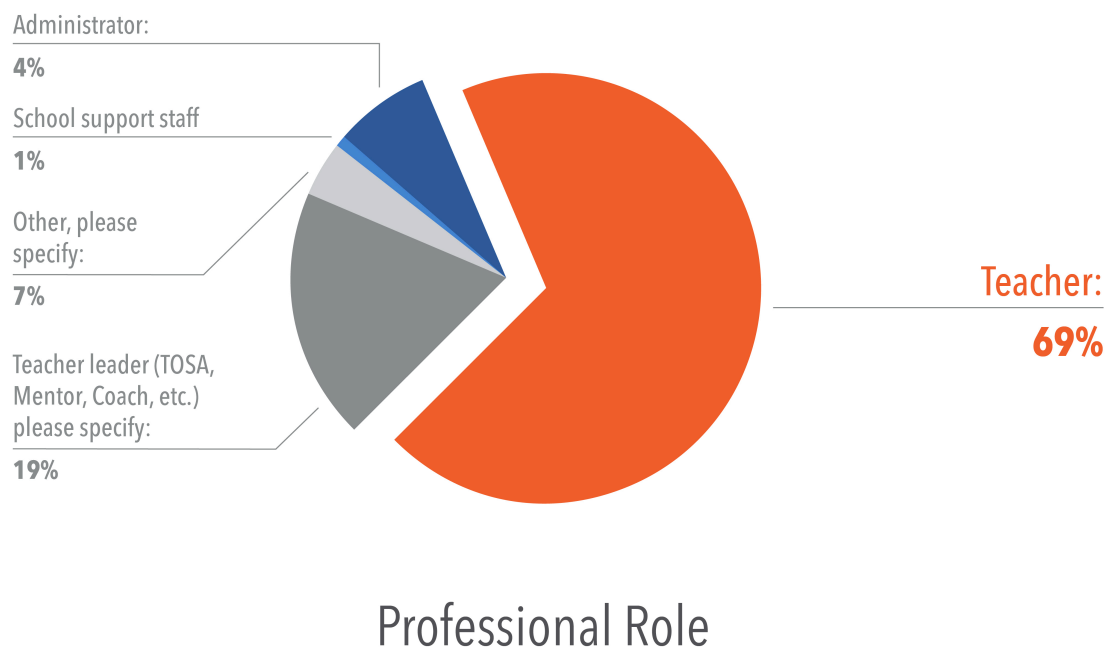


Figure 5. Professional Role ($n = 138$).

Respondents worked for a variety of organizations represented at the Better Together events. Most worked for a School District ($n = 99$, 72%), and the remainder worked for private schools ($n = 17$, 12%), charter schools ($n = 8$, 6%), other ($n = 7$, 5%), county offices of education ($n = 3$, 2%), college or university ($n = 3$, 2%), and education-focused nonprofit organizations ($n = 1$, 1%).

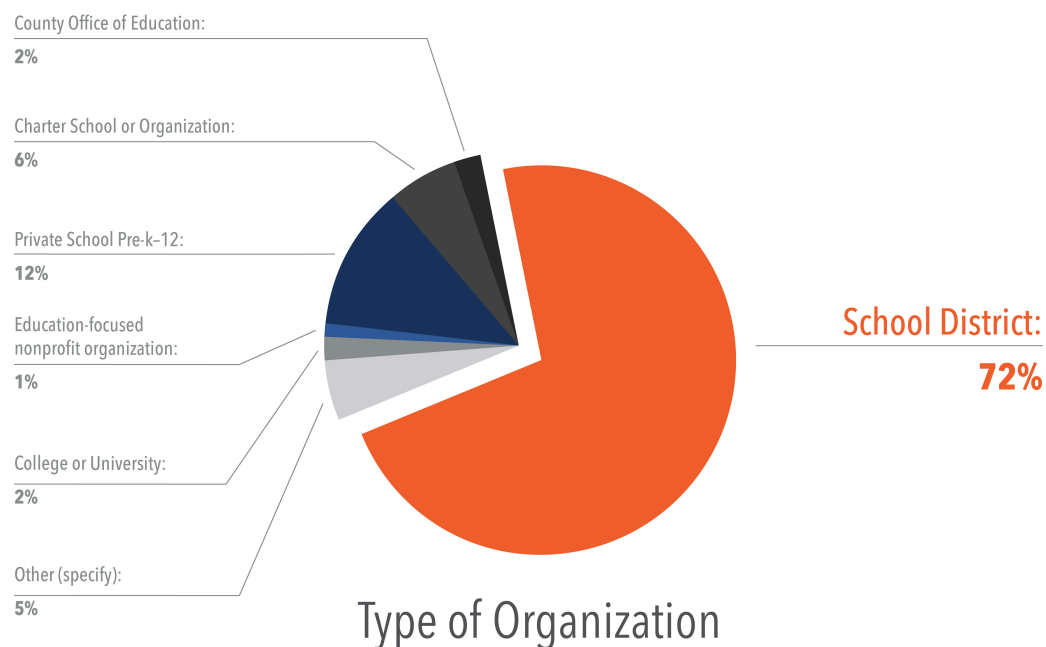


Figure 6. Type of Organization ($n = 138$).

Respondents selected the role or roles they had in Better Together and some selected more than one role. Most respondents selected other as their role ($n = 76, 37\%$). The other category represented roles such as attendee, participant and Edcamp Organizer. The next most response was facilitator for Edcamp sessions at the Better Together Summit ($n = 58, 28\%$), followed by: EdTalk speaker ($n = 45, 22\%$), speaker or presenter ($n = 15, 7.3\%$), local planning committee ($n = 7, 3.4\%$), teacher advisory committee ($n = 4, 1.9\%$), and New Teacher Center facilitator ($n = 1, 0.5\%$).

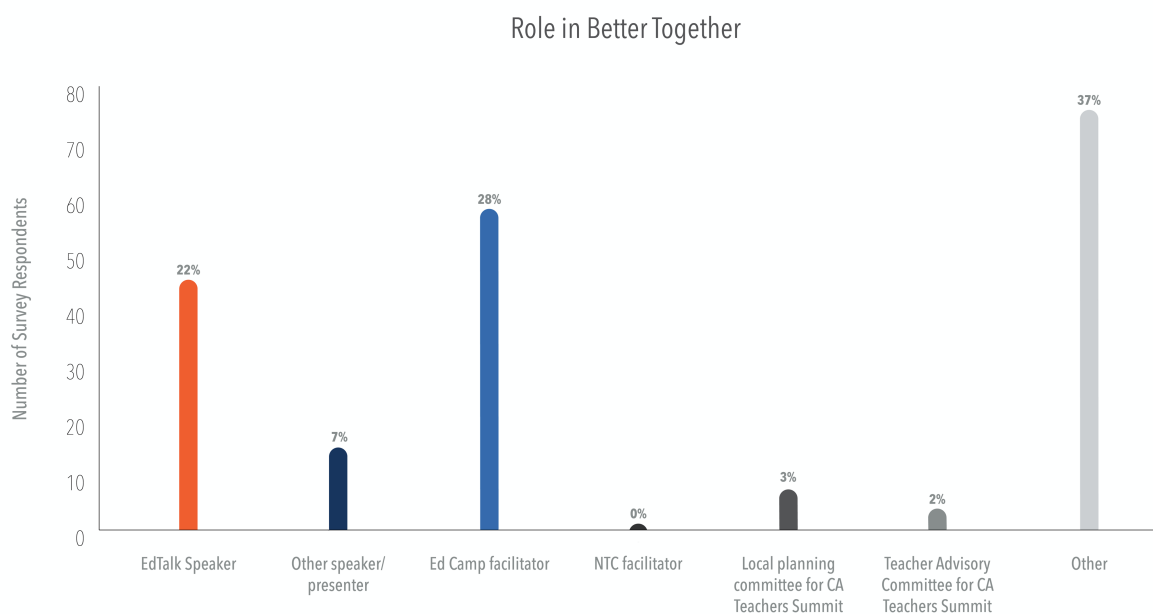


Figure 7. Role in Better Together ($n = 172$).

The largest group of respondents ($n = 66$, 40%), attended for one year. Others attended two years ($n = 42$, 25%), and some for three years ($n = 20$, 19%). A few attended four years ($n = 20$, 12%) and five years ($n = 8$, 4.8%).

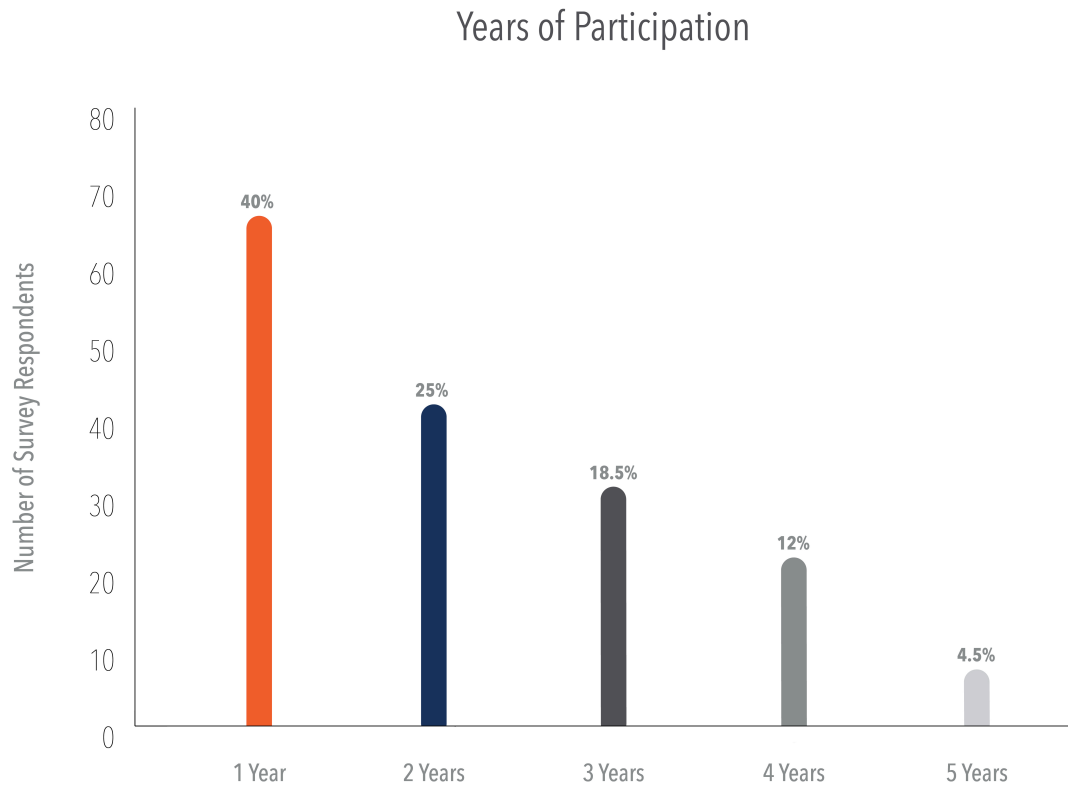


Figure 8. Years participated in Better Together ($n = 167$).

