

March 14, 2025

Dear Collaborative members and guests,

It seems like only yesterday that we were together in Garden Grove. Although the turnaround is shorter than normal, we are thrilled to see you on March 26-27 for our next convening in Santa Clara.

For this meeting, we return to our ongoing emphasis on instructional coherence, this time with attention to mathematics in middle and high school. Mathematics achievement in NAEP and the CAASPP in recent years is a story of stagnation, and even decline, with persistent gaps between historically underserved students and their more advantaged peers. The recent adoption of the California Mathematics Framework and the upcoming instructional materials selection process create a window of opportunity to crystallize a vision for high-quality mathematics instruction and align our systems in support of that vision. Santa Clara Unified School District (SCUSD) has embarked on a journey to redesign its approach to mathematics in ways that are consistent with the framework and offers fertile ground for examining issues like course design, teacher capacity, student support, and instructional materials. We thank Brad Stam and the team in SCUSD for sharing their work as a lens into these important topics.

Meeting Overview

Day 1: Conversations about teaching and learning in mathematics might be most productive when we have shared language to talk about quality. With that in mind, we will begin our time together with an exploration of the California Mathematics Framework and the aspects of classroom practice that can best support students in meeting standards. Mike Torres of the California Department of Education will kick us off with an introduction to the framework, followed by a jigsaw activity in which participants will engage with the framework's five principles for equitable and engaging instruction.

Having laid a foundation for discussing mathematics instruction, we will turn to the SCUSD team for an introduction to the district context. This orientation will cover the motivation for prioritizing work in mathematics and the nature of the district's efforts. It will also address SCUSD's approach to course sequencing and placement, including strategies through which district leaders have engaged with members of the district community members and communicated with them about efforts to establish and maintain momentum.

Following a lunch break, we will turn our attention to issues of educator capacity. A model lesson delivered by SCUSD will illustrate the shifts in instruction that the district is trying to promote. Next, a panel of teachers will share their experiences with these shifts, including supports that have gained traction and areas of persistent challenge. We will close our afternoon with a set of consultancies in small groups designed to address specific problems of practice with respect to improving teacher knowledge, skills, and mindsets.

Finally, we will close the day by joining together for networking, collective relaxation, and additional conversation at a group dinner at Puesto.

Day 2: Thursday will begin with an opportunity to hear directly from students about how they have experienced the changes in mathematics classes in SCUSD. Those small group discussions will inform a subsequent examination of strategies for meeting individual student needs. Heterogeneously grouped classes are a strategy many districts have pursued in an attempt to ensure robust learning experiences for all students, but this approach often results in a wider range of student skills in each classroom than a model that tracks students into higher or lower level courses. We will therefore discuss ways in which districts can design systems that diagnose and address the learning needs of all students.

The final session of our meeting will focus on the vital role of instructional materials in ensuring the quality of the “instructional core”—that is, the interaction of teachers and students around content. Given the expected release of approved curricula from the State Board of Education later this year, many districts are preparing for their local materials adoption process. We plan to address ways in which districts can select instructional materials in way that aligns with an overall vision for teaching and learning in mathematics. We also know that adoption itself is only the first step in a long journey. Our discussion will therefore unpack the structures and supports needed for teachers to use those materials effectively in classrooms, including the alignment between curriculum and ongoing professional learning opportunities.

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 collective learning in Garden Grove. The reading materials are also available on the Collaborative website at <https://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting55>. **On March 14, 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 Emily Agopian at 909-342-3895 or eagopian@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 soon!

Sincerely,



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