Application: main_161447772

From CUE to CALIE

Page: Organization Information

Association Name

California Association for Leading Innovation in Education

Association Website URL

joincalie.org (http://joincalie.org)

Mission Statement

At CALIE, we foster a thriving community of educators and supporters that equips, engages, and inspires members to evolve and embrace better ways of learning.

Association Logo

Download File (https://asae-goldcircle.secure-platform.com/file/2809723/eyJ0eXAiOiJKV1QiLCJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJtZWRpYUlkIjoyODA5NzIzLCJhbGxvd05vdFNpZ25lZFVybCI6IkZhbHNlIiwiaWdub
CALIE-Logo-OrgName-Vertical-FullColor-CMYK%20%281%29.jpg)

What is your organization's staff size?

Small (1-9 Staff)

Is your organization planning to submit multiple Gold Circle Award entries?

Yes

How many entries does your organization plan to submit?

2

If your organization wins a Gold Circle Award or is scored highly by judges, would you be willing to share your insights and best practices through articles, models & samples, virtual lunches, or educational sessions? (If you answer yes, ASAE may share your contact info with relevant ASAE Professional Advisory Councils for potential invitations to participate as a content leader in learning programs.)

Yes

Page: Contact Information

ASAE Member Full Name

Christine Feenstra

ASAE Member ID#

1232469

Page: Entry Information

Entry Title

From CUE to CALIE

Category

Rebranding Campaign

Project Overview

In 2025, the leaders at the California Association for Learning Innovation in Education (CALIE) faced an undeniable challenge. After over 40 years as Computer Using Educators (CUE), the organization had become synonymous with educational technology. But in a post-pandemic world, as technology became ubiquitous in classrooms and homes, the brand that once signaled expertise had become a roadblock. The name required constant, lengthy explanation. Educators who didn't see themselves as "tech people" assumed the organization wasn't for them. But in a post-pandemic world, technology is no longer optional. Every educator, regardless of interest or comfort level, must be aware of how to use technology effectively and equitably. The educators who needed us the most were the ones who were pushed away by our old branding. Education IT professionals and Administrators saw little reason to participate. Partners struggled to describe our value. Revenue declined as relevance eroded. Our flagship conference developed a reputation as a “teacher swag grab” vs. a convenor of education professionals.

The rebrand was anything but cosmetic; it was a deliberate repositioning of an organization that supported its members with tools into a purpose-driven community advancing learning innovation, educator leadership, and equitable practice. The new identity, CALIE, reflects California's energy while expanding our mandate beyond technology to include the full spectrum of how educators inspire and engage learners.

During the rebrand, we didn't just change our name and logo; we updated our entire value proposition, launched two flagship programs on day one, and created a phased rollout strategy to build internal advocacy before going public.
The results speak for themselves. Within four months of our brand launch, we added nearly 1300 new members, a 65% increase, including a significant number from outside California, reaching audiences we had not connected with before. Our conference registrations increased, speaker submissions jumped 155% compared to the prior year, and corporate partners who had left returned. The two newly launched programs (CALIE Certified Educator and AI Leadership Academy) sold out in six weeks. Early revenue indicators show event registrations up 35% year over year and sponsorship revenue up 22%, with overall event revenue exceeding budget, more than two months before the event.

Goals/Objectives

CALIE's rebrand was guided by three goals, each tied to our mission to equip, engage, and inspire educators to embrace better ways of learning.

Goal 1: Expand Mission Impact by Broadening the Audience We Serve
For over 40 years, as Computer Using Educators (CUE), we served a loyal but narrow audience of "techy teachers." In a post-pandemic world, with technology in nearly every classroom, that identity was now a barrier. Educators who didn't see themselves as interested in technology assumed we weren't for them. But in 2025, the reality of education is that interest in tech is no longer optional. Invite educators who need us the most to participate, the educators who were being pushed away by our former brand.

