

December 4, 2014

Dear Collaborative Members and Guests,

We look forward to seeing all of you at our upcoming meeting of the California Collaborative on District Reform on December 17-18 in Sanger Unified School District. Many thanks to Matt Navo and his team for their hospitality in hosting the meeting and for their willingness to share their work as we explore some of the opportunities and challenges associated with implementing the Common Core State Standards in mathematics.

This meeting, entitled *Implementing the Common Core in Mathematics: Designing, Supporting, and Monitoring High Quality Instruction*, is the next step in our ongoing examination of Common Core implementation efforts. It will enable us to renew a focus on classroom instruction while also continuing to dive into the capacity building needs that the new standards introduce. The meeting will also give us a chance to return to Sanger, a district that has achieved considerable success under the prior California standards and that generated much enthusiasm from Collaborative members when we visited in November 2010. As usual, we will ground much of the discussion in the specific problems of practice selected by our host district, but the underlying issues are those that all of our district leaders have identified as the most critical in transitioning to the mathematics standards.

Meeting Overview

Day 1: The meeting will begin Wednesday morning with a discussion of **what high quality mathematics instruction entails** in the context of the Common Core. Based on her work with Alan Schoenfeld at UC-Berkeley, Kim Seashore will lead the group through an interactive exercise to explore what the Common Core asks of students and the implications for teachers. The session should help us create a common vision of what powerful mathematics classrooms look like, which we will then use as a foundation for the remainder of the meeting.

Having identified what we want to see in classroom instruction, we will turn to a key question facing districts as they transition to the Common Core: **how do we know if we are making progress in getting there?** We will break into small groups to examine video of classroom instruction in Sanger, using two classroom observation tools. One of these tools was developed by Student Achievement Partners and is currently in use in Sanger. The other was developed by the Strategic Education Research Partnership (SERP) and has been adapted by Oakland. Subsequent full-group discussion and a fishbowl conversation among Sanger teachers and administrators will enable participants to explore the relative strengths and limitations of the tools and the ways in which educators can use the information generated by observation tools to improve practice.

In the afternoon, we will turn to **how districts are sequencing courses and providing access to higher level mathematics content**. District leaders from several Collaborative districts will share some of the ways in which they have approached decisions about integrated versus traditional course sequences, as well as approaches to accelerating and/or supporting students so that all can succeed in mastering key mathematical content.

As usual, we will end the day with an opportunity for networking and collective relaxation over dinner

at School House Restaurant and Tavern, an old Sanger schoolhouse that has been converted to a restaurant on the outskirts of town.

Day 2: On Thursday morning, we will turn our attention to one of the pressing challenges with transitioning to the Common Core in mathematics, **ensuring that teachers have sufficient mathematical content knowledge** to guide students to mastery of the standards. Phil Daro, one of the lead authors of the standards, will join the meeting via videoconference to engage in an interactive discussion with Sanger district leaders about their approaches to building teacher content knowledge. Following this conversation, we will open the floor to the full group to share their reactions and pose any questions or observations to Phil for his response.

We will conclude with an exploration of how we might leverage existing professional networks and other learning opportunities to address issues of teacher content knowledge and some of the other challenges posed during the meeting.

Readings

As usual, all readings and reference materials for the sessions are available in multiple formats. If you requested a hard copy of the binder, all of the readings are included inside; the cover sheet within each tab identifies a subset of the readings as priority readings. **On Friday, December 5, you will also receive an email with a subset of preparatory readings attached. We strongly encourage you to read these materials prior to the meeting**, as they have been incorporated into our group activities and provide important background information on the topics we will discuss.

For your convenience, all of the meeting materials are also available on the Collaborative website at <http://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting26> and via DropBox at a link you will receive via email.

If you have any questions regarding the meeting logistics, please don't hesitate to contact Suzanne Claussen at 650.843.8192 or sclaussen@air.org. If you have any other questions, please email me (joday@air.org) or give me a call (202.262.4987). I look forward to seeing you all later this month!

Sincerely,



Jennifer O'Day
Chair, California Collaborative on District Reform, and
Institute Fellow, American Institutes for Research