




2020-2021 Collective Support Impact Report



MindCatcher's Collective Support offers site leaders of color the opportunity to investigate their own practice and co-design strategies to support their well-being as leaders and educators. Centering mindset to practice alignment means participants are working to enhance their leadership practices by allowing mindset and values to serve as the centering force for both tackling leadership challenges and fully embracing success. Through this process, fellows come to the awareness that when what you *believe* (*i.e., mindset and values*) and what you are *doing* (*i.e. practices*) are aligned, there is less internal friction, which then helps to alleviate work-based stress. To achieve this alignment, a cohort of site leaders engage in participatory, evidence-based leadership development. This process enables our leaders to cultivate the generative learning environments that our students and families deserve. With community-building as a foundation, Collective Support provides the space for identity-responsive leadership development while receiving thought partnership from fellow leaders of color on current problems of practice. This series of seven working sessions culminates in participants creating a personalized playbook of strategies designed to align their mindset with their everyday practice.



Why Does Supporting Leaders of Color Matter?

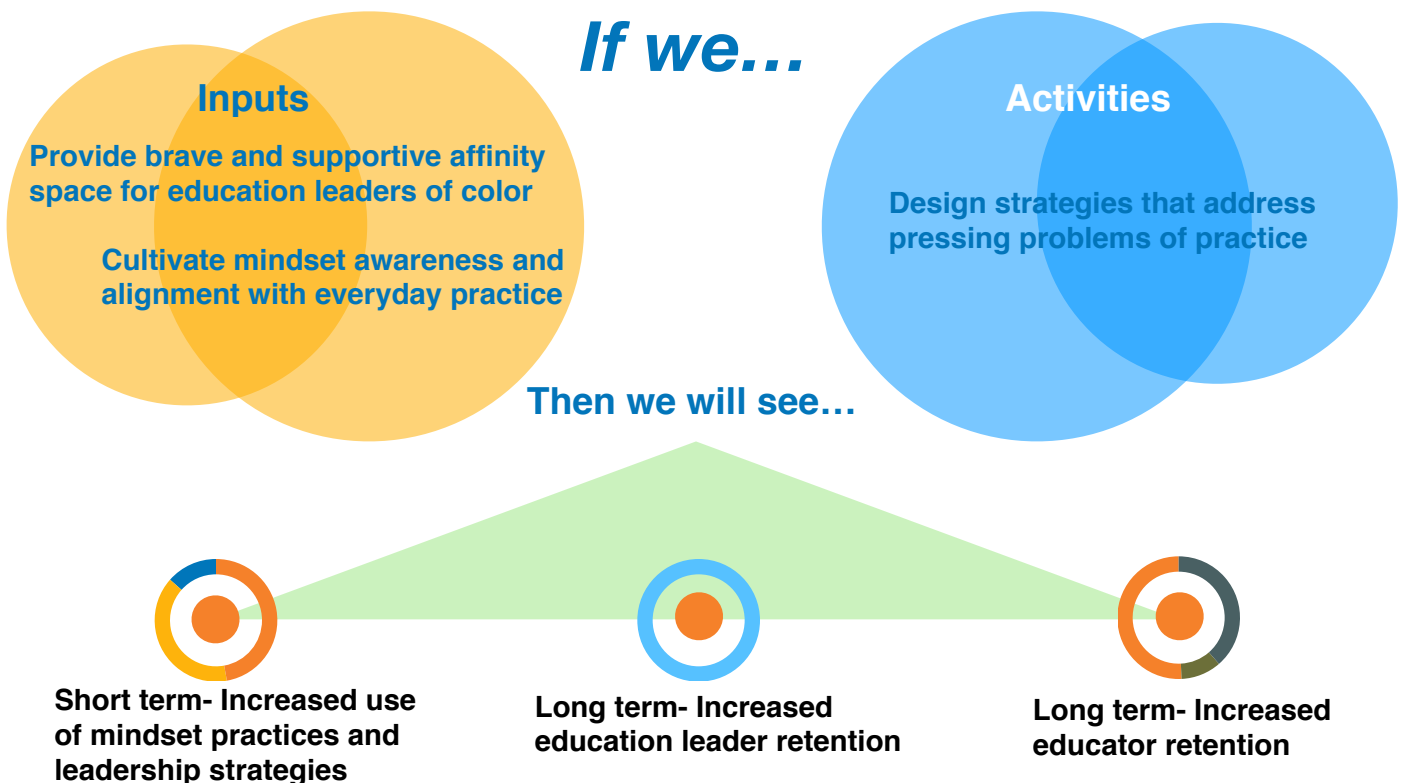
MindCatcher is laser-focused on elevating and supporting the education leadership of those closest to the most vulnerable communities in our schools, young people of color. We have studied the key concerns of education leaders before and during the pandemic and found that education leaders of color face multi-layered challenges to creating generative learning spaces where young people are centered. To provide brave space for them to address these challenges, we set out to provide what our studies showed leaders of color need most: time, community, wellness and mindset as fuel to mastermind their way to better serving young people.

