

DEVELOPING LANGUAGE AND LITERACY IN THE EARLY GRADES: TOWARD INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY AND CONSISTENCY IN OAKLAND

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27 AND WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28
OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
GENERATION THRIVE, WARRIORS OAKLAND FACILITY
1011 BROADWAY, 5TH FLOOR OF THE MARRIOTT HOTEL
OAKLAND, CA

MEETING AGENDA

DAY I: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27

- 8:30 am **Breakfast.** Light breakfast will be available in the meeting space.
- 9:00 am **Convene Meeting.** Joel Knudson will convene the meeting with opening remarks, introductions, and an overview of the agenda. Sondra Aguilera will welcome the group to Oakland Unified School District (OUSD).
- 9:40 am **Update from Elk Grove Unified School District.** Superintendent Chris Hoffman will share an update on developments in his district since the Collaborative met there in October 2023.

SESSION I

Overview of OUSD Language and Literacy Framework

OUSD is in a process of strengthening its approach to early literacy instruction and student learning, with particular attention to the needs of multilingual learners. In doing so, the district is navigating a shift from a history of relative autonomy for school sites to a more coordinated and consistent approach across schools. Building on an understanding of the journey toward language equity, district leaders will describe how and why OUSD embarked on an effort to revitalize its approach to early literacy in 2021, including the development of a new district framework for language and literacy, the selection of relevant curriculum and assessment systems, and the design and implementation of capacity-building efforts for teachers and administrators.

Session Purpose: To orient participants to OUSD's context and approach to supporting multilingual learners.

- 9:50 am **Historical Perspective on Language Equity.** Participants will explore the concept of language equity through a historical lens, using an exercise involving the ELL Language Rights Timeline.

10:45 am **OUSD Context and Background.** OUSD district leaders will provide contextual information about OUSD and the motivation for developing their language and literacy framework.

11:10 am **Break.**

SESSION II

Creating High Quality Learning Experiences for Students

In selecting instructional materials that could serve all students well, OUSD leaders found that existing instructional materials insufficiently addressed the language needs of multilingual learners—in particular, students did not have access to complex texts or rich tasks that supported their language development. Even with the new curriculum, the district’s partnership with EL Education has involved substantial learning and adaptation to ensure that the resources available to guide and support instruction provide opportunities for all learners to access and develop fluency with the English language. In this session, participants will examine the range of student learning needs in developing literacy and OUSD will describe the challenges, opportunities, and implications the curriculum development process has presented.

Session Purposes: Foster participants’ understanding of the learning needs for multilingual learners and the kinds of instructional materials and tasks that can promote both literacy and language development.

11:25 am **Fostering Language and Literacy Development.** OUSD district leaders will guide meeting participants through an activity designed to illustrate the language and literacy demands in the early grades.

12:05 pm **Supporting Learning Through a District Framework and Instructional Materials.** OUSD will guide participants in a discussion about the connections between the district’s language and literacy framework and approaches to high-quality instruction.

12:30 pm **Lunch.**

SESSION III

Cultivating Teacher Knowledge and Skills to Foster Early Language and Literacy

Efforts in OUSD to improve early literacy recognize that curriculum alone is insufficient to support academic progress. Indeed, district leaders characterize the capacity-building challenge as learning not only curriculum and pedagogical approaches, but fundamentally understanding core literacy, foundational literacy, and the process of language development in a way that is not included in their preservice training or typical approaches to professional development. Vital to the early literacy approach has therefore been a concerted effort to provide training and support to teachers charged with improving instruction and student learning. This includes baseline training through the district’s Language and Literacy Institute. It also features mechanisms like coaching and professional learning communities to provide teachers with ongoing, job-embedded support.