Research Question 1: What was the impact of Better Together: California Teachers Summit on teacher leadership, professional learning, and networking, particularly for those who participated in leadership roles?

Emergent Themes	Description
Collaboration	Creating avenues for ongoing communication, engagement, and support.
Diversity Challenges	Experiences with equities, opportunities and resources, and ideas for student success.
Empowerment as Teachers and Leaders	Commitment, confidence in knowledge skills, and innovation.
Confidence and Passion	A safe space for multiple voices to speak, learn, and support teacher leadership.
Networking	Sharing of resources, exchanging information, recruiting other teachers, and building community.

Table 3. Qualitative Findings of Emergent Themes

Collaboration

The theme of collaboration represents the opportunity for Better Together participants to create avenues for ongoing communication, engagement, and support for each other to improve instructional practices, develop leadership skills, expand professional networks, and strengthen confidence to serve as teacher leaders. Collaboration impacted classroom instruction, management, and collegiality, and was developed within the context of a safe and affirming space. Teachers felt the freedom to engage in conversation about their challenges associated with teaching without fear of judgment or harsh criticism. As peers, it was acceptable to be vulnerable and to admit that aspects of teaching, learning, and assessment are often difficult to

perform. Therefore, they would express their concern, listen to responses from other teachers, and collaborate to develop viable solutions to each challenge presented during the Edcamp model sessions. Better Together participants treated each other as professionals, ensuring that their experiences in the classroom were not unique, but a shared experience.

Impact on student learning and success.

On several accounts, teacher leaders vocalized both the challenge and opportunities associated with shifting from a lecture-based pedagogy to student-centered learning.

"We should not be afraid to let [students] experience knowledge and understanding or to exploration .

.. Lecturing doesn't mean teaching. I think a lot of the presenters that you have had in the past in

Better Together help us to be more confident in and not being afraid to let the students explore."

One respondent shared, "I feel like we had really good collaboration on some problem solving as far as classroom management and sort of planning time. There's a lot of things in education that are pretty ubiquitous across various schools and grade levels." The reality that instructional practices and experiences in education are "pretty ubiquitous" created a shared space for participants to develop a sense of solidarity and openness to learn from one another. One respondent from Long Beach recalled collaborating with a teacher from Northern California "and just feeling at comfort that teachers across the state are really giving it everything we have so that we can create a classroom environment, culture that all students can find success."

For some participants, success manifested in learning from other teachers about social justice and mathematics, empowering students to acquire the language to become successful. One respondent lacked

confidence at the onset to teach a student-centric math lesson. She now empowers her students to take ownership of their learning:

"It started with me when I when I first went to the conference and I started looking for more things to make myself more available, build more confidence about my teaching career, and to be more dynamic in the classroom."

From this exploration emerged a teacher leader who embraced student-centered pedagogy:

"Through Better Together I knew more people and have done collaborations . . . They have a lot of workshops, social justice in math. I learned how to start constructing the writing in the students, like helping them to have sentence frames [and] love vocabulary. Because a lot of times, it's not just knowing the formula, or the problem. [They need] to explore the vocabulary to understand the vocabulary."

She continued to provide insight into how her classroom is now conducted:

"I let the students explore. I let them bring up their questions . . . Then I give them a question and the question they have to explore and give me more questions. Or I [say] when I assign work to them, "Okay, you're going to be working together, you two together, but also you have to rely on the person that is in front of you or behind you or on the sides. If the person that is around you is not helping you, you have to move around. You have to look for clarification among your classmates. Because if I give you the answer then I'm not teaching you anything. You have to be reliable. And you see my students are moving around. And there is no quiet classroom."

Culture of collegiality.

In addition to developing student-centered instructional practices and implementing lessons learned from social justice and mathematics education, participants discussed how they were inspired by Better Together attendees to share their pedagogical practices with colleagues. One respondent discussed details of helping his high school to create a college-going culture for their students. According to the respondent, the school site includes 72% Latino students and 15% African American students, with over 90% of students eligible for the Free and Reduced program. He described changes in his thinking:

After going and sitting through the first one and through some of the sessions, it was interesting to me how people wanted to hear the words [about] what I was doing in my classroom. People were like, "Oh my god, I never thought about that." And then people would give me ideas. So it really got me thinking a little bit differently about what I can take back to my high school. How I can be that leader on my campus. But it was [I had been] more focused on what the administration or what the district wanted us to do, but it was about what I could get the teachers to discover within themselves."

The discovery resulted in colleagues working together to assess what could be done to grant more access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses, increase enrollment in college readiness classes (UC/CSU-approved A-G classes), and improve acceptance rates at 4-year colleges and universities. According to the respondent, the outcomes included an increase from 20% to nearly 50% of students accessing A-G courses, an increase in the number of students passing the AP Calculus Exam, and college acceptances at highly selective schools including California Institute of Technology and Johns Hopkins University. The respondent's summation captured the experience of many respondents who shared experiences, resources, and opportunities with their colleagues.

"From Better Together to make that initiative . . . You know what, there's opportunities for us to build and grow collectively as teacher educators."

Diversity Challenges (language, socioeconomic status, and ideas)

Many references were made to the struggles and challenges of diversity relative to language, socioeconomic class, status, poverty, limited resources and ideas. Some teachers found that when they stepped out of their comfort zone, school district, or classroom that others were navigating through diversity issues in many different ways. Some teachers discovered that they had far more resources and options than other teachers. Some recognized that diversity of thought and resources led to new ways of thinking about teaching and classroom outcomes. Others recognized their privilege and decided they should never ask for more, knowing they had colleagues with far less. Another issue that emerged was some teachers learned to use diversity as an asset rather than a deficit, particularly around language and addressing working with families and underserved communities and working together to navigate classroom challenges such as language barriers, and poverty.

A few participants explained the impact of diversity of ideas as an outcome of Better Together. One math teacher reported that she struggled to teach the subject matter with her middle school students because of language barriers. Through Better Together she found strategies that guided her to more effectively teach writing. She found techniques for grouping and pedagogical strategies that brought her classroom alive with students engaging and helping each other to succeed. She described a classroom transformation where no "student leaves the others behind. They care about each other and their success." Another teacher commented on the opportunity to hear and engage with other teachers about so many ideas and approaches to teaching

and learning, “diversity of ideas helped me see things differently.” This area is rich for more discussion and work as teachers address immediate challenges in their classrooms, schools and communities.

Empowerment as Teachers and Teacher Leaders

For the purpose of this report, leadership is defined using the National Education Association (2018) Teacher Leader Competencies: Instructional Leadership, Policy Leadership, and Association Leadership. Instructional leadership is the sharing of resources and instructional knowledge to improve student achievement. Policy leadership influences school, district, state, and national educational decisions, and association leadership involves leading various individuals or groups to “advance quality instructional practice and the right policies to make that practice possible.” (NEA, 2018, pg. 6)

Through various workshops, presentations, and collaborative opportunities, Better Together participants were inspired to lead. Several respondents indicated that attending the Summit strengthened their resolve to commit to serve as classroom leaders and to lead from that platform. Further, their confidence increased as they engaged and learned more about the concept of being a teacher leader.

Most participants ($n = 124$, 72%) stated they had a leadership role prior to Better Together, but 28% ($n = 48$, 28%) did not have a professional leadership role prior to this intervention.



Leadership Roles Before Better Together

Figure 9. Assumed New Leadership Roles (n = 168).

When asked if they held leadership roles, most respondents ($n = 116$, 69%) selected Yes, they had taken a leadership role since Better Together, while 31% ($n = 52$) selected No, they had not.



Since Better Together,
Have you Assumed
any Leadership Roles?

Figure 10. Leadership roles after Better Together (n = 168).

Most participants ($n = 71$, 51%) found Better Together to be impactful and many ($n = 35$, 25%) found it to be very impactful. Only a few ($n = 4$, 3%) reported no impact at all.

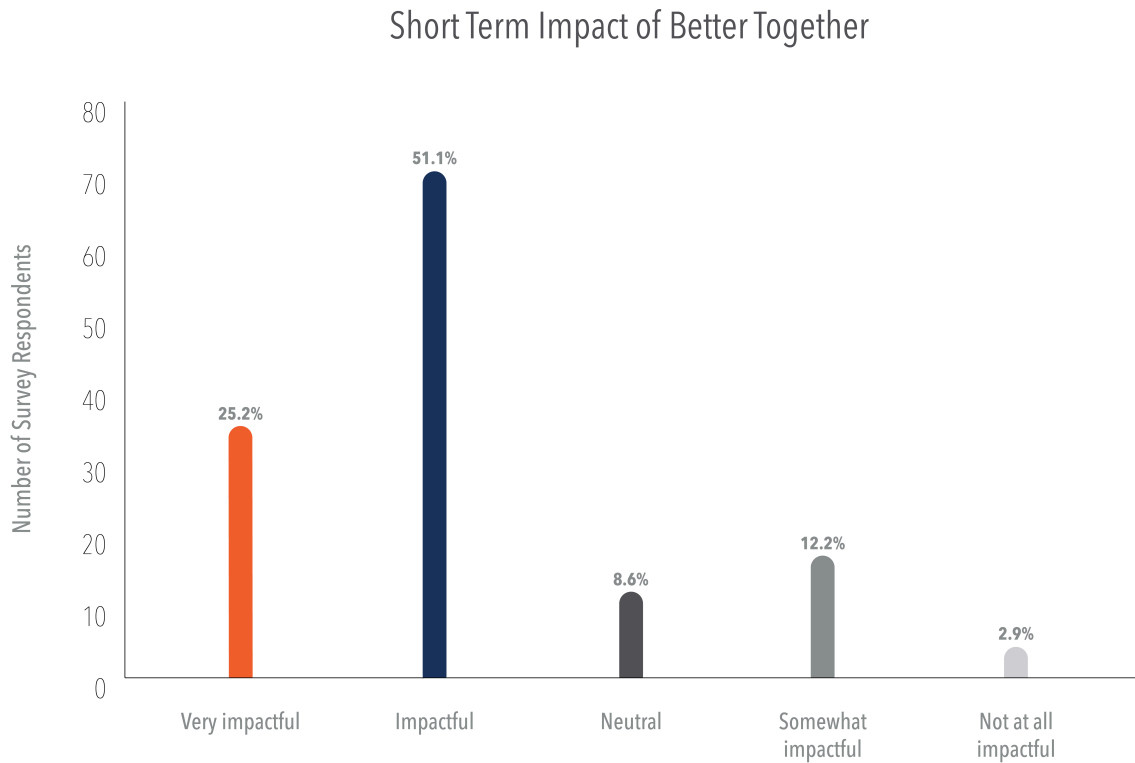


Figure 11. The impact of Better Together on teachers in the short term ($n = 139$).

