CUE JET Review

Final Report
LDI Edition
July 2017

Contents

JET Review: LDI Edition

During the LDI gathering in July, the morning portion of the agenda on Saturday was spent conducting focus group discussions to garner thoughts from the affiliate and learning network leadership in attendance on the future direction of CUE. The focus groups were organized by role - presidents, secretaries and treasurers, learning network leaders, and committee members. Each group was asked to respond to the same questions. In addition to the facilitator for each focus group, who was a member of the Affiliate/Learning Network Committee, there were two notetakers, each of whom was a CUE Executive Board member. Summaries of the conversations are [here](#), organized by question and focus group. Complete notes from each group are at these links: [Presidents](#), [Secretaries/Treasurers](#), [Learning Networks](#), [Committee Members](#).

Additionally, all participants were asked to complete a brief survey. Full results of the summary are [here](#). (One sheet has the raw data, a second sheet has the recommendations parsed out for easier reading.)

Focus Group Responses

Focus group participants were asked three questions:

- What are you proud of (what's working well) regarding CUE as an organization?
- What do you find annoying (what's not working well) regarding CUE as an organization?
- What does CUE need to do to be a truly state-of-the-art organization?

When asked about what's working well with CUE, overwhelmingly the responses indicated that CUE's strength is in the areas of community and professional development. Most responses from all four focus groups pointed to CUE as a place where members could feel connected, supported, and energized. Several responses pointed to feeling isolated at their own sites (being a "Lone Nut"), whereas at CUE events, they could associate with like-minded people who were being innovative and willing to take risks in improving their craft. Responses also indicated a feeling across all focus groups that the professional development opportunities from CUE, which run the gamut of large conferences to regional RockStar-type events to smaller local events, provide wide-ranging opportunities for educators to learn new pedagogies and techniques. Support for individuals and local affiliates and learning networks was also mentioned consistently. Staff is considered responsive and supportive, and resources are freely shared between members. A significant number of people also said that CUE's advocacy for education was a strength.

Participants pointed to several recurring ideas in terms of things that were annoying or not working well with CUE. When asked what's not working well, most responses were in four general categories. Overwhelmingly, providing leadership training for CUE members and communicating more effectively within and outside of CUE were the predominant needs voiced by respondents. Leadership was mentioned by nineteen respondents, primarily by those in the president's focus group, but also in the Secretary and Treasurer, Committee member, and Learning Network groups. Communication of CUE and what benefits exist for members was mentioned consistently in all four focus groups. Within CUE, there's some debate about CUE's identity (multiple respondents said things like, "CUE has lost its mission of 'Computer Using Educators' because everyone has a computer" and "It was Computer Using Educators but it is <now> how to revolutionize education."). Outside of CUE membership, however, teachers and administrators don't understand CUE's mission or vision, or what membership does for them. This idea of clarifying and communicating CUE's identity or mission to educators outside of CUE's membership was mentioned 26 times.

Becoming "state of the art" elicited a wide range of responses, which is to be expected when the idea of "state of the art" is intentionally undefined and left open-ended. Respondents provided several themes, including highlighting local activities and exemplary educators, creating opportunities for more interaction amongst members, seeding innovative pedagogies and projects, communicating about CUE to a larger audience, and finding ways to provide more local events to offset the cost to districts of sending teachers to the Fall and Spring conferences.

Suggested Actions

Tier 3

(Actions that are low / low cost but have significant immediate impact)

3.1 Revamp the cue.org website to highlight activities of local affiliates up-front and center, and include a banner highlighting what membership in CUE can offer for teachers and administrators

Currently, the website's front page highlights CUE, not membership. The rotating banner advertises PD opportunities, and the static content emphasizes conference attendance. Communicating what CUE can mean for non-members, how they can connect to their local affiliate, and what they can gain from belonging to the CUE community should be the main message on the front page. Move the announcements about major conferences and PD opportunities to the lower part of the front page where they are easily found by members and interested individuals, but not the dominating content of the main page.