Our objective was to position CALIE as a statewide education leadership organization serving the full ecosystem, not just classroom teachers but instructional coaches, curriculum leaders, site and district administrators, and IT professionals. We developed messaging that encouraged collaboration across roles rather than reinforcing silos within a school or district, and we created immediate opportunities for those new audiences to engage by launching two flagship programs on day one: the CALIE Certified Educator Program and the AI Leadership Academy. Both programs were designed to serve educators across roles and experience levels, and both sold out within six weeks, demonstrating demand that extended beyond our prior membership base.

Goal 2: Strengthen Our Primary Revenue Generator by Rebuilding Partner, Sponsor, and Exhibitor Confidence
Our annual conference is the organization's largest revenue driver and the primary vehicle through which we deliver professional learning, fulfill partnerships, and convene educators statewide. Years of brand confusion and declining relevance had diminished partner confidence. Major sponsors had reduced or eliminated participation. Our conference had developed a reputation for being more of a "teacher swag grab" than a multi-disciplinary conference for education professionals.
The rebrand gave partners an expanded audience, a broader leadership focus, and a growth strategy. For our 2026 conference, we restructured the programming to reflect this shift, creating tracks that serve IT leaders and administrators as well as classroom educators.

Our objective was to reverse the multi-year revenue decline, re-engage partners such as Google, Apple, and Microsoft, and build new cross-sector partnerships.

Goal 3: Achieve Internal Alignment Before Going Public
Months before the public launch, we convened our volunteer leaders for a two-day in-person event to share our updated mission, vision, and purpose before introducing any visual changes. During this event, we created space for curious conversation, allowing leaders to raise concerns and shape the direction of the public launch. We then gave them time between the event and the launch so they could reflect, ask more questions, and prepare to support the change locally.

Our objective was to ensure that volunteer leaders were not reacting in real time but were armed with the information and knowledge needed to become informed ambassadors. When the brand launched publicly, our leaders were ready with toolkits, talking points, and an understanding of the reasons behind the changes.

Strategy/Tactics

CUE’s members had built this organization from the ground up. They were the educators who fought to get technology into classrooms before anyone else saw the need, and this history created loyalty and a sense of community, directly tied to our “CUE” identity. At the same time, the old name had become a barrier to entry for new, less experienced educators. Those who didn’t identify as “techy” assumed CUE wasn’t for them, and IT professionals and administrators were not engaged. We knew that we had to engage a wide audience to inform the path forward.

We conducted 15 stakeholder interviews, audited 6 competitors, and held more than 30 meetings with board members, volunteer leaders, staff, and other stakeholders. What we heard was not surprising but validated the need to change. The name "Computer Using Educators" actively excluded the majority of educators, limited partnerships, and constrained our ability to address the challenges in schools that technology alone cannot solve. The people who loved this organization the most told us it needed to change.

Understanding that our biggest obstacle was not the proposed changes, but how they were delivered. When it came time to plan the brand launch, we relied on the SCARF framework for change management, which identifies five domains of threat response: Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness, and Fairness. Using the SCAR framework, we developed our communication and engagement decisions to minimize threats. We honored the legacy of existing members to protect Status; we shared detailed transition plans and timelines well in advance to provide Certainty; we involved volunteer leaders in key decisions to preserve Autonomy; we emphasized community to reinforce Relatedness; and finally, we demonstrated how the rebrand would benefit all members and ensure Fairness.

We executed a phased rollout, launching internally with volunteer leaders in July 2025, two and a half months before going public, which gave us time to update messaging based on their feedback and ensured our leaders were positioned as informed advocates.
When we launched publicly, we led with two new programs, the CALIE Certified Educator Program and the AI Leadership Academy, which went live on day one, and both sold out within six weeks.

Our launch campaign included a new website, long- and short-form videos, PR, and paid and organic social media, all built around a narrative video that grounds the rebrand in the shifts our members and all educators have experienced over the past four decades. In the first five weeks, the campaign generated 8.5 million impressions, 4.4 million video views, and over 100,000 link clicks on a budget under $50,000.