“Mindset informs actions. This experience has allowed me the chance to stop and reflect on how I show up as a leader and given me a renewed energy.” ~Cohort I Participant



Our Theory of Action

By creating a brave, supportive affinity space for site leaders of color to utilize mindset practices and co-design strategies to address persistent problems of practice, we aim to achieve short and longer term outcomes. Short term, we expect to see an increased number of site leaders of color using leadership and mindset practices that contribute to adult wellness and capacity for youth-led learning. Longer term, we expect to see increased leader retention and, subsequently, educator retention.



Our Impact

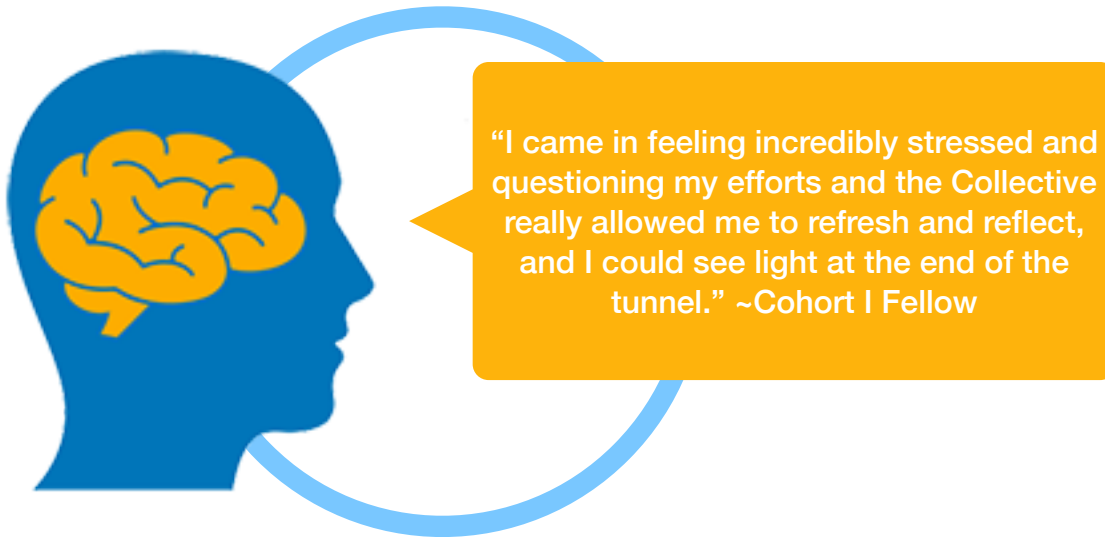
MindCatcher launched Collective Support primarily in response to the need for high quality professional development for site leaders while working in schools to increase youth-led learning. Our research-backed premise was simple: high quality professional development would create the leader capacity needed to shift staff mindset, practices and systems to enable more youth-led learning. To gauge Collective Support's impact, MindCatcher conducted pre and post cohort surveys as well as emotional temperature checks at the opening and closing of sessions.

The inaugural cohort experience was particularly successful at 1) cultivating an increased sense of effectiveness in their work amongst participants, 2) establishing a community of trust, 3) helping participants to recognize mindset as fuel to achieve their goals and 4) fostering psychological safety.



Increased Effectiveness

Consistent with MindCatcher’s theory of action, Collective Support has demonstrated early indicators of positively impacting site leader retention. Only 50% of our cohort started Collective Support feeling satisfied in their work. Post-cohort experience, 100% of our cohort reported their participation in Collective Support both helped them feel more effective and increased the satisfaction they felt with their work.



Research from the [Learning Policy Institute](#) shows dissatisfaction and perceived lack of effectiveness as attributes that lead to education leader attrition. We are encouraged by the potential of Collective Support to mitigate these factors, particularly since, as reported [in a recent NYT article](#), these dynamics have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Participant Perspective

Coming into Collective Support, one leader wrestled with how to support their staff in utilizing more student voice and agency. They shared, my experience “allowed me to surface a perceived misalignment causing significant stress. In reality, my mindset needed to shift about what I was perceiving. This shift significantly reduced my stress.” Now this leader is working with their leadership team to implement strategies to increase educator agency that surfaced during the cohort experience.





