

Meeting 48 Summary
Leading Instructional Quality in Sacramento and Enabling
K–12 Excellence Statewide

November 9–10, 2022

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***Note:** This meeting summary was developed as a resource for members of the California Collaborative on District Reform. We are making this document publicly available in an effort to share the work of the Collaborative more broadly, and to inform the dialogue and decisions of educators throughout the state. This summary does not, however, contain the background and contextual information that might otherwise accompany a product created for the general public. For more information about the meeting and other Collaborative activities, please visit www.cacollaborative.org.*

In November 2022, members of the California Collaborative on District Reform convened in Sacramento, California, to dive into the topic of 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. To take advantage of the proximity to the state Capitol, meeting participants also engaged with several policy actors to discuss and explore the broader context and conditions that can enable districts—and the students they serve—to thrive. Across both sets of conversations, participants considered ways in which education systems at the state and local levels can foster coherence in school improvement efforts.

Exploring the Sacramento Path to Educational Excellence

As educators in Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) navigate the ongoing transition back to in-person learning from the many disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic, they do so in the face of profound student needs that include significant unfinished learning and troubling disparities between vulnerable students and their more advantaged peers. Although the pandemic has rightly elevated attention to mental and emotional health needs, evidence of stalled student learning underscores the relevance and importance of efforts to improve instruction.

Orientation to the SCUSD Context

SCUSD, the 13th largest district in the state, serves about 40,000 students in 75 schools. Nearly 41% of the students are classified as Hispanic/Latino; 19% are classified as Asian or

¹ Thanks to Marina Castro, Mary Louise Baez, Emily Agopian, and Crystal Aguilera for taking careful notes to make this summary possible.

Asian Pacific Islander; 17% are classified as White, and 13% are classified as Black/African American. Sixty-five percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and 47 languages are spoken throughout the district.

Among these various groups of students, there is a large gap in academic performance between White and African American students that cannot be explained by socioeconomic differences or attendance patterns. For example, even when controlling for students who attend school 96% of the time with no suspensions and who are not socioeconomically disadvantaged, there is a 36-percentage-point achievement gap in English/Language Arts. There is also an opportunity and academic experience gap when examining academic feedback students receive on the district common assessment. Asian and White students received feedback 35% and 27% of the time, respectively, but African American students received feedback 21% of the time, and students experiencing homelessness received academic feedback about 10% of the time.

District leaders also provided some historical context about a complicated labor-management relationship; an eight-day strike in spring 2022 is one of the most recent examples of longstanding tension that has shaped the district's actions with respect to instruction that have created unique constraints relative to approaches in other districts.

SCUSD's Journey to Deliver High-Quality Instruction Using Site Leaders as the Unit of Change

SCUSD has been on a continuous improvement journey with the assistance of several partners such as CORE, the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), the Sacramento County Office of Education, and the Carnegie Foundation for Teaching and Learning. District administrators also have participated in the Public Education Leadership Project (PELP) at Harvard University to develop a problem of practice and a theory of action specific to their context to improve the educational experience for students. After examining student learning data, the district has been honing a theory of action that outlines the critical roles of a professional learning plan, a clear definition of high-quality instruction, and strong site leaders to advance quality instruction and student learning. At the time of the meeting, the theory of action read as follows:

If we...

1. **develop** and implement a districtwide, strategic, 3-year professional learning plan that
2. **defines** high-quality, tier-one instruction for black and brown students within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) and
3. **empowers** site leaders to engage staff in creating site-based, district-aligned instructional frameworks tied to the School Plan for Student Achievement,

then...

site leaders will have the support and capacity to implement and monitor effective tier-one instruction practices within our MTSS structure.

In describing the theory of action, district leaders explained that this commitment will involve shifting the role of the instructional assistant superintendent (IAS) to support site leaders as they develop into instructional leaders, rather than just administrative managers. In SCUSD, four IASs serve as principal supervisors for all of the district's schools. These individuals are relatively new to their roles, which gives them a deep familiarity of what it means to be a principal in SCUSD right now as they have recently stepped out of a principalship into the role of IAS. It also presents an opportunity to define and refine the IAS role in a way that is best suited to the district's path forward.