Highlight an affiliate each month on the main page, with clear links to how members can connect to their local affiliate and become active and connected to their local colleagues. Highlight the activities of affiliates and learning networks, in a manner that graphically shows how much local activity is occurring and how this can be of benefit to new members. One survey respondent's comment highlights the current state: "Make it clearer to CUE members, especially when they sign up as members, what a local affiliate actually is. As of now, it's a checkbox on the sign up form with zero explanation to a new member."

With one-time PD monies drying up and district resources shrinking in the near future, CUE's success will hinge on providing improved local opportunities to teachers both for professional development and for networking/community support.

3.2 Make a link from the cue.org website to the leadership.cue.org website and revamp that site to make resources easier to locate

Responses from the focus groups made it clear that a significant group of leaders aren't aware of the resources available, or how to find them. On the cue.org site, none of the banner menus have content drop-down menus, meaning locating specific content such as event planning guides, by-laws, etc. are readily obtainable.

3.3 Develop a committee to create an identity statement that can be shared primarily with non-CUE members, highlighting how they can benefit by belonging to CUE

Even within leadership, there's some confusion about CUE's identity. Clearly, the identity has evolved from "Computer Using Educators" (more than one focus group participant

commented that now, everyone uses computers) to something more in tune with best pedagogical practices and innovation around infusing technology into the classroom.

Narratives from the focus groups clearly show that CUE's identity is not clear, even to leadership. Comments about CUE being "cliquish" show that even within CUE, there's a difference in vision between the "in group" and newer/more low-key members. To have a lasting impact and improve membership, the vision for CUE and it's core mission need to be clarified and universally communicated.

3.4 Develop a leadership development/training program for members who desire to become actively involved in CUE and their local affiliates and learning networks

While much of the delivery of this program could occur, at least in part, at the annual Leadership Development Institute, creating a program for developing leadership skills within CUE was a recurring theme from the focus groups and from the survey. Making this available through a web-based program, perhaps along the lines of the Leading Edge Certification Program, and providing some form of certification or badging would provide both value and meaning for CUE members.

Tier 2

(Actions that are longer term/resource intensive)

2.1 Develop a tighter support network for affiliates

Consistently, from both focus groups and the survey, leaders mentioned the need for ongoing communication and support for affiliates and learning networks. While many mentions were made of existing support, in terms of when the CUE office receives a call, a greater number of responses indicate a need for more pro-active communication from CUE. One idea mentioned was to have a regular "check-up" call with each affiliate, perhaps on a monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly basis; develop a program of regular communications about the resources available and where they can be found, along with contact information for various needs, in the form of a newsletter or list-serv, sent to affiliate and learning network board members.

2.2 Create a CUE marketing plan to attract new members and communicate both inside and outside of existing membership what opportunities for learning and networking are available from CUE

CUE's membership, currently a function of conference attendance, will continue to fluctuate with district budgets. Providing a message highlighting the value of CUE membership outside of conference attendance, and targeting that message at non-CUE members, is the only real avenue to growth independent of district PD budgeting. Coupling this with a clear vision statement about CUE's mission will be increasingly important as district budgets become constrained. Identifying modes of sharing this message outside the existing methods encompasses two components - determining the media to which non-CUE members generally pay attention, and finding ways to get CUE's message into those media streams. For example, it may be that CUE advertising on NPR with a message about how CUE supports teachers and how teachers can join could reach significantly more teachers than through current means.

For existing CUE membership, developing metrics for helping teachers communicate benefits of attending CUE events, especially the more expensive larger conferences, will assist attendees in demonstrating the value of the conferences to their respective districts. Numerous focus group responses allude to districts becoming more and more focused on assuring value associated with conference attendance, and the need for teachers to justify attending a conference. As budgets becoming increasingly constrained, this practice will become increasingly common.

2.3 Develop "district-friendly" financial transaction methodologies

It makes no sense that districts cannot easily register and pay for multiple teachers to attend CUE events.