Session Purposes: To examine strategies for building teacher knowledge and skills and wrestle with specific problems of practice related to teacher professional learning

- 1:30 pm **Professional Learning for Teachers.** OUSD district leaders will provide an orientation to the training and ongoing support underway to help build teacher capacity.
- 2:00 pm **Teacher Panel.** A collection of early elementary teachers will describe their experiences with receiving training and support consistent with OUSD's language and literacy framework.
- 2:40 pm **Small Group Consultancies.** Participants will break into small groups to navigate specific problems of practice that emerge in designing and implementing professional learning for teachers to promote language and literacy in the early grades.
- 3:30 pm **Break.**
- 3:45 pm **Report Out and Full Group Discussion.** Small groups will share key takeaways from their discussions, followed by dialogue among members of the full group.
- 4:30 pm **Collaborative Update.** Collaborative staff will provide a brief update on recent publications and other activities underway to support the Collaborative and its members.
- 4:45 pm **Summary and Reflection on the Day's Discussion.**
- 5:00 pm **Adjourn for the Day.**
- 6:00 pm **Reception Followed by Dinner** at Bocanova.

DAY 2: WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28

8:30 am **Breakfast.** Light breakfast will be available in the meeting space.

SESSION IV

Building a System of Professional Learning to Support Early Language and Literacy

The capacity needs for fostering early literacy extend beyond classroom teachers. Literacy coaches and principals play a vital role in fostering effective teaching at the site level, and mechanisms for providing intensive tutoring supplement the standard learning opportunities that all students receive. To maximize effectiveness, these supports must be aligned, mutually supportive, and sequenced in a way that appropriately addresses adult learning needs.

Session Purposes: To explore strategies for building the capacity of educators in multiple roles and consider ways in which these strategies contribute to a powerful system of professional learning and support.

- 9:00 am **A Districtwide System that Supports a Vision for Professional Learning.** Achieving the district's goals for early literacy requires teachers, principals, and coaches to develop new knowledge and skills. District leaders will describe efforts to develop a system of professional learning, ways in which strategies within that system support one another, and challenges associated with its design and implementation.
- 9:20 am **Educator Panel.** A collection of educators in a variety of roles will describe their experiences with fostering early literacy and language development and the supports they receive to do so.
- 10:00 am **Small Group Discussion.** Participants will break into small groups to consider the ways in which educators in multiple roles can best contribute to early literacy and language development efforts, then explore ways in which supports align with and reinforce one another.
- 10:35 am **Break.**
- 10:50 am **Report Out and Full Group Discussion.** Small groups will share key takeaways from their discussions, followed by dialogue among members of the full group.

SESSION V

Change Management and Moving Towards Consistency

The early literacy work underway in OUSD represents a shift away from work that has historically been more decentralized. Within the central office, district leaders have moved to strengthen the connections across different lines of work—for example, tying the early literacy work to an overall strategic plan and to the LCAP, both of which are coming into stronger alignment than before. In its work with educators, the district is also seeking to foster greater consistency in instructional practice in a system that has featured high levels of autonomy and even distrust of the central office. Just as important as a shift in vision and

curriculum, then, might be the cultural shift that will require both coherence in program design and buy-in from educators at school sites to embrace a new direction for literacy instruction.

Session Purposes: To explore rationales and tradeoffs in moving towards greater centralization in district approaches to early literacy. Explore strategies for change management in a large, urban district setting.

- 11:20 am **Consultancy on Moving OUSD Towards Centralization.** In all the areas of OUSD’s work that we have explored in Day 1, one commonality is the challenge of moving from a highly autonomous system to a more centralized approach. OUSD leaders will explain how history, context, and politics have influenced why they are moving in this direction, how this transition is going, and what challenges they are experiencing. In small groups, participants will follow a consultancy protocol to provide feedback about these challenges.
- 12:30 pm **Lunch.**
- 1:00 pm **Implications for State Policy.** California’s commitment to local control empowers districts to make decisions about instructional approaches, curriculum, and professional learning. Assembly Bill 2222 could shift this dynamic by creating tighter expectations for reading instruction. We will close with a discussion about the degree to which actions at the state level may or may not support local efforts to improve early literacy.
- 1:45 pm **Summary and Reflection on the Day’s Discussion.**
- 2:00 pm **Adjourn Meeting.**