Community of Trust

Commencing Collective Support, our participants shared mixed reports about whether they felt valued by staff and experienced satisfaction in their work as leaders of color. This data suggested a deep need to connect with peers who, through lived experience, could provide empathetic support and creative problem-solving. Overall, the affinity space proved to be a powerful way to help increase our cohort's sense of self-validation around their experiences as leaders of color.

100%

of the cohort strongly agreed the experience provided a community of trust that supported their leadership development.

Participant Perspective

Through the cohort experience, one leader recognized imposter syndrome as a potential root cause of their reactions to the problems of practice they were facing. This participant came into Collective Support with doubts of their leadership. "Even though I knew I was capable and that my intentions for public education were authentic, doubt crept by the edges. I still wondered if I had approached the situation wrong." Affinity spaces that connect to racial identity and professional positionally, proved to be helpful for this fellow, who was able to unpack a significant problem of practice amongst those with shared lived experiences. "Being in a structured environment with other black educators allowed me to be vulnerable and have real talk to address real issues." Having this community of support, coupled with the mindset work helped this leader to be more reflective and solutions-oriented. "Mindset awareness has allowed me to analyze root causes and not individual actions that now has yielded better results."

With an explicit focus on community-building, we were able to positively improve our cohort's social-emotional well-being during each of our sessions gauged through an emotional temperature check. This process helped leaders gain a visceral understanding of the impact of wellness on their leadership.

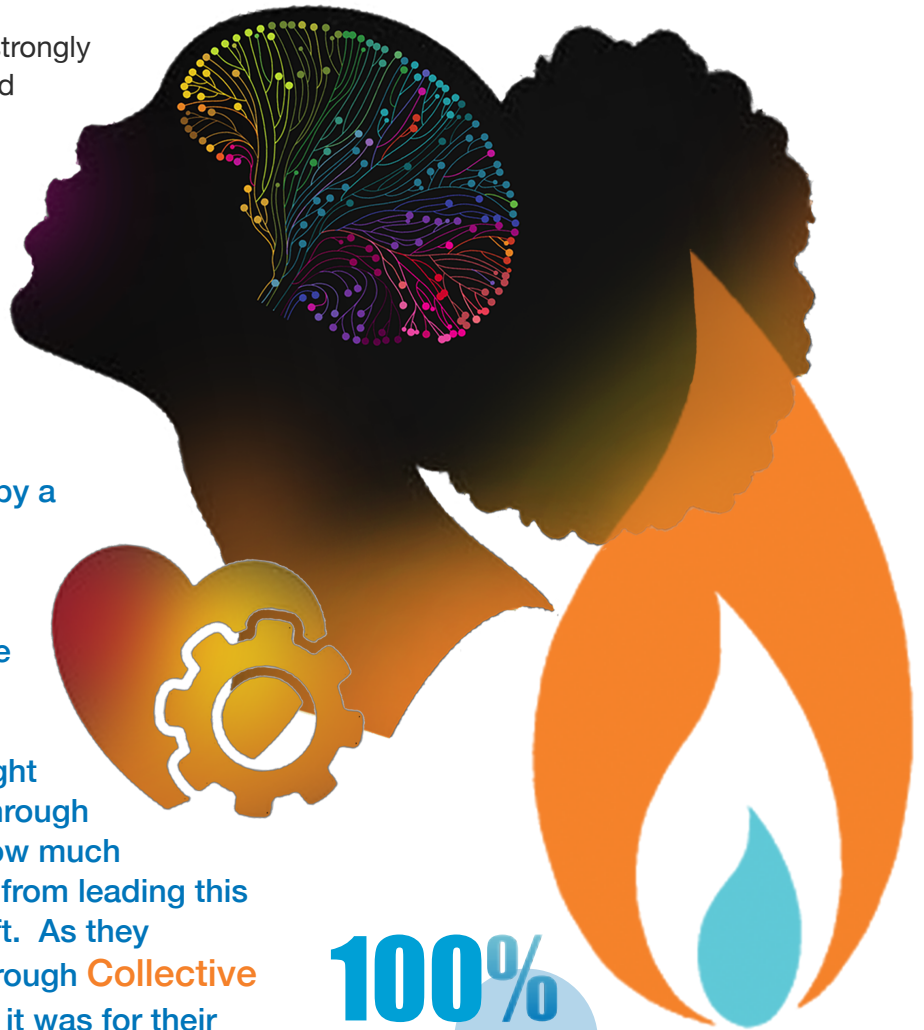
Mindset as Fuel

With community-building as a foundation, we were able to foster an environment that allowed for vulnerability that leaders of color do not often experience. This orientation paved the way for authentic, solutions-oriented approaches to addressing key problems of practice. With the support of our Mindset Framework, the cohort engaged in deep reflection on mindset shifts that were necessary in order to create more alignment with their leadership practices.