Respondents completed a *Select All that Apply* question to identify how Better Together impacted them as teacher leaders. Respondents had the opportunity to select more than one response. After participating in Better Together, 80 respondents ($n = 80, 38\%$) stated that they were more proud to be teachers and 76 respondents ($n = 76, 36\%$) said they were more inspired to be teachers. This was followed by 53 respondents ($n = 53, 25\%$) stating that their desire to be teacher leaders increased. Only four respondents ($n = 4, 2\%$) stated their desire to take leadership roles decreased.

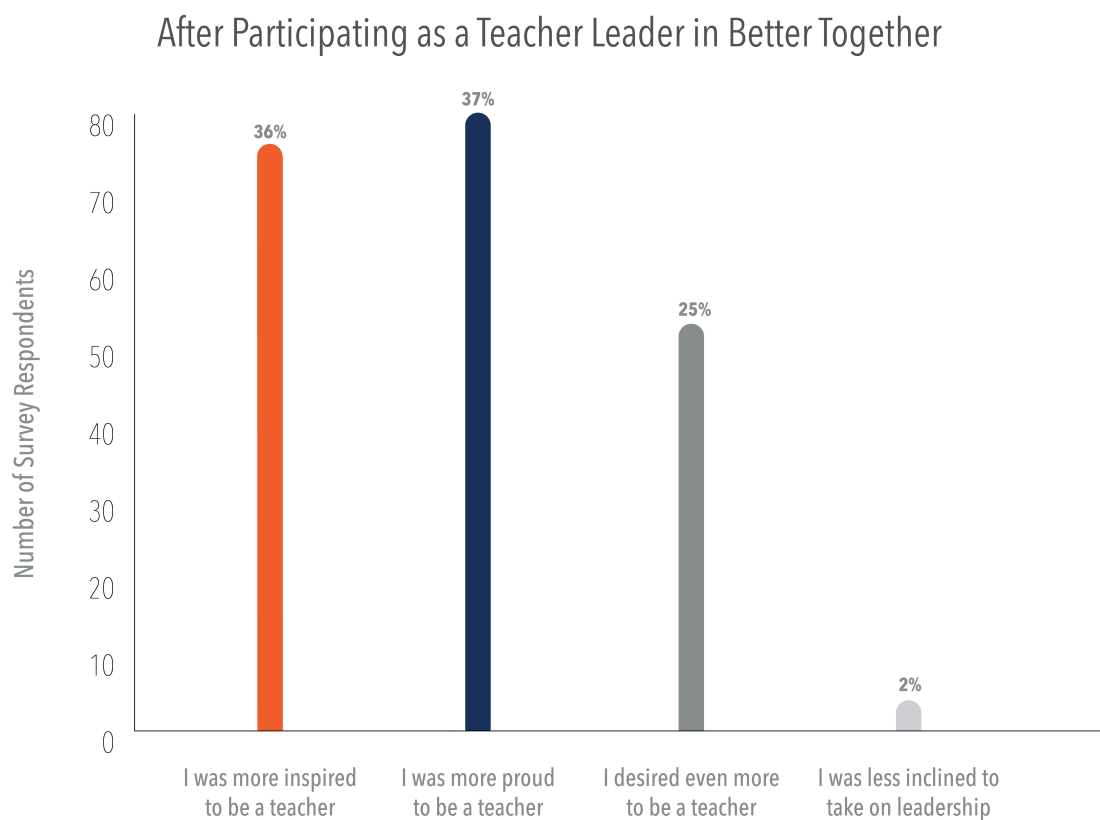


Figure 2. How participants felt after being teacher leaders in Better Together ($n = 172$).

After Better Together, most respondents had some leadership roles ($n = 54, 39\%$), many leadership roles ($n = 28, 20\%$), or very many leadership roles ($n = 12, 9\%$). Only a few ($n = 19, 14\%$) had no leadership roles available to them following Better Together.

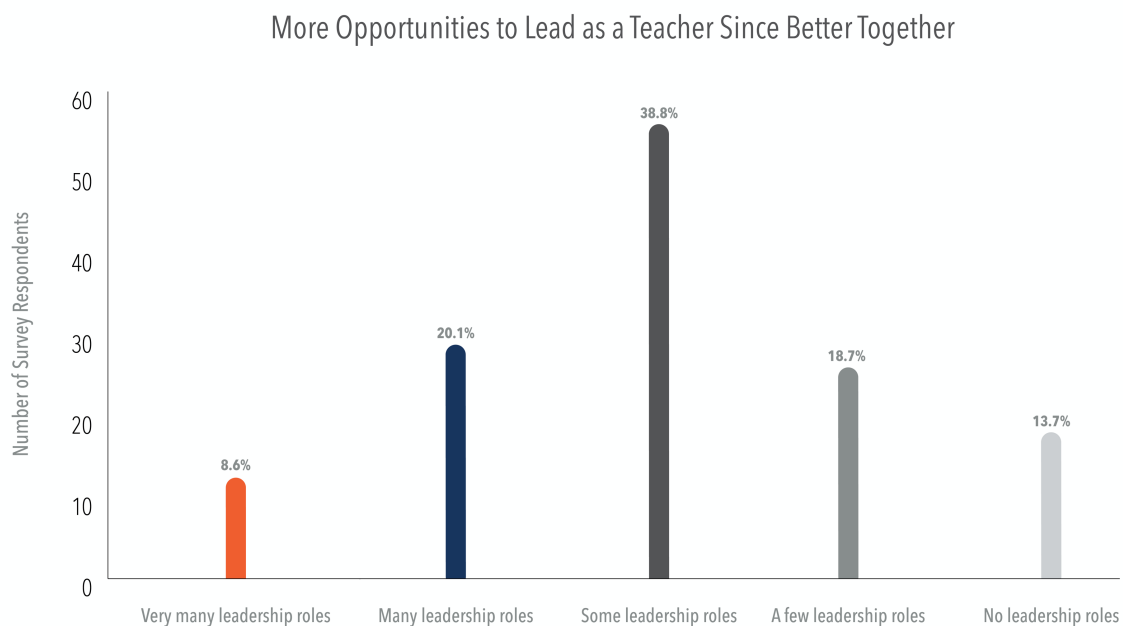


Figure 12. Leadership opportunities after Better Together (n = 168).

Many respondents ($n = 38$, 28%) stated Better Together was very impactful and ($n = 54$, 39%) stated that it was impactful to them in the long term. Some respondents stated Better Together was somewhat impactful ($n = 18$, 13%) with less reporting no impact ($n = 5$, 4%). In addition, some reported Better Together had a neutral impact on them ($n = 23$, 17%).

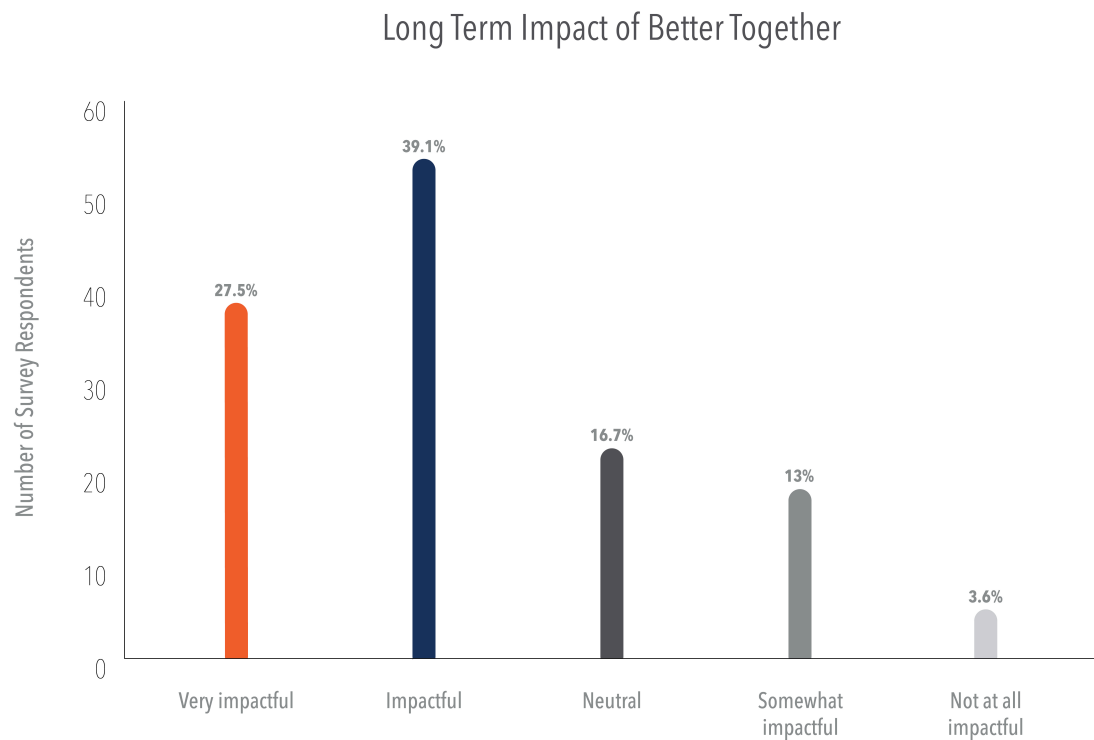


Figure 13. Long term impact of Better Together on their career ($n = 138$).

Almost half of the survey respondents ($n = 63, 45\%$) often sought new leadership roles after Better Together and a few ($n = 13, 9\%$) always sought new leadership roles after Better Together. Followed by respondents seeking new leadership roles somewhat following Better Together ($n = 30, 22\%$) and respondents seeking leadership roles at a neutral rate ($n = 25, 18\%$). Only 6% ($n = 8, 6\%$) of respondents did not at all pursue leadership roles following Better Together.

