

October 28, 2022

Dear Collaborative members and guests,

We look forward to seeing you at our meeting in Sacramento on November 9-10. This week's release of statewide Smarter Balanced assessment results added to the growing body of evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has created and exacerbated profound student learning needs, especially for historically underserved students and communities. The dual focus for this meeting is therefore especially timely. Our first day together will sharpen our attention to instructional improvement, with particular consideration of the role of site administrators and aligned professional learning in fostering cultures and practices that promote high-quality teaching and learning. On the second day, we will take advantage of our proximity to the state capitol by engaging several policy actors in an exploration of the broader context and conditions that can enable districts and the students they serve to thrive. We deeply appreciate Jorge Aguilar and his team at Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) for hosting us and sharing their work to ground this important set of discussions.

Meeting Overview

Day 1: The meeting will begin on Wednesday morning with an orientation to the SCUSD context. District leaders will share background information on the district's history, the relationships that shape its approach to improvement, and ways in which the pandemic interrupted attention to instruction. They will also describe a nascent theory of action that articulates a vision for quality and consistency in instructional practice. This theory of action will provide the foundation for subsequent conversations throughout the day.

Next, we will turn to the role of principals in improving teaching and learning. Building on research that underscores the importance of site administrators as instructional leaders and responding to the assets and opportunities of the district context, SCUSD leaders have initiated intensive work to build principal capacity. A panel of instructional assistant superintendents—principal supervisors who themselves were recently principals in the district—will share their experiences and describe the current landscape of site leadership in SCUSD. District leaders will then present several related problems of practice to the group, around which we will organize a set of consultancies to generate insights about how best to design and support the principal and principal supervisor roles.

Having examined efforts to build the capacity of principals, the final set of Day 1 conversations will explore the work of site leaders in guiding professional learning for site-based educators. The session will begin with a panel discussion among SCUSD principals who will share their perspectives on the current state of professional learning opportunities and articulate areas in which guidance and support could improve educators' effectiveness in classrooms and schools. Participants will then break into small groups to explore considerations for developing a professional learning system that is coherent and aligned with a shared vision for high-quality instruction.

To create space for networking, collective relaxation, and additional conversation, we will continue our tradition of ending the day with a group dinner on the waterfront at Scott's Seafood.

Day 2: On Thursday morning, we will shift gears to consider the broader state context in which districts are operating. Our first aim is to build a shared understanding about the challenges, priorities, and likely directions for K-12 education at the state and local level. A panel of policy actors will identify key issues and share their thoughts about what the path forward is likely to entail from the perspectives of the legislature, the State Board of Education, and the overall fiscal environment. Following these insights, we will turn to group of local education leaders for their impressions about high priority areas for attention, opportunities for progress, and obstacles that stand in the way. We will reserve ample time for questions, answers, and discussion.

Following these opening perspectives, we will turn to our second goal for the session: problem-solving about the conditions that can best enable educators to make progress with their most pressing challenges. In small groups, participants will seek to identify the kinds of supports that would be most useful to them, the degree to which a state role could help with those solutions, and what that role might entail.

After lunch, we will conclude our deliberations by pulling the two pieces of the meeting together and considering the role of the state in supporting instructional improvement.

Preparation and Dropbox

You should find all the information you need for the meeting at a DropBox link you will receive via email, including a set of readings that will provide important background and context for our deliberations in Sacramento. The reading materials are also available on the Collaborative website at <https://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting48>. **On October 28, you will receive an email with the subset of priority pre-meeting readings attached. We strongly encourage you to read this subset of materials prior to the meeting.**

If you have any questions regarding the meeting logistics, please do not hesitate to contact Mary Louise at 916-286-8804 or mlbaez@air.org. If you have any other questions, please email me (jknudson@air.org) or reach out by phone or text at 650-924-0373. I look forward to seeing you all next month!

Sincerely,



Joel Knudson
Chair, California Collaborative on District Reform
Principal Researcher, American Institutes for Research