To this end, **100%** of the cohort strongly agreed that Collective Support helped them develop a solutions-oriented approach to a critical issue in their leadership, which led to all of them reporting that they left the experience with actionable steps they can take to solve those issues.

Participant Perspective

One participant was challenged by a critical cultural shift at their organization where stakeholders were all at different levels of approach and commitment to the change process. Inconsistent tactical approaches from their leadership team eventually brought this fellow fatigue in the work. Through cohort activities, they realized how much they were starting to disconnect from leading this much-needed organizational shift. As they engaged in mindset practices through **Collective Support**, they saw how integral it was for their practice and the professional health of their team. “Purposely engaging around mindset, even in small consistent ways helped me see the importance of making space for it, I will look for ways to include mindset practices for my staff.”



100%

of the cohort strongly agreed they left the experience with actionable steps they can take to solve critical problems of practice.



Key in this process was making space for evidence-based work that centers the cohort's lived experiences as critical data. Lived experience tends to be disregarded by the education establishment in favor of more readily quantifiable forms of data (i.e. test scores). This discounting not only takes a toll as leaders often face their challenges in isolation, but it also risks eclipsing well-being and the ability to bring about creative, uniquely responsive solutions. With this reality in mind, Collective Support helps participants process lived experience data in a way that is humanizing, digestible, affirming and solutions focused. Elevating lived experience combined with a focus on wellness helped leaders to center these attributes in their leadership practices. The subsequent ripple effect encompasses our cohort's staff, thereby increasing MindCatcher's reach and impact.

Psychological Safety

Studies have shown that psychological safety is a critical lever in the workplace that cultivates trust and trust-making behaviors that in turn build confidence, motivation, creativity and open-mindedness. In essence, psychological safety supports leaders and their teams to have space to take risks, without fear of negative consequences. A study conducted by Google has shown that psychological safety is the number one attribute for effective team dynamics. This attribute is incredibly important for leaders of color who often encounter resistance to their leadership that makes them feel invalidated in their practice, approach and experiences. Having greater psychological safety, therefore, allows for them to lead with the creativity, bravery and expertise born from their lived experiences and create the learning environments young people deserve. Collective Support creates space that fosters the psychological safety leaders of color need to have their experiences affirmed and supported by peers.