In SCUSD, the emphasis on school leaders as the lever to support high-quality instruction is both a reflection of the district's belief that principals should be strong instructional leaders as well as a pragmatic response to details in the collective bargaining agreement with the teachers' union that shape the time available for teacher professional learning. Meeting participants heard from a panel of IASs who shared not only their perspectives on the site leadership experience within the district, but also emerging efforts the district can make to build the capacity of principals to foster a culture centered around instructional improvement. A subsequent panel of current principals further enabled participants to explore the role of site administrators as key agents of change and discuss the structures and supports that can empower and equip principals to lead the work at school sites.

Supporting School Leaders to Find the Balance Between Instructional Leadership and Site Management is a Work in Progress

IASs are coaching site leaders to find the balance between instructional leadership and administrative management, but they described this effort as a work in progress. Panelists said that the district's ideal breakdown of a principal's time is 25% spent on management and 75% spent on instruction; however, they estimate that principals currently spend 75% of their time managing their school sites and 25% of their time on supporting instruction. The demands of the COVID-19 pandemic pushed many administrators to prioritize site management tasks such as distributing meals, Chromebooks, and hotspots; the routines and mindsets developed during this time have diverted attention from the desired shift to a stronger instructional focus. Complicating matters, administrator turnover and workforce shortages in SCUSD—like many districts across the state—mean that many site leaders in the district are new to administration and do not have experience in even an assistant principal role. As a result, many are learning the ropes both in administration—such as how to manage a lockdown or who to call if the heating and air condition isn't working—and instructional leadership at the same time. As a result, IASs stated that shifting to find the balance is slower than they would like it to be.

During small group consultancies after the panel discussion, meeting participants discussed strategies the district can use to help site leaders achieve the balance between instructional leadership and site management. One meeting participant suggested that the IASs meticulously document the amount of time they spend supporting principals in instructional tasks versus non-instructional tasks. This would give them data they can track over time to better understand how time supporting principals is being spent until they achieve the right balance.

Another principal suggested the district create two documents that IASs can provide site leaders. The first would be a detailed operational guide that site leaders can reference to learn how to handle work orders and emergency protocols. The second would define what learning looks like in the classroom because it will help principals and teachers have aligned expectations and know what they are building towards together.

Site Leaders' Ability to Cultivate Relationships Is Essential to Being Effective Instructional Leaders

IASs identified site leaders' ability to cultivate trusting relationships with school staff as essential to developing into effective instructional leaders. Through these site-based relationships, administrators are better positioned to find creative solutions to issues that arise based on collective bargaining agreements. For example, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) established between the district and the Sacramento City Teacher Association (SCTA) in 2016 establishes conditions for the administration of districtwide assessments that have, in practice, stood in the way of their development and use. District leaders and school administrators reported during the meeting that the limited availability of common assessments makes it challenging to gauge student progress throughout both the school year and a student's academic journey within the district. Similarly, central office and school administrators described another MOU from 2016 that establishes parameters for teacher collaboration time—parameters that have hampered the conditions needed for successful planning and reflection among grade-level and subject-area teams.

Some principals described ways in which their relationships with staff have enabled them to make progress within their school sites despite the constraints they face. For example, one principal described an instance where she was able to leverage a cultivated relationship with a teacher to act in the students' best interests, regardless of collective bargaining agreements. A teacher who initially resisted administering a common assessment because it was not required ultimately decided to sign on; this principal said the teacher "agreed to it anyway because we are close." Nevertheless, wide variation exists across the district, and even principals who have managed to collaboratively identify some site-based solutions reported ongoing challenges in their efforts.

Site Leaders Will Need Coherence, Clarity, and Time

The set of responsibilities shouldered by site leaders in all districts has reached the point of feeling overwhelming, a reality that the pandemic has both highlighted and exacerbated. As a result, panelists and meeting participants emphasized the importance of the district creating a coherent professional learning plan with input from teachers and school leaders because "everyone in the system needs to see the role they play in building instructional leaders." Another participant voiced their agreement with this statement, further arguing that all the stakeholders need to have agency and voice in the district's theory of action and long-term plan. Otherwise, they might see themselves as targets of improvement rather than as partners in improvement.

In addition to developing a coherent improvement plan focused on instruction, meeting participants also emphasized the importance of defining what high-quality instruction looks like and sounds like. Although the district has identified this step as a key component of its theory of action, the definition is still under development. Meeting participants argued that finalizing and sharing that definition would help in the delivery of a coherent message and create clear coaching expectations from the IASs to the site leaders and the site leaders to the school staff. One principal echoed this sentiment during a small group consultancy: “I can’t even tell you what our shared vision of learning is. There is no instructional vision, and there is no alignment or coherence because there is no clear definition of learning.”

