

THE CALIFORNIA COLLABORATIVE ON DISTRICT REFORM

September 20, 2006

Dear Collaborative members and guests,

The second meeting of the California Collaborative on District Reform will be taking place on October 4th and 5th in LAUSD's Local District 4. We anticipate a thought-provoking and informative dialogue with nearly all members of the Collaborative in attendance. We are very pleased that you will be joining us.

As you recall, at our first collaborative convening in April, we decided that we would spend the next few meetings considering district improvement efforts from the perspective of their attention to and impact on English learners (ELs) and Standard English learners (SELs). We also decided that our discussions would be most productive if we first established a common understanding of the instructional needs of English learners and of effective classroom and school strategies to address those needs. From there we can move to district-level strategies to support effective instruction for EL and SEL students.

Reflecting these decisions, the topic for our October 4-5 meeting is "Instruction for English Language Development: Needs and Evidence." Our focus will be on the classroom, and once again we will be grounding our discussions in the concrete realities of a specific California district – in this case, Los Angeles Unified Local District 4. Our sincere thanks to Collaborative member Richard Alonzo and his district colleagues for hosting our deliberations and for opening their schools and classrooms to Collaborative members during our visit.

Wednesday schedule

As was the case in April, our meeting will begin with an overview of our host district (Session I). Richard and his colleagues will summarize Local District 4's overall context, the goals and strategies for improvement, and the initiatives under way to improve EL instruction. The district's special focus on improving mathematics instruction will also be reflected in the morning presentation. From this point, however, the structure of the meeting will be a little different from that of our last gathering. Because Collaborative members requested a firmer grounding in the content and a more focused process for observing school practice, we will not be going into schools until Thursday morning.

Instead, Session II on Wednesday afternoon will consider findings from research and practice on needs and strategies for language minority students in literacy and mathematics. Diane August, Senior Research Scientist at the Center for Applied Linguistics, will present findings from the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth. She will also discuss a current district-wide reform effort that builds on the findings of the Panel. Unfortunately, Collaborative member Uri Treisman, who was to lead the discussion on language issues specific to mathematics, has just informed us that he cannot travel at this time for health reasons. We will be sending you an update shortly on who will taking over that session in Uri's stead.



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In Session III, also on Wednesday afternoon, the group will then receive training on LAUSD's observation protocol, which we will be using for our classroom visits on Thursday. We will also have the opportunity to apply the protocol to a video clip of a 4th grade mathematics lesson in order to clarify our interpretations of the specific indicators used.

Thursday schedule

Dr. Alonzo and his LAUSD colleagues have graciously offered to provide the Collaborative participants with an opportunity to meet with district administrators leading their improvement efforts and to visit one of eight schools in the district on Thursday morning (Session IV): Fletcher Drive Elementary School, Gratts Elementary School, Hancock Park Elementary School, Plascencia Elementary School, Bancroft Middle School, Virgil Middle School, Franklin Senior High School, and Marshall High School. You should already have received a short description of these schools via email, with a request to get back to us if you have strong preferences as to which school you would like to visit. In this binder, you will find additional information regarding LAUSD and each of these schools. We encourage you to review these materials prior to the visit.

When we return from the schools Thursday afternoon, we will have a chance to debrief with district staff about what we observed. The guiding question posed by Superintendent Alonzo for the school visits and debrief is: ***In what ways do you see evidence that best practices in EL/SEL strategies are being implemented to support student engagement?*** Richard asks that participants also apply their expertise to suggest ways in which the district's work in this arena might be improved.

Following the debrief on the substance of the school visits, we will have a chance to discuss the process and tools for gathering information on instructional practices relevant to English learners and other students (Session V). We will use our experience with the district's observation protocol as a starting point for this discussion. The meeting will then end with a consideration of prospective topics and locations for subsequent convenings.

Meeting Logistics

The meeting will commence at the Wilshire Grand Hotel in downtown Los Angeles located at: 930 Wilshire Boulevard. Participants should plan to meet in the Los Angeles room at 10:45 AM. Directions are included in the binder, along with parking information, though we discourage participants from obtaining a rental car due to traffic congestion in Los Angeles.

Dinner on Wednesday will be provided at the Ciao Trattoria at 815 W. Seventh Street, just ½ block from the Wilshire Grand Hotel, beginning with cocktails at 6:30.

At 8:00 Thursday morning we will reconvene briefly in the Los Angeles Room to get into our groups for the school visits. (A continental breakfast will be provided, beginning at 7 A.M.) District directors for each school will be providing transportation to and from the school



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sites. After the visits to the schools, we will reconvene at the hotel conference room. Lunch will be available at 12:00 and we will begin at 12:30 and adjourn at 4:30 p.m.

In this Binder

In this binder, we have included several articles, briefs, and reports relevant to the discussions planned for Wednesday and Thursday. In addition to the materials on LAUSD, we have included readings on issues in English learner instruction, on EL students in California, and on gathering evidence on EL instruction. A full listing of the articles follows this letter. An annotated version for the relevant materials for each section of the binder follows the tab divider for that section. Please note that several of the pieces were researched and written by members and guests of the Collaborative. We encourage you to review the materials included in this binder prior to the meeting. As we know you have limited time, we have starred (***) several articles that we would like everyone to read.

In the first sections of this binder, you will find additional meeting logistics, including a detailed agenda, a participant roster, and short biographies of all the Collaborative participants. If you have any additional questions regarding the meeting logistics, please don't hesitate to contact Kassie Chaney and the California Collaborative staff at 650.843.8219.

Again, thank you for joining us. We hope you will find this an informative and productive meeting. We look forward to seeing you soon!

Sincerely,



Jennifer O'Day , Chair
American Institutes for Research



Amy Gerstein, Liaison
Policy Analysis for California Education

