

October 29, 2015

Dear Collaborative Members and Guests,

We look forward to seeing you in Sacramento on November 12-13 for our upcoming meeting of the California Collaborative on District Reform. This meeting comes at the request of Mike Kirst and represents a break from our typical practice of grounding our conversation in the context of a host district. Instead, we will focus on an issue that has surfaced many times in Collaborative activities over the past two-plus years, and which has impacted K-12 education throughout the state: the implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and design of the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) process and template.

The meeting will draw heavily on the experiences of our district leaders and other stakeholders in the second round of LCAP development, which was completed this past summer. Our goal will be to identify—in specific form—some of the key issues and challenges with the template and process and to propose concrete short- and long-term improvements. The meeting will also provide a forum for people to examine some of the promising practices that have emerged during early LCFF implementation.

Meeting Overview

The design for the meeting derives from input from a range of participants, including our district leaders, state policy members, county office of education administrators, civil rights advocates, funders, support providers, and researchers.

Day 1: Planning calls have made it clear that people and organizations throughout the state have multiple goals for the LCAP, but those goals are not always made explicit, and can in fact conflict with one another. To help clarify the issues that stakeholders are hoping to address with the LCAP, we will begin the meeting with a brief exploration of its intended purpose(s).

We will then consider the LCAP itself. In small groups, participants will walk through example pages from the LCAPs of attending district leaders. Through this exercise, we seek to develop a shared understanding of what the document entails, the ways in which districts have approached their plans, and some of the opportunities and challenges associated with the current document and process. Through these small group conversations and subsequent reflections, we aim to surface the key issues that merit attention in refining the LCAP.

The discussions during the morning of Day 1 build toward a series of afternoon working groups charged with generating specific ideas for improvement. Organized around the key issues that emerge early in the meeting, these small groups will aim to develop solutions to some of the central problems associated with the current LCAP guidelines and experiences. These solutions may simply involve matters of clarification or expansion of best practice. They may also call for regulatory changes or even legislative action. We will use the identified purposes of the LCAP as a backdrop for considering the trade-offs among the suggested remedies. We will conclude the first day with some reflections from state leaders about what they have heard and a short discussion of how the Collaborative can most effectively leverage the contributions of meeting participants to inform the broader field of educators focused on LCFF issues.

As usual, after a full day of collective deliberation, we will reconvene for networking and collective relaxation over dinner at Chops Steak Seafood and Bar, just a short distance from the hotel.

Day 2: On Friday morning, we will address a challenge raised in many of our planning calls, particularly by the Collaborative’s district leaders: how best to communicate the content of a district’s LCAP—including the data on which it is based—with parents, staff, and the broader community. We plan to take advantage of some of the communication materials submitted by our districts to explore the advantages and shortcomings of several forms of communication. The session will enable us to meet one of the key requests from our district leaders: to learn from some of the promising practices being employed by districts around the state. It will also foster discussion about the appropriate role that districts, COEs, and state policymakers can play in helping parents and community members understand and respond to the content of their local LCAPs.

Continuing on the broad theme of communication, we will then turn to a problem of practice posed by Mike Kirst and other guests from the State Board of Education (SBE). District administrators have reported receiving inconsistent messages and supports from COEs about the LCAP document and planning process. Using a consultancy protocol that has sparked productive reflection and discussion in previous Collaborative meetings, participants will consider the ways in which the SBE can ensure consistency in the messaging and supports that districts receive and facilitate the spread of promising ideas throughout the state. We will conclude the meeting with summary reflections and next steps.

Readings

In response to feedback from our members, we have limited the pre-reading for this meeting to only a handful of materials, which you will find behind the following tabs of the binder: “LCAP Early Implementation,” “Strategic Planning and the LCAP Process,” and “LCFF Resources.” **We will also send the pre-readings to you via email on Friday, October 30. We strongly encourage you to read all of these materials prior to the meeting**, as they provide important background information on the topics we will discuss. The final tab in the binder (“Example Communications Materials”) contains a set of outreach documents from districts about their LCAPs. These may be useful points of reference during our Day 2 conversation, but are not essential pre-reading; please feel free to review at your leisure.

For your convenience, all of the meeting materials are also available on the Collaborative website at <http://www.cacollaborative.org/meetings/meeting29> and via DropBox at a link you will receive in the October 30 email.

If you have any questions regarding the meeting logistics, please don’t hesitate to contact Dawn Smith at 650.843.8239 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