

# THE CALIFORNIA COLLABORATIVE ON DISTRICT REFORM

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June 15, 2007

Dear Collaborative members and guests,

Our fourth meeting of the California Collaborative on District Reform will take place on June 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> in Long Beach Unified School District. Once again, we are excited to gather such a thoughtful and well-informed group together to discuss important issues of district improvement.

To date, our Collaborative meetings have focused on the instructional needs of English learners and what teachers need to know to differentiate instruction for this student population and others. Two themes that emerged during these discussions were the need for strong *district supports* to enable the kinds of student and teacher learning we discussed in these meetings, and the need for districts to become *learning organizations* themselves to better enable this work.

Building on these key themes, our fourth meeting will focus on *District Infrastructure and English Learner Achievement: Supporting Improvement the “Long Beach Way”*. We wish to express our thanks to Collaborative member Chris Steinhauser and his colleagues for inviting us to learn about the work that has enabled the third-largest district in California to sustain exceptional growth in student learning over such an extended period of time. Winner of the Broad Prize in 2003, LBUSD is now under consideration for a repeat award. Their use of data and the district processes and structures they have put in place to support school improvement are two reasons for their continued success and two central foci of this meeting. Long Beach Unified is well-known for its “top-down, bottom-up” culture of reform, and in this meeting we will learn from district staff about Long Beach’s unique culture and approach to improving instruction and student learning. Our discussions will be grounded in a specific problem that the district is currently addressing – persistent achievement gaps among English learners and standard English learners. Discussing how they have designed and implemented structured interventions to address this problem will enable us to consider ways in which Long Beach Unified leads and learns through its work.

Three themes will run throughout our sessions for this meeting:

1. **Structured interventions for low-achieving English learners and other students.** Our meeting will be grounded in this strategy that Long Beach Unified is using to address persistent achievement gaps. While in prior meetings we have discussed the instructional needs of English learners within regular classroom instruction, we have not yet discussed supplementary interventions for these students and others.
2. **The district’s role and needed infrastructure to support effective instruction and professional development discussed at the last two meetings.** Some key questions we will address in this meeting are: What kind of infrastructural supports need to be in place for the district to support schools and school personnel to improve instruction for EL, SEL, and other low-achieving students? How can districts build human capital to do this work? How can we make this work coherent?
3. **The district as a learning organization.** We’ve talked about students as learners (meeting 2), teachers and principals as learners (meeting 3) – and now we turn to organizational learning. During this meeting we will discuss: How does an effective district organize its



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work to continually learn how to improve? How does it ensure the flow of information up, down, and across the system? Our discussions will include the identification of problems, the use of data, the search for and development of solutions, formative evaluation of the results, the creation of a culture of inquiry and improvement throughout the system.

While these three themes will run throughout the sessions, certain threads will be highlighted in individual sessions.

## Thursday schedule

During our first day we will discuss district supports in the context of Long Beach Unified. We will convene promptly at 9:00 am at the Long Beach Unified central office (see the logistics summary in the front cover of the binder). Superintendent Chris Steinhauser and colleagues will provide an overview of Long Beach's instructional program and strategies for data use. They will also discuss the problem of persistent gaps in achievement for English learners and standard English learners that they have been addressing, including the evidence they used to identify this problem. Session II will then focus on their rationale for implementing structured interventions to address the problem and the infrastructural supports they have put in place to implement these interventions in a coherent way. In Session III we will focus in on one particular form of district support, human capital development (including teacher preparation, hiring policies, and professional development), that has been critical to Long Beach's instructional initiatives.

## Friday schedule

On Friday, we will reconvene at 8:30 am at the Long Beach Unified central office. During this second day we will move our discussion beyond Long Beach to examine district organizational learning. Session IV's discussion will focus on the kinds of data districts need, organizational structures to foster collective problem solving and communication flow through the system, and ways to foster the risk-taking necessary for districts to learn from their work. Then, in Session V, we will discuss potential plans for the next phase of the Collaborative. We have been gathering initial feedback from Collaborative members about their thoughts for the future. This session will provide some focused time for us to discuss in small groups ways in which we can share what we have learned beyond the Collaborative members, special projects the Collaborative can conduct, and future products.

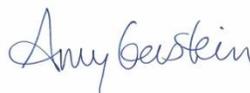
Our meeting will adjourn at 3 pm on Friday. We look forward to having you join us for both days and for cocktails and dinner at Alegria Cocina Latina on Thursday evening (see logistics summary). If you have any additional questions regarding the meeting logistics, please don't hesitate to contact Suzanne Claussen and the California Collaborative staff at 650.843.8192.

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, Collaborative Chair  
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