Participant Perspectives

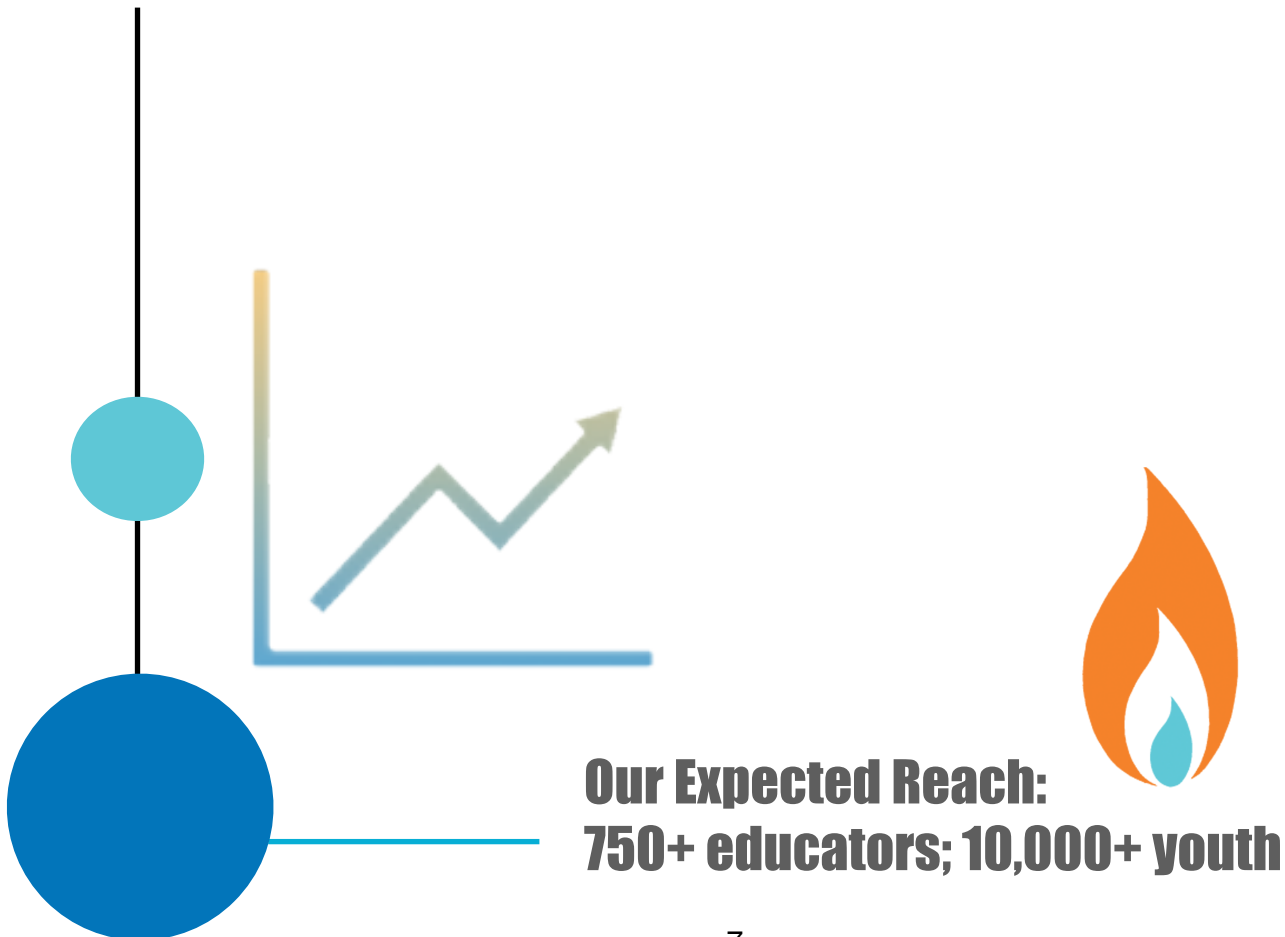
"Collective Support has provided space where...I am seen as a whole person, accepted for who I am, and that allows me to avoid the stress of proving my worth. A safe social emotional learning environment allows me to engage in productive dialogue and receive feedback [from other participants] building my capacity as a leader. I have not experienced similar safe social emotional learning environments as an administrative leader..."

"The mindset-to-practice process helped me identify areas in my leadership where I was deeply emotionally tied, but often did not yield results in the manner I would like. My leadership has improved because I have created space for staff to express themselves authentically. I think that trust and relationship building occurred from that. My leadership reflectiveness has improved due to the Collective consultancy, providing me with a space to identify the history connected to my response and present valuable solutions."

Next Steps for Collective Support Fellowship

Based on the overwhelmingly positive response we have received from participants in the inaugural cohort, MindCatcher plans to grow the Collective Support to 12 participants in 2022. Key aspects of this growth will include:

- **Launch of Mindset Studio:** Based on the overwhelmingly positive response we have received from participants in the inaugural cohort, MindCatcher plans to grow the Collective Support to 12 participants in 2022. Key aspects of this growth will include:
- **Implementation Coaching & Support:** MindCatcher will provide increased coaching and support for Collective Support participants as they implement their wellness-grounded strategies with their staff.
- **Leader Retention Research:** We are excited to look at the ways our work will impact leader retention in the long term. We'll be playing close attention to data in the field and our experiences with leaders of color to better understand the specific components of our work that support leader retention so we can fine-tune our programming and data collection processes appropriately.
- **Educator Retention Research:** Research has shown that adequate principal support positively impacts educator retention. We therefore expect any impact MindCatcher has on leader retention to subsequently impact educator retention. To this end, we will be looking at ways to assure we can collect data to demonstrate this impact.



Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the inaugural participants of Collective Support, who gracefully bear the responsibility of educating young people in the face of adversity, and many thought partners who generously provided input to this endeavor.

Collective Support Participants

Addae Cox, Michael Essien, Jibraan Lee, Stacey Wyatt

Thought Partners

4.0 Schools: Hassan Hassan, Destiny Shantell Woodbury; *Digital Promise*: Malliron Hodge, Kim Smith, Viki Young; *EdLoC*: Layla Avila; *National Equity Project*: Mark Salinas, Asha Sitaram

Citations

Levin, S., & Bradley, K. (2019). *Understanding and Addressing Principal Turnover*. Washington, DC: Learning Policy Institute

Singer, N. (2020, November). Teaching in the pandemic: 'This is not sustainable.' *New York Times*, pp. 9, Section A