In addition to coherence and clarity, site leaders stated that they need consistency over time to implement the professional learning plan: “We would like to experience staying the course instead of doing something different every year. We should be able to focus on two or three things and learn to do those things well.”

Site Leaders Need Opportunities to Grow and Develop With One Another

In addition to the coaching and mentoring that site leaders receive from their supervisors, learning communities among peers can provide site leaders with opportunities to grow and develop with one another and share their burden. When principals participate in professional learning communities (PLCs) together to explore problems of practice, attend conferences, and model for school staff what collaboration looks like, it can help not only to build capacity among principals but foster a support network that can sustain the leaders who are willing to take on a mentally and emotionally demanding role. According to one meeting participant, “It’s good to have the principals in space together.”

The Instructional Assistant Superintendents Need Support in Their Roles as Well

Meeting participants noted that because of the recent transition to the current set of four IASs, a process of coordinating expectations and approaches is still underway. One IAS shared, “We are all new to the role and are still building. There is still an alignment process. We meet on Mondays with the assistant superintendent team, and we added an additional day per week because we recognized that there needed to be additional calibrating.”

During small group consultancies, one meeting participant also observed that each IAS supports about 19 schools and referred to research that suggests the ratio should be closer to 11:1. Hiring additional principal supervisors may or may not be feasible for a district. Another meeting participant therefore suggested that onboarding recently retired school leaders might help the IASs support the school leaders, particularly with more transactional site management tasks, thus freeing up the IASs time to focus on instructional leadership work.

SCUSD's Journey to Deliver High-Quality Instruction by Creating a Coherent Approach to Educator Professional Learning

Delivering high-quality instruction requires site-level administrators and teachers have the capacity to implement high-quality instructional practices. Closely connected to the vital role of SCUSD principals in promoting and supporting these practices, the district's theory of action also articulates the importance of a system of professional learning that is coherent and aligned with other district priorities. Meeting participants heard from a panel of eight SCUSD principals whose experience ranged from three months to ten years; panelists described their perceptions of educator learning opportunities in the district, the needs that still exist, and the necessary conditions that can help site leaders guide and support high-quality instruction in the classroom. Meeting participants then broke into small groups to explore promising strategies and obstacles to developing a coherent system of professional learning.

The Current State of Professional Learning and Professional Learning Supports

Principal reflections underscored the reasons that SCUSD is pursuing greater coherence in its approach to professional learning. Panelists characterized their experience with professional learning in the district as scattered and inconsistent. One principal stated, "We tried so many things without consistency." Another said, "Our system rolls things out very sporadically every few years that trickles down to teachers, so they just wait for the next thing. Our focus on building capacity has been inconsistent." This same administrator also argued that she is a decent site leader largely due to chance; she described herself as lucky to have had good mentors but noted that her experience was not the result of a coherent design to build her capacity as an administrator or a teacher.

Several principals characterized the current state of professional learning in the district as challenging due to the parameters of the collective bargaining agreement and MOUs between the district and SCTA. At the site level, principals sometimes encounter responses from teachers in response to plans for professional learning such as, "When are we supposed to do this learning? Is it mandatory?"

Barriers to Implementing a Coherent System of Professional Learning

Principal panelists described some of the barriers they see standing in the way of implementing a coherent system of professional learning. First, they identified that not having mandatory districtwide assessments is a challenge to developing and implementing a coherent system of professional learning. Not having common data across different points in a year and across years hampers growth; this shortcoming makes it difficult to identify pockets of success and areas for growth, not only for students but teachers as well. Without that knowledge, principals struggle to determine what to target in professional learning for teachers. However, one superintendent of a district that does administer districtwide assessments encouraged the principals to acknowledge this barrier but not fixate on it: "It's important for the conversation to move away from the things we think will fix it all. I know

that's what we are fixated on because these are really challenging times, but we do have common assessments in our district, and we are still dramatically underserving districts."

Second, the principals also pointed out that labor challenges regarding teachers' contractual time is a tremendous barrier. There are different interpretations across the district about how common planning time on Thursdays should be used. One principal indicated, "It is very challenging to look at the contractual day and just rely on people volunteering their time."