Tier 1

(Actions that are aimed at significant organizational impact, regardless of cost)

1.1 Establish a clear statement of identity for the purpose of establishing organizational norms, practices, and vision

One respondent best articulated a recurrent theme: "It feels like there is CUE, then there are affiliates, and they don't cross much." CUE's identity is either top-down or bottom-up, meaning that the focus of the organization is either to support teachers at a local level, backed up with large, isolated events, or it is focused on large-scale events, backed up by support at the local level. Most mentions of identity allude to the latter, but the sentiment seems to be towards the former. Regardless, this dichotomy needs to be discussed, clarified, and communicated both overtly, and in terms of branding and image management. Further, whether CUE is about technology, pedagogy, professional development, education advocacy, or some combination of these needs to be more clearly communicated.

1.2 Develop tighter connections between individual members, local affiliates and learning networks, and CUE

Regardless of the resolution of the top-down vs. bottom-up conversation, there's a clear need, based on focus group responses, for better communication, articulation, and support for local organizations, as well as articulation of how CUE can be benefit and support individual members. Establishing methodologies for better ongoing contact and dialog are needed, along with avenues for communicating with non-CUE members (teachers and administrators alike).

Survey Results (Group discussion totals follow these 3 charts and 2 digital responses)
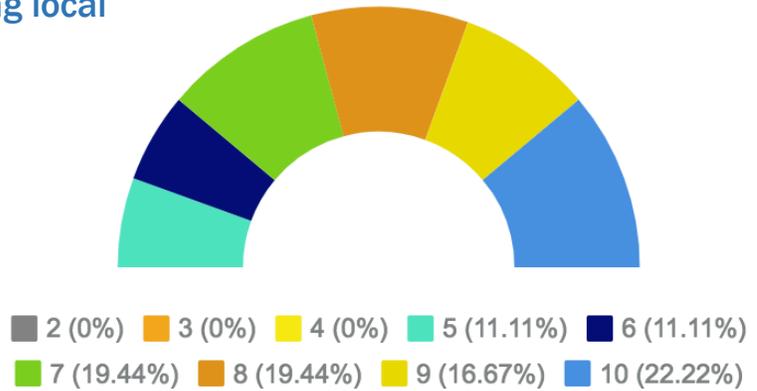
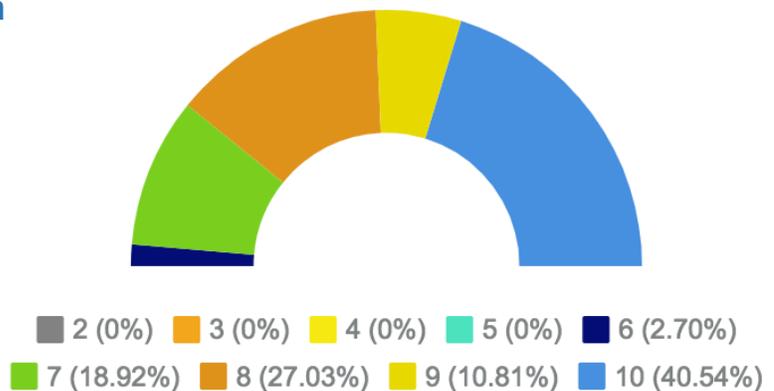## CUE is focused on educators and education

