

November 7, 2013

Dear Collaborative Members and Guests,

We look forward to seeing all of you at our upcoming meeting of the California Collaborative on District Reform on November 21 and 22 in Sacramento. Many thanks to Jonathan Raymond and his team for putting forward their district's work to help us explore the opportunities and challenges associated with implementing the Common Core State Standards.

The meeting will enable us to deepen our ongoing attention to the Common Core, a thread that has woven through all of our meetings since we first engaged with the standards as a group in June 2010. As districts have progressed in their efforts to implement the new standards, the most pressing issues have begun to crystalize—among these, the challenges of acquiring/developing curricula and instructional materials, improving teacher and leader capacity, and identifying the resources needed to support the work. This meeting will address these issues in the context of the specific strategies being employed in Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) and in other Collaborative districts as well. It will also situate Common Core implementation efforts within a broader state policy context that has seen major developments in resource availability and allocation over the past year.

As in previous meetings, we will incorporate a variety of session formats, including smaller working groups and sessions that rely on panels and district consultancies. Our hope is that all Collaborative members will feel they have opportunities to contribute to the meeting dialogue. We are also continuing a practice we began in April by emailing you a much smaller set of advance readings that we will use directly in the meeting, in addition to this binder of resources to read and use as your time permits. This email should arrive on or shortly after November 8.

Meeting Overview:

Day 1: We will begin Thursday morning with a short presentation from the SCUSD team about their strategy of developing units of study as a vehicle for developing curriculum and introducing the Common Core into classroom instruction. District leaders will then acquaint us with the third grade English language arts unit on reading and writing informational texts that will serve as the focus for the morning's sessions. After this presentation, we will split into smaller groups to explore the unit in detail, with particular attention to three issues:

- the ways in which it helps students achieve the Common Core's college/career readiness descriptors
- the ways in which the unit reflects and encourages the instructional shifts required by the Common Core
- the entry points for English learners and students with disabilities

Subsequent full group discussion will give us an opportunity to reflect on the units of study approach as a district strategy for standards implementation. **The email mentioned above will contain the unit of study and accompanying instructional materials; we encourage you to read and think about them before the meeting.**

On Thursday afternoon we will turn our attention to issues of capacity building, beginning with a panel of SCUSD teachers and principals that will reflect on the how the units of study provide the basis for professional learning as well as curriculum. The full group conversation that follows will give meeting participants an opportunity to ask questions of the panelists as well as to address broader issues of capacity facing all California districts as they work to implement the Common Core.

We will end the day by focusing on problems of practice facing other Collaborative districts in their Common Core implementation efforts. We have used a consultancy panel approach in previous meetings, but the size of the group has hampered participation of all the participants in active discussion. In order to address this problem, as well as to consider a broader range of implementation strategies, we will split into several consultancy panels, each featuring a different district problem of practice in a smaller group setting.

As is our usual practice, after a day of thought-provoking dialogue, we will gather for more informal conversation and relaxation at a group reception and dinner at Esquire Grill.

Day 2: Friday morning will begin with reports from Thursday afternoon's consultancy panels and discussion about the range of implementation challenges and strategies presented. We will then turn to the problem of identifying, garnering, and allocating the resources necessary to implement the Common Core effectively and equitably. We will begin the conversation in small groups, which will be charged with identifying the issues and opportunities related to three inter-related categories of resources: people, time, and money. Reconvening as a full group, we will hear from district leaders about how they are addressing these issues, including how they are taking advantage of the targeted Common Core state allocations and flexibility afforded by the Local Control Funding Formula. We hope that the full group conversation will generate new ideas and insights about how districts can leverage their resources most effectively to support Common Core implementation.

We will conclude the meeting with a consideration of the state role in supporting local Common Core implementation, using the newly released *Leadership Planning Guide* to ground our discussion

Readings:

As usual, all readings and reference materials for the sessions are included in this binder. **As noted above, you will also receive an email with a smaller subset of preparatory readings attached.** We have instituted this practice in response to your requests for a more targeted and easily digestible set of pre-meeting materials. **We strongly encourage you to review this sub-set of readings prior to the meeting as they have been incorporated into our group activities.**

For your convenience, all of the meeting materials are also available on the Collaborative website at <http://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting23> and via DropBox at <https://www.dropbox.com/l/bDXYMZmaOItBdNAwnfJBrc>. A small number of CDs that contain the briefing binder materials will also be available at the meeting if necessary.

If you have any questions regarding the meeting logistics, please don't hesitate to contact Suzanne Claussen at 650.843.8192 or sclaussen@air.org. If you have any other questions, please email me (joday@air.org) or give me a call (202.262.4987). I look forward to seeing you all later this month!

Sincerely,



Jennifer O'Day, Chair
California Collaborative on District Reform
American Institutes for Research