The principals also identified some strategies to overcome these barriers. First, principals advocated for a districtwide multi-year plan for professional learning that also leverages teacher voice. One principal stated, "If I have the plan ahead of time, then I can think about how to make learning meaningful for the adults in the system." Other meeting participants built on this suggestion by advocating for the inclusion of teacher voice in the process of developing a long-term plan to help get teacher buy-in.

Second, principals reiterated that having a clear definition of high-quality instruction from the district would be extremely helpful in communicating a plan for professional learning with teachers. As one principal explained, "If things aren't clear to me, I can't convey that to my own staff, and it's not clear to me what the definition of high-quality instruction is." Building a whole system of professional learning toward an instructional goal seems impossible without having a clear vision and definition of high-quality instruction. Although this clear definition is part of the district's theory of action, these comments suggest that finalizing it should be a high priority in order for other components to succeed.

Opportunities for Progress

SCUSD is working with the CCEE to pilot professional learning communities at two schools. Several meeting participants mentioned the opportunity for progress in this strategy of creating a community of practice for teachers and principals to learn from and develop deep, trusting relationships as they develop strategies to deliver high-quality instruction. They encouraged the district to create opportunities for principals and teachers in SCUSD to observe the model being implemented in their district because, according to one meeting participant, "sometimes you have to see it to envision what can be possible. Seeing, practicing and being coached have to be integrated in order for professional learning to radically change." One former district superintendent said, "One of the most powerful components of professional learning was not training, but teachers observing teachers and shadowing one student all day long to really understand the students' experience as well."

Understanding and Navigating the Current Policy Context

Research shows that it is more likely for districts such as SCUSD to achieve equitable outcomes through high-quality instruction when initiatives and programs are implemented within an aligned and coherent system, from the state level to the classroom.² Without coherence, evidence-based practices may not achieve desired outcomes because they are implemented in uncoordinated silos that create barriers to effective implementation.

On the second day of the meeting, the Collaborative took the focus on education from a local level to a broader state level. The session began with a panel of invited guests in policy roles—including connections to the governor’s office, the State Board of Education, and the California legislature—who discussed key issues facing K–12 education, the role of policy in the system, and the dynamics that complicate policy progress. Following the panel, participants met in small groups to consider ways in which state policy might best support districts in navigating some key challenges in the work. Through these discussions, participants explored the priorities and pressures that shape the current state policy landscape, ways in which policy can support school districts in the work they do to educate students, and ways in which well-intentioned state-level action can complicate those efforts.

Key Issues Facing K–12 Education

Panelists began by sharing their perspectives on the key issues facing California’s K–12 public education system.

One central goal stemming from the pandemic is to leverage some of the great programs that started during the COVID-19 crisis to support students’ academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs and adapting them to become sustainable and long term, especially given staffing shortages districts across the state. Therefore, it is critical for the state to determine the best ways they can support school systems as they continue to provide online learning programs for students, expanded learning opportunities before and after school and during the summer, universal meal programs, and access to universal prekindergarten.

Another challenge that intensified during the pandemic is a frayed relationship between the school systems and the families they serve, which has become highly contentious due to lost trust in the system. Many educators who work in public education do so because they view education as a great equalizer that provides opportunities. Nevertheless, a lack of trust that schools can deliver on that promise has been growing. Outcome gaps between demographic groups are greater than ever, and 42% of parents across the state feel that the quality of public schools is on the decline. Meanwhile, school systems face profound capacity demands to address the multitude of needs for student groups as teachers and staff experience burnout.

² <https://www.wested.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/State-Alignment-and-Coherence-SEA-Alignment-2-4.pdf>

In response to the pandemic, both the federal and state governments infused school systems with one-time money to better support students and their families affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Therefore, insufficient funding levels that have long plagued California's K–12 education system are not an obstacle during this 2022–23 school year. However, given that many of these funding streams were provided on a one-time basis and will soon run dry, keeping an eye on the funding landscape is essential in the planning process to deliver high-quality, equity-based education across the state.³

Dynamics That Complicate the Policy Progress

In the effort to tackle the key issues facing the K–12 education system identified by the panelists, some dynamics can threaten to complicate the policy process.

Educator turnover often hurts efforts to improve education at the local level, as it not only requires school systems to find highly qualified teachers and administrators to fill open roles, but it also drains aspects of a system's culture and institutional memory. The panelists emphasized that turnover within the legislature also can complicate the policy process as well, leading to transition and coherence issues. The Collaborative meeting took place right after the November 2022 election, and panelists mentioned that the election results would produce new committee members who need to be brought up to speed, and new bill ideas have to be aligned with the current context.

