

## **BACK TO SCHOOL IN THE ERA OF COVID-19: UNCERTAINTIES, COMPLEXITIES, AND EMERGING PLANS**

MONDAY, JUNE 15 AND TUESDAY, JUNE 16

### MEETING AGENDA

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NOTE: DUE TO THE COVID-19 HEALTH CRISIS AND SHELTER-IN-PLACE GUIDELINES, THIS MEETING WILL BE HELD VIRTUALLY THROUGH FOUR 90-120-MINUTE SESSIONS

#### DAY I: MONDAY, JUNE 15

8:30 am **Convene Meeting.** Jennifer O'Day will convene the meeting with opening remarks, introductions, and an overview of the agenda.

#### **SESSION I**

##### *Addressing the Complexities of Re-Entry: District Approaches*

8:45 am **Exploration of Context.** As California school districts prepare for the 2020-21 school year, two aspects of the broader context are particularly relevant—the continued threat from COVID-19 and the evidence of persistent and increasing inequity in our schools and racial injustices throughout our society. To address the first of these, Don Goldmann, Harvard professor of pediatrics in the School of Medicine and of immunology and infectious diseases, and epidemiology in the School of Public Health, will provide a quick update on the coronavirus and then respond to queries from the group. Then, Collaborative member Elisha Smith Arrillaga, executive director of Education Trust-West, will frame some of the key concerns and priorities related to equity that have risen to the forefront during the school closures and recent events.

9:15 am **Overview of District Planning.** Despite unpredictable community health conditions and parameters from state or county authorities around public gatherings, district leaders are well into the process of designing their approach for re-entry to school-based learning environments. These include decisions about scheduling, physical distancing, instruction, and supports for social and emotional well-being, among others. To help the group understand the complexity of this planning process and to establish a foundation for subsequent small-group conversations, participants will hear about one district's comprehensive preparation and plan.

- 9:30 am      **Exploration of District Planning in Small Groups.** Having heard an overview of district planning, participants will explore key considerations for reopening, informed by the contributions of other district leaders about their contexts and emerging plans. Each group will have an opportunity to explore promising ideas, possible gaps or potential unintended consequences of various strategies, and implications of the discussion for the remaining topics of the meeting.
- 10:00 am      **Report Out.** Small groups will return to the full group to share key takeaways from their conversations.
- 10:30 am      **Break until Session II** (3.5-hour break).

## SESSION II

### *Creating Equitable and Effective Instruction in Remote or Hybrid Settings*

The rapid and unexpected transition to distance learning in spring 2020 produced a variety of district responses. Without the time for careful planning, most districts were primarily geared toward making the best of the extraordinary circumstances. As they now confront the likelihood that remote learning will continue to be a part of at least some students’ instructional experiences in the fall, they must draw lessons from the spring and from research to improve instructional quality, address the loss of learning time during the school closures, and ensure equitable access to standards-aligned instruction for all students regardless of instructional format.

- 2:00 pm      **Considerations for Ensuring Quality in Distance Learning.** Participants will hear reflections from their peers on considerations and strategies for designing a coherent and standards-based plan for instruction and student learning in fall 2020, including the promises and challenges observed in distance learning efforts this spring, research on effective high-quality remote instruction, and issues of teacher development and deployment to best meet student needs in remote or hybrid learning environments.
- 2:20 pm      **Jigsaw Exploration of Key Priorities for Teaching and Learning.** Participants will break into small groups to explore teaching and learning priorities through three lenses: assessing and addressing learning loss stemming from school closures, ensuring the quality and coherence of an instructional program, and preparing and supporting instructional staff. Following initial discussions in small groups, we will reconfigure into new groups to “jigsaw” our observations and questions across different areas of focus.
- 3:00 pm      **Report Out.** Small groups will return to the full group to share key takeaways from their conversations.
- 3:20 pm      **Summary and Reflection on the Day’s Discussion.**
- 3:30 pm      **Adjourn for the Day.**

## DAY 2: TUESDAY, JUNE 16

### SESSION III

#### ***Ensuring Social and Emotional Well-Being as a Foundation for Learning***

Educators have increasingly recognized the critical role of social and emotional well-being for both students and adults to thrive in school settings. These needs have become especially pronounced by the uncertainty and fear generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as by the loss of many of their normal supports, sources of interaction, and even safety from abuse. Students and adults alike have had to adapt to new expectations and pressures, often with little guidance. More recently, a volatile national environment and racist attacks have unleashed pent-up anger and increased feelings of fear and stress. Recognizing and addressing these emotions and re-engaging students in social interaction will be critical for academic learning to take place.

- 8:30 am      **Opening Activity.**
- 8:35 am      **Practitioner Fishbowl.** A group of Collaborative members will initiate this session on strategies for supporting social and emotional well-being of both students and educators by sharing their reflections about the needs they have observed in the spring and the challenges they anticipate in the fall.
- 8:45 am      **The Science of Student and Adult Well-Being.** Dr. Pamela Cantor and Gretchen Livesey from Turnaround for Children will respond to contributions from the fishbowl conversation by sharing key aspects of the science behind stress and the factors that support social and emotional health and readiness for learning, including the importance of positive developmental relationships.
- 9:05 am      **Exploration of Social and Emotional Well-Being in Small Groups.** Meeting participants will break into small groups twice during this session, first to share their reactions and key takeaways from the presentation and then to engage in an exercise to explore social and emotional issues in more depth.
- 9:45 am      **Report Out.** Small groups will return to the full group to share key takeaways from their conversations.
- 10:00 am     **Break until Session IV** (4-hour break).

### SESSION IV

#### ***Leading Through Crisis: Challenges, Lessons, and Tools***

The crisis conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic have introduced tremendous strain on school districts, as leaders have been asked to navigate unprecedented circumstances to rapidly transform food services safely, to procure and deploy devices and hot spots to those who needed them, and to re-envision and deliver opportunities for student learning—all in a state of urgency and persistent uncertainty. Now they are being asked to plan for a return to school under multiple potential scenarios, including the possibility of subsequent closures should we see a spike in COVID-19 cases in the fall. The

demands for calm and decisive leadership and for organizational agility under these conditions are significant, as is the need for consistent attention by system leaders to addressing the deep-seated structural and cultural sources of inequity in our schools.

- 2:00 pm      **Anticipating and Responding to Crisis.** As the upcoming months promise still more uncertainty, district leaders face the challenge not only of addressing today’s concerns, but also equipping their organizations and the teams within them to lead through times of continuing crisis. Through individual reflection, presentation, and small group discussion, meeting participants will examine ways in which organizations can both improve their *responses* to external conditions and use the opportunity for *proactive planning* to do things in more effective ways. A framework drawn from research on high reliability organizations will help frame the discussion and participants will learn about a review tool and process that Peter Senge has called “one of the most successful organizational learning methods yet devised.”
- 2:50 pm      **Leadership across system levels.** Toward the end of the session, we will turn to the leadership roles that different entities in the state’s education system could or should play in supporting districts as they navigate reopening schools and responding to the complexities of the current crises.
- 3:15 pm      **Next Steps for the Collaborative.** Meeting participants will brainstorm ways in which the Collaborative can leverage the experiences and insights of its members to inform the planning and activities of education leaders inside and outside of the group. Possibilities could include consultancies around individual problems of district practice, working groups to unpack considerations and strategies in key topic areas, or briefs that explore key issues for the broader California education community.
- 3:30 pm      **Summary and Reflection on the Day’s Discussion.**
- 3:40 pm      **Adjourn Meeting.**