Pursuing New Leadership Opportunities

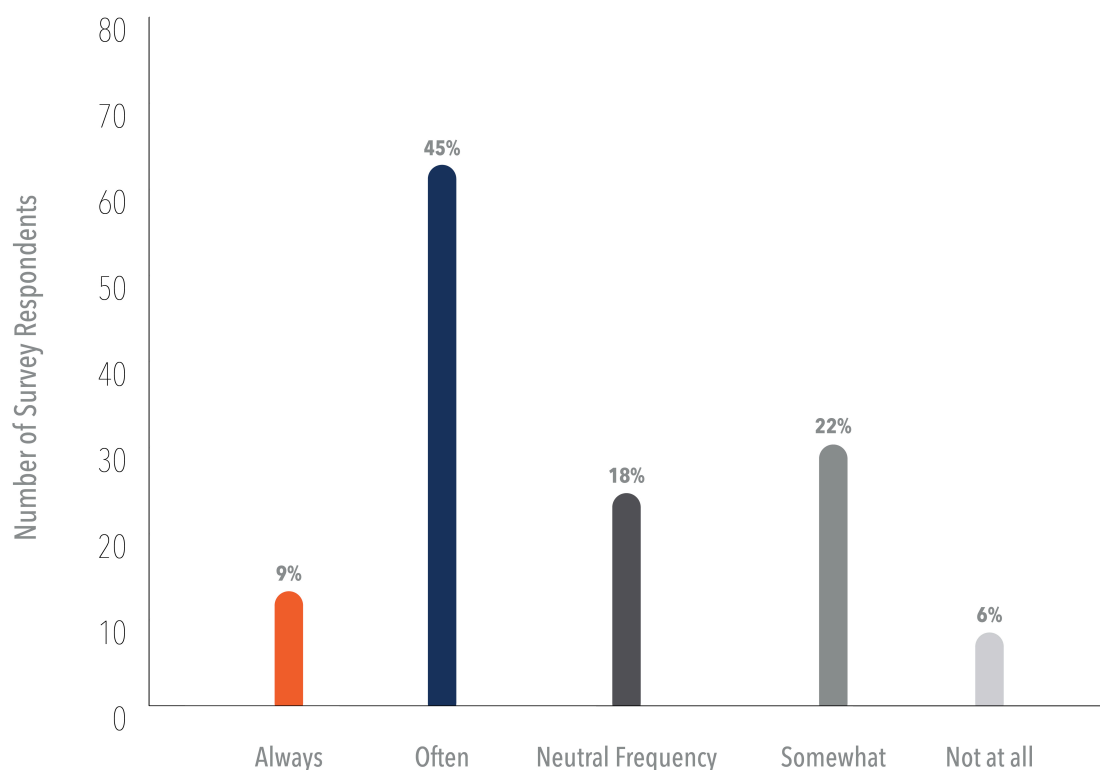


Figure 9. After Better Together, to what extent did participants pursue new leadership (n = 139).

Respondents were asked to identify the ways in which they participated in Better Together, which for some respondents may have been more than one role. A comparison was then made between each role and the percentage of individuals within those roles who indicated that they gained new leadership positions after Better Together. The most selected role was Facilitator for Edcamp breakout sessions ($n = 56$), followed by EdTalk speaker ($n = 44$), Better Together Attendee ($n = 27$), Speaker at CA Teachers Summit ($n = 14$), Local Planning Committee member ($n = 6$), Teacher Advisory Committee ($n = 4$), and New Teacher Center (NTC)

Facilitator ($n = 1$). The role with the most respondents indicating they gained a new leadership role after Better Together was Speaker at CA Teachers Summit ($n = 12$, 86%), followed by EdTalk Speaker ($n = 35$, 80%), Edcamp Facilitator ($n = 45$, 80%), Teacher Advisory Committee member ($n = 3$, 75%), Local Planning Committee ($n = 5$, 83%), and Better Together Attendee ($n = 16$, 59%). Despite NTC Facilitator reporting 100%, the survey respondent population only had 1 individual reported as a NTC Facilitator.

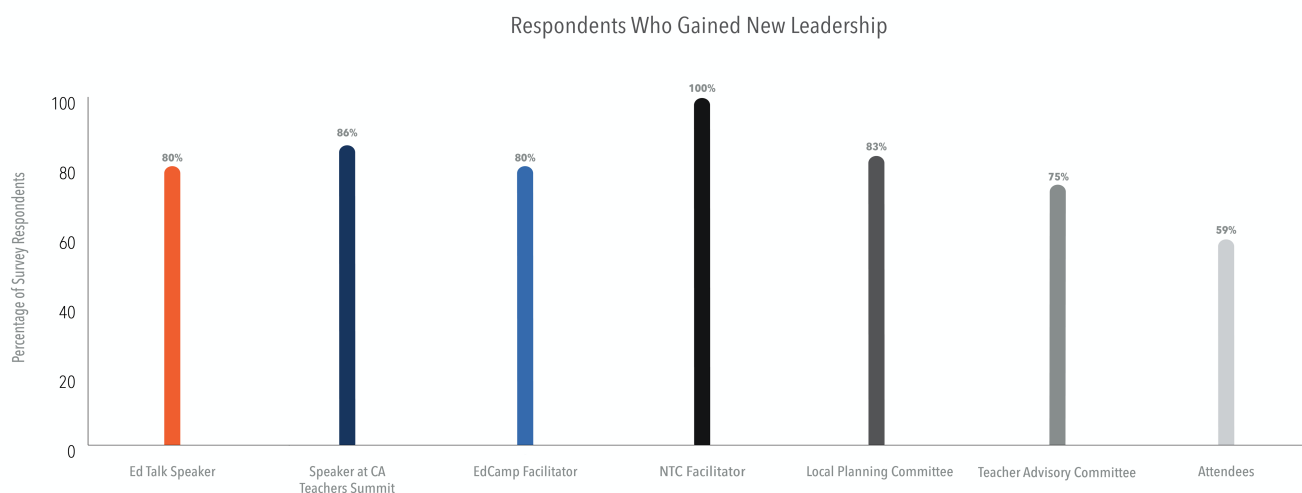


Figure 15. Respondents who gained new leadership ($n = 152$).

More respondents held leadership roles ($n = 120$) prior to Better Together than those who did not hold leadership roles prior to Better Together ($n = 28$). More returning leaders ($n = 94$, 78%) gained new leadership positions than returning leaders who did not ($n = 26$, 22%). In addition, almost half of respondents who had not held previous leadership positions ($n = 22$, 46%) gained leadership roles following Better Together.

Assumed New Leadership Roles After Better Together

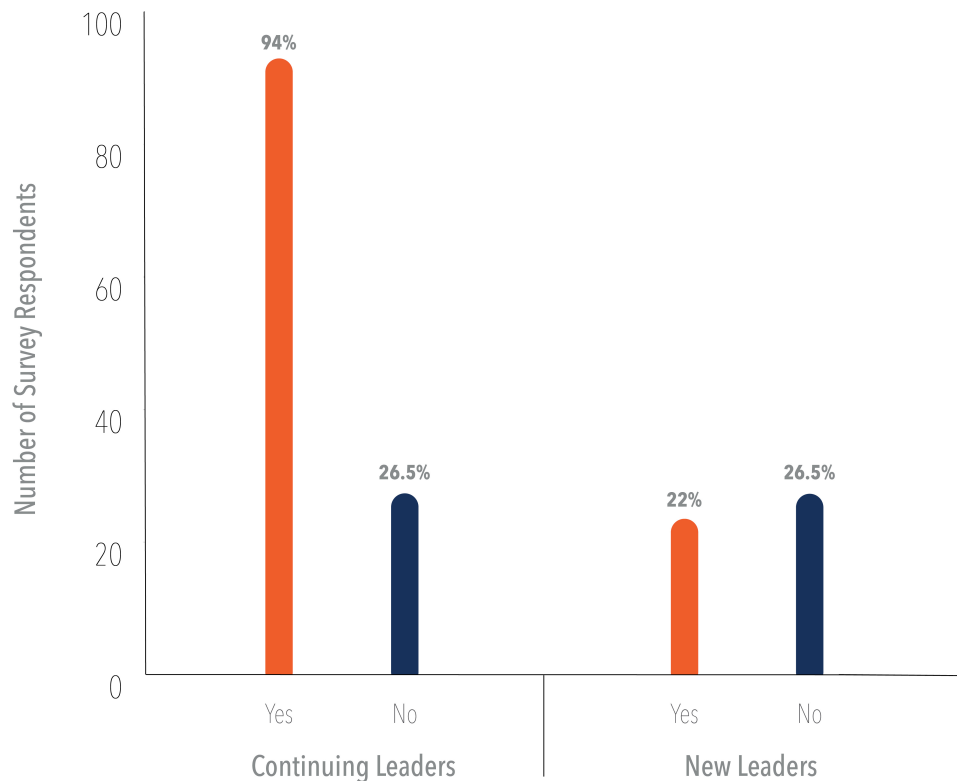


Figure 10. Assumed new leadership roles ($n = 168$).

In support of this inference, a correlational analysis indicated a significant positive correlation ($p = .002$) between short-term impact ($M = 2.17$, $SD = 1.03$) and the pursuit of new leadership opportunities since Better Together ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 1.09$; Table 3). This suggests that the larger the short-term impact on respondents, the more likely they are to pursue leadership opportunities following Better Together. Overall, Better Together has a robust short-term impact on professionals' leadership roles.

Variables	3	4
1. To what degree did the Better Together Events impact you as a teacher leader in the short term?	_____	.258**
2. To what degree have you pursued new leadership opportunities since the Better Together Event?	.258**	_____

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 4. Correlation Statistics ($n = 139$).

Leading where you are.

The concept of “leading where you are” acknowledges the impact and influence classroom teacher leaders can have in their schools, communities, and districts. Several respondents did not ascribe to the idea that leaving the classroom is paramount to leadership; rather, they believed that classroom instruction equated to leadership. After attending Better Together, teachers were inspired to remain in the classroom to serve as support to their colleagues. As teacher leaders, they also impacted student learning and success by creating college-going cultures at their school sites, leading professional learning programs and presenting innovative approaches to student teaching and assessment through their districts and social media platforms. As their networks expanded, they recognized the statewide and national influence to improve the teacher-workforce through a continuous exchange of information. These examples diverge from traditional views of leadership, which is often centralized within school district offices. The concept of leading from where you are, provides an opportunity for teachers to have a platform to engage and guide other educators within their respective

expertise. One respondent, a career changer, began teaching at 32 years old. On entering the classroom, she immediately understood the impact teacher leaders have:

“But I think being involved in Better Together helped me realize that idea of leading where you are.

And at this point, there’s no way for me to go back to get my master’s degree to become an administrator or some other type of job – wouldn’t make any sense. It wouldn’t pay for itself really. And so, this really helped me realize that you can lead where you are, and be a teacher leader, while still have positive impact on schools and on what we offer students.”

Another respondent, who self-identified as being born in another country, did not perceive classroom teachers as leaders. However, after attending Better Together she became aware of her influence and capacity to lead:

“And speaking I speak English as my second language. I think I’m brave enough to promote, into, and to show the teachers that there is the opportunity for change and to be a better, better teacher—a better leader in the classroom. I think I am a strong leader in the classroom. And my coworkers see me they see me as a leader. Yeah, but a lot of the things that I have gained from conferences like Better Together is they have helped me to build my leadership and not to be afraid to be who I am and to express myself. I feel happy with what I have, but I know there is more room to grow.”

Similarly, another respondent did not perceive himself as a leader, “Before BT, I did not see myself as a teacher leader. I didn’t know I had the skill set and disposition. Now, I am capable, and there is a purpose for those spaces. Purposeful for self and for students.” The perception of teachers seeing themselves as leaders and the need to advocate for students became clear.