Panelists also identified another consequence of legislative turnover: The shared purpose and commitments behind some of the great work already accomplished can be lost. California enacted landmark legislation in 2013 with the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), a funding model that sought to advance both equity and coherence by changing how the state finances districts across the state, measures results, and provides services and supports for improvement. However, nearly a decade after LCFF, most of the legislators who committed to a restrained state role that protected local decision-making authority have transitioned out of their roles. Panelists also responded to reflections district leaders that the efforts to provide financial support to districts in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic are reminiscent of the era of categorical funding before LCFF. Although any individual funding stream may be well-intentioned, the slow expansion of programs and accompanying programmatic and reporting requirements can lead to siloed improvement efforts and erode coherence in district improvement activities. As one panelist reflected, "I can see why it feels like a return to the old system, and I'm trying to stop that."

But the panelists also highlighted the challenge of trying to achieve the proper balance between local control and the coordination required to implement programs at scale. One panelist argued that some opportunities are important enough to warrant a statewide mandate: "There's success in a lot of communities you are leaders of, but if we want to see

³ One week after the Collaborative meeting, the Legislative Analyst Office [reported](#) that California projects a \$2.6 billion deficit for schools and community colleges starting in July 2023, and that it anticipates the state will have to dip into its education rainy day fund.

this for all students, we have to bring it to scale and ensure that it's a common opportunity. Universal meals should be for everyone, so that's a state-level initiative." One of the challenges is identifying those areas in which state action is appropriate and those in which local leaders should have more agency. As another panelist observed, it can be difficult to find consensus across the state on where to draw those lines.

Insights About the Appropriate Role for Policy

During the pandemic, criticism emerged from district leaders and other members of the broader education community that the state was not offering enough support and guidance.⁴ Yet, as the state infused funds to districts through initiatives that sought to expand approaches like extended learning and community schools, when COVID-19 relief became available, there was some criticism that the state was attaching strings and burden to access the new sources of funding, taking away local control. An appropriate balance of guidance and flexibility will shape the effectiveness of policy implementation, and the state has a responsibility to ensure common opportunity across communities. To consider ways that state action can foster more effective approaches at the local level, meeting participants broke into small groups to discuss three topics: addressing workforce shortages, gaining public trust, and accelerating student learning.

State Action to Address Workforce Shortages

At a time when many districts face workforce shortages, district leaders seek solutions to fill key positions that provide services for students and, in the process, protect time for teachers to build their own capacity and collaborate with one another. At the local level, this has led to approaches such as offering financial incentives for teachers to fill high-need positions, tuition supports for prospective teachers in training, pursuing affordable housing for teachers, and identifying new candidates through active community recruiting as well as referral and signing bonuses. Meanwhile, although declining enrollment has led to undersubscribed schools and low student-teacher ratios, many districts have been reluctant to consolidate in ways that would free up teachers to fill vacant roles.

Some sources of pandemic-related state flexibility have enabled districts to better address some of their staffing challenges, but these were short-lived. For example, a waiver that enabled retirees to return to the classroom was an effective lifeline for many districts, but that waiver expired in spring 2022. Similarly, an executive order that expanded options for long-term substitutes was valuable, but it only applied during a state of emergency. Resuming these supports could be part of a set of solutions that help districts meet their staffing needs.

Additional areas of support and flexibility from the state could help districts address some key challenges. For example, opening the door for separate salary schedules for high-need areas like mathematics, science, and special education could attract new talent into

⁴ For a brief coauthored by multiple Collaborative members that made the case for stronger state-level leadership during the pandemic, see https://edpolicyinca.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/pb_hough_jul20.pdf

teaching. State action with respect to teacher credentialing might also help to ease the workforce shortage. Many school districts build teacher collaboration time into the school day when students are in music or art. However, many districts lack sufficient qualified educators to staff music and art programs. If the state could ease the credentialing requirement for music and art teachers so that school districts can use experienced professionals in their community, districts can design the workday for classroom teachers to do their best work by bringing in new sources of expertise while freeing up teacher time.

