



October 17, 2025

Dear Collaborative members and guests,

We look forward to seeing you on October 29-30 for the Collaborative's first visit to Napa Valley Unified School District (NVUSD). On the heels of last week's public release of the 2025 Smarter Balanced assessment results, our topic is especially timely: **building cultures of data use**. For many years, Collaborative members have highlighted the vital distinction between sharing data to promote accountability and sharing data to cultivate learning. NVUSD offers an ideal setting for exploring the opportunities and challenges associated with embedding evidence of student learning into conversations and decisions designed to better support students. Building on a foundation of financial stability, strong governance, productive labor-management relationships, and a strategic plan that establishes clear priorities for improvement, the district is taking steps to center the process of improvement on data about progress throughout the system. We thank Rosanna Mucetti and her team in NVUSD for opening their doors and providing a forum for examining these important issues.

Meeting Overview

Day 1: Our two days of collective learning will begin with an orientation to the NVUSD context. Through an introduction to the district that examines three domains—finance, governance, and student achievement—our hosts will demonstrate ways in which various types and sources of data have historically informed key district decisions. Opening remarks about these domains will also set the stage for understanding NVUSD's current progress in its improvement journey.

Having considered priorities around data use within the central office, we will turn our attention to the critical role that principals play in embracing, modeling, and supporting the use of data to drive their work. A dynamic fishbowl of NVUSD principals will give participants an opportunity to both observe and experience a data dialogue process that the district first instituted in 2024. A subsequent principal panel will help to illuminate the strengths of this experience and areas in which school leaders still need support. After lunch, we will break into small groups to consider ways in which districts can best prepare and support principals in building familiarity with and effective use of data at the site level.

After examining issues related to school leadership, we will next explore ways in which districts can encourage teachers' familiarity with and commitment to using data about student performance to inform instructional decisions. A brief orientation to NVUSD's labor-management dynamics will help participants understand the working relationship between the district and its labor partners and how that shapes a movement toward more data-informed approaches to teaching. Next, a panel discussion among teachers will help to illuminate emerging work around instructional quality and the kinds of resources and supports that may be needed for teachers to embrace more frequent conversations about data. We will close the afternoon with a fishbowl conversation among superintendents who will share their insights about ways in which strong relationships with union leadership can create the conditions for instructional improvement, as well as persistent issues that require ongoing attention.

Finally, we will close the day by taking advantage of the renowned Napa culinary scene by convening at CIA at Copia for an evening of networking, collective relaxation, and additional conversation at our group dinner.

Day 2: Thursday will begin with further exploration of work with teachers through the use of a consultancy protocol. In small groups, participants will provide feedback on specific problems of practice related to engaging teachers in discussions about evidence of student learning.

Our final session will expand our horizon beyond educators by considering what it means to engage families and the broader community in a culture of data use. Three NVUSD trustees will join us to share their insights about the priorities families have for the district, the sources they turn to for information, and the tools that board members need to communicate effectively with their constituencies. District leaders will then provide an orientation to a new public-facing data dashboard, which will lead into small group discussions about ways in which districts can leverage tools like data dashboards to inform their work with both district employees and community members. We will conclude the meeting with a conversation about how these approaches to evidence-based discussions about district progress fit into a broader narrative about public education in our current political and cultural environment.

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 Napa Valley. The reading materials are also available on the Collaborative website at <https://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting56>. **On October 17, 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