

Center for Educational Excellence | Graduate School of Education

CLASSIFIED EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

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CLASSIFIED EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP PROGRAM



Overview

The Classified Executive Leadership Program (CELP), offered through the Center for Educational Excellence Graduate School of Education, is a cohort-based executive learning experience designed specifically to develop the leadership capacity of classified managers and leaders within California's public education system. The program is grounded in the understanding that classified leaders play a central role in the daily functioning, stability, and long-term success of school districts, often overseeing complex operations, large teams, significant fiscal resources, and high-stakes compliance responsibilities.

CELP is intentionally structured to bridge theory and practice, supporting participants as they deepen their understanding of how educational systems operate within political, legal, financial, and human contexts. The program emphasizes real-world leadership application, equipping classified leaders with the tools needed to navigate change, lead people effectively, and make sound, legally compliant decisions in dynamic and often challenging environments. Learning is anchored in authentic district scenarios, collaborative problem-solving, reflective practice, and applied leadership work that mirrors the responsibilities participants carry in their current roles.

A defining feature of the program is its strong focus on relational leadership. Participants build skills in coaching, communication, conflict resolution, and consensus-building, recognizing that successful classified leadership depends as much on trust and influence as it does on technical expertise. The program fosters a professional learning community in which participants learn alongside peers from across departments and districts, strengthening cross-functional understanding and creating a durable network of classified leaders who can support one another beyond the program year.

The program culminates in a comprehensive capstone experience that integrates leadership, law, policy, and management into a single applied project. This work allows participants to demonstrate executive-level thinking and decision-making while addressing authentic organizational challenges. Through this process, candidates leave the program not only with expanded knowledge but with increased confidence, clarity of leadership identity, and a practical framework for leading complex systems.

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Importance

The Classified Executive Leadership Program responds to a critical and longstanding gap in leadership development across California’s educational landscape. While classified managers are frequently entrusted with extensive operational authority, legal accountability, and fiscal oversight, there are relatively few structured, high-quality leadership pathways designed specifically for their professional growth. CELP elevates classified leadership by recognizing its strategic importance and investing intentionally in its development.

By strengthening classified leaders’ understanding of organizational systems, labor and employment considerations, school law, and change leadership, the program directly supports district effectiveness, risk management, and organizational coherence. Leaders who complete the program are better equipped to anticipate challenges, navigate complex regulatory environments, and lead with both confidence and care—reducing institutional risk while improving organizational culture.

Equally important, the program affirms the value of classified leadership as an integral component of district leadership teams. CELP promotes equity in leadership development by ensuring that classified leaders have access to rigorous, executive-level learning opportunities comparable in depth and quality to those traditionally available to certificated administrators. This investment strengthens succession planning, supports internal talent development, and builds leadership capacity across the entire educational system.

Ultimately, the Classified Executive Leadership Program advances the Center for Educational Excellence’s mission to cultivate reflective, informed, and innovative leaders. By empowering classified executives with the knowledge, skills, and professional networks they need to lead effectively, the program contributes directly to stronger organizations, more resilient systems, and improved outcomes for students, staff, and school communities.

Application Requirements

Space is limited in the Classified Executive Leadership Program. The cohort size is capped at twenty Executive candidates. Please apply at CenterEdX.org under the Classified Executive Tab. Candidates will be connected with after applying regarding a group interview and writing sample.

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Cost

All candidates who meet the application requirements and are currently employed within the Las Virgenes Unified School District will have all tuition and instructional materials costs waived. All out of district candidates will be billed \$950 for the cost of tuition and materials.

Benefits of an Executive Leader Certificate

Across the state of California, leadership programs for preparing Classified Leaders are limited. That said, in many districts, Classified Managers lead large amounts of staff and have extensive fiscal and legal oversight. Completion of the Executive Leader Certificate demonstrates to any employer that an applicant has:

- A thorough understanding of change leadership
- A depth of knowledge around school policy, practices, and regulations
- An appreciation and resourcefulness for all facets of school law
- Skillfulness in facilitating and coaching individuals and groups
- A breadth of tools for evaluating, coaching, and supporting employees with an understanding of fair and equitable labor laws
- Tools to navigate hard conversations and challenging circumstances
- A network of classified colleagues to lean upon in times of challenge.



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Schedule

Date & Time	Topic
February 25, 2026 (Wed) – 2:00–4:00 PM	Classified Leadership as Systems Stewardship
March 11, 2026 (Wed) – 2:00–4:00 PM	Leading Under Pressure: Cognitive Load, Urgency, and Judgment
March 25, 2026 (Wed) – 2:00–4:00 PM	Psychological Safety, Authority, and Accountability
April 15, 2026 (Wed) – 2:00–4:00 PM	Human Resources as a Leadership System
April 29, 2026 (Wed) – 2:00–4:00 PM	Coaching for Growth and Capacity Building
May 13, 2026 (Wed) – 2:00–4:00 PM	Navigating Conflict with Clarity and Purpose
May 27, 2026 (Wed) – 2:00–4:00 PM	Time, Delegation, and Distributed Leadership
September 9, 2026 (Wed) – 2:00–4:00 PM	Organizational Culture and Collective Thinking
September 23, 2026 (Wed) – 2:00–4:00 PM	Financial and Operational Literacy for Classified Leaders
October 14, 2026 (Wed) – 2:00–4:00 PM	Ethics, Judgment, and Leadership Under Scrutiny
October 28, 2026 (Wed) – 2:00–4:00 PM	Legal Literacy and Risk Management in Classified Leadership
November 18, 2026 (Wed) – 2:00–4:00 PM	Governance, Role Clarity, and Public Trust
December 2, 2026 (Wed) – 2:00–4:00 PM	Building Sustainable Capacity in Classified Systems
December 9, 2026 (Wed) – 2:00–4:00 PM	Capstone Integration: Executive Judgment in Practice

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