Every element of the launch strategy was designed to advance CALIE's mission to equip, engage, and inspire educators to embrace better ways of learning. We listened to the members who built CUE, made room for their questions and concerns, gave them time to adjust, and launched with something tangible.

Success Metrics/Results Achieved

The three goals were tied to measurable outcomes. Four months after launch, nearly every goal has been met or exceeded.

Goal 1: Expand Mission Impact by Broadening the Audience We Serve
We set a target of 30% membership growth within 12 months of launch, and in four months, we added nearly 1,300 new members, a 65% increase, more than doubling our goal in a third of the time. A significant number of these members came from outside California and the United States.

Our goal to expand the member mix beyond traditional edtech adopters and classroom teachers is showing early results. Prior to the rebrand, we did not have an AMS. We built and launched the AMS alongside the brand launch with our new website, and we are still building out member profiles, which will provide detailed demographic data over time.

However, for the first time in recent history, we have over 10 superintendents registered for our annual conference. We are also seeing our perceived value increase, as demonstrated by the California Department of Education, Assistant Superintendent of Information Technology, who accepted our request to participate in a panel with education leaders. For the first time, we will have enough women IT leaders attending to launch a dedicated Women in IT Leadership breakfast, with vendor sponsorship. Our 2026 conference submissions, which closed two weeks after the brand launch, included proposals from district technology leaders, curriculum directors, and administrators. Our final submissions increased 155% from the prior year.

Both of our new programs exceeded the enrollment budget. The AI Leadership Academy aimed for 25 participants and enrolled 38. The Certified Educator Program aimed for 20 and enrolled 22. In six weeks, both new programs sold out. The conversion of participants into volunteer leaders is a metric we will measure over the coming year.

Goal 2: Rebuild Partner, Sponsor, and Exhibitor Confidence
We set a sponsor retention target of 70%. With one month remaining before our conference, we have already reached 60% and are on pace to meet or exceed it. Three major partners, Google, Apple, and Microsoft, have returned. Sponsorship revenue is up 22% from the prior year, and our 2026 event revenue has exceeded the budget with 5 weeks to go.

Goal 3: Achieve Internal Alignment Before Going Public
Each of our affiliate organizations sent a leader to our affiliate-to-chapter transition workgroup, a new committee designing the updated local engagement strategy post-rebrand. This is proof that our approach and SCARF-based strategy met the needs of our leaders. Our paid media campaign generated 8.5 million impressions, 4.4 million video views, and over 100,000 link clicks on a budget under $50,000.

Conscious Inclusion

The problem that we set out to solve with our rebrand was exclusion. For over 40 years, the name "Computer Using Educators" signaled that our community was for a specific kind of educator, one who already identified as “techy”. It excluded the majority of California's educators, particularly those in under-resourced schools, non-traditional "tech" roles, or in areas where access to technology and confidence varied not just district to district or school to school, but classroom to classroom.

Inclusion was central to the research phase as we sought diverse voices across race, age, gender, and professional role. As part of this process, we interviewed current and former members, as well as people who had never joined, to understand who we were missing and why. When we expanded our primary audience beyond classroom teachers to include administrators, curriculum leaders, and IT professionals, we did so knowing these roles are made up of different demographics. IT leadership in education is predominantly male, while teaching is predominantly female. At our annual conference, we will offer affinity spaces for Black, Hispanic, Asian Pacific, Arab, LGBTQI, and neurodiverse participants. Finally, the AI Leadership Academy was designed to serve educators regardless of their starting point with AI. For those who need to make decisions about AI implementation but may not have the traditional “techy” backgrounds.

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Page: Supporting Materials

Is there a URL or landing page for this entry? (optional)

https://joincalie.org/about-rebrand/ (https://joincalie.org/about-rebrand/)

Is a username and password required to view the supporting material?

No

Instructions

Would you like to add an additional URL? (optional)

No