Supporting teacher leaders as student advocates.

For several participants, it was their first time speaking in front of large audiences, while other attendees perceived themselves as leaders for the first time. Both experiences led to a greater resolve to support, and in some instances, advocate for students at the school site and district level. For example, one respondent discussed her experience attending a session where they discussed Senate Bill 48 or the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, and Respectful Education Act. The respondent collaborated with a university professor and community representative to learn what her district could do to ensure that the contributions of various racial/ethnic, cultural, gender, and non-gendered based groups were present in their California and United States history curricula.

One respondent articulated that, though she had enough classroom supplies, she realized her peers had limited resources to work with. As a result, she spent time collaborating with these individuals to determine how they do more with less. Another respondent shared how very few of her colleagues attended the Better Together Summit. Remembering the impact the Summit had on her and her classroom environment, she engaged in conversations with her school site and district on how she could encourage them to attend.

Serving as a featured speaker or sharing in small groups.

Based on the responses, two components impacted Better Together presenters: voice and validation. Many of the respondents expressed that they rarely, if ever, had a chance to speak in front of a broad audience or to engage in meaningful discussions with small groups (beyond their school site). The opportunity to share their expertise resulted in empowerment for both the presenters and the audience. As discussed earlier in the report, one teacher was inspired while attending one of the seminars. Other educators validated him, and

consequently, he began to share ideas with his colleagues. Eventually, he mobilized efforts to provide more college-going opportunities for their students. Several other respondents had similar experiences. For example, one of the site-based keynote speakers discussed how serving as a keynote speaker empowered her to engage the district in discussions to replicate the Better Together model for teachers. The roundtable sessions, “solidified what you understood to be some challenges statewide and across to actually across the country.”

Teacher Confidence and a Renewed Sense of Passion

Participants shared how Better Together provided a safe access space for multiple voices to speak, learn, and support teacher leadership. As discussed earlier in the report, some participants were able to present before a large audience for the first time, while others shared how collaborating with other teachers empowered them to embrace being a teacher leader. There were several respondents who shared how they were confident to change their instructional practices and relinquish their power to allow students to take ownership of their learning. Through collaboration, teachers gained the confidence to engage and replicate the Better Together experience in their districts and school sites, explicitly using the Edcamp framework in professional learning opportunities.

Another participant mentioned how their self-confidence increased in reference to their capabilities to serve as a teacher leader. She wrote, “I felt like [Better Together] has given me a little self-confidence in the sense that I can [be] more equipped to be able to handle those struggles, and I know that other people are going through the same types of issues as well.” The solution for many of their struggles was creating a sense of solidarity with other participants, “...listening to teacher concerns, listening to challenges they face, the same kinds of things you will hear up and down the state and from coast to coast. And so that was helpful to learn that

when we are challenged and when we're looking for help and support, it's often in the same kind of six areas.

And that helped clarify my mission and what I bring back to work was how to have really strong responses."

More than just sharing their struggles, the participants created a sense of community that impacted the community, "feeling the comfort that teachers across the state are really giving it everything we have so that we can create a classroom environment, culture [so] that all students can find success." It was important that these teachers felt empowered and valued.

Consequently, their passion to teach and reengage the work of education was reignited. One responded commented, "But overall, in general, I just remember the whole event being geared toward and just reminding us as professionals in education why we do what we do. So I went back with a new passion and a renewed and desire to do what's best for kids. So I think that was important."

Networking

One of the most often reported outcomes for Better Together was that of networking. Participants described their excitement of being part of a statewide community of teachers organizing on behalf of the profession and those they serve. Almost all participants at some point mentioned networking opportunities as a motivator for participating and returning to Better Together Summits. Teachers across the state recognized the power and value of networking both in person and using social media platforms. Several participants indicated they were able to expand their networks as a result of creating content specific platforms on Twitter. New ideas, exchange of information, critiquing of lesson plans, and recruiting other teacher to attend Better Together also occurred through Twitter.

Many teachers reported learning of other conferences and events through the Better Together community. For almost all participants, networking led to an expansion of their perspectives. Participants reported no longer feeling isolated or working in silos. Additionally, the impact of Better Together events grew exponentially as a result of expanded professional networks. When teachers returned to their school sites, many invited their peers to participate in the Better Together community.

Teachers living in rural communities found the networking opportunities profoundly helpful. They felt a stronger sense of community and professional connections. These teachers shared how limited professional learning opportunities were in their small communities and schools. Additionally, teachers, at all levels, raised concerns about limited funding for professional learning. To this end, teachers collectively were disappointed and concerned that Better Together was not offered after 2018.

Social media as a platform to engage other teachers.

Respondent shared social media created a platform to share instructional resources such as lesson plans and discussion boards. It was also a source of ongoing communication between Better Together participants throughout California. It served as a means to expand their networks, and a method to gain access to Better Together resources beyond their respective regions. The preferred social media platform for respondents was Twitter, which opened both (a) lines of communication within the Better Together networks in California and (b) discussion and discourse throughout the nation. One respondent shared that he became familiar with Better Together because of the Twitter feeds on his timeline. One participant described new learning:

I saw some of my colleagues posting pictures of their boards [discussion boards] to social media. And it was like, “Oh, yeah, that is not the kind of topic that we’re bringing up around here. This is completely different.” But in that way, I think it really did help to meet the needs of people who were there that day.

Summary

In alignment with the literature, Better Together filled a void in professional learning opportunities for attendees. For many participants, they were able to develop meaningful and sustained relationships with other educators. In doing so, their lesson plans and instructional practices have changed to include more technology, innovation, and student-centered learning opportunities. Further, participants were privy to a diverse array of teachers—some who had minimal resources to support their students, while others had enough to engage their students effectively. Collectively, they resolved to do more with less, ultimately developing greater solidarity and professional learning networks beyond the scope of Better Together.

Several teachers felt they could be vulnerable and share their challenges associated with teaching, e.g., classroom management and math instruction. As participants attended Better Together, they grew in confidence and were inspired to lead. Through Better Together, teachers became teacher leaders and adapted the mantra to “lead from where you are.” It was an opportunity of affirmation and for some a resolve to remain in the classroom. By being together, they grew in passion and confidence to not only teach, but also support one another, contribute to professional growth opportunities in their schools and districts, and to develop platforms online to advance and share their work with other teachers.

The network grew exponentially, beginning first on campus at California colleges and universities hosting the Summit, expanded statewide via Twitter, and extended beyond California to other unconferences and networks.. There was a consensus that opportunities such as Better Together are needed to support, empower, and sustain the teacher workforce. The resources shared were also valuable. The insight gleaned from one another enhanced pedagogical practices, and the opportunity to come together on an annual basis before the start of the school year is too important to abandon.

Research Question 2. What were the outcomes of Better Together: California Teachers Summit on students, peers, schools, and districts?

Respondents were asked to report areas of education in which they have seen a change due to Better Together. Respondents had the option of selecting more than one response. The largest effect of Better Together was on students ($n = 111$, 27%) followed by peers ($n = 110$, 26%), schools ($n = 102$, 24%), and their districts ($n = 95$, 23%).

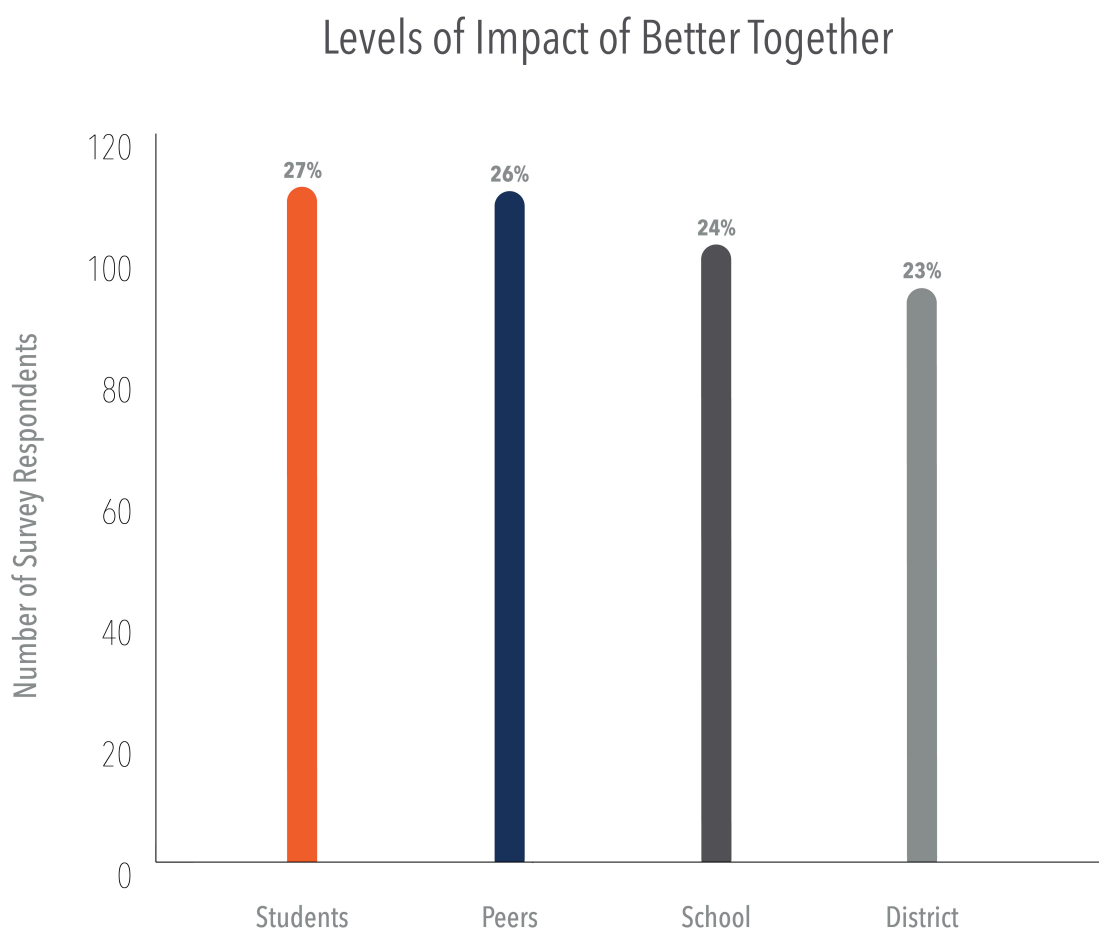


Figure 4. The effect of participating in and learning from Better Together ($n = 172$).

Impact on Students

Educators returned from Better Together with innovative teaching styles that changed the way they taught. They took the ideas, methods, and techniques they learned at Better Together and implemented them into their classrooms. This led to increased student success, improved classroom environments, and better connections with students. Notably, as educators deepened their connections with students; they became more empathetic of their student's struggles. For example, teacher leaders attempted to change their pedagogical style to better suit their students with disabilities.