Although staffing concerns are immediate issues for districts, participants also explored long-term strategies to increase the pipeline into the teaching profession. Through loan forgiveness, the state could lower the financial barriers to pursuing a career in teaching. Incentivizing pathways to high-need teaching positions—for example, by reducing or eliminating costs for a special education credential—could also help address shortages in key areas. Similarly, financial incentives for teaching in high-needs schools can help to address staffing shortages in communities where student needs are most pronounced. Even earlier in students' academic experience, school districts can elevate the teaching profession as a viable career path for their students through “learn here, live here, teach here” initiatives.

State Action to Gain Public Trust

Education leaders at all levels of the system might be wise to shift their focus away from disputes over the locus of control in school improvement programs and decisions. The broader context in which schools and districts operate is one in which public trust has decreased and anger at the system has increased—even as school systems have been called to do more than ever before. By working together to earn back the public trust, policy actors and local educators might help to create the conditions for a healthy K–12 education system. Meeting participants raised the importance of state and local leaders listening to the voices of the people—especially students and families who feel a lack of agency. These perspectives can be instrumental in both better understanding community needs and areas where great work is taking place across the state.

Having listened, participants argued that the education community needs to develop clearer messages and vehicles for communication. Groups that criticize public education have been effective at establishing and repeating clear talking points—even if those talking points are toxic and misleading. Educators and education systems need to be equally adept at crafting a narrative. State agencies like the State Board of Education might take the lead in this effort; philanthropic funding for professional public relations firm might be even more effective. Just as important as the message itself is the messengers. Following leadership at the state level, leaders who are trusted at the local level—system leaders, teachers, mayors, parents, and others—play a critical role in carrying that message to the community. Counties might play a valuable coordinating role as well, not only because of the resources that exist within county offices of education but because public health and other family-serving institutions are organized at the county level. All actors within and

even beyond the education system are vital here in co-constructing an honest and hopeful narrative about public education.

Trust also can develop through more effective provision of services to families and communities. By working across traditional funding and organizational lines to connect, for example, food and mental health services, public servants inside and outside of education can restore people's faith in the ability of taxpayer-funded institutions to address their needs. Meanwhile, by leveraging resources in this way to help meet student and family needs, districts can protect the ability to emphasize students' academic progress.

Meeting participants also emphasized that another way to gain back public trust is to establish a built-in feedback loop to enable state-level policymakers to hear directly from practitioners and the students and families they serve to better understand how policy plays out day to day.

State Action to Accelerate Student Learning

The small group focused on accelerating student learning began with an exploration of strategies at the local level to better foster student progress. These ranges from specific academic interventions to revisiting grading practices to addressing relationships between students and adults in schools. Participant reflections emphasized that student learning is fundamentally intertwined with their social and emotional health—and that of the teachers and administrators who serve them.

With respect to the state role, this group acknowledged the novelty of addressing stalled learning that resulted from the pandemic and compounded existing opportunity and outcome gaps. Without clarity about what works, one critical state role is collecting data that enables local school systems to gauge the effectiveness of their approaches.

The state can also create the conditions districts need to effectively implement multiple programs designed to better serve students and their families and accelerate learning. Currently, investments at the state and local level provide resources and guidance for a multitude of instructional, social, mental health, extended learning, and community school programs, among others. Collectively, this collection of priorities would be overwhelming for districts to carry out with quality and coherence even in the best of times, let alone in the wake of the highly disruptive pandemic. By giving districts time to gather data to determine program effectiveness in schools and communities, the state can create space for the process of reflection and adaptation that is essential for continuous improvement. For smaller districts that do not have the capacity to support their own research departments, the state can provide technical support for assessing the efficacy of their interventions.

Participants also discussed the potential value of providing cover for districts to make changes that are difficult to negotiate at the local level. For example, in recognition of the sometimes overwhelming demands placed on educators, some participants suggested that the state lead a reconceptualization of what the educator workday entails. The time spent in front of students and the increasing expectations placed on educators mean that

professional learning and other activities too often takes place outside the boundaries of a six-and-a-half-hour instructional day. An eight-hour day, in contrast, would offer greater flexibility for embedding attention to wellness, work in professional learning communities, and other activities that can build teacher capacity and advance student learning. Providing cover for this kind of change and other approaches like grading practices could help to facilitate progress that would not otherwise take place.

Next Steps for the Collaborative

The Collaborative will meet next in February 2023 in San José Unified School District. In the meantime, Collaborative staff will continue to share key lessons and takeaways from our core meetings with the broader field of California educators. Resources from this meeting, as well as resources from previous meetings and updates regarding Collaborative members, are available at www.cacollaborative.org.