37 responses

- 2 (2.70%)
- 3 (0%)
- 4 (0%)
- 5 (0%)
- 6 (5.41%)
- 7 (2.70%)
- 8 (10.81%)
- 9 (10.81%)
- 10 (67.57%)
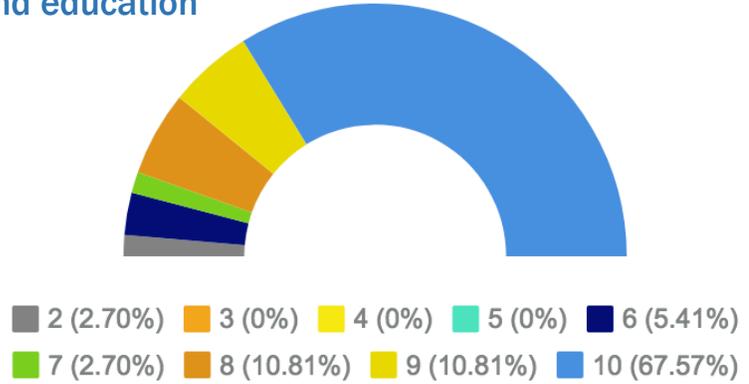
CUE is committed to supporting local Affiliates/Learning Networks

36 responses

- 2 (0%)
- 3 (0%)
- 4 (0%)
- 5 (11.11%)
- 6 (11.11%)
- 7 (19.44%)
- 8 (19.44%)
- 9 (16.67%)
- 10 (22.22%)

CUE is committed to me as an individual educator

37 responses

- 2 (0%)
- 3 (0%)
- 4 (0%)
- 5 (0%)
- 6 (2.70%)
- 7 (18.92%)
- 8 (27.03%)
- 9 (10.81%)
- 10 (40.54%)

Short-term IMPROVEMENTS

CUE can make short-term improvements to support for local Affiliates / Learning Networks:

Most common answers on SURVEY Q1: Opportunity
Something CUE can do short term to improve support for local Affiliates / Learning Networks

Guidance, communication, training, poc, support for affiliate/learning network leaders: 17

Outreach to members, new audiences: 9

Activities/events/Other ideas: 7

Clearer member benefits, offerings, org structure: 2

> *Quotables:*
>
> *"Communication and collaboration. It feels like there is CUE, then there are affiliates, and they don't cross much."*
>
> *"More clear handbooks, a singular location for both Resources AND Inspiration. Think a digital hub, a place to connect all the affiliates, celebrate each other, to highlight the bright spots and to offer resources."*
>
> *"Provide more materials/transitional support for NEW affiliates. Have a CUE staff member meet with the new board post-creation, require a certain percentage of affiliate board members to undergo governance training, etc."*

Short to Medium-Term ACTION ITEMS

- Develop a CUE Affiliate / LN 101 orientation / informational video for new board members
  Explain the org. structure, resources (and where to find them), who to call, etc.
  Include best practices, examples from exemplary affiliates

- Improve communication with affiliates Bi-monthly check-in option

- Webinars/GHOs
  Increase communication of resources available on leadership.cue.org

- Communicate to affiliates who to call at CUE for questions / help On webpage, easy to find

- Develop protocol to communicate with new members (when they join CUE) who their local
  affiliate is, how they can get info, what they can do to get involved

Long-term INITIATIVES

Most common SURVEY Q2 responses: Visionary
Something CUE can do in the longer term to improve support for local Affiliates / Learning Networks

Guidance, communication, training, poc, support for affiliate/learning network leaders: 13

Outreach to members, new audiences: 12

Activities/events/Other ideas: 5

Clearer member benefits, offerings, org structure: 1

> *Quotables:*
>
> *"Create materials to help support affiliates in creating connections with local districts. Even something as simple as providing pamphlets/lanyards would be useful for outreach."*
>
> *"Dig down beneath the layer of willing and eager sharers--i.e., those of us who find CUE and enthusiastically turn out to support and present regularly at events--to bring reluctant people out of the shadows. I think there are tons of people doing great things, who would be flattered but reluctant at the idea of being presenters. CUE should develop a stated mission and culture of getting more and more people to showcase their best practices. In order for this to work, we "regulars" need to be willing to step back into the shadows, lead fewer sessions, and instead get into the business of finding new talent and nudging new faces into the speakerships at our regional events."*
>
> *"Leadership Development should be leadership development. Have activities and sessions that build leadership. We don't need a hero journey for everything."*
>
> *"Focus the mission of the organization on developing people. Human capital is the future of CUE. Develop people and then empower them."*