Impact on Peers

When asked to share how Better Together impacted their peers, respondents stated that one primary impact was the sharing of pedagogical practices. One respondent said "I was able to share tools and strategies that I learned...from my fellow participants with my teacher peers". This demonstrates that Better Together allowed educators to share their learnings with their peers and help further develop a culture of continual learning. In addition to sharing practices, educators also demonstrated teacher leadership by implementing Edcamp-like models at their school sites. A respondent shared how they used their experiences from Better Together to build collaborative structures around professional development, stating: "I was able to learn how to facilitate dialogues around teacher professional development with veteran teachers". One educator took the lead in bringing more people to Better Together stating "As a first year participant in 2016, I organized a group from my site, which included the assistant principal in charge of PD, to attend". Once educators better understood their role as teacher leaders, they utilized their agency to work as collective advocates for students.

One response was that Better Together “reminded me of my role as their advocate”. Respondents shared how they could use their work and learnings from Better Together to better serve students stating “I am able to draw attention to the details that can be overlooked by others in a professional way by citing research and am able to recommend alternative strategies that could be helpful to students and families”.

When asked if they had implemented their learnings from the Better Together professional development, a significant amount of respondents reported “yes” ($n=65$, 40%).



Figure 17. Replicating Better Together professional learning in their school district ($n = 162$).

Nearly a quarter of participants ($n = 34$, 24%) stated Better Together increased their view of the importance of teacher networks by a great deal. While ($n = 31$, 22%) stated it changed their views by a moderate amount. A similar amount of respondents ($n = 30$, 22%) either stated Better Together did not change their views of teacher networks at all, or their views remained neutral ($n = 30$, 22%). Lastly, 10% ($n = 14$) thought it somewhat changed their views of teacher networking.

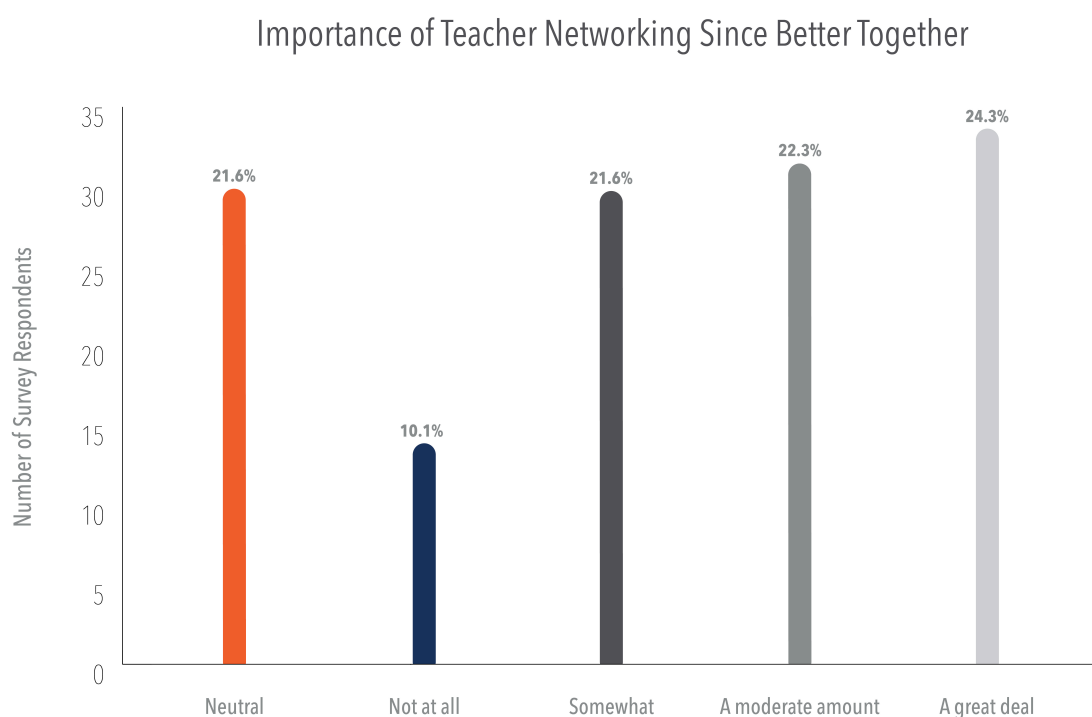


Figure 3. Importance of teacher networking since Better Together ($n = 139$).

Impact on School

After Better Together, educators took on leadership roles with their schools to create the change they wanted to see. For example, educators implemented Edcamp-like models into their school's professional development because they believed it would be more effective than traditional professional development. Additionally, respondents continued the culture of sharing by collaborating and sharing ideas with their colleagues. Specifically, educators who attended better together shared the skills, methods, and techniques they learned at Better Together with those who did not attend Better Together. After these changes were enacted, respondents noticed student academic growth and an improvement in school climate. As one respondent said "As a result of the improved collaboration, our school's math scores improved immensely." Another respondent elaborated on school climate: "It [Better Together] helped me bring no place for hate to my school has had a positive impact on school climate and disrupting bias."

Impact on District

When asked what impact they saw on their district, many respondents were skeptical that there would be any impact. Thirty-three respondents saw no district level change. In addition, some respondents stated that their district was not supportive of better Together, stating "I'm disappointed that our district didn't allow teachers to attend Better Together instead of the district run PD...Unfortunately, the district did not recognize Better Together as another viable PD fulfillment option". However, there was some positive impact on the district level as seen by the change in professional development. One respondent shared that Better Together "...provided a new lense [sic] to my district of how pd [sic] can be designed by teachers and for teachers". One respondent reported an implementation of collaborative professional development, sharing "We are

implementing EdCamp in district leadership meetings to begin incorporating it into district PD". Furthermore, one respondent shared how they used their learnings from Better Together to advocate for students at their district. They shared "I was able to come with a group of parents before the school board to express the needs of the students". Overall, though many were skeptical of positive change at district levels, those that did see a change, saw innovative and more collaborative professional development structures similar to Edcamp.

Summary

The Better Together Summit helped establish an environment of continuous learning for a majority of teachers and administrators as well as empowering educators to step into new leadership roles at their work sites. After experiencing Better Together, all but 4 respondents reported feeling more empowered as a teacher and a majority of respondents saw both short term and long term impacts on them as teacher leaders. In addition, almost half of respondents often sought leadership positions and nearly 70% of respondents took on new leadership roles after Better Together. When considering that more respondents reported having "few" to "no" leadership opportunities available to them after Better Together than those who reported having "many" to "very many" opportunities, it suggests that Better Together empowered teachers to see themselves as leaders as well as encouraged teachers to seek out leadership opportunities. This encouragement and teacher leader mentality, in turn, allowed teachers to see their roles as advocates for their students. Educators utilized their leadership capacity to advocate for students at their school sites and in their districts, using their learnings from Better Together and their new found network to support them.

Research Question 3. What are the lessons learned from Better Together for teacher professional learning, teacher leadership, and networking?

To answer the final question of this study, the research team in collaboration with the Advisory Board and teacher leaders discussed the findings of the study, the perspectives of the leadership team, and the implications for best practices and future directions. To begin this part of the report, we turn to the learnings from the leadership of Better Together who created and executed this vision for teacher professional learning, leadership, and networking.

Reflections: Better Together Leadership

When discussing Better Together, leaders agreed that a clear well thought out mission, purpose, and goals allowed for the establishment of the Better Together brand. A genuine commitment to serve, elevate, and support the teachers of California, despite organizational differences prevailed. To this end, the Better Together Steering Committee, with the support of many stakeholders, successfully designed and implemented an unconventional professional development concept with an unconventional approach on multiple levels. The idea of teachers learning from each other and forming networks of support to promote best practices emerged. The Steering Committee members revealed through two group interviews their perceptions and reflections relative to this process and product. Members shared there was no blueprint for carrying out this work. The team demonstrated collaboration and leadership similar to what they hoped to see emulated in the essence of the Summit and beyond. One member emphasized the expansiveness of the work:

“Opportunity to collaborate with new partners, not that we don’t know those partners, but partners that we haven’t necessarily worked in these ways before and to have impact on the statewide level as opposed to just at the local college or community level.”

With the desire to create an organic professional development process for teachers, these leaders galvanized their organizations across the state to create pathways and structures to bring teachers and teacher leaders together to learn and grow from one another. One leader shared perspectives on professional development:

"In our research of 20 years, we never found that professional development for anybody stuck at all. We believed that if we made it organic and brought teachers in made it feel like a grassroots effort, it would be more successful. Our motivation was around teacher voice at the beginning and pushing the professional learning structures that never change.

Another leader explained that the 'heart of it is the concept of teachers as leaders."

The motivation to bring teachers back to college campuses was appealing to this group. "The motivation was around the concept of lifelong learning. It was an incredible way to bring teachers back to campus in a meaningful way." With only four months to plan and execute the first Summit, there was no roadmap for the Steering Committee to follow. "We wrote the playbook as we did it," exclaimed one committee member.

Once these leaders brought teachers together and teachers attended across the state, the Steering Committee "saw the power of teacher leadership, the power of excellent Edcamp facilitators, so the focus shifted to teacher leadership over time." Another commented on the need for different models of a much larger scale:

"A lot of conversations were around how to meet the needs of teachers and fill the gaps in terms of resources, strategies, tips, tools that were teacher vetted and evidence based that could be shared with teachers on a larger scale, kind of in some ways sort of outside of the traditional district county office model."

A major initial motivator was the need for resources and strategies to implement the newly adopted California Common Core State Standards, which attracted large numbers of teachers to participate in the first Summit. That quickly shifted to “powerful professional learning, the role of teacher leaders and having a voice.” The shift occurred because of what happened at the first Summit.

Leaders described the initial Summit as “a sea of teachers engaged with one another,” “the energy in the room was palpable,” “[On] the day of, you can feel the energy. We put a lot of money into high quality set up, design. . . That’s how professional they felt like they were treated.”

The numbers of teachers who came were only part of the story. The other aspect was “to uplift the teacher community.” The Summit was free for all participants and designed by teachers for teachers. One leader described the statewide element relative to the power of the day.

“There was also this power about it being state wide and not just in this one location because all of our institutions across the state do professional development in some way but this one was different because we were all connected across the state for this one day and there was just a lot of power and energy in that as well that I think teachers felt and experienced and it was almost like being a part of this movement for this day.”

The project leaders believed they were effective with the Summits based on feedback through formal and informal assessments. Teachers said, “This is something we look forward to” said one Steering Committee member. Evidence of success included Twitter activity after the Summit led by teachers, motivation to bring teachers together at their school sites, and through the Summit, built networks. The Better Together efforts have been replicated in other settings. The Steering Committee hoped for more data on teacher leaders’ needs, teacher leaders’ desires for further learning, and their behavior changes and actions after the Summit. One

Steering Committee member suggested a more formalized structure for sustainability; “something like a nonprofit” would have benefitted this project long-term.

