

THE CALIFORNIA COLLABORATIVE ON DISTRICT REFORM

October 24, 2007

Dear Collaborative members and guests,

Our fifth convening of the California Collaborative on District Reform will be held on November 5th and 6th in Sacramento City Unified School District. We look forward to bringing everyone together again to continue our discussion of important issues related to district improvement.

To date, our Collaborative meetings have focused on various facets of district reform, such as capacity building and district infrastructure, through the lens of instruction for English learners. In our last meeting, members expressed an interest in narrowing our focus further to allow us to dig deeply into issues faced by districts in supporting their English learners. Specifically, participants noted that the needs of English learners in secondary schools are often neglected, and the field has accumulated little knowledge about how to foster achievement and attainment for this student population. We therefore decided to focus our next few meetings on district strategies to address the needs of adolescent English learners.

In light of this decision, on November 5th and 6th we will focus on *Adolescent English Learners: Instructional Content for College and Career Readiness*. Collaborative member Maggie Mejia has graciously invited the Collaborative to Sacramento City Unified as the setting for our meeting. While our discussions will focus on middle and high school English learners throughout California, several of our sessions will be grounded in the specific challenges in Sacramento City Unified, a district with one of the most diverse student populations in California.

Our meeting will focus on three overarching questions:

- **Who are the adolescent English learners in California and in Sacramento?** To understand how best to address the needs of this student population, we will spend time at the beginning of the meeting learning about the demographics, backgrounds, achievement levels, and instructional needs of adolescent English learners.
- **What do we mean by college readiness and how does this goal apply to secondary EL students?** Our meeting will also focus on the expectations for EL students in secondary schools. Specifically we will discuss the concept of *college readiness*, an oft-stated goal for all high school graduates. Basing our discussion on a white paper by David Conley (provided in this briefing book), we will explore the meaning of college readiness, the knowledge and skills students need to be successful in entry-level college courses, and the extent to which we should expect all students to be ready for college at the end of their high school careers. We will discuss the application of this concept for *all* students as well as adolescent English learners.
- **What is and should be the instructional content for adolescent English learners?** In light of the goals and expectations discussed above, we will examine the instructional content needed to meet these goals. We will focus on three main areas of instructional content – core academic content, language skills, and other skills (e.g., study skills, knowledge of the college system, analytic skills, etc.). How can we bridge the gap between the skills and knowledge of English learners and what is needed to be college and/or career ready?



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Monday schedule

On the first day we will convene promptly at 9:00 am at the Sacramento City Unified central office (see the logistics summary in the front cover of the binder). Superintendent Maggie Mejia and colleagues will provide an overview of the adolescent English learner population in Sacramento City Unified. They will present data related to these students, and we will discuss how they compare to similar student populations in other California districts. Session II will then focus on college readiness. In this session we will discuss Conley's piece on college readiness, and we therefore ask all participants to read this article prior to the meeting. We will discuss expectations for college readiness, as well as the implications of this goal for adolescent English learners.

At the end of the day, we will briefly discuss some of the other Collaborative activities from the past few months, including a Critical Friends visit to Los Angeles Unified Local District 4, the practitioner working group that participated in the recent *Getting from Facts to Policy* symposium in Sacramento, and fundraising activities. We then look forward to having you join us for cocktails and dinner at California Fat's Steakhouse and Asian Grill on Monday evening (see logistics summary).

Tuesday schedule

On Tuesday, we will reconvene at 8:30 am at the Sacramento City Unified central office. In the morning we will turn to instructional content for adolescent English learners. We will hear directly from practitioners in Sacramento City Unified about the instructional content offered to and received by adolescent English learners in Sacramento City, as well as the challenges they face in this area. The afternoon session on Friday will provide an opportunity for the group to reach consensus on take-away points and learnings from the meeting and to identify key questions concerning adolescent English learners to be addressed over the next few Collaborative meetings.

Our meeting will adjourn at 3 pm on Tuesday, November 6th. 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,



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