

November 15, 2018

Dear Collaborative Members and Guests,

We look forward to seeing all of you in Long Beach on December 4-5 for our upcoming meeting of the California Collaborative on District Reform. This convening will build on past Collaborative explorations of Common Core mathematics instruction, while drawing on the recent work and lessons of the Math-in-Common and CORE Districts and contributing to policy-level discussions about levers to improve mathematics performance across California. Throughout the two-day discussion, we will apply the lenses identified in our June 2017 meeting to frame our exploration of district improvement efforts: capacity building, equity, and continuous improvement. We are grateful to the team from Long Beach Unified School District (USD) for hosting the meeting, partnering with us in the planning process, and sharing their mathematics journey as part of the discussion. However, we are also aware that educators at the district, school, and classroom levels have come to understand their problems in different ways and have therefore designed responses that reflect both the diversity of those problems and the contexts in which they take place. In recognition of this diversity, we are excited to spotlight efforts underway in a range of districts as we consider how to best foster improvement at all levels of the system.

Meeting Overview

Day 1: The meeting will begin with an examination of the problem. Student outcomes on both state and national assessments have shown a consistent combination of low overall performance, slow growth over time, and persistently large gaps among student groups. To better understand the nature and the potential underlying causes for these outcomes, we will consider several sources of evidence related to student opportunities and outcomes, using data from Long Beach USD. Through this exploration, we hope to generate a shared understanding of some of the key struggles and opportunities that districts face in improving teaching and learning in mathematics.

From this opening exercise to understand the problem, we will turn to the stories of three districts' improvement journeys in mathematics. Leaders from Long Beach, Sacramento City, and Twin Rivers USDs will share information about their mathematics challenges as well as the evolving approaches they have employed to realize improvement. Of particular focus throughout these examples will be efforts to address deep inequities within their systems. This session will help participants to see contextual variation while also revealing some common cross-cutting themes.

In the afternoon, we will explore some of these common themes related to capacity and equity. In small groups, we will consider the challenges of (1) building teachers' mathematical content knowledge, (2) ensuring that principals and other school administrators have the knowledge and skills they need to lead and support the mathematics improvement work, and (3) creating the necessary structures and supports within school systems to motivate and facilitate improvements in mathematics. We will then close the day with a consideration of how educators can engage in cross-system learning when problem

identification and improvement cycles are local and context specific, paying particular attention to the role of improvement networks.

Maintaining our longstanding tradition, we will follow Tuesday's deliberations with an opportunity for networking, collective relaxation, and continued conversation over dinner on the water at the Hotel Maya.

Day 2: On Wednesday morning, we will take a different lens into addressing inequities in mathematics achievement by considering approaches to course sequencing and placement. District leaders from San Francisco USD will share some of the experiences and results they have seen since the district redesigned its middle school math courses to eliminate accelerated course-taking and focus on both quality and access for all students.

The meeting will conclude with an extended discussion of opportunities for leveraging state policy to foster mathematics improvement at scale, drawing on the experiences across Collaborative districts and both the CORE and Math-in-Common networks. Of particular focus will be options and priorities for using state set-aside funds in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

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 materials are included there; the cover sheet behind each tab identifies a subset of priority readings that we suggest you read before the meeting. **For your convenience, on Friday, November 16, you will also 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,** as they provide important background information on the topics we will discuss. Also for your convenience, all of the meeting materials are available on the Collaborative website at <http://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting37> and at a DropBox link you will receive via email.

If you have any questions regarding the meeting logistics, please do not hesitate to contact Dawn Smith at 650-376-6439 or dcsmith@air.org. If have any other questions, please email me (joday@air.org) or give me a call at 202-262-4987. I look forward to seeing you all next month!

Sincerely,



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