Through this project, the organizers found they could organize and collaborate for teacher leaders’ professional development. This lesson learned allows stakeholders to consider future actions in support of teacher recruitment, retention and professional development. From their perspective, teacher candidates benefited. One committee member recalled, “Pretty rare for prospective teachers to be invited to an event like this. Many emailed on how it gave insight to being a teacher that they had never experienced.” In terms of retention, one committee member reflected, “it helped teachers remember why they do what they do. It helped give them motivation to finish the year strong.” There were messages received from Better Together participants where “teachers emailed giving Better Together credit for why they kept on teaching. One person said, “I was about to quit and then I went to your event and I’m super excited.” In terms of teacher retention, the Summit highlighted the “importance of teacher preparation programs around lifelong learning”. One member suggested, “More thinking and intentionality on how teacher prep helps lifelong learning.”

In terms of the future, Steering Committee members believe it important to continue to find ways to engage individual school districts more, grow teacher leaders in every way we can, expand online networks, consider online Summits, investigating state support options, grants and other funding sources. All members agreed that the Better Together “brand” should not be compromised. Parts of the project may be continued through the school districts and universities.

In summary, the Steering Committee values the work and effort invested in making Better Together a success. The impact of the program has long and short-term ramifications as project goals were realized and

teacher leader professional development through using a nontraditional model that worked on many levels.

This group supports the continuation of this teacher leader intervention without compromising the integrity of the brand and model.

Overall, the best practices for teacher leadership and professional learning and networking based on Better Together suggest that a comprehensive, multipronged approach to serving and supporting teachers in these areas is critical. In a state like California, with such a diverse teacher workforce, students and families from a variety of settings and locations, there is no “one” way to provide effective teacher learning and development. It requires a host of stakeholders working collaboratively to meet the multiple needs of the various communities that collectively contribute to this statehood. As a result, the best practice then is to use a model similar to Better Together to serve all. Teachers facilitating learning based on their needs, and responding to local, regional and statewide needs using online and face to face gatherings to address educational problems and share solutions in support of teachers as leaders in professional learning.

Discussion

Better Together intentionally created an inviting professional atmosphere, and combined it with the unconference style, in order to ensure that teachers felt valued. The professional atmosphere was created by the: comfortable, indoor setting conducive to learning, the inspirational keynote speakers, and “bottom up” approach of the Summit. The unconference style allowed participants to create their own day of learning rather than follow specific learnings imposed on them. Together, these methods led to teachers being the primary

focus of the event; therefore, they felt respected and appreciated because the intention was for them. Once teachers felt valued, they were more proud, inspired, and motivated as teacher leaders and advocates for their students. This translated into future actions of leadership practices and a positive impact on their students. Furthermore, teachers began motivating and inspiring their peers within their schools and districts, because they were empowered and valued by their Better Together experience.

It is important that teachers continue to be valued so that those same positive impacts can be actualized at the classroom, peer, and school levels. However, teachers had difficulty reporting the level of impact Better Together had on school districts and communities. Teachers primarily reported duplicating Edcamp like professional learning sessions for district impact. The limited change reported at the district level may have been due to limited contact and access to district activities, personnel/policies. At the district level, it seems imperative that they are engaged with and communicating with teacher leaders. Otherwise, it is difficult for teacher leaders to see the impact of their efforts on the district; and it is difficult for the districts to fully understand the change occurring at the schools and successfully implement those changes to other schools.

A natural consequence of the culture of collaboration created at Better Together was the increased importance of networking. Many respondents stated Better Together increased their view of how important teacher networks are. This demonstrates that teacher leaders saw networking as more important; because the unconference conference demonstrated to them that they had expertise to share. This is consistent with findings from the literature; where Valli and Hawley (2002) indicated that successful professional learning allows educators to learn what they want and collaborate with colleagues with the same interests. Consequently, they needed to network with each other to continue learning after the Summit. Given these learnings, it appears that

teachers could benefit from a resource directory of colleagues containing the contact information of all speakers, facilitators, and attendees. This directory will allow them to continue learning, developing new pedagogical skills, and solidify the networks developed at Better Together. The lack of such a directory made it difficult for some respondents to maintain their newly made connections, therefore limiting their ability to sustain a network.

Had it not been for the empowerment respondents received at Better Together, they may not have felt as confident, or capable of being advocates for their students or inspired to become stronger teacher leaders. Furthermore, many respondents implemented the Edcamp structure in their schools because of Better Together. This combined with the overall positive effect of Better Together, reflected in the increased leadership actions, teacher empowerment, and student impact, suggests that Better Together was a worthy intervention.

The fact that this statewide intervention involved Pre K-12 public schools, charter schools, private schools, school districts, public and private colleges and universities, as well as non-profit organizations speaks highly to the universal need for teacher professional learning that is: comprehensive and focused on teachers, led by teachers, and for teachers. This study confirms the positive impact of Better Together statewide and data shows the power of this project on teachers, students and schools.

On a final note, when participants reflected on what they wanted moving forward, and what best practices for teacher professional learning were, many had ideas and feedback for future planning. Most participants wanted Better Together to continue, have more opportunities for connections/networking, and greater collaboration. Many respondents made a deliberative effort to obtain the contact information of other educators because they found value in the connections, ideas, and skills they gained from each other, hence the

development of a Better Together community. The community developed a collaborative culture of shared ideas, skills, and resources. While Better Together is finished, there were insights and recommendations offered by respondents that may prove helpful for consideration moving forward (See Appendix D).

Lessons Learned/Future Efforts

The Center for Research on Educational Access and Leadership identified the following recommendations for consideration regarding future statewide professional learning opportunities for teacher leaders relative to:

Policy Makers

1. Value teachers, new and seasoned, by supporting efforts for teacher learning and development such as Better Together
2. Recognize the need for teacher professional development as a career-long need
3. Consider identifying funding for a statewide infrastructure for both online and teacher-to-teacher professional learning that supports teacher development
4. Support efforts to continue a Better Together type program in California

Better Together Steering Committee Members

1. Capitalize on the work completed thus far and develop a resource directory of colleagues to support and reinforce statewide networking efforts
2. Continue to encourage university and college personnel to offer Edcamp like models for professional learning and support the identification and training of facilitators and speakers
3. Consider establishing a non-profit, as recommended by Steering Committee members to refine the work of this project

4. Disseminate findings of program impact to elected officials and other stakeholders in support of future funding
5. Work with local PBS stations to disseminate the work of this project including best practices for teacher professional learning and teacher leadership and networking

University, Colleges, and Schools of Education Leaders

1. Communicate clearly with the Deans of the Colleges and Schools of Education across the state the impact of this project on teacher leaders, students, and schools
2. Incorporate teacher professional learning efforts into networking opportunities sponsored by college and university alumni offices in conjunction with the school of education and California teacher professional associations

Conclusion

In a span of five years (2010 – 2015), California Board of Education adopted sweeping standards, assessments, and financial reforms to K-12 schools: (1) Common Core State Standards, (2) Local Control Funding Formula, (3) Local Control Accountability Plan, (4) Next Generation Science Standards, and (5) Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. The rendering of these policies had a significant impact on K-12 teachers and their classrooms. They had to acquire new skills to teach the state standards to students, which emphasized a more in-depth analysis of nonfiction text, greater emphasis on problem-solving, and literacy across all subjects (a shift from the previous California State Standards). The Local Control Funding Formula offered supplemental grants for English learners, foster youth, and students eligible for free or reduced-price meal plans. The Local

Control Accountability Plan provided a greater voice to community stakeholders on how funds should be allocated to schools, (e.g., increased resources to establish and sustain a college-bound culture). Finally, the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium would require computer-based testing for all grade levels, moving beyond paper-based multiple-choice selection to an open-ended solution model.

In order to adapt to the changes, California teachers underwent ongoing professional development, often leaving their classrooms for multiple days in a week to receive training (while schools remained in session). Consequently, these years were stressful for teachers because they had to learn new content standards, develop different pedagogical approaches to teaching, learning, and assessment, and quickly adapt to new expectations of their respective districts and communities. To this end, there was a need for teachers to address these reforms, both efficiently and effectively. Also, teachers needed to express their frustration or dismay with new expectations. Therefore, when the opportunity for teachers to first attend Better Together in 2015 was presented, the timing was impeccable.

Better Together provided an environment in which professionals discussed and learned innovative teaching methods from each other. Participants discussed their need for growth within education and the importance of Better Together for providing a space for them to share their ideas with like-minded individuals. Many teachers believe continuous change and improvement in the classroom is needed to improve student learning. There was an emphasis on the importance of taking the information learned to the district and classroom setting to facilitate change. Further, teachers gained confidence through their new experiences with Better Together.

They elaborated on how their confidence increased through leadership and oral presentation skills. Self-confidence increased for those who were asked to take on a new role in facilitating or speaking, and it was necessary to note that these teachers felt empowered and valued.

Often new teachers do not feel valued, but through Better Together, they felt valued and cared for as professionals. Through the development of leadership skills, participants were able to empower one another and be open with themselves. They reported improving and polishing their leadership skills. Many of the teachers believed that networking with one another would translate into an improvement in their teaching ability. Having teachers support each other made their roles more enjoyable. This gave them more confidence in their roles, functions and activities at their own school sites, knowing they had access to a broad network of educators across the state.

This was an empowering experience for the participants and the organizers. California teachers and teacher leaders felt positive, productive, cared for, and valued as professionals as a result of Better Together.

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Appendix A

Better Together Survey

Better Together 2019

Start of Block: Teacher Leader Survey

Q1

This survey is part of a research study that aims to capture the learnings from the Better Together: CA Teachers Summit and network, including an examination of impacts on teacher leadership, professional development, and networking. The results will be shared with the education community with the goal of improving professional learning opportunities for teachers. At the end of the survey you will have an opportunity to enter a drawing for a **Kindle Paperwhite or an Amazon Echo Show**.

Q2 Project Title: Better Together
HSR #: HSR-19-20-108 2019-2020

Dear Better Together participant,

The Better Together: CA Teachers Initiative supported teachers through the annual CA Teachers Summit and connected them to a supportive professional learning community from 2015 through 2019. The Better Together organizing partners have contracted with external evaluators (CREAL) to identify program outcomes related to teacher leadership, professional development, and networking.

As part of this evaluation project, we are conducting surveys and interviews with individuals who participated in Better Together to identify learnings that can inform and improve future professional learning opportunities for teachers.

Study Activities and Participation

You are being asked to participate in a study that aims to identify outcomes of the Better Together initiative.

Participation in the study means you may:

Complete questionnaires and individual or focus group interviews addressing 1. what you learned, 2. your experience and 3. your perceptions of participating in project Better Together.

Potential Benefits

We expect at least two main benefits from this study and the larger project. First, you will have the opportunity to share some of the most effective tools and strategies that learned from the Better Together activities. Second, you will have the opportunity to make recommendations for future best practices in teacher professional development.

