

THE CALIFORNIA COLLABORATIVE ON DISTRICT REFORM

October 16, 2008

Dear Collaborative members and guests,

The eighth convening of the California Collaborative on District Reform, to be held on October 28-29 in Hayward, promises to delve into a timely and urgent topic for districts across the state – the new state board requirement to test all eighth grade students in Algebra I within 3 years. I'd like to extend our sincere thanks to Hayward Unified School District for hosting this meeting (our second in Hayward), and we look forward to seeing all of you there.

Our goal in this meeting is two-fold. First, we hope to engage members and guests in meaningful and productive dialogue about the new algebra requirement in the context of specific district conditions and their long-range goals and strategies for student success in mathematics. We will have an opportunity to hear district perspectives first-hand and to explore the challenges districts face and the range of approaches they are taking to respond to the new testing mandate. In particular, we will examine implications of the new policy for articulating mathematics content and instruction across grades K-12 and for ensuring that teachers have the requisite knowledge and skills to foster algebraic thinking and algebra knowledge at the relevant grade levels. We will also explore strategies for providing students with the intensity of instruction and interventions appropriate to their level of performance in order to ensure their success in algebra and higher mathematics. Throughout these discussions we plan to pay particular attention to the implications of the mandate for EL students and their teachers.

Our second goal for the meeting is to lay the foundation for a published policy brief to inform district and state leaders about the range of conditions, issues, and approaches to address this requirement at the district level; the analyses needed to identify and quantify “the problem” districts face; and the challenges and trade-offs associated with varying approaches. We anticipate that the brief will also include recommendations regarding state support and will address specific needs of EL students. We will integrate discussion of the proposed brief throughout the meeting and address its content more specifically in the final session.

In this binder, we have provided you with brief summaries of the ways in which the various districts represented on our Collaborative are approaching the algebra requirement, which will be useful in providing context for the first session of our meeting (others will be forthcoming via email). In addition, we have provided you with background information on the new algebra requirement and on trends in the study of algebra in U.S. schools, as well as materials related to specific topics of discussion, such as teacher capacity, and mathematics standards, curriculum and instruction.

October 28

On Tuesday, we will start a little later than usual – at 9:30am – in order to accommodate the fact that we will be moving directly to dinner at a restaurant nearby once the meeting adjourns. The



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meeting will open with a brief explanation of the state algebra requirement, followed by an in-depth dialogue amongst districts on how this requirement is playing out in their individual contexts. We will consider how districts are defining and quantifying “the problem” with respect to algebra and mathematics achievement, the strategies they are putting in place, and the challenges they face in meeting the mandate.

The afternoon session will focus on a specific challenge raised by all districts – that of improving instructional *capacity*. The session will start with a brief overview of the state context with regard to the current supply of qualified mathematics teachers and will move into small group discussions to explore questions related to how districts are meeting this challenge, strategies for building the capacity of the current pool of teachers and retaining them, alternatives for meeting the demand for quality teachers, and implications for ELs.

When the meeting adjourns at 6:00, we will group into car pools and go directly to Neumanali for cocktails and dinner (see logistics summary).

October 29

On Wednesday, the meeting will begin at 8am with the opening session focusing on another key issue expressed by all districts – alignment of the mathematics curriculum across grade levels and implementation of timely supports and interventions for students. The session will begin with a brief presentation of a range of curricular implications of the algebra requirement, followed by a discussion of district strategies for addressing those implications.

The final session for the meeting will culminate with the identification of key themes that have emerged over the course of our meeting to be included in the published policy brief.

Our meeting will adjourn at 3 pm on Wednesday, October 29th. 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, thanks for joining us!

Sincerely,



Jennifer O'Day, Collaborative Chair
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