

November 30, 2017

Dear Collaborative Members and Guests,

We are excited to see all of you at our upcoming meeting of the California Collaborative on District Reform on December 14-15 at the El Dorado County Office of Education (EDCOE). This meeting picks up on the central theme that emerged from our June meeting—to focus the Collaborative’s work on issues and approaches relevant to building capacity for equity and continuous improvement in districts across the state. It also addresses two specific topics/member requests from that meeting: 1) to convene in a county office of education (COE) in order to better understand the role of the COEs in California, and 2) to delve into design considerations for a statewide system of support. We extend our thanks to Ed Manansala and his team in El Dorado for hosting us as we engage in a timely set of conversations.

### Meeting Overview

Day 1: The meeting will begin on Thursday, December 14, with an overview and framing for our discussions throughout the two days. Our overall task is straightforward yet incredibly complex. It is to explore how California can best meet the stated goal for its statewide system of support, as laid out in the November 2017 memorandum to the State Board of Education:

“...to assist LEAs and their schools to meet the needs of each student served, with a focus on building capacity to sustain improvement and effectively address inequities in student opportunities and outcomes.”

During Thursday morning and early afternoon, we will be laying the conceptual foundation for addressing this goal. We will begin by learning about our host county and exploring the context for county offices of education and the roles they play. Given the intended role of COEs in the proposed support structure, this is critical background information. EDCOE Superintendent Ed Manansala will describe the range of services that the El Dorado County Office of Education has historically provided and the ways in which its role has evolved since the passage of the Local Control Funding Formula. Reflections from other COE leaders at the meeting will help meeting participants understand the similarities and distinctions among counties across the state.

Our conceptual explorations will continue throughout the morning and early afternoon as we consider what constitutes effective support, applying three different lenses to this question. First, we will review the *research* on support for school and district improvement, much of which has been conducted in the context of local, state, and federal accountability systems implemented over the past two decades. Next, we will consider *perspectives from practice*. A panel of educators representing district leadership, school administration, and classroom teaching will describe their experiences as recipients of support and discuss what has distinguished more effective from less effective assistance. Finally, we will examine the issue of support through the lens of *continuous improvement*. How might the state support system be designed to help motivate, structure, and facilitate the work of continuous improvement among local administrators and teachers? A brief presentation and conversation among participants in the CORE Districts’ improvement work will spark this discussion.

Having examined elements of effective support through the perspectives of research, practice, and continuous improvement, we will set out to synthesize the most compelling lessons that emerged across the three lenses and to crystallize them into a set of design principles for the statewide system of support. The conversation will begin in small groups and be completed by the full group. The resulting design principles will be an important tool in the discussions about the current proposals for the support system on Day 2.

Day 2: On Friday morning, we will turn from conceptual underpinnings and design principles to the current proposals for California's new statewide system of support. The morning will begin with a presentation on the planning process and the specific proposals that have been considered by the State Board of Education or that are emerging from the discussions. Participants will have an opportunity to ask clarifying questions of individuals who have contributed to the state planning process.

Following the overview of the state's plans, participants will return to their small groups to consider the alignment of those plans with the design principles developed at the end of Day 1. The groups will identify areas in which the state's current plans are consistent with the elements and characteristics previously identified as important to effective support. They will also explore potential discrepancies or areas not yet addressed in the most recent state proposals and consider ways that any gaps between the proposals and the design principles might be addressed.

After lunch, participants will reconvene in the full group to share their observations and explore possible recommendations for moving forward. These may include steps that the Collaborative can take, that individual meeting participants can pursue, or that state policymakers might consider as they continue to develop and refine the state's plans.

### 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 the readings as priority readings that we suggest you read before the meeting. **For your convenience, on Friday, December 1, you will also receive an email with this subset of priority pre-meeting readings attached. We strongly encourage you to read these 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/meeting34> and via DropBox at a 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 [dsmith@air.org](mailto:dsmith@air.org). If have any other questions, please email me ([joday@air.org](mailto:joday@air.org)) or give me a call at 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