Potential Risks

While no research is entirely risk-free, this study poses minimal risk to you. It may be uncomfortable at times to provide specific and honest feedback about your experience in Better Together.

Confidentiality

Data will be collected by an independent evaluator, who will maintain the confidentiality of all data. To the degree allowable by law, any information shared through interviews or journals with the evaluator will be kept confidential and your identity will not be disclosed. Given the number of individuals who are involved in project Better Together; it is possible, though unlikely, that other individuals who are closely associated with this project may be able to construe your identity and/or associate comments with a functional role. Further, if you participate in a focus group interview, your identity will be known to other participants of that focus group. Paper and electronic records will be maintained for three years after the project is completed, in accord with common research practice, and then shredded or erased.

Rights of Subjects

Even if you initially participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time and without consequences. You may also decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer, but continue to participate in the study.

Alternatives to Participation

There will be *no negative consequences* if you choose to not participate in this study. Simply decline to participate in the project and do nothing with this form.

Questions

If you have questions about this study:

Please contact Dr. Dawn Person, Evaluator, at 657-278-8510 or dperson@fullerton.edu OR Institutional Review Board (IRB), at 657-278-7719 or irb@fullerton.edu

Your Choices

By clicking the "I agree" option, you are agreeing that:

- 1) My participation in this study is entirely voluntary and will not impact my status or involvement with the Better Together: CA Teachers Summit and Network.
- 2) I am at least 18 years of age.

- 3) I have had the opportunity to ask and receive satisfactory answers to the questions I had about this study.
4) I will participate in this research evaluation activities outlined above.

☐ I agree (1)

☐ I do not agree (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Project Title: Better Together HSR #: HSR-19-20-108 2019-2020 Dear Better Together particip... = I do not agree

Page Break

Q3 Please identify the way(s) that you participated in Better Together at your local CA Teachers Summit site or at the State level (check all that apply):

- ☐ EdTalk speaker at CA Teachers Summit site (1)
- ☐ Other speaker or presenter at CA Teachers Summit (for example, master of ceremonies or panelist) (2)
- ☐ Facilitator for Edcamp breakout session(s) at CA Teachers Summit (3)
- ☐ New Teacher Center (NTC) Facilitator at CA Teachers Summit (4)
- ☐ Local planning committee for CA Teachers Summit (5)
- ☐ Teacher Advisory Committee for CA Teachers Summit (statewide) (6)
- ☐ Other (please specify): (7) _____

Q4 How many years did you participate in one or more of these roles?

- ☐ 1 year (1)
- ☐ 2 years (2)
- ☐ 3 years (3)
- ☐ 4 years (4)
- ☐ 5 years (5)
-

Q5 Were you able to take back any Better Together learning to your classroom, school and/or district?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)
-

Q6 Prior to Better Together, were you in a professional leadership role (grade level team leader, mentor, coach, master teacher, professional organization leader etc)

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)
-

Display This Question:

If Prior to Better Together, were you in a professional leadership role (grade level team leader, me... = Yes

Q7 If yes, please specify

Q8 Since Better Together, have you assumed any leadership roles?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If Since Better Together, have you assumed any leadership roles? = Yes

Q9 If yes, please specify

Q10 How, if at all, did your experience in Better Together enable you to step up as a leader?

Q11 Did you replicate any of the Better Together professional development structures in your school or district?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If Did you replicate any of the Better Together professional development structures in your school o... = Yes

Q12 If yes, which ones

- ☐ Teacher led with teacher choice PD sessions (1)
 - ☐ EdTalk Presentations (3)
 - ☐ EdCamp Foundation Collaborations (2)
 - ☐ Other (4) _____
-

Q13 After participating as a teacher leader in Better Together...

- ☐ I was more inspired to be a teacher (1)
 - ☐ I was more proud to be a teacher (2)
 - ☐ I desired even more to be a teacher leader (3)
 - ☐ I was less inclined to take on leadership (4)
-

Q14 To what degree did the Better Together Events impact you as a teacher leader in the short term?

- ☐ Very impactful (1)
 - ☐ Impactful (2)
 - ☐ Neutral (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat impactful (4)
 - ☐ Not at all impactful (5)
-

Q15 To what degree has the Better Together Event had a long term impact on you as a teacher leader?

- ☐ Very impactful (1)
 - ☐ Impactful (2)
 - ☐ Neutral (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat impactful (4)
 - ☐ Not at all impactful (5)
-

Q16 Do you have more opportunities to lead as a teacher then you did before you participated in Better Together?

- ☐ Very many leadership roles (1)
 - ☐ Many leadership roles (2)
 - ☐ Some leadership roles (3)
 - ☐ A few leadership roles (4)
 - ☐ No leadership roles (5)
-

Q17 To what degree have you pursued new leadership opportunities since the Better Together Event?

- ☐ Always (1)
 - ☐ Often (2)
 - ☐ Neutral (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat (4)
 - ☐ Not at all (5)
-

Q18 From your perspective, in what ways did your learning and participation in Better Together affect:

☐

Your students? (1) _____

☐

Your peers? (2) _____

☐

Your school? (3) _____

☐

Your district? (4) _____

Q19 Now that you have experienced Better Together, what would you recommend to those who plan and offer professional development to teachers?

Q20 What did you want from the Better Together Network? What suggestions do you have?

Q21 How could we engage more of your colleagues in Better Together?

Q22 Has your view on the importance of teacher networking changed since your participation in Better Together

- ☐ Not at all (5)
 - ☐ Somewhat (6)
 - ☐ Neutral (2)
 - ☐ A moderate amount (7)
 - ☐ A great deal (8)
-

Q23 Gender

- ☐ Male (1)
 - ☐ Female (2)
 - ☐ Non Binary (3)
 - ☐ Transgender (4)
 - ☐ Prefer not to say (5)
-

Q24 Age

- ☐ <25 (1)
 - ☐ 25-30 (2)
 - ☐ 31-35 (3)
 - ☐ 36-40 (4)
 - ☐ 41-45 (5)
 - ☐ 46-50 (6)
 - ☐ 50+ (7)
-

Q25 Number of years in the profession

- ☐ <5 (1)
 - ☐ 6-10 (2)
 - ☐ 11-15 (3)
 - ☐ 16-20 (4)
 - ☐ 20+ (5)
-

Q26 Current Grade Teaching

- ☐ Pre-K, K, or TK (5)
 - ☐ 1st through 5th (1)
 - ☐ 6th through 8th (2)
 - ☐ 9th through 12th (3)
 - ☐ Never taught (4)
-

Q27 Type of organization

- ☐ School District (1)
 - ☐ County Office of Education (2)
 - ☐ Charter School or Organization (3)
 - ☐ Private School (Pre-k-12) (4)
 - ☐ Education-focused nonprofit organization (5)
 - ☐ College or University (6)
 - ☐ Other (specify) (7) _____
-

Q28 Professional role

☐ Teacher (1)

☐ Teacher Leader (TOSA, Mentor, Coach, etc.) please specify (2)

☐ Administrator (3)

☐ School Support Staff (4)

☐ Other (specify) (5) _____

Q29 Would you be willing to participate in a focus-group interview to explore these topics in more depth?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

Display This Question:

If Would you be willing to participate in a focus-group interview to explore these topics in more de... = Yes

Q30 If yes, please provide your name and contact information

☐

Name (1) _____

☐

Phone Number (2) _____

☐

Email (3) _____

Q31 Thank you for completing this survey, this will help evaluate the learnings from the Better Together: CA Teachers Summit and network. The results will be shared with the education community with the goal of improving professional learning opportunities for teachers.

Q32 Would you like to enter a drawing for a chance to win an Amazon Kindle Paperwhite or an Amazon Echo Show 5?

☐

Yes (4)

☐

No (5)

Display This Question:

If Would you like to enter a drawing for a chance to win an Amazon Kindle Paperwhite or an Amazon Ec... = Yes

Q33 If yes, please provide your name and contact information

☐

Name (1) _____

☐

Phone Number (2) _____

☐

Email (8) _____

End of Block: Teacher Leader Survey

Appendix B

Better Together Interview Protocol

Better Together Interview Protocol

1. Please introduce yourself providing your name, affiliation, and involvement with Better Together
2. What learnings did you take back to your work environment from the Better Together experience?
3. Has your involvement with Better Together contributed to a change or difference in your self-perception as a leader or in the way you approach your practice? If yes, can you describe the change? (Probes: how has your perception changed? How have you taken action? Any reflections on this action?)
4. Can you think of a time when your involvement with Better Together contributed to a change in you as a professional, your perceptions of yourself as a leader, taking on a leadership role, and/or the way you approached your practice?
5. Describe how, if at all, being a part of Better Together helped you participated and possibly create more peer to peer collaborative efforts in grade levels, networks, or other settings?
6. What short term and long term impact did Better Together have on you?
7. What impact do you believe it had on your students? School site and district?
8. Were there any unanticipated outcomes?
9. What do you now expect from a professional network?
10. What professional development activities do you anticipate engaging in over the next year?

Appendix C

Better Together Leadership Interview Protocol

Better Together Leadership Interview Protocol

1. Please introduce yourself providing your name, affiliation, role and the expertise you brought to the Better Together Project.
2. Where you involved with Better Together since its inception? For how long were you involved?
3. What was the motivation for you and/or the organization you represent to partner in this endeavor?
4. Do you believe project goals were realized? What evidence supports your response?
5. What observed changes, if any, did you witness in participants?
6. Upon reflection, what is your assessment of the project's development, implementation and evaluation processes?
7. How effective we're you all as a coordinating body in modeling collaboration and leadership?
8. From your perspective, what was the impact of this project? (short term and long-term for participants, colleges, school districts, your organization?)
9. Were there any unanticipated outcomes?
10. What learnings from Better Together did you take back to your work environment and how, if at all, did it change your perspective on 1) teacher recruitment, 2) teacher retention and, 3) teacher leader professional development?
11. Given what you know now, what might you change or want to see done differently with Better Together?
12. What are your thoughts about future directions for this project?

Appendix D

Better Together Respondents' Recommendations

Respondents' Recommendations for future efforts such as Better Together:

- a directory of contacts prior to the event for follow up/maintain connections
- more experienced or expert educators leading breakout sessions for more purposeful and impactful sessions
- better promotion through advertising/marketing of Better Together
- ask teachers which topics to include
- replicate the Edcamp design with experienced facilitators
- have teachers lead breakout sessions
- need teacher input in planning professional development
- need new material and professional development in new areas to address changes in the classroom and best practices over time
- respondents prefer the Edcamp like format for professional development as it allowed teachers to have a choice in what materials they were presented based on interests and needs
- facilitators should be experienced and qualified, as some of the facilitators were new teachers who struggled to give greater insight about how they applied the skills discussed in their Edcamp like sessions
- more teacher-led sessions for future professional development