

The California Collaborative on District Reform

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

George Bohrnstedt
American Institutes for Research

Jim Brown
Pivot Learning Partners

Richard Carranza
San Francisco Unified School District

Cynthia Coburn
University of California, Berkeley

Susanna Cooper
State Senator Darrell Steinberg's Office

Arturo Delgado
San Bernardino City Unified School District

Ken Doane
S. H. Cowell Foundation

Geno Flores
California Department of Education

Patricia Gándara
University of California, Los Angeles

Amy Gerstein
John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities

Libia Gil
American Institutes for Research

Kenji Hakuta
Stanford University

Mike Hanson
Fresno Unified School District

Matt Hill
Los Angeles Unified School District

Holly Jacobson
California School Boards Association

Joseph Johnson
San Diego State University

Marc Johnson
Sanger Unified School District

Joel Jordan
United Teachers Los Angeles

Derry and Charlene Kabcenell
Dirk & Charlene Kabcenell Foundation

Kristi Kimball
The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Vince Matthews
San Jose Unified School District

Maggie Mejia
Former Superintendent

Rick Miller
California Education Partners
Capitol Impact LLC

Ellen Moir
New Teacher Center

Rose Owens-West
WestEd

Arun Ramanathan
The Education Trust—West

Jonathan Raymond
Sacramento City Unified School District

Jorge Ruiz de Velasco
Ford Foundation

Warren Simmons
Annenberg Institute for School Reform

Marshall "Mike" Smith
Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

Tony Smith
Oakland Unified School District

Jim Soland
Legislative Analyst's Office

Brad Stam
ConnectEd

Christopher Steinhauser
Long Beach Unified School District

Joan Talbert
Stanford University

Dale Vigil
LAUSD, Local District 4

Aida Walqui
WestEd

March 10, 2011

Dear Collaborative Members and Guests,

We are all looking forward to this month's convening of the California Collaborative on District Reform, which will be held on March 24th and 25th in Garden Grove Unified School District (GGUSD). We are grateful to Superintendent Laura Schwalm and her team for sharing their time, strategies, and insights with us as we explore the topic of *Ensuring Access to Post-Secondary Success in a Standards-Based System: Garden Grove*. Of particular focus will be the district's work with secondary-level English learners (ELs).

This meeting will provide an opportunity for the group to pick up and deepen themes touched on in prior meetings as we explore issues of *college readiness* (Sacramento, Nov. 2007), *student placement and access to college preparatory courses* (Sacramento, Nov. 2007; Fresno, March 2009), and *content and language instruction for secondary ELs* (Los Angeles, October 2006; Sacramento, November 2007; Hayward, October 2008), as well as the new topic of *standards-based grading* in secondary schools. In addition to the substantive problems of practice related to these topics, a second stream of inquiry in the meeting will be GGUSD's *systemic approach to implementation*. GGUSD is at varying stages of implementing responses to the three core problems of practice in secondary school preparation that we will discuss in this meeting. By exploring strategies in these different stages, the meeting will provide deeper insights into the implementation process, from initial roll-out and buy-in to on-going monitoring and sustainability. As a backdrop to this implementation thread, we will use a framework used by GGUSD and based on the work of one of our own Collaborative members, Cynthia Coburn.

This meeting will also provide an opportunity for us to consider future directions for the Collaborative and strategies for garnering the resources to continue our collective inquiry.

Overview of Meeting Agenda

The meeting agenda is located behind the first tab in this binder. We will begin the first day with a brief overview of GGUSD's approach to post-secondary preparation and of the implementation framework that we will use throughout the two days.

For this discussion, we ask that you review the priority readings located in the *Scale Up and Sustainability* tab, including:

- a graphic of "Exploring the Process of Scaling Up";
- Coburn (2008). *Rethinking scale: Moving beyond numbers to deep and lasting change*.

the priority readings in the *College Readiness* tab:

- summaries from two of our previous meetings relevant to this discussion;
- a fact sheet from the National High School Center.

and Zvadsky (2010), a book chapter profiling GGUSD's successes (located in the *Overview of Garden Grove* tab).

We will then turn to the first problem of practice—**inequitable access to college preparatory courses**—and GGUSD's student placement policies and practices to address this problem. Because this is an area in which the district has now garnered both experience and success, we will be able to see not only how they identified and

The California Collaborative on District Reform (www.cacollaborative.org) joins researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and funders in ongoing, evidence-based dialogue and collaborative activity to improve instruction and student learning for all students in California's urban school systems.

addressed the problem of access but also how they monitor implementation over time to sustain and expand their progress.

Priority readings for this discussion include:

- Garden Grove data on students' a-g completion rates (*Student Placement: Garden Grove* tab)
- Finkelstein and Fong (2008). Course-taking patterns and preparation for postsecondary success in CA's public university among minority youth (*Student Placement: Ensuring Access* tab)

Once students are in the right courses, of course, instructional strategies must ensure that all students can access the content and have the opportunity to demonstrate their performance relative to the content standards. We will learn about GGUSD's use of gradual release of responsibility (GRR) as a guiding principle in their instruction and then consider the specific problem of **providing secondary EL students with the academic language needed to comprehend the content and demonstrate their understanding**. The discussion will bring out problems of deepening teachers' understandings, spreading new practices across schools and classrooms, and shifting classroom instructional practice.

Priority readings for this discussion include:

- Two documents prepared by the district describing their approach to the gradual release of responsibility (*Accessing Content: Garden Grove* tab)
- Dutro and Kinsella (2010). Improving education for English learners: Research-based approaches. (*Accessing Content: Language and Instruction* tab)

In the late afternoon, we will take a break from our focus on Garden Grove to strategize around the future of the Collaborative before adjourning and heading to our group dinner at the Brodard Chateau.

On Friday, March 25, we will turn our attention to a problem of post-secondary access that we have not previously explored in any depth: **inequitable grading practices and discrepancies between student grades and their tested performance on the CST**. GGUSD is in the early stages of implementing standards-based grading as a response to this problem, and we will have the opportunity to delve into both the rationale for standards-based grading and design and implementation challenges the district is facing as it rolls out this reform to high school teachers.

Priority readings for this discussion include:

- Garden Grove data on discrepancy between student grades and proficiency rates on the CST (*Standards-Based Grading: Garden Grove* tab)
- Marzano (2009), Formative Assessment and Standards-Based Grading and O'Connor (2009) Reforming Grading Practices in Secondary Schools (*Standards-Based Grading: Literature* tab)

We anticipate that this will be an informative and lively meeting that will explore not only Garden Grove's approach to these problems of practice but also how other districts in the Collaborative are addressing similar issues in their own contexts. As usual, the binder includes other background readings that we hope you find useful both before and after the meeting.

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. Thanks again to Laura Schwalm and her staff in Garden Grove for hosting this meeting. I look forward to seeing you all on the 24th!

Sincerely,



Jennifer O'Day, Collaborative Chair
American Institutes for Research